

ACTIONS



4

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This final section describes specific actions that the *Prince William Sound and the Kenai Peninsula* segment of Alaska's Marine Highway should pursue to address the challenges and opportunities identified in this plan. The actions both echo those from the full corridor partnership plan as well as highlight actions that are specific to this region. The purpose of this section is to provide the Alaska's Marine Highway System and this segment's port communities with a roadmap for regional actions. These byway actions are broken into five categories: byway organization, marketing, physical improvements, information and interpretation, and All American Road status.



Participants for this segment's Scenic Sail-aboration included mayors, community leaders, government agencies, byways partners and local citizens.

A. ORGANIZATION

ADOPT A STRUCTURE

The *Prince William Sound and the Kenai Peninsula* region supports the full byway's efforts to adopt an organizational structure that will provide full and efficient representation for each segment, all communities and all other byway partners within each segment. This action is moving forward at the full byway level and the *Prince William Sound and the Kenai Peninsula* segment will participate and support these efforts.

- a. **Action: The *Prince William Sound and the Kenai Peninsula* segment should review this plan, delegate tasks, finalize an organizational structure and nominate individuals with time to devote as a volunteer to the byway program.**

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OUTREACH

As previously noted, the *Prince William Sound and the Kenai Peninsula* segment should work to coordinate byway activities with economic development organizations in the region. The best means of doing this will be ensuring that these groups become byway partners and are involved in the byway leadership organization.

- b. Action: Specific regional and local economic development organizations should be targeted for contact.** To the degree possible, individuals should be sought to join the byway organization that represent these various groups and can liaison with these groups.

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES

Each community should find one person to act as spokesperson for the byway (i.e., understand the program, answer questions and initiate community discussions and decisions.) This will be critical to ensure that the program isn't seen as something that only exists in far away Juneau or Washington, DC. Local advocates always increase the chances for building local support and quickly responding to local concerns.

- c. Action: As communities become partners in the effort, require that they have a local spokesperson identified.** The regional byway leader should provide that person with this plan as well as other published material on the state and national programs so that they can come up to speed and do a good job representing the byway.

Prince William Sound is a shipping lane for the Trans Alaska Pipeline and provides opportunities to see many types of ships including oil tankers and tugboats.



B. MARKETING

The Marine Highway is fortunate in that it has a full-time paid marketing director who is actively promoting the Marine Highway as an America's Byway. Tourism professionals within the communities work on their own marketing programs. The key for the byway will be finding joint marketing ventures that build on the strengths of all of these marketing efforts and do not create awkward overlaps in effort or responsibility. The core objectives should be, first, to encourage visitors to get on and off the ships more frequently and stay longer in communities, and second to encourage visitors to return for another visit.

With these concepts as principles, the marketing actions are broken into several categories.

SIMPLIFYING CHOICES: PACKAGING AND DIFFERENTIATION

Alaska's Marine Highway should begin to shift byway marketing materials away from using the words Southeast, Southcentral and Southwest and instead use terms that mesh more closely with the geographic names used in existing tourism marketing materials produced by the state, communities and regions: Inside Passage, Prince William Sound & the Kenai Peninsula, and Kodiak and the Aleutians.

- a. Action:** The byway organization should consider formally adopting new, more geographically descriptive names for each segment. This should be done in consultation with state and regional tourism marketing organizations.

Develop clear itineraries for Marine Highway travelers. These itineraries should offer varied and appealing trips, but also work within the established ship schedules and make use of the segment's resources, partners and destinations. This will help travelers see that trips of a variety of lengths and personalities are viable on Alaska's Marine Highway.

- b. Action:** The segment's community representatives should develop various itineraries for byway visitors based on various themes. The working groups should suggest various itineraries for byway visitors. Each group should lay out as many one-day, two-day, three-day, four-day and week-long sets of experiences as they can think of and then narrow each category to the best of the best. These itineraries should be reviewed and tested, refined and then offered as part of Alaska's Marine Highway and local marketing materials via the web and printed collateral.

Passengers take a picture of the Harvard Glacier, a glacier that is advancing. Glacier watching is a popular activity and can be done from the ship as well as with private charter operators, charter air service or by kayak. Many port communities provide access to local glaciers.



