



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

**Department of Transportation and
Public Facilities**

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER
John MacKinnon, Commissioner

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August 21, 2020

The Honorable Mark Jensen
Mayor, City & Borough of Petersburg
PO Box 329
Petersburg, Alaska 99833

Dear Mayor Jensen:

I have reviewed your comments regarding the recently published Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) 2020-2021 draft winter sailing schedule. I can understand your disappointment with the proposed levels of service since it is not optimal from my perspective either.

As you are aware, the AMHS has faced unprecedented challenges over the past year. Before the coronavirus pandemic hit this spring, AMHS had a workable budget in place and expected sufficient revenue to provide reliable ferry service throughout the year. Due to unexpected repairs and mechanical issues with five ships in our fleet, followed by a variety of COVID related operational impacts, we are now facing a nearly \$45 million budget shortfall. Because system-generated revenues support the AMHS operating budget, this shortfall, caused by the pandemic, equates to a budget cut of the same amount. Communities will experience gaps in service this winter. Simply put, the AMHS does not have enough cash to support the level of service we had originally intended to provide this winter.

These are extraordinary times in which we are trying to operate the system and, while public engagement is critical to the AMHS mission, providing for a public comment period longer than the 5 days we announced would likely result in a schedule not being available for bookings prior to October 1. This would jeopardize AMHS revenues even further beyond the impacts of COVID-19.

The AMHS is truly open to, and open for, public comment 365 days a year. They are receptive to special schedule accommodations year-round and on numerous occasions, have made special schedule adjustments for events and needs. The AMHS scheduler is in regular contact with community leaders, e.g., city administrators, school officials, community event planners, visitor bureau staff, etc., and she often makes modifications to schedules. We will continue to accept public comment on the draft 2020-2021 winter schedule after August 14 and we will modify the sailing calendar where and when feasible to meet community needs.

"Keep Alaska Moving through service and infrastructure."

Though Petersburg won't enjoy service from two mainliners and the six port calls per week it had as recent as two winters ago, here are the sailings intended for Petersburg in this draft winter schedule:

Northbound 10/5	Southbound 10/15	Northbound 10/19	Southbound 10/29
Northbound 11/2	Southbound 11/12	Northbound 11/16	Southbound 11/25
Northbound 11/30	Southbound 12/9	Northbound 12/14	Southbound 12/23
Northbound 12/28	Southbound 01/06/21		

The week of February 10, 2021, the Matanuska will begin providing the usual Sunday northbound and Wednesday southbound service to Petersburg.

I take exception to your comments that the department is working toward elimination of the ferry system. At DOT&PF, we take our responsibilities seriously for all of Alaska's communities – those on the road system, the 35 serviced by AMHS, and the 140+ that are neither on the road nor on the ferry routes. The truth is, we are trying to make a system that meets today's fiscal reality.

I am honored to be surrounded by many hard-working and passionate leaders, all trying to make a very complicated system run as efficiently as it can during historically extraordinary times with the revenue available to us.

Sincerely,



John MacKinnon
Commissioner

CC: The Honorable Mike Dunleavy, Governor, State of Alaska
The Honorable Bert Stedman, Senator, Alaska State Legislature
The Honorable Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins, Representative, Alaska State Legislature
John Falvey, General Manager, AMHS
Nils Andreassen, Executive Director, Alaska Municipal