

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
JOINT MEETING
HOUSE TRANSPORTATION STANDING COMMITTEE
SENATE TRANSPORTATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 5, 2013

1:32 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

HOUSE TRANSPORTATION

Representative Peggy Wilson, Chair
Representative Doug Isaacson, Vice Chair
Representative Lynn Gattis
Representative Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins

SENATE TRANSPORTATION

Senator Dennis Egan, Chair

MEMBERS ABSENT

HOUSE TRANSPORTATION

Representative Eric Feige
Representative Craig Johnson
Representative Bob Lynn

SENATE TRANSPORTATION

Senator Fred Dyson, Vice Chair
Senator Anna Fairclough
Senator Click Bishop
Senator Hollis French

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PUBLIC TESTIMONY ON DESIGN CONCEPT REPORT FOR THE DAY BOAT FERRY

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

REUBEN YOST, Deputy Commissioner
Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions about ferry scheduling, staffing, and the roll on/roll off loading concept.

MIKE KORSMO, representing himself
Skagway, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Expressed concern that the new plan does not necessarily reduce travel time or increase current capacity and doesn't make travel any easier; and while it may look like we're getting two boats for the price of one, terminal modifications for a roll on/roll off system and other ancillary expenses weren't included in the figures.

DAVID HAYFEE
Southeast Alaska Conservation Council (SEACC)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Supported the original plan of an Alaska class ferry (ACF), as its design was versatile enough to meet the demands of all communities in Southeast Alaska.

DON ETHERIDGE, representing himself
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Expressed concerns about the design of the new vessel.

SANDY WILLIAMS, representing himself
Douglas, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Characterized this vessel as "design by committee," which is "what got us into trouble in the first place."

MALCOLM MENZIES, representing himself
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Welcomed the department's position on reducing ferry costs and the new design of the Alaska class ferry, and if open decks was a valid concern, he was sure the design would be modified. He did know from sailing on Lynn Canal that state rooms and fancy meals were not needed. "We just need to be able to get there."

NANCY RATNER, representing herself
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Said "Anyone who has spent any time in Lynn Canal knows that the governor's latest proposed ferry design is inappropriate for Lynn Canal conditions."

BILL HOPKINS, representing himself
No address provided

POSITION STATEMENT: He read the accounts of the new ferry design and thought it was all sub-standard with the clam shell bow doors, open car deck aft, reduced cargo carrying capacity, no unaccompanied vehicles allowed, vending machines, and an unmanned engine room.

STAN SELMAR, Mayor
Skagway, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Stated "We have this wonderful highway system on the water that needs to be maintained and the current reduced size day boat isn't the answer, especially not this version."

STEPHANIE SCOTT, Mayor
Haines, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Said the thing to do is to go back to the ACF design, for which we have already spent \$3 million, and attempt to publically "tweak" it, and if we must, abandon the commitment to building in state, accept federal subsidies and build the boat outside Alaska.

ROB GOLDBERG, representing himself
Haines, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Had reservations about the day boat design, especially the open car deck, but focused suggestions more on the inefficiencies of its proposed schedule.

DANNY GONCE, representing himself
Haines, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Said that additional power would be needed on the upper Lynn Canal grid for over-nighting a ferry in Haines and related other concerns over the new design.

ROBERT VENABLES, member
Marine Transportation Advisory Board (MTAB)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Reported that he was listening to the discussion of the ferry design issues.

CAPTAIN JOHN FALVEY, General Manager
Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS)

Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF)
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Said that the AMHS will continue taking input, including from masters and crew, and that the new vessel may end up looking very different.

KATHLEEN MENKE, representing herself
Haines, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Said the state can't afford a failed experiment and for safety, health, and commerce, urged taking the federal money and putting the original plan out to bid again or building the ferry in Alaska and budgeting for it.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[1:32:03 PM](#)

CHAIR DENNIS EGAN called the joint meeting of the House and Senate Transportation Standing Committees to order at 1:32 p.m. Representatives Gattis, Kreiss-Tomkins, Isaacson, Chair P. Wilson and Senator Egan were present at the call to order.

Public Testimony on the Day Boat Ferry

[1:32:33 PM](#)

CHAIR EGAN announced that the only order of business would be public testimony on the draft conceptual design of the Alaska ferry.

[1:33:12 PM](#)

REUBEN YOST, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF), Juneau, Alaska, said they had set up a website under the Alaska Class Ferry Project and that people could submit emails on it through March, because the design study report had been pushed back into April. They would also take public comments on the report when it is released in April.