Along with geographic-oriented itineraries, the Marine Highway should consider creating thematic sailings that uses resources uniquely accessible via Alaska's Marine Highway and connect them with relevant land-side resources. Just as private tour operators concentrate their trips on certain themes, this same potential — with admittedly more time required and somewhat less focus given the other demands on the shipping system — can be applied to Alaska's Marine Highway. For instance, if the marine environment and marine animals is the theme and Seward and the SeaLife Center is the anchor, what other related activities could be woven together for the traveler? If 'birding' is a theme, what resources can serve as anchors? What places and resources can augment that trip? On appropriate themed sailings, a USFS interpreter, US Fish and Wildlife specialists or SeaLife employee could accompany the cruise and provide on-ship talks. Packages of relevant books and materials could be organized and sold to participants.

The personality of these trips should be less the 'we hold your hand the entire trip' version of tours and more the 'we give you information and support and let you explore on your own' style of tour. This will appeal to many people. The themed sailings are then more easily marketed to individual travelers via in-state and out-of-state associations and other groups (e.g., history groups, recreation groups, etc.) as well as through the Internet using the sailings' themes to capture key word searches on the web.

- c. **Action: Building from the itinerary work described above, develop a set of pilot themed sailings.** The Marine Highway marketing director will guide this process and have the ultimate say in whether the program can work within the budgetary and other constraints of the Marine Highway system.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service's Islands and Oceans Visitor Center in Homer is a great way to learn about the history, culture and importance of the marine ecosystem. This modern facility includes many interactive 'stations including remote control 'live bird cameras' to watch nesting birds on neighboring islands.



MARKETING THE COMMUNITIES

The byway organization should establish clear and recognized partnerships with communities and other entities along the highway and rail corridors that access this segment of the Marine Highway. For example, the Kenai Peninsula communities along the Sterling and Seward Highways should be involved in discussions about how to encourage byway travelers to experience the full Kenai area before or after their ship experience. Also include communities along the Glenn and Richardson Highways and their link to the port community of Valdez.

A variety of travel itineraries that include travel by ship, rail and/or car can be created that link the byway communities of this segment, with Anchorage, and other Kenai Peninsula and Prince William Sound communities. For example, one could drive to Homer, board the ship and sail to Seward, Whittier or Valdez and then drive back to Anchorage. A variety of loops could be established using any four of these linked communities that includes the Alaska's Marine Highway to close the loop.

There are several important components to make this successful. First, travelers need to be made aware of the alternative itineraries and excursions available to them. Second, the landside services need to be in place to support the alternative itineraries and excursions. Third, the communities need to welcome these travelers and ensure the necessary services are in place so that the experience is woven together with the marine portion of the trip. (For example, participating lodging establishments should have information on the Alaska's Marine Highway's schedules and policies so they can support travelers with questions.)

d. Action: Alternative itineraries and excursions should be developed for byway travelers.

Develop clear itineraries for travel that work within the established ship schedules and make use of the segment's resources, partners and destinations. Lay out as many one day, two day, three day, four day and week long sets of experiences as they can think of and then narrow each group to the best of the best. These itineraries should be reviewed and tested, refined and then offered as part of Alaska's Marine Highway and local marketing material via the web, printed collateral and the system's guide.

Many port communities have road access and many of these roads are State or National Scenic Byways. These roads and communities are vital partners, including the Glenn Highway below.



Fly-drive-sail-drive. Develop *fly-drive-sail-drive* packages with airlines that would allow the traveler to affordably fly into Anchorage, pick up a rental car and drive to one of the four gateway port communities, board the Marine Highway to another port community and then drive back to Anchorage. Total trip time could be as short as five days. For the traveling public that thinks of Alaska as a once in a lifetime trip, 'Experience the Kenai Peninsula and Prince William Sound in four days!' would be appealing. Extending the sailing and itinerary beyond four days could also be accomplished by selecting port communities that are further apart such as Homer and Valdez and would require more time on the ship and longer distances to drive but experience more of this area. With the fast ferry *Chenega* coming on line and providing daily service to Cordova, Valdez and Whittier will allow passengers to sail a portion of this segment, then overnight in select communities to explore the community. The passenger would then board the *Chenega* the following day and continue their voyage then disembark in another port community drive back to Anchorage and return home by air.

