

Petersburg Borough, Alaska
RESOLUTION #2020-01

**A RESOLUTION OPPOSING THE EXPENDITURE OF MILLIONS OF STATE DOLLARS FOR
THE KAKE ACCESS ROAD PROJECT AND URGING THE LEGISLATURE TO RE-
APPROPRIATE THE BALANCE OF THE ORIGINAL 40 MILLION DOLLAR
APPROPRIATION TO THE ALASKA MARINE HIGHWAY SYSTEM TO BENEFIT ALL
COASTAL ALASKA COMMUNITIES OR TO ROAD PROJECTS WITHIN THE CITY OF KAKE
AND/OR THE PETERSBURG BOROUGH**

WHEREAS, in 2012, Senator Stedman secured a 40 million dollar appropriation toward a single-lane gravel road project along the northern end of Kupreanof Island between the City of Kake and a terminus near the City of Kupreanof across the Wrangell Narrows from Petersburg; and

WHEREAS, the 40 million dollar appropriation prompted an Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (ADOT&PF) and Federal Highway Administration study for improving transportation access to Kake and by early 2016 approximately 37 million dollars of the original appropriation was left; and

WHEREAS, in 2015 Governor Walker and the Alaska Legislature were actively discussing a looming fiscal crisis and looking for options to balance the State's budget or risk spending the State's savings; and

WHEREAS, in 2016, citing the fiscal crisis, the ADOT&PF shelved all project plans that were considering various options for the gravel road on northern Kupreanof Island with a ferry connection from Kupreanof to Petersburg on Mitkof Island and a separate Kake to Petersburg Transmission Intertie Project; and

WHEREAS, the State of Alaska is currently experiencing that fiscal crisis which has caused significant funding reductions in education, transportation, senior services and other important government operations; and

WHEREAS, under Governor Dunleavy's administration, ADOT&PF has revived the gravel road project, spending more of the original appropriation funds in 2019, and plans to construct a 35 mile single-lane unpaved road with new bridges where required on Kupreanof Island which will join with existing forest service roads connected to the City of Kake on one end and a new boat launch accessing the often rough waters of Frederick Sound near the mouth of Twelvemile Creek on the other end; and

WHEREAS, this proposed unpaved road in remote terrain will require maintenance and could create law enforcement and emergency responder obligations and expenditures of limited Local, State and Federal resources and dollars; and

WHEREAS, the State has already failed to prioritize maintenance of ferry terminals, dock facilities and access points already in existence on Kupreanof Island, Mitkof Island and outlying areas; and

WHEREAS, the idea that the road will provide for safer emergency transportation services (by vehicle on a dirt road not maintained in the winter) from Kake to a boat waiting in

Frederick Sound (if ocean conditions are favorable for travel) and eventually to the Petersburg Medical Center, who routinely medivac patients by air to larger facilities themselves, seems misguided; and

WHEREAS, ADOT&PF's stated purpose of the proposed Kake Access Road project is to provide increased recreational and subsistence opportunities on Kupreanof Island; and

WHEREAS, some residents of Kake have expressed concerns that increased road access would potentially have a negative impact on subsistence hunting resources by allowing increased recreation hunting access; and

WHEREAS, Joel Jackson, President of the Organized Village of Kake, opposes construction of the road and rejects the idea that the road will provide safer medivac services; and

WHEREAS, due to the lack of maintenance of our State ferries and their docking terminals and infrastructure, the Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) is currently 99% shut down, serving only Metlakatla, with a bleak outlook of one vessel returning to service after repairs that could take weeks to complete are made; and

WHEREAS, AMHS was created to provide a reliable regional transportation system to service coastal Alaska for passengers, vehicles and goods. The failure of this service is causing catastrophic repercussions in our small communities who do not receive regular flight or barge service, such as a lack of food and supplies in local stores and school cafeterias and affordable transportation for medical appointments and school activities.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Petersburg Borough Assembly opposes the expenditure of millions of state dollars to construct the Kake Access Road project; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Petersburg Borough Assembly urges the Legislature to stop the Kake Access Road project and re-appropriate the balance of the original 40 million dollar appropriation to the Alaska Marine Highway System to benefit all coastal Alaska communities or to road projects within the City of Kake and/or the Petersburg Borough.

PASSED and APPROVED by the Petersburg Borough Assembly this 2nd day of March, 2020.

ATTEST:

Mark Jensen, Mayor

Debra K. Thompson, Borough Clerk