



Promoting sensible transportation systems in Alaska

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Statewide Poll Shows Little Support for Juneau Road/Ferry Project Alaskans Prefer Local Projects and Will Not Use the Road to Contact Legislators

Anchorage, AK – A new statewide poll shows that Alaskans prefer by a 79% to 11% margin that the state spend money on local transportation repairs, maintenance, and upgrades rather than on the \$374 million Juneau Road/Ferry Project. The poll also shows that by an even higher margin, 81% to 13%, Alaskans do not plan to use the proposed road/ferry project to access the legislature in Juneau. Southeast Alaska residents alone backed local repairs, maintenance, and upgrades over the project by a smaller margin, 63% to 26%. The poll, conducted by Anne Hays Research (www.haysresearch.com), was taken on November 9-12 and is available at <http://www.aktransportation.org/press-releases/november-19th-2007>.

The Juneau Road/Ferry Project, a holdover transportation project proposed by the Murkowski Administration, consists of 50 miles of new road that would end at a new ferry terminal on the east side of Lynn Canal, 18 ferry miles from Skagway. Travelers would then take ferries to Haines or Skagway. The proposed road route is along very steep terrain prone to avalanches, rockfalls, and landslides, so a good portion of the project will be among the toughest – and most expensive per mile – road construction projects in the country.

“These poll results demonstrate that the Juneau Road/Ferry Project is not a priority for 8 of 10 Alaskans, and that almost no one in the state plans to drive to Juneau. Governor Palin should cancel this expensive project and use the money for essential transportation repairs and maintenance, which only will increase with permafrost melting and increased flooding caused by climate change,” stated Walt Parker, Anchorage-based former head of the state’s Department of Highways (now Alaska Department of Transportation) under Governor Jay Hammond.

Lois Epstein, Director of the Alaska Transportation Priorities Project, a non-profit, statewide transportation “watchdog” organization stated that “the legislature needs to hold oversight hearings on what would not be funded if the Juneau Road/Ferry project moves forward, including transportation projects that would benefit the trucking industry and relieve congestion in and en route to Anchorage.”

Much of the \$244 million in currently-unidentified funds for the project will come from the state because federal transportation funding is in decline, resulting in Alaskan transportation needs being cancelled, delayed, or scaled back to fund the Juneau Road/Ferry project. Using general fund money could affect non-transportation priorities, such as funding for education and municipal revenue sharing. Important state transportation projects that may have inadequate funding should the Juneau Road/Ferry Project proceed include the Glenn/Seward Highway to Highway connection in Anchorage, upgrading the Parks Highway to allow for year-round truck travel, and ensuring the safety of existing roads and bridges.

Hays Research Group conducted the poll as part of a survey of 400 residents statewide, and the margin of error is +/- 4.9%. Only approximately 1 in 10 poll respondents didn’t know or refused to answer the poll questions.

The Alaska Transportation Priorities Project (ATPP) promotes sensible transportation systems in Alaska with the goal of safe, economic, well-maintained, and environmentally-appropriate transportation throughout the state.