

City of Seward
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From: Kat Sorensen, City Manager, City of Seward
Date: January 28, 2025
Subject: Supporting Alaska Railroad Bond Authorization

On behalf of the City of Seward, I am writing to express our strong support for increasing the bonding authority of the Alaska Railroad Corporation from \$60 million to \$135 million to fund the construction of a new dock and terminal in Seward. This legislation is crucial to maintaining and enhancing an essential economic link for both our city and the state of Alaska. This letter reaffirms the support expressed with Resolution 2022-013 by the Seward City Council, supporting the Alaska Railroad Corporation's efforts to secure funding for the Seward passenger dock project.

The current dock is nearing the end of its useful life, and its replacement is necessary to ensure continued service, expanded capabilities, and economic sustainability. The proposed facility is not solely for tourism; it is designed as a year-round, multi-use space for our community. With an improved terminal, Seward residents will benefit from a more welcoming venue for local events such as the Seward Music and Arts Festival, or like our community wide watch party for local Olympian Lydia Jacoby. This project represents an investment in community spirit and shared public space.

The City of Seward was also awarded a federal grant to install shore power infrastructure at the port. This provides a unique opportunity to strengthen our locally owned electric utility by adding a large, stable ratepayer, easing the financial burden on smaller utility customers. Due to the dynamic energy environment of Southcentral Alaska, we included battery energy storage systems into the grant, allowing us to store power on hand rather than adding to hours of already high demand.

Also, the employment opportunities generated by cruise ship operations are invaluable to our community. The new terminal will sustain and create good-paying jobs that uphold Seward's proud longshore tradition. Moreover, the statewide economic impact of a functioning and modernized dock extends beyond Seward, supporting businesses, tourism, and supply chains across Alaska.

For these reasons, I urge you to support this legislation without delay. This project is not just about replacing aging infrastructure—it is about securing a stronger economic future for Seward and Alaska as a whole.

Thank you and let me know if you have any questions.

Best,

Kat Sorensen

City Manager, City of Seward