[1:35:01 PM](#)

MIKE KORSMO, representing himself, Skagway, Alaska, said he was "just a tugboat captain" who serves on the Skagway Assembly and the MTAB board; he had also been very involved with the Marine Highway System under the Southeast Conference.

He said Captain Falvey and his team had been a doing a great job running the system for the last five or six years and that the issue of the change in ferry plans is extremely important to Lynn Canal residents and those decisions affecting them must be well thought out.

MR. KORSMO expressed concern that the new plan as presented earlier did not necessarily reduce travel time or increase current capacity, and didn't make travel any easier. And while on paper it may look like we're getting two boats for the price of one, some issues arise including the terminal modifications for a roll on roll off system that hadn't been accounted for. He wanted the best system and was glad to see the department slow down a bit.

1:38:20 PM

CHAIR EGAN asked if he was still a member of the Martine Transportation Advisory Board (MTAB).

MR. KORSMO indicated that he was.

1:38:38 PM

DAVID HAYFEE, Southeast Alaska Conservation Council (SEACC), Juneau, Alaska, supported the original plan of an Alaska class ferry (ACF), as its design was versatile enough to meet the demands of all communities in Southeast Alaska. In 2011 he visited Alaska Ship and Dry-dock in Ketchikan and toured their facilities and everyone supported construction of the new ACF in Ketchikan. It was originally designed to handle the Lynn Canal route safely and reliably in all seasons as well as all other routes in the region including Icy Strait, Chatham Strait, Frederick Sound and Clarence Strait.

He said the ferry system is the economic and social lifeblood for many communities in Southeast Alaska. Having safe and reliable travel is important to Hoonah, Gustavus, Pelican, Angoon, Kake, Petersburg, Wrangell, Skagway, and Ketchikan, as well as Haines, Skagway and Juneau. In the process of designing the next vessels in AMHS' fleet, it is important to keep all communities in mind, not just those in Lynn Canal.

MR. HAYFEE expressed similar concern about the open aft design of the proposed shuttle ferries to those cited by many others already. Lynn Canal experiences extreme weather conditions regularly in winter months, and subjecting an open aft ship to passengers in these conditions needs more public feedback and department scrutiny.

MR. HAYFEE said that in the last 30 years two ships, the M/S Estonia and the M/S Herald of Free Enterprise, sank in the North Sea due to malfunctioning clamshell bow doors. This is of great

concern to those who depend on safe ferry service in the winter months.

He said that unaccompanied vehicles also often depend on AMHS service and the proposed shuttle ferries will no longer allow unaccompanied vans, trailers, or trucks. That will seriously affect those who depend on ship freight up and down Lynn Canal, and the originally designed ACF was not the subject of any of the above safety, reliability or freight-related concerns.

MR. HAYFEE said if these shuttle ferries are intended to serve a hypothetical ferry terminal at the Katzehin River, as DOT&PF's Commissioner Kemp stated to the Juneau Chamber of Commerce, then the design and scope of these vessels are overkill. And if the vessels are intended to serve the full length of Lynn Canal and potentially other communities, the design and scope need to address the public's concern about size, open aft and bow doors.

[1:42:00 PM](#)

CHAIR EGAN recognized Representative Lynn and Juneau Mayor Sanford.

[1:42:36 PM](#)

DON ETHERIDGE, representing himself, Juneau, Alaska, said he is a licensed captain and had spent his entire life in Southeast Alaska running all sizes and shapes of boats and that he had concerns about the design of the new vessel. He also had spent 25 years working in the maintenance section for the AMHS and was familiar with the boats and their abilities. He was not so much concerned about the bow configuration, which had improved dramatically since the last couple of accidents (by installing additional bulkheads), but by using the open stern in Lynn Canal, because weather conditions many times during the winter will build up a tremendous amount of ice on the stern. Going straight on is not a problem, but in Southeast Alaska you never go straight on to the weather; spray hitting the side of the ship is what would bring it over the top even with the height of the walls. Keeping the aft section thawed out during loading and unloading would also be a problem with an open stern. He had done crabbing in Lynn Canal and seen dangerous ice buildup there.

[1:45:00 PM](#)

SANDY WILLIAMS, representing himself, Douglas, Alaska, said he was not a boat designer in any way and characterized this vessel as "design by committee," which is "what got us into trouble in the first place." He said the AMHS has finally recognized the

need for efficient operation without jeopardizing safety and service and the increasing gap between its operating costs and revenues cannot continue. Everything can't be done for everyone, like food service and room service and putting vehicles on without being able to get them off without some help at the other end. He said this ship would be reviewed extensively by the Coast Guard and agencies that understand design and he suggested allowing them to do their job.