Fly-sail-fly. All communities are also linked by air service and could include flying to or from a port community instead of driving to or from Anchorage.

Fly-rail-sail-rail. The Alaska Railroad also provides service from Anchorage to Whittier or Seward and an itinerary could include one with no driving at all, 'where we do all the driving for you!' (Fly-rail-sail-rail) Start with flying to Anchorage, boarding the railroad to Seward, sailing to Whittier and then taking the train back to Anchorage and flying home. Once in Whittier, passengers could explore other communities on the *Chenega* before returning via train in Whittier. There are numerous possibilities and the most successful will be the most simplistic but allows visitors to see the most. This concept should be directed towards out-of-state and in-state visitors

f. Action: Discuss packaging, ticketing and promotional opportunities with airlines, the Alaska Railroad and car rental agencies.

Vacation packages for excursions should be developed and promoted on board ships during the peak tourist season. Materials should be prepared and distributed to all passengers to make them aware of these travel packages. Email and mailing addresses for all non-regional-resident passengers should be captured to allow follow-up marketing and promotion. Periodic mailings and email promotions should encourage people to return to Alaska's Marine Highway.

g. Action: Lay out a thorough program with supporting collateral to sell the return trip to all passengers.

Several volcanoes, including active ones, can be found in the Cook Inlet portion of this byway segment.



CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND ECONOMIC RESEARCH

The byway organization and the Alaska's Marine Highway regularly perform informal and formal surveys of passengers to identify the ways in which the travel experience along the byway can be improved. A survey should also verify that the needs of disabled and international travelers are being met. In addition, information should be captured on the expenditure levels for Marine Highway travelers for different types of trips (i.e., ship only with limited mainland connected experiences or mixed ship and land travel, etc.)

h. Action: Alaska's Marine Highway should fund customer satisfaction surveys several times each travel season. Customer satisfaction and impact cards should be available on-board and staff should encourage travelers to complete them. Follow-up contact information should be collected for all travelers responding via a card and/or survey so that Alaska's Marine Highway can respond to travelers' questions and concerns. Email addresses for as many passengers as possible should be gathered so that follow-up questions can be asked.

i. Action: A simple tourism readiness survey should be prepared that allow byway communities to assess their visitor services and infrastructure. Areas that should be assessed in a tourism readiness survey include: terminal design and usability, transportation options, hours of ferry service and hours of business operations in town (i.e., do they overlap?), information on accessibility, disabled travelers access issues, needs of international travelers, lodging capacity, experiences readily accessible to visitors and the willingness of the community to host visitors. These surveys will help the byway organization identify where investments are needed and which communities are ready today to encourage more byway travelers including those with disabilities and international travelers.

Dog mushing is a year round activity that is available in the summer on the region's glaciers. This is a popular activity for visitors to the area.



C. FACILITY AND COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENTS

This section reviews the terminals, landside transportation and port community facility improvements that must be addressed along the byway.

PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND AND KENAI PENINSULA TERMINAL IMPROVEMENTS

Given that the land immediately adjacent to the terminals is normally controlled by Alaska's Marine Highway, the following section on terminal improvements is critical. For many coastal communities, the Alaska's Marine Highway terminal is the primary gateway to their community. For marine passengers, the terminal is some times the first opportunity they can get community or Marine Highway information. As a result, terminals need to evolve beyond waiting rooms and a place to purchase tickets.

The *Prince William Sound and Kenai Peninsula* segment is currently undergoing significant capital improvements including several new terminals, terminal remodels and a new fast ferry to serve a portion of this route. It is essential that these new facilities include interpretation and visitor services in the planning, design and funding and that the planning is completed by an interpretive specialist who looks at both the individual facilities and the whole segment. This is a great opportunity to upgrade the interpretation and visitor services of this segment in the immediate future to world-class status.

This section describes potential terminal recommendations for enhancing the visitor services along Alaska's Marine Highway.

Snow capped mountains line the rugged coastline shaped by volcanoes, waves and wind.



GENERAL ACTIONS FOR ALL TERMINALS

(UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)

- Some terminals are located out of the town center and are isolated from visitor services. Allow, permit or encourage visitor services at or within close proximity of terminals. Services would include food, the opportunity to purchase provisions, lodging, camping and access to dependable transportation linked to the community center.

