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THE STATE
of ALASKA

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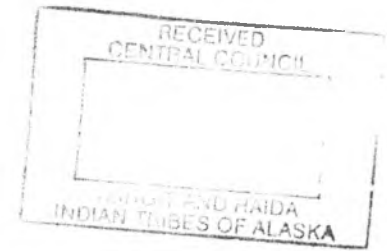
Department of Transportation and
Public Facilities

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

1200 Chenoweth Drive
Juneau, Alaska 99801-2500
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August 31, 2012

President Edward K. Thomas
Central Council, Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska
Andrew P. Hope Building
320 West Willoughby Ave. Suite 300
Juneau, AK 99801-1726



Dear President Thomas:

Thank you for your letter dated August 28, 2012 regarding the Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) summer 2013 schedule and the service AMHS provides in support of Alaska Native cultural events that occur primarily in the September through November time period.

In the past, our philosophy for supporting these events has been to handle them on a case-by-case basis. Event coordinators would work directly with the AMHS Scheduler, Ms. Kerri Traudt, to evaluate the event timing compared to the existing AMHS schedule, then make adjustments where feasible and warranted. We strive to provide the best possible service within our budgeting and maintenance constraints, and I believe we have been relatively successful at meeting the transportation needs of cultural events using this process.


Your letter requests a shift in our philosophy in how to support cultural events. It requests the maximum service level possible, including keeping the Fast Vehicle Ferries (FVF) in service longer into the fall months, which is essentially an extension of the summer operating schedule. During the summer, based on heavily increased traffic volumes, we operate all AMHS ships to meet that demand. Spread throughout the fall, winter, and spring, we cycle the ships through their required maintenance periods and lay-up several as a cost savings measure to remain within our authorized budget. We can meet the lighter fall, winter, and spring traffic demand with fewer ships, though admittedly communities see a reduction in the frequency of service and level of convenience.

To accomplish what you request would require compressing the maintenance scheduling of the ships through their maintenance periods and an increased AMHS operating budget. The shipyards we utilize for AMHS work have limited capacity, and with an AMHS operating budget that greatly exceeds the revenue generated by the system, seeking increased operating budget authority is not justified by the traffic volume carried.

The Alaska Marine Highway System strives to provide adequate transportation service to all of the communities we serve. The AMHS senior staff, and particularly our scheduler, is keenly aware of the cultural event needs and we remain willing and able to address these transportation needs through case-by-case scheduling. Thank you for taking the time to make the concerns of the Central Council, Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska known.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me at 465-6977.

Sincerely,


Michael A. Neussl
Deputy Commissioner, Marine Operations

cc: Captain John Falvey, AMHS General Manager
Ms. Kerri Traudt, AMHS Scheduler



August 28, 2012

Michael A. Neussl
Department Commissioner, Marine Operations
State of Alaska
Department of Transportation and Public Facilities

Dear Commissioner Neussl:

Tens of thousands of Alaska Natives reside in the communities of Southeast Alaska, many of them in the historic villages of our people settled thousands of years ago. As the days grow shorter and the air gets cooler, we begin to gather once again in the traditional ways of our ancestors for cultural activities that celebrate our houses, our clans and our collective identity as Alaska Native peoples.

As you prepare the summer and fall ferry schedule for 2013 I ask that you pay particular attention to a little recognized but very significant need of our people.

Fall time in Southeast Alaska is when multiple clan 'parties' occur. These cultural events in the villages reflect the spirit and soul of our people, and they require significant movement of goods and persons through the region.

For this reason, we request that all consideration be given to extending the maximum service level possible in the September-November time period to our year round residents of Southeast Alaska. Our request extends to keeping the "fast ferries" in service longer into the fall, along with maintaining good service level connections with the urban centers and villages to support these events which usually occur over a week end.

This request needs to be a standing year after year consideration as it clearly ties to preserving the health and economic viability of the region. Sealaska staff is available to more fully discuss this request with the Alaska Marine Highway.

Please coordinate follow up efforts with our Transportation Director, Mary A. Miller, PE. She can be reached at mmiller@ccthita.org or (907) 739-9305.

Sincerely,

Albert M. Kookesh, Board Chair
Sealaska Corporation

Central Council
Tlingit and Haida



Indian Tribes of Alaska

CENTRAL COUNCIL
Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska

ANDREW P. HOPE BUILDING
320 West Willoughby Avenue • Suite 300
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1726

August 28, 2012

Michael A. Neussl
Dept. Commissioner, Marine Operations
State of Alaska
Department of Transportation and Public Facilities

Dear Capt. Neussl:

On behalf of Central Council Tlingit Haida, I request that you pay particular attention to a little recognized, but very significant need of our people, as you prepare the 2013 summer and fall ferry schedule.

During the fall time in Southeast Alaska multiple clan parties occur. These cultural events in the villages reflect the spirit and soul of our People. These cultural parties require significant movement of goods and persons through the region.

For this reason, we ask that all consideration be given to extending the maximum ferry service possible through September-November. Our request extends to keeping the fast ferries in service longer into the fall for the benefit of our year round residents. Also we request that you structure travel connections between the urban centers and villages to support clan parties which usually occur over a weekend.

This request needs to be a standing year after year consideration as it clearly ties to preserving the health and economic viability of the region. Central Council staff will be available to more fully discuss this request with the Alaska Marine Highway.

Please coordinate follow up efforts with our Transportation Director, Mary A. Miller, PE. Mary can be reached at mmiller@ccthita.org, or by phone at (907) 739-9305.

Sincerely,

Edward K. Thomas
President



CENTRAL COUNCIL
Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska
ANDREW P. HOPE BUILDING
320 West Willoughby Avenue • Suite 300
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1726

CENTRAL COUNCIL OF TLINGIT AND HAIDA INDIAN TRIBES OF ALASKA
Seventy-Seventh Annual Tribal Assembly
April 18-21, 2012
Juneau, Alaska

Resolution TA/ 12-34

Title: Alaska Marine Highway Ferry System

By: Hoonah Tlingit and Haida Community Council

WHEREAS, Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (Central Council) is a federally recognized tribe of more than 28,000 tribal citizens worldwide; and

WHEREAS, our remote communities have relied on year round transportation service by the Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS); and


WHEREAS, this mode of transportation is the most cost efficient for transporting people, cars, and freight throughout Southeast Alaska; and

WHEREAS, the AMHS needs to ensure better communication and work with our communities and local tribes to create a feasible schedule that will better serve our communities;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Seventy-Seventh Tribal Assembly of Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska convened in Juneau, Alaska on April 18-21, 2012, directs Central Council's Tribal Transportation Department to work with the State of Alaska's Department of Transportation regarding the development of a more efficient ferry schedule for Southeast Alaska communities.

ADOPTED this 21st day of April 2012, by the Seventy-Seventh Tribal Assembly of Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska.

CERTIFY



President Edward K. Thomas

ATTEST



Tribal Secretary Harold Houston, Sr