1:47:18 PM

MALCOLM MENZIES, representing himself, Juneau, Alaska, said he was testifying as a passenger. Since his retirement he had taken the ferry to Juneau/Haines/Skagway at least five times a summer/fall for recreation in the Interior. His camper ran an average cost of \$.41 a mile to go on the Alaska Highway, but an average of \$1.46 a mile to go on the AMHS. He welcomed the department's position on reducing the AMHS's ferry costs and its new design but could understand the concern about the open deck. However, he couldn't imagine the department designing a ship without walls or some type of thing to keep the salt spray off of the deck. If this is a valid concern, he was sure the design would be modified. He did know from sailing on Lynn Canal that state rooms and fancy meals were not needed. "We just need to be able to get there." He said it takes two hours to get on the ferry and an hour to get off; straight on/straight off will help decrease the time it takes to get to either Haines or Skagway.

1:49:26 PM

NANCY RATNER, representing herself, Juneau, Alaska, testified that in the 1980s, while living at a remote cabin on Sullivan River on Lynn Canal with her husband she observed that Eldred Rock, about 20 miles south of Haines, was consistently the windiest location in the Inside waters as per the Coast Guard marine observation broadcasts. Also, the seas in Lynn Canal can change from flat to 12 foot breakers in less than an hour. Further, in a relatively warm winter, the weather often turns to snow and freezing conditions north of Endicott River. "Anyone who has spent any time in Lynn Canal knows that the governor's latest proposed ferry design is inappropriate for Lynn Canal conditions." Ironically, right after the governor scrapped the 350 foot ferry, the M/V LeConte sailing was canceled due to storm force winds, 11 foot seas and freezing spray in Lynn Canal, she said.

In addition to being an inappropriate design for Lynn Canal weather conditions, the proposed day ferries are too limited in range and usefulness. In the fall, winter and spring when the

fleet of ferries is undergoing yearly maintenance, the proposed day boat ferries would be unable to fill in the scheduling gaps or to accommodate changes of scheduling due to mechanical problems.

MS. RATNER expressed concern that trailers and vans unaccompanied by a tractor and a driver will no longer be allowed on the proposed ferry and DOTPF has not addressed how the current freight traffic on the ferries will be accommodated.

She said the public spoke loud and clear during the planning process that the 350 foot ACF would best serve the needs of the community and better than smaller shuttle ferries. It feels like an insult to the public process to change plans now. She also felt it was a waste of money to build two ferries with limited usefulness. A ferry should be built that could be used in all communities. The only reasonable and safe use for this style ferry in Lynn Canal is as a shuttle if the Juneau access road were built, but to build these ferries now on the hope and the prayer that Juneau will have a road someday is a waste of limited resources.

MS. RATNER said while it would be nice to have the ferry built in Ketchikan, the priority should be to design and build one that is safe and can serve all Southeast communities as needed. In comparing the costs of the 300 foot ferry versus the smaller day ferries, the additional cost of modifying existing ferry terminals needs to be included as do the additional planning costs.

She also suspected that the current estimate would increase as design details get worked out, and she doubted that the full cost of building two limited-use ferries would be much less than building one 300 foot ACF if the additional costs are added. Neither the Haines nor Skagway ferry terminals could accommodate this style of ferry. And since the new ferry design is best used as a shuttle ferry, the \$460 million cost for building the road out of Juneau should be considered as part of the cost. To help with the additional revenue needed to build the 300 foot ferry, she suggested using the \$10 million that the Governor proposed for the Juneau access improvement project (the road out of Juneau).

MS. RATNER said she thought the Alaska class ferry design was best, because it is more versatile and can be used in all Southeast communities when other ferries are offline due to maintenance or unforeseen circumstances. The governor's proposal

is inappropriate for the extreme weather conditions of Lynn Canal; its use would be limited and it is a more expensive option when all the planning and infrastructure costs of operating shuttle ferries in Lynn Canal are considered.

1:54:59 PM

BILL HOPKINS, representing himself, said he was a retired AMHS ferry Master since 2006, last working on the Kennecott for eight years. He said the clam shell bow doors, open car deck aft, reduced cargo carrying capacity, no unaccompanied vehicles allowed, vending machines, and an unmanned engine room were all sub-standard features in the new ferry design.