A 354 pound halibut caught by a visitor to the area on a charter fishing trip. This segment is known for its world class fishing including salmon, halibut and clams, to name a few.



- Each terminal needs to provide a unified, easy to identify **visitor information area** about the port community. This wayfinding area should have the same graphics and layout as all other terminals to be easily identified but allow local character. Maps, signs and interpretive panels should be made current, be made of durable materials and have easy to read text and graphics. This local visitor information area should have the following at a minimum:
 - o Map of the community with terminal and local attractions indicated.
 - o Map of immediate area surrounding terminal within 1-3 miles with attractions.
 - o Walking and driving distances on all maps.
 - o Indicate all Federally, State and locally designated lands and their associated features (ie, Chugach National Forest and USFS campgrounds).
 - o A brief description of the intrinsic qualities found in the port community and, if possible, their location on maps.
 - o Information on how to access the community's visitor services and attractions for those without a vehicle.
 - o A list of things to see and do based on time available while in port or the community.
 - o Where to get additional information and the location indicated on maps.
 - o Provide rack space for local tour operators to display flyers and pamphlets.
 - o When funding permits, also provide interactive electronic kiosks for visitor information and community interpretation. This would be an additional type of interpretation and should not replace the static maps and information above that does not breakdown and require minimal maintenance.

- Each terminal needs to provide a unified, easy to identify **interpretation area** that discusses the port communities serviced by the Marine Highway and the areas traversed by the ships. This interpretation area can be reproduced and placed in each of the terminals. Most terminals have some manner of this information; however it varies from terminal to terminal and needs to be expanded. Research needs to be carried out to ensure all of the 'corridor stories' are being told to their potential.
- Each terminal needs to provide the same basic information, but each terminal should also tell a unique story. When each terminal's story is pieced together with all the other terminals, the result will be a detailed and complete story about the Marine Highway segment (i.e. *Prince William Sound and Kenai Peninsula*). The graphics should be unique from the visitor information area indicated above and concentrate on interpretation. Maps, signs and interpretive panels must be made current, be made of durable materials and have easy to read text and graphics. All new terminals and remodels should have adequate space allocated for these interpretation areas. This interpretive area should have the following:
 - o Map of the entire Alaska's Marine Highway route with major attractions indicated (e.g., Kenai Fjords National Park)
 - o Enlargement of the Alaska's Marine Highway corridor segment map (ie. *Prince William Sound and Kenai Peninsula*) with attractions indicated. Provide topographic information and marine depth soundings. Indicate distances from port to port.
 - o Provide images of attractions in each port community and briefly list the intrinsic qualities and attractions in each port community. Select the two major intrinsic qualities that best portray the community and indicate them on the maps.
 - o Provide images and brief descriptions of points of interest traversed by the Marine Highway between communities.
 - o Provide interpretation on a specific topic that is relevant to the terminal community (ie, Valdez and the Trans Alaska Pipeline) that is not duplicated at other terminals. When all the terminal stories are linked together, a visitor understands in detail much about the communities, the landscape, wildlife, cultures and history of the corridor segment.
 - o When funding permits, also provide interactive electronic kiosks for interpretation. This should not replace the static maps and information which do not breakdown and require minimal maintenance.

The region's steep shoreline cliffs and rich waters make it the habitat for hundreds of species of birds; and birders looking to complete their life-list.



- o Provide secure display space at each terminal for local artwork, interpretation or cultural/historic items. Many terminals have examples of local taxidermy but many do not include interpretation on the animal being displayed other than size and species. These displays should be expanded as dioramas unique to the port community but all displays need to be coordinated to eliminate repetition of displays and ensure all the stories of the corridor are being told. Display cases should be easy to identify and be consistent in each terminal; however the contents will be unique to the terminal with detailed interpretation. The display should be coordinated with the two major intrinsic qualities the community is being identified with (e.g., Yakutat: history-WWII and recreation). The size of the terminal and available space will dictate the number of displays and their size. All new terminals and remodels should have display space allocated.
 - Provide kayak launch facilities in close proximity to the terminals (less than ¼ mile) and secure storage at or near the terminal, where possible.
 - Many terminals provide bike racks, however greater security such as bicycle lockers is required for longer storage periods.
 - Many terminals are located several miles from the community's attractions and center. Work with local private transportation carriers to provide dependable and consistent service from the terminal.
 - Provide safe and efficient transportation routes for non-motorized travelers for pedestrians and cyclists to nearby points of interest, visitor service areas and community centers.
 - Where property size and characteristics allow, provide covered outdoor waiting areas with picnic facilities, and grass areas at the terminal. Terminals should be located in a pleasant setting to create a positive gateway.
 - Because terminals serve as the gateway to communities for marine passengers, terminals should be should be welcoming and provide visual clues to the character of the port community while maintaining the functional needs and image for the Marine Highway.
- a Action: Include these recommendations in the Alaska's Marine Highway capital programming and seek other sources for funding.**

