

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE TRANSPORTATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

March 27, 2025

2:05 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Ashley Carrick, Co-Chair
Representative Ted Eischeid, Co-Chair
Representative Genevieve Mina
Representative Louise Stutes
Representative Kevin McCabe
Representative Elexie Moore

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Cathy Tilton

OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT

Representative Ky Holland

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 47(RES)

"An Act relating to Chugach State Park; and providing for an effective date."

- MOVED CSSB 47(RES) OUT OF COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL NO. 26

"An Act relating to the duties of the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities; and relating to a statewide public and community transit plan."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 47

SHORT TITLE: CHUGACH STATE PARK EASEMENTS

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) GIESSEL

01/22/25	(S)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/17/25
01/22/25	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/22/25	(S)	TRA, RES
02/04/25	(S)	TRA AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205

02/04/25 (S) Heard & Held
 02/04/25 (S) MINUTE(TRA)
 02/11/25 (S) TRA AT 1:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
 02/11/25 (S) Moved SB 47 Out of Committee
 02/11/25 (S) MINUTE(TRA)
 02/14/25 (S) TRA RPT 2DP 1DNP 1NR
 02/14/25 (S) DP: BJORKMAN, KIEHL
 02/14/25 (S) DNP: SHOWER
 02/14/25 (S) NR: TOBIN
 02/17/25 (S) RES AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
 02/17/25 (S) Heard & Held
 02/17/25 (S) MINUTE(RES)
 02/26/25 (S) RES AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
 02/26/25 (S) Moved CSSB 47(RES) Out of Committee
 02/26/25 (S) MINUTE(RES)
 02/28/25 (S) RES RPT CS 6DP 1NR SAME TITLE
 02/28/25 (S) DP: GIESSEL, HUGHES, DUNBAR, CLAMAN,
 MYERS, WIELECHOWSKI
 02/28/25 (S) NR: KAWASAKI
 03/10/25 (S) TRANSMITTED TO (H)
 03/10/25 (S) VERSION: CSSB 47(RES)
 03/11/25 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
 03/11/25 (H) TRA, RES
 03/20/25 (H) TRA AT 1:00 PM BARNES 124
 03/20/25 (H) Heard & Held
 03/20/25 (H) MINUTE(TRA)
 03/25/25 (H) TRA AT 1:30 PM BARNES 124
 03/25/25 (H) Heard & Held
 03/25/25 (H) MINUTE(TRA)
 03/27/25 (H) TRA AT 1:00 PM BARNES 124

BILL: HB 26

SHORT TITLE: STATEWIDE PUBLIC & COMMUNITY TRANSIT PLAN
 SPONSOR(S): REPRESENTATIVE(S) MINA

01/22/25 (H) PREFILE RELEASED 1/10/25
 01/22/25 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
 01/22/25 (H) CRA, TRA
 02/27/25 (H) CRA AT 8:00 AM BARNES 124
 02/27/25 (H) Heard & Held
 02/27/25 (H) MINUTE(CRA)
 03/18/25 (H) CRA AT 8:00 AM BARNES 124
 03/18/25 (H) Heard & Held
 03/18/25 (H) MINUTE(CRA)
 03/20/25 (H) CRA AT 8:00 AM BARNES 124
 03/20/25 (H) Moved CSHB 26(CRA) Out of Committee
 03/20/25 (H) MINUTE(CRA)

03/21/25 (H) CRA RPT CS(CRA) 4DP 1DNP 1AM
03/21/25 (H) DP: HOLLAND, HALL, HIMSCHOOT, MEARS
03/21/25 (H) DNP: PRAX
03/21/25 (H) AM: RUFFRIDGE
03/27/25 (H) TRA AT 1:00 PM BARNES 124

WITNESS REGISTER

REMINGTON PURNELL, Staff
Representative Genevieve Mina
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: On behalf of Representative Mina, prime sponsor, gave the sectional analysis for CSHB 26(CRA).

PATRICK REINHART, Executive Director
Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education
Department of Health
Anchor Point, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided invited testimony and answered questions on CSHB 26(CRA).