Frozen sprinkler and fresh water systems could be expected with an open car deck, because wind vortices over a superstructure allow freezing spray to land just about anywhere on a ship. Having no heat for pets and livestock would also was a problem he foresaw.

As far as an unmanned engine room goes, Mr. Hopkins said once he had oil and fuel lines rupture under pressure that sprayed flammable mist onto hot engine manifolds. Without someone down there to immediately take care of a problem, there would have been a fire. He had experienced engine problems and predicted fires would result. It also happened on the large cruise ship Carnival Triumph. He said this is not Puget Sound, and designers and planners have a difficulty with that fact. He said the legislature needed to review the roll on/roll off accident on the Harold of Free Enterprise on March 5, 1987 in the English Channel when 193 crew and passengers were lost, followed by the ferry Estonia in the Baltic Sea on September 28, 1994 when 852 passengers and crew were lost, for some perspective.

In August 2003, the AMHS sold the M/V Bartlett on E-Bay and one of the reasons cited was impending federal regulations for its visor bow that opened vertically rather than horizontally, like clam shell doors. He felt the DOTPF had done everything except the right thing and have spent millions of dollars on high speed ferries and their operations, but those are limited to seas of seven feet or less. While improvements have probably been made, things happen in rough seas. Now AMHS is about to spend millions on shuttle ferries that can only function in Lynn Canal, and that is only 75 miles of the 3,700 mile Alaska Marine Highway System.

None of this advances the replacement of the Malaspina, the Matanuska or the Taku, he said. The department should have been

replacing the aging mainliners all along, especially the ocean-going Tustumena, which was very disappointing. The Alaska Marine Highway needs real ships with through-route schedules like Prince Rupert to Skagway, and if allowed to do its job, it would be very difficult to argue for a half billion dollar highway up Lynn Canal. This [new plan] does not live up to the standards and expectations of the Alaska Marine Highway founders, which is regrettable.

2:01:16 PM

STAN SELMAR, Mayor, Skagway, Alaska, said after hearing about these accidents at sea it is "pretty rewarding" that we are in our 50th year and have had no fatal accident, probably due to the great people who are operating our vessels in all kinds of weather. He had three issues with the AMHS; first was building the Skagway ferry terminal perpendicular to the wind, which eventually got changed; second was in 1975 when his mother died in Juneau and he had to buy a ticket for her to come back to Skagway in a hearse; and third, he was concerned about using the public process to get the 350 foot ACF and then having that public input turned into the day boat concept.

He said he had not heard from DOTPF as to how they could put a roof over the open aft area or other solutions, but he had seen that even the DOT uses unaccompanied vehicles to help with the cost of moving things from port to port in Southeast Alaska. That won't change with whatever kind of ferry we have. We have this wonderful highway system on the water that needs to be maintained, and the current reduced size day boat isn't the answer, especially not this version. He said, "Let's get another independent engineer to tell us how to design what they've got so far and put that out for consideration." He also wanted the Marine Highway Service in the DOT&PF to be returned to the Alaska Marine Highway Service.

2:05:08 PM

STEPHANIE SCOTT, Mayor, Haines Borough, Haines, Alaska, read prepared testimony as follows:

Thank you Chairman Egan, Chairwoman Wilson, Senators, Representatives. My name is Stephanie. I live in Haines. And I do have the honor to be the mayor of the Haines Borough. I have traveled the Alaska Marine Highway for over 40 years. I have a strong sense of the importance of AMHS to intra and interstate commerce.

We have a design for an Alaska Class Ferry that has been vetted by years of public and legislative process but it was scuttled in December and replaced three months later with the Day Boat Alaska Class Ferry Concept Design produced by Coastwise Corporation. By the end of the month, DOT/PF intends to take this radically new concept to a higher design level. I think this is a grave mistake. Let me take a few minutes to point out flaws in the concept and then I will make two suggestions. The concept report suffers from:

- Brevity and lack of clarity regarding the process for public response to the draft design concept;
- Lack of evidence for the reliability and safety of bow clam shell doors in the tough seas of the Lynn Canal; • lack of discussion of the impact of icing and snow on vehicles on the open aft deck and cost of mitigating those
- The flawed presumption of reduced ridership or vehicle capacity requirements in the inclement months.
- Lack of discussion of the impact of the very strong currents at the Haines terminal on the plan to hold the vessel at the ramp for loading and unloading with propulsion only;
- A discrepancy in the report regarding the passenger capacity of the vessels;
- Failure to explain why there are many fewer seats provided than the number of passengers the vessel is certified to accommodate;
- Failure to explore the implication of the statement that the car deck should be designed to accommodate passengers while the vessel is underway;
- Failure to explore the economic impact of the proposed standard of "no unaccompanied vessels" on freight to Haines;
- The economic impact on electrical rates in Haines if a vessel home ported here is required to tie into shore power;

