

A report from the trip to Juneau, by Assembly Member Chelsea Tremblay, with the Alaska Municipal League January 20-23, 2020

I joined members of the following communities:

Wrangell, Pelican, Haines, Skagway, Angoon, Gustavus, Kodiak, Cordova, Homer, Seldovia, Unalaska

Broadly our message was around the urgency behind the request for funds to the Alaska Marine Highway system. We know the long-term solutions with the ferry system will take a while to work out, but in the immediate future communities are cut off and fishing seasons/summer economies will be disrupted, particularly in Prince William Sound, with the current proposed schedule. Emphasizing the broad economic impact the ferry system has on the state, if not the world, by allowing goods to flow in and out of these communities, was one point we tried to emphasize in the meetings, as well as the health and safety concerns related to not being able to travel freely and reliably.

We split into two groups. Over two days the group I was a part of met with: Reps Lincoln, Rauscher, Neuman, Josephson, Fields, Shaw, Sullivan-Leonard, Knopp, Vance, Jackson. Also Senators Giessel, Majority leader, and Sens Bishop and Hoffman.

The whole group also met with Dep. Commissioner Siroky from Department of Transportation, Ben Stevens, Chief of Staff for the Governor, and testified in front of the House Transportation Committee Meeting.

We met with chief of staff from Stedman's office, and Rep Kreiss-Tomkins came to sit in on the House Transportation Cmte meeting along with Rep Dan Ortiz. It's clear this is a priority for them which I was grateful to hear.

To summarize: I was encouraged by some conversations with legislators, and by the coordination of AML that made this happen. The connections made with other community members reinforced how essential this kind of coordinated advocacy is.

For next steps I believe staying actively engaged in the conversation in Juneau wherever possible - testifying and letting the community know when their voices are needed, either at the LIO or in Juneau - is imperative. Our representation in Juneau is in a powerful position to advocate on our behalf, they need to continue to feel how important this is to us in the days ahead.