Art work on the M/V Kennicott is very high quality but needs to be interpreted to get full value from this great collection. Cultural items can be found on all ships.



TERMINAL SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

The following information describes the nature of each terminal and then lists additional recommendations beyond those discussed above. It is assumed that all terminals now provide or should provide restrooms, public telephone, seating, pamphlet racks for local tours and attractions and a map of the community, unless otherwise noted.

Yakutat

This small community does not have a terminal building and is limited to a marine ramp to access the ships.

Actions:

- Provide basic shelter and signs.

Cordova

This community has a mid sized terminal that was constructed in 1998. Cordova will be the home port for the *M/V Chenega*.

Actions:

- Provide directional signage from the terminal to the community
- Enhance the *M/V Bartlett* display
- Provide a non motorized trail from the terminal to the community
- Provide baggage storage at the terminal
- Provide internet access for the public

Valdez has several museums and visitor centers including one at the pipeline terminal pictured below.



Valdez

Valdez has a new terminal that opened in January of 2005.

Actions:

- Involve an interpretive planner to assist in the furnishing the terminal and providing interpretation.
- Provide additional visitor services in this terminal due to its role as a gateway terminal the Marine Highway.
- Utilize the digital sign in the terminal to provide other interpretive and visitor information, not just ship schedules and travel advisories.

Chenega Bay

This small community does not have a terminal building or uplands facilities.

Actions:

- Provide basic shelter and signs.

Tatitlek

This small community does not have a terminal building or uplands facilities.

Actions:

- Provide basic shelter and signs.

Whittier

Whittier will have a new terminal in early 2006.

Actions:

- Ensure interpretive services, facilities and furnishings are included in the design and development of this terminal.
- Provide visitor service information in the terminal due to its role as a gateway terminal for the Marine Highway.
- Create partnership with the Alaska Railroad for interpretation and visitor services.

Seward

Seward's terminal is located in a multi purpose transportation and tour facility that is shared with the Alaska Railroad, the cruiseship industry and the Marine Highway.

Actions:

- Provide year round interpretive and visitor service information in this terminal due to its role as a gateway terminal for the Marine Highway, Alaska Railroad and the cruiseship industry.
- Partner with the Alaska Railroad and cruiseship companies to provide interpretation and visitor services.
- Improve directional signage inside the terminal.
- Improve directional signage and pedestrian access from the terminal to the community.
- Create a large outdoor gathering and waiting area to help relieve congestion and create an enjoyable waiting area for bus loading or waiting for the ship.

Homer

This terminal has all the necessary facilities including a small visitor center and is a successful gateway terminal.

Actions:

- Extend the existing non-motorized path to the terminal.
- Action: Include these recommendations in the Alaska's Marine Highway capital programming and seek other sources for funding.** A concerted, long term effort will obviously be needed to move all of these various terminal improvements forward. Action on the above recommendations will do much to move the Marine Highway system toward being more unified and visitor-oriented.
 - Action: Ensure adequate planning, design and funding for interpretive and visitor services in new terminals currently in the planning, design or construction phase.** This segment is undergoing significant improvements that include several new terminals and upgrades. It is essential that these new facilities include work by an interpretive specialist who looks at both the individual facilities and the whole segment. This is a great opportunity to upgrade the interpretation and visitor services in a majority of the terminals in this segment to world-class status.

The Homer Spit has a wide array of visitor services just a short walk from the terminal.



