



Promoting sensible transportation systems in Alaska

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**Alaska Governor Palin Wisely Cancels Ketchikan to Gravina “Bridge to Nowhere” Project
Fiscal Concerns, Greater State Transportation Needs Doomed this Mega-Project**

Anchorage, AK – Alaska Governor Sarah Palin announced this week that the federal money for the proposed bridge from Ketchikan to lightly-populated Gravina Island would be used for other state transportation projects. The move ensures that the controversial bridge will not be built.

The proposed \$398 million Gravina Bridge was one of former Governor Murkowski’s three proposed, costly mega-projects, the other two being the Juneau Road/Ferry project and the Knik Arm Bridge, also frequently characterized as a “bridge to nowhere.” The Juneau Road/Ferry project has an out-of-date cost estimate of nearly \$300 million and the two-phase Knik Arm Bridge will cost over \$1 billion (not including future inflation and unplanned cost overruns).

Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT) estimates that the annual cost for existing Alaska highway and bridge maintenance and preservation is over \$540 million. With approximately \$600 million in annual state transportation revenues (DOT estimates), there is little room in the state budget for transportation mega-projects with high, unknown costs.

Additionally, Alaska is the state most dependent on federal funding for transportation and the state is facing significantly declining federal funding. In May 2007, DOT Commissioner Leo von Scheben stated in a letter to Alaskans that the federal government may need to reduce outlays to states by as much as 25% beginning in 2009. Because Alaska alone does not have any dedicated state funding source for transportation, transportation projects throughout the state – including maintaining and operating existing roads and public transit in urban areas – likely will face dramatically reduced funds unless property taxes or other revenue sources are increased or developed.

“With federal funding in decline, the state doesn’t have the money for new transportation mega-projects, so Governor Palin was wise to cancel the Gravina Bridge project. Alaskans throughout the state urge the governor to carefully scrutinize the enormous costs, dubious merit, and the financial trade-offs to the state should the Juneau Road/Ferry and the Knik Arm Bridge mega-projects go forward,” said Engineer and Director Lois Epstein of the Alaska Transportation Priorities Project (ATPP).

“Additionally, we believe a portion of the money saved should stay in Ketchikan. ATPP supports improved ferry access to Gravina Island including upgraded waiting facilities and luggage check-in on the Ketchikan side of the ferry. With some upgrades and proper maintenance, the ferry system between Ketchikan and the airport on Gravina Island will serve the community and visitors well,” stated Epstein.

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