

CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA
RESOLUTION NO. 2013-13

A RESOLUTION BY THE CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA REQUESTING
THE ALASKA MARINE HIGHWAY SYSTEM MAINTAIN CORE SERVICE LEVELS, INCLUDING
ONE PRINCE RUPERT VESSEL YEAR-ROUND AND TWO VESSELS MAY THROUGH
SEPTEMBER

WHEREAS, Southeast Alaska coastal communities without access to road systems have depended on the Alaska Marine Highway System for reliable, predictable primary marine transportation service since the creation of AMHS; and

WHEREAS, the Alaska Marine Highway System transports the region’s residents, visitors, food, health care, supplies, equipment, and seafoods, providing critically important transportation and commerce links within the Region and connections to the rest of Alaska and the lower 48; and

WHEREAS, the continued expansion of the Alaska Marine Highway System to provide new and expanding routes combined with the increasing costs and decreasing revenues available to operate the System are resulting in reduced core service levels in Southeast Alaska including the layup of the Taku through June, 2014, rather than operating this second Prince Rupert vessel during May and June when demand for a second Prince Rupert vessel is at a peak; and

WHEREAS, the seven-month Sitka Winter schedule has consisted for several years of only ONE northbound sailing and two southbounds per week; if the second Prince Rupert vessel is delayed until July, the single Rupert connection in May and June is grossly inadequate to serve Southeast Alaska.

WHEREAS, Sitka is grateful the Fairweather is being repowered this winter. Sitka will heavily use the fast vehicle ferry as soon as it comes out of overhaul to increase May service to Sitka, with full Summer service required by June 1, 2014;

WHEREAS, AMHS has better alternatives to reduce its budget by re-scheduling vessels that would not restrict core summer service so critical to the economies and citizens of Southeast Alaska;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska Marine Highway System maintain its essential core service levels to Southeast Alaska with one Prince Rupert and one Bellingham vessel year round and a second Prince Rupert vessel throughout the entire summer season – May through September – and if required modify non-essential vessel schedules to reduce the AMHS budget; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Assembly of the City and Borough of Sitka requests a consistent, sustainable core service schedule for Southeast Alaska be developed with input from the Marine Transportation Advisory Board, Southeast Conference, and the local communities which have the greatest stake in maintaining reliable AMHS service levels.

PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED by the Assembly of the City and Borough of Sitka, Alaska, on this 23rd day of July, 2013.

Mim McConnell, Mayor

ATTEST:

Sara Peterson, CMC
Acting Municipal Clerk

MEMO TO: Interim Administrator Jay Sweeney
Mayor and Assembly

FROM: Marlene Campbell, Government Relations Director

SUBJECT: Alaska Marine Highway Update

DATE: July 17, 2013

In April, 2013, CBS commented on the proposed Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) seven month Fall/Winter/Spring schedule (see attached), and requested a second northbound sailing. AMHS responded "We will not be able to accommodate this". At that time, the Fairweather fast vehicle ferry was due to go into engine replacement approximately 10/1/13 to 5/15/14.

The Legislature cut the AMHS FY'14 budget by approximately 3.5%, and AMHS announced it would lay-up the Taku and could possibly keep the Fairweather laid up until July 2014 to reduce costs. CBS and others commented that laying up the second Prince Rupert vessel and possibly the fast vehicle ferry during two of the heaviest use months of the year, which would continue Sitka's Winter service level (one northbound two southbounds per week) through June, would drastically reduce Sitka service.

It should be noted that while AMHS must cut costs, there are many other ways to do so without cutting core service to Southeast Alaska. The AMHS has expanded and added new routes to Gustavus and the north even though budget reductions were anticipated. Reducing the number of very costly Kennicott across-Gulf runs or other reductions in service could still provide adequate travel options while reducing cost.