ALASKA'S MARINE HIGHWAY SHIP IMPROVEMENTS

This section reviews potential improvements on board the Marine Highway's fleet of ships that should be addressed based on the analysis in Chapter 3. Overall the ships are well equipped for providing an exceptional travel experience and will meet or exceed the expectations of the average traveler. The *M/V Chenega* will provide exceptional service for Cordova, Whittier and Valdez and will likely allow the *M/V Tustumena* to provide more frequent service to the remaining portions of *Prince William Sound and the Kenai Peninsula* as well as the opportunity to make additional sailings to *Kodiak and the Aleutians* segment, should the Marine Highway find this desirable. The *Tustumena* provides adequate services for short haul passengers but is undersized for longer voyages due to a lack of staterooms, an undersized TV lounge/interpretive area, and a lack of seating and deck space. Adding the *Chenega* to this segment will reduce the route sailed by the *Tustumena* and therefore makes the lack of services less obvious. Expanding the size of the ship is unreasonable and the logical solution is additional sailings that may be possible with the *Chenega* also sailing this route, however this would be an operational decision by the Marine Highway. The following outlines comments appropriate for all ships to make the travel experience world-class.

It is hard to ask for any ship improvements on a sunny day on the aft deck.



- Many ships have good quality art on board and several issues must be considered in its display:
 - Interpretation for each art piece is needed. Interpretation should provide information about the art, the artist, the artist's culture, the subject depicted in the art and the topic of the piece.
 - Make descriptive panels permanent rather than paper copy.
 - Better organize the art by decks on ship or by spaces on ship – create themes, display by geographic area or by artists. Avoid mixed metaphors.
 - Provide better lighting and display cases. Use non-reflective glass where needed.
 - Create an on-board art brochure to promote art to travelers and where to find them on board.
 - Provide interpretive information in other languages in pamphlet form.
 - Have the interpretive displays and information designed and developed by a professional interpretive planner looking at all ships in the fleet and individual ship needs.
- More maps are needed and need to be organized in a logical manner. Maps need to be specialized for use of traveler, rather than generic. Where possible provide digital maps with touch screens to tell user more about community and landscape they are seeing.
- Expand existing program of linking the ship's GPS location to all ships and provide land information as well as nautical.

- Create child friendly interpretation opportunities on the ships.
 - Ensure existing and new material can be utilized by those with disabilities including text and graphic size, size of information on TV monitors, height of displays and colors used.
 - Update video and sound system on ships similar to the *M/V Fairweather*. All ships should have a multitude of interpretive programs to show on monitors that are appropriate to the route of the ship.
 - Convert the multitude of paper information and current events including news, weather and sports at the Purser's Desk into digital form that can be easily updated and accessed throughout the ship.
 - Provide adequate electrical outlets and internet hookups in areas of the ship that the Marine Highway wants to promote the use of laptops and other electronic equipment.
 - Provide satellite hook up to all ships to regularly download information for passengers including news, weather, and sports, and provide information on kiosks.
 - Provide historic and recent photographs of port communities. Provide community pamphlets that outline what they can see and do while in port.
 - Understand the primary routes passengers travel while on board (ie. berth cabin to restaurant) and ensure most important information is located along these routes.
 - Coordinate the telling of the byway story on each ship and the entire fleet based on the port communities each ship calls on.
 - Have the interpretive displays and information designed by a professional.
 - Work with US Forest Service Interpretive staff and professional designers in creating interpretive areas that are large enough and appropriate for presenting the best possible program while balancing limited space on board.
 - Provide seating on the side decks where safety allows including seating for the aging, young and disabled.
 - Update children's play areas with new equipment. Ensure play equipment meets safety requirements and is age appropriate.
- a. Action: Include these recommendations in the Alaska's Marine Highway capital programming and seek other sources for funding.** A concerted, long term effort will obviously be needed to move all of these various ship improvements forward. Action on the above recommendations will do much to move the Marine Highway system toward being more unified and visitor-oriented.

The Tlingit and the Eyak cultures are found along the eastern portion of this segment along the Gulf of Alaska.



COMMUNITY PLANS AND IMPROVEMENTS

The byway program should work to support and integrate its development efforts with those defined in local comprehensive plans and other similar documents. While it does not make sense to list all of those types of improvements in this document, the following are real examples of the types of local issues that communities are considering that directly overlap with byway actions.

