

THE ALASKA LEGISLATURE



November 12, 2019

Michael J. Dunleavy, Governor
3rd Floor, State Capitol
PO Box 110001
Juneau, AK 99811

John MacKinnon, Commissioner
Alaska Dept. of Transportation and Public Facilities
P.O. Box 112500
3132 Channel Drive
Juneau, AK 99811

Dear Governor Dunleavy and Commissioner MacKinnon,

We represent various geographically isolated Southeast Alaska communities. As you know, the Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) vessels are the primary means of transporting people, freight/commodities, and vehicles to and from these communities. We — as public officials — are aware that accessibility to AMHS services directly impacts every person and business existing in our area.

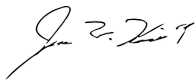
The recent news that the *M/V LeConte* and *Malaspina* will be laid up is devastating to our region. Cutting service to Angoon, Tenakee Springs, Pelican, and Gustavus entirely — with reduced sailings to Hoonah and Kake — places these communities in an existential crisis. The ferry is the only economical means of transportation for many Southeast Alaskans. We know Railbelt residents would feel similar with a simultaneous closure of the Glenn, Parks, and Richardson Highways. With the multitude of recent, severe budget cuts to AMHS, and delayed maintenance to system vessels, this is leading to future economic and social disasters, if management action is not taken quickly.

The executive branch and the Department of Transportation have a responsibility to the Alaskan people to step up and solve this problem with the utmost haste. This seems to be a funding priority crisis that can be solved. We understand that the department budgeted \$1.2 million for repairs to

the LeConte and the real cost of repair is closer to \$4 million. This is not a valid reason to hamstring these communities and the administration has the tools to solve the problem. There is funding available — \$20 million was set aside in an earlier budget for just this type of situation. The Department of Transportation must deliver on its mission statement to “Keep Alaska Moving through service and infrastructure.” The executive branch and department can, together, alleviate this operational issue and set the collective minds of our communities at ease.

We, like many Alaskans, are awaiting a positive response from you.


Sincerely,



Sen. Jesse Kiehl



Rep. Dan Ortiz



Rep. Andi Story

CC: Captain John Falvey, General Manager, AMHS
Mike Lesmann, Legislative Liaison, AMHS



Rep. Jonathan Kreiss-Tomkins



Rep. Sara Hannan