- The improbability of the positive economics of running a ferry back and forth between Haines and Skagway more than once a day; especially in light of this year's traffic patterns that show vessels sailing south from Haines to be more frequently fully booked compared to vessels sailing north to Skagway;
- The institutionalization of inconvenience and delay to Skagway southbound passengers as well as Juneau passengers northbound to Skagway by the plan to require them to disembark in Haines and re-embark on a different vessel to sail south or north;
- The dependency of the new vessel on new or modified ferry terminals; it seems that the ground breaking for the \$20 million terminal for Haines must coincide with the January 2014 keel laying - and this in a time of ever shrinking transportation dollars for Alaska. If the building and boat are not exquisitely synchronized, what happens to this vessel's service schedule since it is so very specifically designed for the upper Lynn Canal?

[2:09:12 PM](#)

MS. SCOTT continued:

[I suggest that] the planners become as familiar with the characteristics of the upper Lynn Canal inside passage as they have demonstrated that they are with the Haines Highway; that DOT/PF and Coastwise Corporation bring their concept to Haines and other communities and present it to us. Does this sound like a familiar activity? It should. It is. It's been done before for the Alaska Class Ferry design, now scuttled. My second suggestion is more important and more fundamental with respect to the situation we now find ourselves in. I suggest that we return to the hard won Alaska Class Ferry design and proudly acknowledge that the original concept did morph, the mission did creep. After 4 years of public process and two years of legislative review, it morphed and crept to an improved design and mission. The dangerous bow doors were eliminated, the 12-hour rule was abandoned, crew quarters added - and the idea of building a Haines/Juneau shuttle replaced with the broader idea of replacing the 50-year old Malaspina, lifting the

entire system to an improved standard of service and reliability; this, in addition and never instead of, improving service on the ever so lucrative run from points south/north to the Haines and Klondike Highways. The mission crept and the design morphed into a better mission, a better design.

I submit that the thing to do is to go back to the ACF design, for which we have already spent \$3 million, and attempt to publically "tweak" it, and if we must, abandon the commitment to building in state, accept Federal subsidies, and build the boat. The Alaska Marine Highway is, after all, an essential link between Alaska and the lower 48. It is traveled by the entire nation, not just those of us who live here. Though not a road, treat the Inside Passage as the interstate highway that it is. If, in order to achieve this change, you have to separate the Alaska Marine Highway from DOT/PF, then consider doing so. Thank you.

[2:11:34 PM](#)

ROB GOLDBERG, representing himself, Haines, Alaska, stated he was chair of the Haines Borough Planning Commission. He said he had provided written comments to the committee, but also had some remarks.

[2:12:42 PM](#)

MR. GOLDBERG said he had reservations about the day boat design, but today he wanted to focus more on the operations use. He said the proposal does not increase capacity over the existing use of the Malaspina as a day boat. Using an entire ship for a Haines/Skagway run was very inefficient, because that segment does not have enough traffic to support an entire ship. Capacity could be doubled on the Juneau to Haines segment, where it is needed, in this way: run one ship in a Haines/Juneau/Haines loop (suggested in the proposal) within a 12-hour crew day; run the other ship in a Juneau/Haines/Skagway/Haines/Juneau loop as is done now. However, he realized that with crew time on either end of the voyage this loop cannot be done in a 12-hour crew day. It currently takes 14 hours running time or a 15-hour crew day, so he suggested putting on a crew of 12 instead of 9 (in the proposal); then every crew member would work an 11-hour day and have four hours of break time. The addition of three crew members would allow the passenger and vehicle capacity to be doubled between Juneau and Haines. This schedule would also

allow enough time to load the AML vans, as movement of these vans is critical to the whole region.

MR. GOLDBERG said he had also had concerns about the open car deck; not only freezing spray, but snow, will have to be cleared before the cars can move. Putting a roof over this area seems simple enough to do. He was also concerned about the ability of the clam shell bow doors to withstand the rough seas in Lynn Canal and to keep from freezing shut. He agreed that in reading the proposal, it seemed like the design is sub-standard and it doesn't make sense to scrimp on design and crew if we end up with ships that don't work and add inefficiencies to the system.