- Develop bicycle and walking paths between the terminals, community and local points of interests.
 - Develop private transportation services between the terminal and community.
 - Protect and enhance natural areas near terminals, where appropriate.
 - Partner in the development of way finding (directional) plans for visitors and install signs to fulfill the goals in the plan.
 - Preserve and enhance cultural and historic sites and structures near the terminals.
 - Install sidewalks and other non-motorized routes to safely separate motorized users from non motorized users.
 - Creation of parks and other recreation facilities near the terminals, where appropriate.
 - Install interpretive facilities near terminals and along routes between terminals and the community centers.
 - The region's byway group should encourage communities to review their local plans and incorporate references to the byway and ensure integration of byway and local planning activities.
- a Action: Encourage local plans to reference the byway and integrate their actions with byway efforts.** The byway should keep open lines of communication with localities through its local representatives so that the byway supports the needs of communities.

Cordova, like many of the port communities, is a recreation paradise year round with a rich fishing culture.



TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS

There are a variety of land-side transportation actions that must be addressed. The major issue is that Marine Highway passengers often face significant challenges finding transportation from the terminal into the community's business center and to cultural, historical and recreational attractions or to other transportation facilities. The following actions attempt to address these challenges.

There is a need to establish convenient and predictable private or public transportation to meet the ships in all communities. Ensure transportation at night or in the winter when service is needed the most but is typically the least predictable. With the addition of the *M/V Chenega* making day trips to Cordova, Whittier and Valdez, terminal transportation needs will likely increase and be predictable with a regular schedule during the day. Due to the likelihood of increased passengers for this route ensure transportation from the terminal to the community and other transportation facilities. Provide transportation between the Marine Highway terminal and the Alaska Railroad terminal for those select communities that also have railroad service.

Work with local car rental agencies in the four port communities linked to the state highway system to explore one-way drop off rates that are reasonably priced so as to make the option of *drive-sail-drive* or *drive-sail-rail* appealing to travelers. Work out package deals and provide transportation to the rental agency or have the cars at the terminal.

For terminal towns that have no public transportation back to airports, other transportation centers, or the community, collect data on traveler preferences in those communities. Explore whether there is sufficient demand to merit a local van or taxi service to the transportation centers.

- a Action: An Alaska's Marine Highway transportation task force should be formed as a subcommittee of the *Prince William Sound and Kenai Peninsula* full byway group in order to explore the issue of improving community transportation services and facilities.** In some cases, transportation is adequate; in other cases it is unnecessary. In other cases, it stands as a major impediment to a smooth customer experience. Explore partnerships with the Alaska Railroad, car rental agencies and others.

The Marine Highway ships transport a wide array of vehicles including kayaks and bicycles.



Many passengers do not have vehicles and would prefer to explore the community on foot or by bicycle. In many cases there are no safe non-motorized transportation routes from the terminal to the community and the various points of interest.

b. Action: Encourage all communities interested in establishing or improving trails from terminals to town centers to prepare plans and present them at one of the byway segments working meetings. Identify the magnitude of the costs associated with these various projects. Criteria to prioritize local trail projects might include:

- *Distance:* The shorter the distance, the more likely people will use the trail.
- *Ferry Service:* The more ship service there is during the day, the more likely people will use the trail.
- *Time:* The amount of time in the terminal.
- *Public Transportation:* The level of service of existing taxi or other public transit options.
- *Trail Qualities:* The intrinsic nature of the trail (e.g., is it a beautiful landscape that will draw people to recreate there versus an industrial landscape that would only serve those with a great need to walk to or from the terminal).
- *Demand:* The current demand for cycling trails or walking trails given the nature of the terminal community (e.g., if there are many mountain biking trails in the community, it is more likely these types of travelers will stop at that community).

Seldovia is enjoyable to walk through and see the unique features of this small fishing community .



c. Action: When surveying passengers for overall satisfaction feedback, also test their transportation experience at each of the terminals. Were they able to get into town? Why or why not? Was the service satisfactory? Choose questions that will then allow the byway partners to assess the level of demand at the various terminals. Work with regional or state economic development agencies to sponsor a workshop for those who might be interested in providing terminal to town transportation services. The workshop should cover licensing, insurance and an overview of typical operating expenses and revenues. Encourage people to start businesses in communities where demand appears to be sufficient.

