

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
HOUSE TRANSPORTATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 4, 2003

1:15 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Representative Jim Holm, Co-Chair  
Representative Beverly Masek, Co-Chair  
Representative Hugh Fate  
Representative Cheryll Heinze  
Representative Vic Kohring  
Representative Mary Kapsner

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Representative Albert Kookesh

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

OVERVIEW: DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC FACILITIES

**TAPES**

03-1, SIDE(S) A & B

**CO-CHAIR JAMES HOLM** convened the meeting of the House Transportation Standing Committee at 1:15 p.m. Present at the call to order were Representatives Holm, Masek, Fate, and Kohring. Representatives Kapsner and Heinze arrived as the meeting was in progress.

**SUMMARY OF INFORMATION**

MICHAEL BARTON, Acting Commissioner, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) presented a factual overview of the department. Acting Commissioner Barton's PowerPoint presentation contained a departmental general overview and information on operations and capital programs. He began his presentation by introducing the following DOT&PF staff, who were available to respond to questions from the committee: George Capacci, Ralph Swarthout, Frank Richards, Jeff Ottesen, Nancy Slagle, Mike Downing, and Dennis Poshard.

ACTING COMMISSIONER BARTON outlined DOT&PF's regional boundaries, maintenance stations, airports, ports and harbors,

the Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) route map, the National Highway System, Alaska's highway system, and DOT&PF's organizational chart. Acting Commissioner Barton mentioned that the department would implement organizational changes while not losing current efficiencies that have been built into the system.

ACTING COMMISSIONER BARTON addressed operations issues such as budget, maintenance, facilities, disasters, airports, aviation security, AMHS, ports and harbors, measurement standards and commercial vehicle enforcement. Acting Commissioner Barton pointed out that the Alaska International Airport System (AIAS) includes Anchorage and Fairbanks international airports, with DOT&PF taking pride in the Anchorage airport being the largest cargo airport in the U.S., and the busiest floatplane base in the world. He mentioned that AMHS recently celebrated its 40th birthday on January 23, 2003, with the M/V Malaspina, the first boat bought by the state, still in operation. He reported that there are two new fast vehicle ferries under construction to serve Southeast Alaska and Prince William Sound, and that over time, four or five fast ferries may replace the larger ships, which will help to shrink the labor cost average so it will be less than the current rate of 68 percent of AMHS's annual operating budget.

CO-CHAIR HOLM asked if analysis had been done on connecting any of the substandard airports by roads, and indicated that the committee would be interested in helping with such an approach to correcting the existing problems in 116 substandard airports.

ACTING COMMISSIONER BARTON confirmed that such an analysis was being done, and continued the overview with an explanation of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP), which involves a federal requirement that forms the basis for the federal aid program and includes a lengthy sorting process with a fair amount of public input.

REPRESENTATIVE FATE asked if safeguards, changes, or streamlining could be made to the STIP's current management regarding prioritization of projects.

ACTING COMMISSIONER BARTON explained that the STIP is only relevant to federal aid projects. He acknowledged DOT&PF's awareness of difficulties with the STIP process and said that DOT&PF is looking to improve upon the STIP process. In response to a question from Co-Chair Masek, Acting Commissioner Barton said he felt strongly about maintaining existing roads as well

as building new roads; he said there are no easy answers and that a balance needs to be struck.

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no announcements.

#### **COMMITTEE ACTION**

The committee took no action.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Transportation meeting was adjourned at 2:50 p.m.

NOTE: The meeting was recorded and handwritten log notes were taken. A copy of the tape(s) and log notes may be obtained by contacting the House Records Office at State Capitol, Room 3, Juneau, Alaska 99801 (mailing address), (907) 465-2214, and after adjournment of the second session of the Twenty-Third Alaska State Legislature this information may be obtained by contacting the Legislative Reference Library at (907) 465-3808.