A substantial number of the approximately sixty Coast Guard families who redeploy from Sitka and 60 families who arrive do so in May and June; and most arrive on the Alaska Marine Highway. Alaska Summer Music Festival musicians and audience, the large number of persons coming to Sitka to fish, and many others arrive and depart Sitka by ferry in June. Petersburg has substantial grocery and fish freight and other users to and from Prince Rupert as well as on the Fairweather. Adverse impacts to the entire Southeast ferry system from not running a second Prince Rupert vessel in May and June will be substantial.

Southeast Conference has developed a regional resolution supporting maintaining core service to Southeast Alaska—including a Prince Rupert run year-round, and a second Prince Rupert vessel from May through September. The attached draft CBS resolution supports this request. Please approve or revise this resolution to enable CBS to continue to lobby for reconsideration of laying up the Taku and possibly the Fairweather until mid-Summer.

NOTE: The Marine Transportation Advisory Board (MTAB) which advises the Governor and Alaska Marine Highway System will hold its next meeting in Sitka on August 30, with members arriving on the Fairweather August 29. CBS is tentatively planning to sponsor a light reception the afternoon of August 29. The MTAB meeting Friday, August 30 will be publicized. It is hoped the Assembly and other Sitka representatives can attend both events.



City and Borough of Sitka

100 Lincoln Street Sitka, Alaska 99835

Coast Guard City, USA

April 3, 2013

Captain John F. Falvey, Jr., General Manager
Alaska Marine Highway System
By e-mail dot.amhs.comments@alaska.gov and fax 907-586-8365

Dear Captain Falvey:

Thank you for requesting comments on the 2013-14 Fall/Winter/Spring proposed Alaska Marine Highway System schedule. City and Borough of Sitka (CBS) comment follows. CBS and Sitka are grateful for the improved summer service with multiple sailings of the Fairweather and southbound mainlines to Sitka especially in July and August. We do not take this service for granted, and our community has many more options for our travel as well as bringing visitors to Sitka during the summer season. We also understand with the winter layups/overhauls and only the Malaspina or Matanuska and Taku mainlines running, it is difficult to meet basic service needs.

The proposed schedule has north and south service to Lynn Canal five times per week, while Sitka has only one northbound and two southbound ferries per week. CBS respectfully requests that our community of over 9,000 population be scheduled for two northbound and two southbound ferries per week. One way to achieve this greater parity with other mainline Southeast communities is for the Malaspina/Matanuska to stop in Sitka early Monday on its northbound voyage from Bellingham and not go up Lynn Canal. This would give adequate time to provide a second northbound Sitka stop per week without changing the Bellingham schedule. Lynn Canal would still receive four N/S stops per week, on Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, and Sunday.

Restricting Sitka to one northbound ferry per week for seven months severely restricts Sitka's use of the ferry system. Sitka needs Winter service for many Sitka and Juneau events, school travel including two high schools, medical travel to and from SEARHC, potlatches tribal, sports and cultural activities, and other primarily regional travel. With only one north sailing on Wednesday, it doesn't work. Please provide a second northbound sailing to permit Sitka have better access to its highway year round.

Your consideration of this request is appreciated. If further information is needed, please contact Marlene Campbell at 907-747-1855 (campbell@cityofsitka.com).

Sincerely,

Christopher Brewton, Acting Municipal Administrator

cc: Mayor and Assembly

Providing for today ... preparing for tomorrow

Core service

Core service is a scheduling concept that defined the lowest level of service by identifying essential service. Core service is a tool that was adopted by Marine Transportation Advisory Board and the Department of Marine Transportation to assist in scheduling during times of constrained budgets and vessel deployment.

One of the main elements of this service was two Prince Rupert vessels May thru September. For the past 5 schedule cycles this has not happened.

Core service: one year round Bellingham sailing. Two vessels from Prince Rupert, one year round and one running May through September. LeConte serve as day boat to Hoonah, Tenakee, and Juneau. Additional service nlc day boat may through September. Sitka/Angoon Fairweather sailing 4 days a week as much as possible.

Bellingham service was seen as non-essential if cuts were necessary.

The idea is to maintain service to communities that did not have road access.