ANDY MILLS, Legislative Liaison, Special Assistant to the
Commissioner
Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Answered questions on CSHB 26(CRA).

ACTION NARRATIVE

[2:05:11 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR ASHLEY CARRICK called the House Transportation Standing Committee meeting to order at 2:05 p.m. Representatives Moore, Mina, Stutes, Eischeid, and Carrick were present at the call to order. Representative McCabe arrived as the meeting was in progress.

SB 47-CHUGACH STATE PARK EASEMENTS

[2:05:45 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR CARRICK announced that the first order of business would be CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 47(RES) "An Act relating to Chugach State Park; and providing for an effective date."

[2:06:29 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR EISCHEID moved to report CSSB 47(RES), Version 34-LS0179\G, Bullard, 2/26/25, out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes. There being no objection, CSSB 47(RES) was reported out of the House Transportation Standing Committee.

[2:07:02 PM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 2:07 p.m. to 2:10 p.m.

HB 26-STATEWIDE PUBLIC & COMMUNITY TRANSIT PLAN

[2:10:35 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR CARRICK announced that the final order of business would be HOUSE BILL NO. 26, "An Act relating to the duties of the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities; and relating to a statewide public and community transit plan." [Before the committee was CSHB 26(CRA).]

[2:11:07 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MINA introduced the committee substitute (CS) for HB 26(CRA) and paraphrased the sponsor statement [copy included in the committee packet], which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) stewards the state's transportation system as the lead body in developing the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). CSHB 26 aims to support and secure accessible transportation options for all Alaskans by improving DOT&PF's public engagement process and broadening the study of transportation options across the state.

First, CSHB 26 seeks to improve DOT&PF's public engagement process in statewide transportation planning. Sufficient collaboration with local and regional entities is federally required to secure funding for transportation and infrastructure projects. CSHB 26 codifies this federal requirement by specifying that DOT&PF must coordinate with public, Tribal, and community transit programs in their development of Alaska's comprehensive, long-range, intermodal transportation plan (e.g., STIP). In this

case, these transit programs refer to programs such as Nome's Tribal Transit Program, Juneau's Capital Transit, Tok's Interior Alaska Bus Line, and Anchorage's People Mover.

Second, CSHB 26 expands DOT&PF's responsibility to study alternative transportation options by including rural and remote areas. DOT&PF is statutorily responsible for studying alternative means of transportation in Alaska, but they are currently only required to study urban areas. Alternative transportation methods, such as public transportation, are essential for those without a car and who cannot drive. According to a 2022 DOT&PF report on The Economic Value of Public Transit in Alaska, Alaskan communities benefit from transit due to increased business sales, reduction of road congestion, less air pollution, and better travel times.

Public transit is often the only transportation option for Alaskans with disabilities, low-income Alaskans, youth, and the elderly. Securing federal funding and improving access to public and community transit is essential to connect all Alaskans to their jobs and communities. HB 26 improves the annual study, reporting, and development of Alaska's multimodal transportation network.

[2:12:58 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MINA commended DOT&PF on being more intentionally multimodal and addressing the bigger picture; however, she advised the committee that multimodal transportation efforts are not currently codified in the state. She continued that, if codified, it would ensure Alaskans have access to public transit options in the future. She argued that those Alaskans most impacted by these efforts of the department should have a "seat at the table." She warned that if there is not active engagement with stakeholders, federal funding could be at risk. She summarized that public transportation is often the only option available to residents of the state, especially individuals with disabilities, low-income individuals, youth, and the elderly. She concluded that securing federal funding for state transportation is imperative for all Alaskans.

[2:15:12 PM](#)

REMINGTON PURNELL, Staff, Representative Genevieve Mina, Alaska State Legislature, gave the sectional analysis for CSHB 26(CRA) [copy included in the committee packet], which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

Section 1. AS. 44.42.020(a):

Amends subsections (3) and (4) in the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities' planning duties to "study alternative means of improving transportation" and "develop a comprehensive, long-range, intermodal transportation plan for the state" by including public, tribal, and community transit programs.