[2:15:48 PM](#)

DANNY GONCE, representing himself, Haines, Alaska, said he worked for Alaska Power and Telephone and said that additional power would be needed on the upper Lynn Canal grid for over-nighting a ferry in Haines. While it is a little amount of power, it would be good for them to have additional capacity on line in the form of a hydroproject.

He expressed concern about the open aft and the clam shell doors, but applauded the AMHS for looking at ways to make the ferry more efficient, both in increasing capacity and reducing costs if it can be made to work as designed.

He said the environmental conditions in the standard mission requirements have a lot of objectives; they're measurable and delineated. "Sea keeping" in the next section, uses words like anticipated and passenger comfort and it would be hard to come up with firm numbers for that. The same section talks about limiting the analysis to bow and stern sea keeping trials, and if this boat was to be used for cross canal runs at Burner's Bay to William Henry or from Katzehin to Haines there would be considerable cross-weather passage. That would need to be considered as well.

[2:18:45 PM](#)

CHAIR EGAN thanked him for his remarks.

ROBERT VENABLES, Marine Transportation Advisory Board (MTAB), Juneau, Alaska, reported in that he was listening to the discussion of Alaska class ferry (ACF).

[2:20:06 PM](#)

CHAIR EGAN invited Mr. Yost to come forward again for one more question.

2:20:27 PM

REPRESENTATIVE GATTIS asked what the reasoning was behind not letting unaccompanied freight and vehicles on.

2:21:00 PM

MR. YOST answered that the distance between Juneau and Haines is very close to what can be accomplished in a 12-hour work day. One of the reasons for "roll on/roll off/drive through" is to load and unload as quickly as possible. If you allow unaccompanied vans, they have to be loaded on; then the tractor disconnects from the trailer and drives off. At the other end, after the passenger vehicles have departed, once again tractors have to be backed on and vans pulled off. The letter addressed to the joint committees entails how many unaccompanied vans are currently being transported and the different ways that could be addressed.

2:21:59 PM

REPRESENTATIVE GATTIS said she read the letter, but was unsure of what a swing tractor was and asked if you can have unaccompanied personal vehicles where you load it on one end and your husband picks it up at the other end.

MR. YOST said that might be possible, but hadn't been addressed yet.

2:22:41 PM

REPRESENTATIVE GATTIS said she heard discussion about vending machines and lack of food and asked if people would bring coolers, and if water and a microwave would be available.

MR. YOST answered yes; the vending machines would include more than just snack food, so it could be heated up in a microwave. The road map design has a dining area because they assumed people would bring their own food. The level of vending machines had not been decided yet, and the idea was to not have crew that are dedicated to serving meals.

2:23:20 PM

REPRESENTATIVE GATTIS confirmed that food could be brought on.

MR. YOST explained the idea of a swing engine is that the freight company would have a tractor that isn't designed for going up the highway from Haines to Anchorage, but is sort of like a yard engine. In the case of transporting a van north, a tractor would pull the van onto the vessel, stay on the vessel

and pull it off when it gets to Haines, and then the tractor is "swung out." In other words, the tractor that normally would have been picking up that van and hauling it to Anchorage would couple up to the tractor and takes it. The swing tractor basically just makes the circuit that the ferry makes. He said that is just one of the possibilities that he had discussed with MTAB.

2:24:34 PM

REPRESENTATIVE GATTIS said she wasn't sure about the term "swinging" in this context.

MR. YOST explained that the term comes from swinging it into play and out of play rather than have it stay with the tractor and heading up the highway to Anchorage or whatever the destination is.

2:25:02 PM

REPRESENTATIVE GATTIS asked if it was hooked up to a trailer and pulled it off and comes back on with a different trailer and goes the other way.

MR. YOST said that was correct. Sometimes it would come back unattached to a trailer, because the vehicle numbers differ going north and south.

2:25:34 PM

CHAIR EGAN asked if this is like Tok and Horizon is doing when bringing vans off of big ships in Anchorage.

MR. YOST said that would be up to the freight company and it would probably be a street legal tractor, because they would be hauling from their sort yard.

CHAIR EGAN said the MHS doesn't care about that; they just want the trailer off the ship.

MR. YOST said that was correct. The idea is that when the bow door opens that all the vehicles can immediately be driven off.