Impact

- Cost effective way to increase service by 40% to Ketchikan, Wrangell, Petersburg, Kake, Juneau, Haines, Skagway, Sitka and Lynn Canal.
- This service ties the region together by facilitating commerce between communities of the region.
- Essential for commercial traffic, while you may not use the ferry directly, your food travels north while fish travels south.
- By maintaining this service on a constant year by year basis it enables commercial users, schools and other users to plan and depend on the system.

While we understand the need for financial constraint, Petersburg has born a dramatic loss of service since the inception of the system. By returning to the core service concept we can maintain a level of service that is at least 50% of pre-96 levels. This is essential for our seafood industry.

We also request that the Fairweather provides service, ideally Tuesday and Friday may through September. Understanding the needs of Sitka and now Angoon, we request at a minimum, Tuesday service may through September.

** Core Service Concept/History of AmHS Service developed by Dave Kensing, Petersburg and Mayors Committee Letter*

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SERVICE

SERVICE LEVELS AT THE LOWEST POINT SINCE THE INCEPTION OF SYSTEM

1966 - 1996: Six daily Prince Rupert departures a week, one Seattle (then Bellingham) departure, and two turnarounds using the LeConte gave us more than daily north/south service. We had 4 to 6 direct connections a week to Juneau, 2 to 4 connections a week to Sitka/Kake. Winter service (which at that time as well as now was considered Oct. 1 till May 1) was the same with the exception of one less Prince Rupert sailing and one less LeConte turnaround.

1996 - 2006; Prince Rupert winter service was one vessel for 4 months, then two vessels for the remainder of the year. The Kennicott stopped in Petersburg every other week north and south on its run. LeConte service included the entire Panhandle and two Bellingham runs in the summer, and one in the winter. Service was clumped, with two or even three north or southbound stops in a 24 hour period. Ridership dropped and the system responded by cutting stops.

2006 - Present: The LeConte becomes a dedicated day boat based out of Juneau, but no longer connecting Petersburg to the North. Prince Rupert service drops to one vessel year round. Most years we have another Prince Rupert vessel for an additional 7 to 8 months, this year it is for less than 3 months. One Bellingham run stops going north and south. Prince Rupert vessels stop in Kake going north and south since the LeConte no longer stops at that community, so few runs operate direct to Juneau. Fairweather service is sporadic at best, with several years of

Tuesday/Friday service but has not been consistent. Some years it is only 10 weeks, others 14 weeks of service. This year and last year it was only Tuesday service for 10 weeks (not clear whether service will be for the entire month in the proposed schedule).

Our proposed service level this year will be the lowest since 1964.

1. One Prince Rupert vessel year round (two northbound, two southbound stops)
2. One Bellingham vessel year round (one northbound, one southbound stop)
3. Summer service starts June 9th and ends August 30th, with an additional Prince Rupert vessel (two northbound, two southbound stops)
4. July 1, Fairweather service every Tuesday through mid-September.

PETERSBURG
A L A S K A

August 21, 2012

Mr. Michael Neussl

Deputy Commissioner, Marine Operations

Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities

PO Box 112500

Juneau, Alaska 99811-2500

Dear Mr. Neussl

The City of Petersburg is writing in response to the Department's request for comments on the proposed summer 2013 ferry schedule.

While we recognize the AMHS's need to maximize the efficiency of the fleet, we also are keenly aware that our community has seen an overall decrease in port departures by 19.5% since 2002 and an 18.6% decrease in passenger disembarkments over the same time period. The two are clearly linked - the more the Marine Highway System reduces service to our community the fewer people use the service thereby apparently justifying additional reductions the following year.

In regard to the summer 2013 schedule, we are concerned that our summer service is being reduced yet again. The majority of our passenger disembarkments occur during the summer and it important to our local businesses that visitors can make their way to Petersburg and spend more than a few hours here before they continue on their travels.

It is important for us to understand the specific reasons why this level of service cannot be restored. Please respond in writing to what the impediments are to increased ferry service for Petersburg so we can work together to resolve them.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



Al Dyer Mayor

Administration

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Petersburg, AK, US