Amends subsection (5) to the Department's duty to study alternative modes of transportation by adding rural and remote areas to its scope, and requiring coordination with local governments and tribal entities in this process.

Adds subsection (17) which creates a new duty for the Department to develop a statewide public and community transit plan in coordination with local, community, and tribal entities.

MS. PURNELL explained the change incorporated in CSHB 26(CRA). She stated that in Section 1 of the proposed legislation "ferry operators" were added to the list of entities that the department would need to cooperate with while developing a statewide public and community transit plan.

[2:16:49 PM](#)

PATRICK REINHART, Executive Director, Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education, Department of Health, provided invited testimony on CSHB 26(CRA). He shared that he is a founding member of the Alaska Mobility Coalition. He expressed support for the proposed legislation, as it would ensure the transportation needs for those in the state who do not drive. He continued that the lives of people with disabilities who cannot drive would be improved. He argued that not having this in statute defers the department's ability to support public transportation. He described the public transportation programs in the state as "a patchwork;" none is exactly alike or connected, with some areas having no programs

at all. He suggested that the proposed legislation would help direct the available funding into a statewide plan.

[2:21:23 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR EISCHEID asked about the alternative transportation options in rural Alaska.

REPRESENTATIVE MINA responded that, per the current statute, the department only studies alternative modes of transportation options in urban areas. She deferred the question to DOT&PF.

[2:22:32 PM](#)

ANDY MILLS, Legislative Liaison, Special Assistant to the Commissioner, Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, responded that the use of the word "urban" [in the statute] does not limit the department from addressing transportation issues in rural areas. He further clarified that the term "alternative" includes a wide swath of possibilities, including companies, such as Uber. It would also include micro transportation, such as electric public-use scooters. He noted that all-encompassing language is used [in the statutes] because future trends are unknown.

[2:23:54 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE questioned the funding and its equal distribution across the state.

REPRESENTATIVE MINA responded that public transportation is funded with both state and federal dollars. She expressed uncertainty concerning private funding. She stated that the mental health budget supplies transportation funding in Anchorage for the elderly and those with disabilities. She deferred to Mr. Mills for specific funding details. Concerning transportation equity in the state, she emphasized that the only cities in Alaska with public transit are Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau. She stated that the proposed bill would require DOT&PF to develop plans expanding to other areas of the state. Concerning creating plans across the state, she referenced the proposed legislation, [Section 1, paragraph] 17, line 7 to line 9.

[2:28:24 PM](#)

MR. MILLS, concerning the funding for the proposed legislation, expressed the understanding that, under Title 49 [of the Code of Federal Regulations], the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has funded the state a total of \$9.2 million, and this was dispersed to local operators and nonprofits. He noted that transportation advocates are looking for additional funding because of the "patchwork" of programs in a state the size of Alaska. In discussing alternative methods of transportation between hub sites, he mentioned that there has been a suggestion for a light rail between Anchorage and the Matanuska-Susitna (Mat-Su) Valley; however, he opined that would be a significant undertaking.

[2:30:07 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE questioned the addition of a ferry system for Western Alaska and the Yukon River. He expressed the opinion that the Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) already "wastes a ton of money" because of inefficiencies, and there are others in the state who need the same type of service. He reiterated the question concerning the equal distribution of funds across the state.

[2:31:02 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MINA expressed disagreement with the idea that AMHS is a waste, as it is an investment into transportation for Alaskans who live in coastal areas. She argued that funding the ferry system should be considered the same as investing public money in the highway system. She acknowledged the need for improved public transportation in remote villages, stating that the proposed legislation would direct the department to be responsive to this. She discussed the feasibility of a light rail system, pointing out that funding should be directed to the communities who are expressing need; otherwise, the department would "get ahead of itself" by studying bigger options the public has not necessarily requested. Concerning how the proposed legislation would affect the ferry system, she stated that the ferry system is covered under a different statute. She discussed including ferry operators in the proposed legislation and deferred to Mr. Mills.

[2:33:22 PM](#)

MR. MILLS noted that when addressing more funding for a cohesive transportation system in the state, this would be a federal, service reauthorization conversation. He stated that the U.S.