2:26:18 PM

CHAIR P. WILSON asked him to explain that a little bit about union contracts and the 12-hour shifts.

MR. YOST explained that Coast Guard regulation dictates how many hours a person on a vessel can work without rest.

[2:26:52 PM](#)

CHAIR P. WILSON asked if a four-hour rest in between would be okay.

MR. YOST said the problem there with the union contract is telling a person he working for 12 hours, but he's captured for 16. No union contracts allow that; there's either 12-hour work or its' a 24-hour vessel. He asked Captain Falvey to confirm that.

[2:27:15 PM](#)

CAPTAIN JOHN FALVEY, General Manager, Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS), Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF), Juneau, Alaska, said the 12-hour day is a Coast Guard regulation. Technically the crew needs to have 10 hours of rest every night. It's also a question of where the resting would happen since the ships don't have staterooms.

[2:28:16 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE LYNN said he was more concerned about the safety of the ships than getting on and off a ferry quickly.

MR. YOST responded that there are two sets of issues; one category is safety and the other is convenience. And service that has been traditionally provided in the past but may no longer be available.

With respect to safety, he explained that three different marine, engineering and architect firms are involved in this project and the department had received recommendations in the form of a design concept report from Coastwise Corporation whose principal marine architect grew up in Juneau and worked for the MHS for several years before forming his own company. That recommendation will go to Elliott Bay Design Group that has designed ferries for the Pacific Northwest, Alaska, Texas, and the East Coast. The department is also preparing a very detailed wind and wave analysis of all Lynn Canal, rather than just recorded winds at Eldred Rock, using a very respected marine group.

MR. YOST said aside from AMHS expertise, the ship has to be permitted by the USCG and has to be certified by a classification society, a worldwide expert in the operation of that type of vessel. In addition, there are regulations for bow doors and guidelines to follow in order to have safe ones. Most of the other issues have to do with the type of service they will be providing. The uncovered aft roof is not a safety issue

so much as how much it would cost and what other service would have to be dropped in order to provide it.

[2:30:53 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE LYNN said he typically pays more attention to the practical experience of people who captain these ships than people in an office with all their degrees designing things.

CAPTAIN FALVEY said he understood.

[2:31:35 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ISAACSON asked if there was adequate staff to tend to emergencies since the boiler room is unmanned.

CAPTAIN FALVEY related that three AMHS vessels - the two fast ferries and the Lituya - already have unmanned engine rooms; that means there is a high degree of automation and electronic warning indicators, and the Coast Guard will always certify and approve the ships via their certificates of inspection, with emergencies, crowd control and fires in mind. That would fall under the category of the total crew required. Larger merchant ships and fast ferries, the newer ships, are often unmanned; some are 700-800 feet long with only one person in the control room.

[2:33:34 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ISAACSON asked how many numbers of hours of operation per incident the AMHS has and if anything had put us on the brink of destroying the safety record that had been built up over the years.

CAPTAIN FALVEY said he did not think so; engineers are on board, but they tend to be on the bridge with the operating crew watching the instrumentation. They have a very good safety record.

[2:34:28 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ISAACSON said during a period of cost cutting he hoped proven industry standards were being used and that they were erring on the side of safety.

CAPTAIN FALVEY agreed completely, adding that he had 27 years at sea with a spotless safety record.

[2:35:33 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS asked whether the DOT/PF had consulted its captains and masters in producing this design concept.

CAPTAIN FALVEY answered no, but that is not to say they won't in the future. This is a road map vessel and a naval architect firm is in the process of designing it. They would be getting input from captains.

[2:36:27 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS asked why they hadn't consulted the captains yet.

CAPTAIN FALVEY replied that they hadn't got to that point yet.

[2:36:42 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS related that a marine engineer with the ferry system earlier said something about a heated car deck.

CAPTAIN FALVEY said he may have misspoken; he was referring to a heated car deck space not the heating of the deck, itself.

[2:37:37 PM](#)

CHAIR P. WILSON asked what he meant by a "road map vessel."

CAPTAIN FALVEY explained that it means a "concept vessel," that is used as a "go forward" to design what they will build.

CHAIR P. WILSON asked if they will hold public hearings and receive input once the blueprint is finished.

CAPTAIN FALVEY answered yes. He added that the AMHS will take input, meet with masters and crew, and the vessel may end up looking very different.

[2:39:28 PM](#)

CHAIR EGAN said since "D-day" had been moved back a bit, he thought affected communities would like the Department of Transportation & Public Facilities to make presentations to them before a final decision was made. "It's our highway," he said.