The ships meet the needs of passengers but improvements are possible to match the experience of this fantastic journey.



d. Action: Each community should identify where it needs directional and information signs. The byway group should prepare a set of criteria to help communities perform a full inventory of needed signs and to establish priorities as to which are most important. For example, when performing an inventory, criteria for new signs should include:

- Definition of priority routes to community centers and attractions. In other words, if there are multiple route options into a town, what is the chosen main route into town?
- Clear directions to visitor services and attractions.
- Signs to transportation services.
- Directional signs for walking routes to community centers and attractions.

A detailed list of needed signs, types of signs, suggested wording/graphics for each sign and type of installation needed should be prepared for each community. Maps with clear labels should be prepared in association with the list. These community plans should be assembled at the regional level and funding sought for the most urgent projects first.

e. Action: Seek National Scenic Byway, Transportation Enhancements and/or National Trails Program funds to construct high priority trails and make the noted transportation improvements.

INTERPRETATION AND INFORMATION

Interpretation will be a major project for all of the *Prince William Sound and Kenai Peninsula* communities. It will help to tie the sailing experience to the landside experience. The significant number of enhancements and new terminals for this segment should not be overlooked and can provide immediate improvements for interpretation and information in the terminals.

a. Action: Develop interpretative ideas and strategies for ships, terminals and communities.

Support the byway-wide effort to prepare a detailed interpretive plan. Work with the USDA Forest Service but also foster partnerships with other groups and organizations. This effort would also prepare interpretive plans for the various segments along the byway. Given the large size of the byway and the vast number of potential stories to tell and the many ways those stories might be conveyed, a plan is needed to identify the best options for action and investment. Determine the best methods to convey the interpretation (maps, presentations, interactive kiosks, etc).



This segment is home to many endangered and threatened species including Stellar sea lions. More interpretation is needed to outline what can be found along this route.

b. Action: Collect information for travelers about port communities. Prepare a template on community information and request that each community complete the forms. Develop a standardized community profile brochure/information rack. Seek byway funding to install information centers on all ships and at all terminals. If funding allows, explore the concept of digital information kiosks on-board each ship that would allow passengers to explore information about each community. Place the same information on the byway website and in terminals.

The possibilities for expanding the role of interpretation are broad and largely limited by funding. Issues to explore include on-board libraries, more interpretive signage on-board and in terminals, and themed sailings that focus on specific topics. Other ideas explored by the workshop participants included expanded on-board arts programs, interactive computer interpretive kiosks linked to the ship's global positioning system (GPS) and electronic interpretive facilities like internet kiosks and audio tapes.

E. ALL-AMERICAN ROAD STATUS

PREPARING APPLICATION

The Alaska's Marine Highway has the support and proper qualifications to achieve All-American Road status and therefore the byway should pursue that designation.

- a. **Action: Continue with efforts to prepare the application for All-American status for the spring of 2005.**

BUILDING SUPPORT IN COMMUNITIES

The Alaska's Marine Highway is an extensive byway with many communities and thousands of miles of byway. Support for the program has been overwhelmingly positive but there is still more that can be done to build additional support.

- b. **Action: Hold annual, *regional* meetings that allow people with either a general or narrow interest in the byway to participate.** Update attendees on the byway's general status and news. Make the meetings practical and informative. For example, hold a workshop that not only talks about the current status of the overall byway, but also provides sessions on partnering with local tour operators and guides, or terminal-to-town transportation opportunities.

- c. **Action: Host annual byway meetings to update stakeholders and byway groups on byway happenings.** Meetings should establish or confirm priorities, continue to build partnerships and determine actions and projects to pursue.
- d. **Action: Select a few easy to complete yet high visibility, high priority projects that will benefit as many communities as possible as well as passengers and the Marine Highway.** Getting a few projects completed at an early stage will build additional support for the byway. Make these a priority for creating partnerships and acquire funding, if need be, and complete these projects as soon as possible. Projects might include analyzing and updating interpretation panels on the ships and terminals, working with the US Forest Service to improve their interpretation facilities on board, or partnering with the Alaska Railroad in Whittier and Seward for improved interpretation.

The Alaska's Marine Highway is a world class byway traveling through world class landscapes not found anywhere else in the United States.



