



07 January 2022

Press Release – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Marine Highway Unions agree to allow State to contract out Lynn Canal ferry run

In an effort to prevent the Southeast Alaska communities of Haines and Skagway from being abandoned this winter, the three Maritime Unions of the Alaska Marine Highway System have unanimously agreed to the State's request to contract out service for the North Lynn Canal run. Though typically not allowed per their collective bargaining agreements, the Unions would like to prevent Haines and Skagway from being without service in these harsh winter months. AMHS Management's decision to schedule all operating vessels annual maintenance periods back-to-back has once again left Southeast communities without service. Already the MV Matanuska and MV Kennicott returns to service being delayed has hampered winter travelers. Currently, only one vessel is scheduled to run during the second half of January, the MV Aurora up in Prince William Sound. The agreed upon timeframe would cover the last two weeks of January. The State needs this time to prepare the recently built MV Tazlina for passenger service.

"We (the Unions) are doing everything we can to keep our communities from being abandoned, but we cannot comprehend why this was needed when there's a designated Ready Reserve ship." says Earling Walli of the Inland Boatman's Union of the Pacific.

The State has continually asserted that the MV Tazlina is designated as a ready reserve vessel. Typically, this would mean that the Tazlina is prepared to take over service with little to no notice. Unfortunately, the Tazlina is missing its regulatory certifications that are required for her to carry passengers. AMHS Management has informed the Unions that they will have these certifications completed and the vessel ready to sail by the end of January. For the past year, the Tazlina has been sitting idle, first at Ketchikan's Vigor Shipyard, before it was moved to its recently reconstructed Auke Bay berth last July. Also, having been constructed without Crew Quarters or a Galley, the Tazlina is limited to only operating as a day-boat, preventing her from fully covering the mainline run.

"Repeatedly we have been told the Tazlina is the ready reserve ship, so why was she not prepared to take up this emergency service?" asked Ben Goldrich of the Marine Engineers Beneficial Association. "We believe these vessels should be better prepared in the future."

"Vessels being delayed out of shipyards has become more and more common as these vessels continue to age. It should no longer be this big of a surprise. A plan should be created to prevent these service gaps in the future." Shannon Adamson from Masters, Mates and Pilots added.

In a letter to the State that was sent with the signed Letters of Agreement, the Unions unanimously agreed that; "It is our opinion that State resources are better used providing this service to Alaskans using the State's already owned assets and already compensated employees."

Adamson concluded with; "Unfortunately, this will not fix all the service gaps affecting our communities, but we hope it is a start and can serve as a wake-up call to AMHS Management that our communities cannot be ignored or abandoned."

Questions or requests for further information regarding this Press Release may be directed to Shannon Adamson (907) 209-2300 or sadamson@bridgedeck.org