

**Testimony of Lois N. Epstein, P.E.**  
**Alaska Transportation Priorities Project**  
**Before the House Transportation Committee**  
**February 9, 2010**

Thank you Madame Chair and members of the Committee. Good afternoon. My name is Lois Epstein and I am a licensed engineer and director of the Alaska Transportation Priorities Project, or ATPP. ATPP works with conservation organizations, transit advocates, community and governmental leaders, neighborhood organizations, engineers, and others to promote sensible transportation systems and policies in Alaska.

ATPP believes it is a good idea to address the upcoming decline in federal transportation funds, but there are some problems with today's approach, and it is limited in its overall impact on transportation funding as I will discuss. First, HB 329 does not include money for maintenance, preservation, and operation (roughly \$500 mill./year for highways and bridges, plus over \$100 mill./year for maintaining and operating ferries). We shouldn't build projects we can't maintain, and this approach does not address maintenance even if that's the greatest need.

Second, HB 329 is very specific with respect to allocations – e.g., 60% to major roads and bridges, and only 5% to community roads and public transportation. These allocations might not be the most appropriate in the future – especially with federal requirements likely to be coming dealing with climate change. Regardless, there will be an advisory council overseeing funding decisions and a scoring system, so why bind the decisions so tightly? I wouldn't be opposed to a maximum percentage to be spent on roads, however, in the range of 40-60% to ensure that other modes are appropriately funded. Note that I sit on the AMATS Technical Advisory Committee in Anchorage and AMATS allocates funds by mode within predetermined ranges.

Last, today's approach does not at all address the high amounts many in the state would like to spend on questionable major projects like the Juneau Road (\$0.5 billion), the Road to Nome (\$2.5 billion), the ongoing Gravina Access saga (\$0.4 billion), etc. There's not enough money for these projects but the state's appetite for researching and studying them at the level of millions of dollars each year (and I can document that statement), regardless of the project's full cost, never goes away! The FHWA and the FTA recently sent a letter to Alaska DOT that confirms this overreach problem by the state. The November 2009 letter says that Alaska "will be over programmed in the long term and that sufficient funds are not available from current recognizable sources to complete a number of large projects contemplated by the State's Program." The projects I identified above cost from \$400 million to \$2.5 billion and would not be much affected by the bill under consideration today because they require federal dollars to build them. I urge both the legislature and the governor to show fiscal leadership and seriously consider cancelling one or more of these projects rather than spending millions of our state's transportation dollars each year pursuing them without a financial plan to complete any of them. I would be very happy to work with your Committee and its staff to hold a hearing on the state's lack of fiscal constraint, perhaps an even more important topic given federal concerns than today's transportation funding discussion.

Thank you very much for considering these comments.