Congress will be discussing this within the next year and a half because the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) will be expiring. He continued that for additional FTA funding to expand transportation services, this would need to be a conversation on the federal level.

MR. MILLS stated that AMHS benefits from federal funding because of its special designation as a highway. He clarified that the department operates AMHS, whereas transit grants are provided to local operators, and this is a significant difference. He continued that under FTA, Title 23 and Title 49, requirements for public transportation planning already exists; therefore, the federal money comes with requirements concerning multimodal connections and consultations with local governments and Tribes. He explained that much of the proposed legislation is already being driven by federal requirements.

[2:35:53 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE stated that his first impression of the proposed legislation was that it only concerned Anchorage. He expressed the opinion that all Alaskans should benefit from the state's money.

[2:37:01 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR EISCHEID expressed agreement with the planning requirement of the proposed bill, explaining that it would create "a gateway for ideas." He expounded on the importance of public engagement in formulating transportation plans.

[2:39:42 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR CARRICK expressed appreciation for the idea of having ferry service on the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers. She questioned how "big picture" ideas are discussed by the department.

[2:40:33 PM](#)

MR. MILLS responded with an explanation of the M-11 route, which would incorporate coastal and river ports across parts of southwestern and northern Alaska. He stated that this passage was created so these communities could receive grant funding from the Port Infrastructure Development Program. He advised the committee that the designation for these parts of the state created the ability to build infrastructure there; however, the

department is more concerned with stabilizing AMHS and the communities it currently serves.

CO-CHAIR CARRICK commented that Southeast Alaska communities have both marine and air transport, while Western and Interior Alaska do not. She questioned whether this would be within the scope of the proposed legislation.

MR. MILLS responded that AMHS statutes are different, with long-term, comprehensive, specific plans, and this would be where any expansion of AMHS would exist.

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REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE pointed out that there had been a ferry plan between Anchorage and Port Mackenzie, arguing that Anchorage failed to build a terminal. He suggested that millions of dollars were "waisted" from this project. He noted that Port Mackenzie has a federal highway terminal designation. He commented that in the past barges were used, but cargo airplanes have been the demise of river transport.

[2:45:26 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR CARRICK expressed the understanding that the language in Section 1, [paragraphs] 3 and 4, in the proposed legislation, would codify existing federal consultation language.

REPRESENTATIVE MINA responded that language in [paragraph] 17 on page 3, as well as [paragraph] 5 on page 2 of the proposed legislation would codify the federal language about engagement with local governments and community stakeholders. In response to a follow-up question, she expressed agreement that part of the language in the proposed bill was created to reflect federal requirements. She deferred to Mr. Mills.

[2:46:59 PM](#)

MR. MILLS offered to provide citations from FTA's Title 23 and Title 49; however, per the conversation, he stated that the designated requirements for consultation with local and Tribal governments is governed by [the concept of the Three Cs of transportation planning: continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative, as mandated by the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1962]. He stated that these elements are continuous, comprehensive, and cooperative.

CO-CHAIR CARRICK expressed appreciation for any references he could provide to the committee.

[2:47:56 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MINA, concerning funding, questioned the funding for different transit projects.

[2:48:32 PM](#)

MR. REINHART, concerning previous comments on a light rail between Mat-Su and Anchorage, stated that the Alaska Railroad receives millions of dollars in transit commuter funding; however, he expressed the understanding that the money has not been spent on commuter services. He expressed the opinion that this was another lost opportunity.

[2:50:08 PM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE MCCABE acknowledged the railroad funding and expressed the understanding that the problem is that a commuter rail would need to go through Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER). He speculated on the problem with the scenario.

[2:51:07 PM](#)

MR. MILLS stated that he could not address the topic. He offered the understanding that the railroad received the money, but he expressed uncertainty on the amount. He continued with the understanding that the railroad is the only entity in the state that would qualify for the funding. He speculated on any other entity that could qualify.

[2:51:59 PM](#)

CO-CHAIR CARRICK made closing comments.

[CSHB 26(CRA) was held over.]

[2:52:39 PM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Transportation Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 2:52 p.m.