

STATE OF ALASKA

THE LEGISLATURE

1989

Source

Legislative
Resolve No.

SCS CSHCR 12(Trsp)

15



Relating to the Alaska marine highway system master plan.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

WHEREAS the Alaska marine highway system was created to provide an intrastate transportation link between coastal communities in Southeast and Southwest Alaska and an interstate link between Alaska and the continental highway system; and

WHEREAS expansion of the Alaska marine highway system has been directly associated with the growth and economic and social development of the coastal communities served and the changing transportation needs of the state as a whole; and

WHEREAS the first priority for the Alaska marine highway system is to provide intrastate transportation to communities not linked by road to the state highway system; and

WHEREAS the Alaska marine highway system is essential to the economic viability of Southeast and much of Southwest Alaska and supports significant over-the-highway freight and tourist trade and travel between central Alaska and Alaska's state capital; and

WHEREAS five of the nine vessels of the Alaska marine highway system, including the mainline ferries Matanuska, Taku, Malaspina, and Tustumena, are over 25 years old and will be approaching the end of their useful economic lives in 5 to 10 years; and

WHEREAS there is growing public dissatisfaction with ferry schedules, fares, and services provided by the Alaska marine highway system; and

WHEREAS a new breed of fast ferries exists today that offers improved services with lower capital and operating costs; and

WHEREAS fast ferries can be acquired for a fraction of the replacement cost for the existing LeConte-class vessels and would provide greater flexibility for system expansion and scheduling; and

WHEREAS strategically employed fast ferries can maximize the use of mainline ferries and extend the useful and economic life of these expensive vessels; and

WHEREAS the Southeast Transportation Plan, dated June 1986, recognized the growing obsolescence of the fleet and recommended the purchase and employment of three new fast ferries to operate on the Ketchikan to Hollis, Sitka to Juneau, and Juneau to Skagway routes and recommended new roads be constructed, subject to funding and further environmental impact analysis; and

WHEREAS the concept of mainline ferry service, supplemented by fast ferries, new roads, and beneficial schedule changes has been adopted by the Southeast Conference and recent agreements adopted by the cities of Haines, Skagway, and Juneau; and

WHEREAS chapter 128, SLA 1986, appropriated \$4,900,000 to acquire the first of the recommended fast ferries; and

WHEREAS the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities has expended more than \$600,000 of that appropriation for other marine highway projects and has not taken any action to purchase a fast ferry; and

WHEREAS the federal government has advised the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities that federal funds will not be authorized to purchase fast ferries until a marine highway system master plan has been prepared and adopted by the commissioner of transportation and public facilities; and

WHEREAS the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities advised the legislature that the Alaska marine highway system master plan was in a draft stage in January 1988, and should be completed in 60 to 90 days; and

WHEREAS the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities has neither adopted the plan nor circulated the plan for legislative review; and

WHEREAS it is in the best interest of all affected communities, traditional ferry users, and the state as a whole, that the master plan be completed, transmitted to the legislature for review and approval, and adopted and implemented on schedule by the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities; and

WHEREAS the legislature should be provided drafts and completed plans of all major transportation proposals affecting the citizens of this state in a timely manner and any changes to an adopted plan should be transmitted for review before those changes are effected;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska State Legislature respectfully requests the Governor to direct the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities to expeditiously complete the federally required Alaska marine highway system master plan and to submit the master plan to the legislature for review by April 15, 1989; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the master plan must include

- (1) community and user comments and recommendations;
- (2) Alaska marine highway system employee recommendations;
- (3) a written summary of the relationship between the Alaska marine highway system master plan and the state transportation long-term plan;
- (4) preliminary assessments of environmental impacts;
- (5) a condition survey of vessels and facilities and a long-term vessel replacement plan;
- (6) a marketing, advertising, and promotional plan;
- (7) proposals for changes in short-term and long-term operating budgets;
- (8) crew schedules;
- (9) a statement on the effect of the Alaska marine highway system on Alaska hire, Alaska residency, and local purchase;
- (10) information relating to training;
- (11) a statement on the compatibility of the plan with traditional commercial users; and
- (12) a statement of the improvements in services provided by the Alaska marine highway system.