CAPTAIN FALVEY said he will take that under advisement.

[2:40:13 PM](#)

MR. YOST said the next step is to provide a design study report, which will have more analysis of controversial items.

[2:40:44 PM](#)

CHAIR EGAN thanked them for their testimony today and apologized for putting them on the hot spot.

[2:40:56 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS said one underlying concern he had was that the day boat concept is fundamentally premised on the 12-hour work day as required by Coast Guard regulations, and right now the run time for the Juneau/Haines schedule is 11 hours and 44 minutes. What if it takes extra minutes to get rid of accumulated snow and ice after six hours in Lynn Canal, or the propulsion mooring system doesn't work out quite as well as anticipated or there is some issue with the bow doors - unforeseen factors - and it's not possible to regularly operate it on that route in under 12 hours?

MR. YOST replied that there are several places in the schedule right now that have allowances for that. For instance, the turnaround time in Haines is listed as one hour and existing captains have said that could be shorter. Second, the schedule was built to demonstrate that it could be done at 15.5 knots, but that is not top speed of the vessel. You have to show the Coast Guard that generally you can keep the schedule. After 12 hours is when the rest rule comes into play, and that has already happened with both the fast ferries.

CAPTAIN FALVEY added that technically the crew must have 70 hours of rest in a 7-day period (10 hours a night) and that starts from the time the crew walks up the gangway until it walks down the gangway. He said he believed this vessel will run faster than 15.5 knots and terminal activity could be adjusted to utilize night crews to test gear on the boat and get things ready to sail before the operational crew shows up. Options exist to operate the vessel in 12 hours.

[2:44:29 PM](#)

CHAIR P. WILSON said she hoped the studies for fuel efficiency would be put to use in figuring out the most economic speed to run the ferries.

CAPTAIN FALVEY agreed and said they are installing (expensive) power management systems on the ships that save fuel. It tends to be more useful on the large mainliners that are running longer routes when the ship has more time and distance to run. They are not on the fast ferries or the Lituya, because it doesn't really pay on the shorter routes. On the shorter run

with the day boat and state of the art engines, the fuel consumption is very optimal to begin with.

2:46:14 PM

REPRESENTATIVE GATTIS expressed concern after hearing public testimony about how the ferry design morphed and then got pulled back. She got the feeling that the department was not taking enough public comment. She was really concerned that this time the new design wouldn't get as much public input and thought listening to the guys who had been running the boats for the last 40 years was imperative. She understood the vending machines and microwaves, but she was talking about folks that know the weather, the sea spray and the route.

CAPTAIN FALVEY said those were good points and they would talk with them.

2:48:39 PM

REPRESENTATIVE KREISS-TOMKINS agreed that substantial institutional knowledge could and should be used despite the aggressive timeline.

MR.YOST answered that he would take time to get feedback, but the sense of urgency is due to replacing the M/V Malaspina while also being under pressure to cut back on operating costs. There is no deadline, but they were trying to do things as quickly as possible.

2:51:31 PM

KATHLEEN MENKE, representing herself, Haines, Alaska, said she had ridden the ferries for 30 years. She related how she took a trip from Juneau to Haines along with six wrestling teams at the end of January on the M/V Taku, a 452 foot ferry. Teams often travel via the ferries, and she urged Representative Wilson to speak to the coach of the team in Wrangell about that experience. They had 70 knot winds, 14 foot waves and got to Haines two hours late. The trip ended up taking over six hours and was not pleasant even though the M/V Taku is big and sturdy.

MS. MENKE said she couldn't imagine how the new ferry design would suffice to get children, students, elders, and people who need health care safely to and from Southeast communities. She related how the M/V LeConte had been canceled several times this winter and stated that a 12-hour turnaround was just not realistic in windy weather.

Further, she said, they were being told this ferry wouldn't work anywhere else but Lynn Canal, but we are telling them it will not work in Lynn Canal either. What happened to the 350 foot mid-size Alaska Class Ferry? They were hoping for it and now it appears to be a budget issue. This is going down the wrong track. Fast ferries are fuel guzzlers, and the state can't afford another failed experiment. She concluded that the best course of action for the safety, health, and commerce of their communities is to either take the federal money and put the original plan out to bid again outside of Alaska, or build the ferry in Alaska and budget for it.

CHAIR EGAN thanked everyone for their testimony.

[2:56:08 PM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committees, adjourned the House and Senate Transportation Standing Committees at 2:56 p.m.