

# ACTIONS



4



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This final section describes specific actions that the *Inside Passage* 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.

## A. ORGANIZATION

### ADOPT A STRUCTURE

The *Inside Passage* 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 *Inside Passage* (Southeast) segment will participate and support these efforts.

- a. **Action: The *Inside Passage* segment should review this plan, delegate tasks, finalize an organizational structure and nominate individuals to participate as community representatives.**

An Elderhostel group takes in the views from the aft deck of the M/V Columbia.



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OUTREACH

In addition, as noted above, the *Inside Passage* segment should work to integrate byway actions and awareness with the traditional economic development organizations in the region. The best means of doing this will be ensuring that all these groups become byway partners. Outreach aimed specifically at these groups will be a part of the overall public awareness efforts fostered by the segment.

- 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.



*All communities along the Inside Passages have retained much of their historic architecture.*

## B. CUSTOMER SERVICE

This challenge is very broad and covers most aspects of the byway effort. Helping people make good decisions before traveling relates to marketing and communication. Making the system easier to understand relates to communication, travel itineraries and basic service scheduling. Signage and bike racks relate to facility investments. Providing transportation services is its own separate activity. Each of these topics is covered after this section, in their own respective sections, but in most cases there is a strong customer service connection. The topics that clearly fall only within the concept of customer satisfaction are presented below.

### MEASURE CUSTOMER SATISFACTION AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Improving customer service and the traveler's experience are critical. In addition, as the byway begins to take shape, now is the time to capture economic impact baseline data. This information will be important to convince state and federal officials to continue to support the byway into the future. With these concepts as an objective, the following action is recommended.

- a. **Action: The *Inside Passage* segment and Alaska's Marine Highway in general should annually perform surveys of passengers to identify the ways in which the travel experience along the byway does or does not meet traveler expectations for service, quality and convenience.** (See Appendix for sample questionnaire.)

Additional 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.) Alaska's Marine Highway should fund such surveys at least once 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.

***Relative to economic impact, the most crucial question to ask is how much money people spend when they go ashore. Measuring the amount spent and the number of people who go ashore will provide a good solid foundation to estimate growth and change in economic impact over time. As time passes, it may be useful to ask questions regarding where the money was spent so that more sophisticated overall economic impact estimates can be made, but that is unnecessary for the immediate future.***

*The economy of many communities rely on the visitor industry and most communities such as Juneau have all the necessary facilities to accommodate them.*



## INCREASE THE QUALITY OF CUSTOMER SERVICE ALONG THE BYWAY

While tourism is well-established in many of the byway communities, the byway has the potential to increase visitation to all areas that seek it. Providing a quality visit for all travelers will require that interactions with travel industry workers be professional and efficient. Hospitality training is a basic customer service objective for all byway businesses and organizations that interface with the traveler.\

- b. Action: Work with the Alaska Host Program, or a similar effort, to provide hospitality training to travel workers along the byway.** Arrange for trainers and sessions to be available several times during the year in byway communities.

*The ships provide a variety of information on the communities and local attractions but these areas are unorganized and need to be updated.*



## PROVIDE MORE TRAVEL INFORMATION AT TERMINALS

Currently, it is common for visitors to disembark and find terminals with little or no information on what lies in the nearby community. This should be changed.

- c. Action: Work with the Marine Highway to seek byway funding to design and install information kiosks at terminals all along the byway.** The design of the kiosks should be consistent and make it easy for travelers to find information about the port community.

## PROVIDE MORE TRAVEL INFORMATION ONBOARD THE SHIPS

Currently, the ships in the system do offer some information on land-side communities and activities, but this information could be expanded.

- d. Action: Develop a template for all byway communities organize and present their visitor information.** Seek byway funding to develop the profiles for all communities, print them and distribute them on all relevant ships. Develop a clean rack or kiosk system to present the material to travelers.

## C. 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 communities should break themselves into short-term working committees based on the natural travel patterns that the segment offers.** The working groups should create various pre-defined suggested 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.

*The Inside Passage has nearly a dozen historic lighthouses along the route. Many have been recently restored or are in the process of returning to their original condition.*



Along with geographic-oriented itineraries, the Marine Highway should consider creating thematic sailings that use 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 early Russian-American history and culture is the theme and Sitka is the anchor, what other related activities could be woven together for the traveler? If Native history is the theme, what resources can serve as anchors? What places and resources can augment that trip? On appropriate themed sailings, a USFS interpreter or Native representative could accompany the cruise and provide on-ship talks. Packages of relevant books and materials could be organized and sold to participants.



*Native culture continues to play a strong role in all communities.*

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.

## MARKETING THE COMMUNITIES

Establish clear and recognized partnerships with the communities and entities along the highway corridors and other access routes that lead to each terminal community. For example, formally bring Anchorage, Tok and Yukon Territory communities (Haines Junction, Whitehorse and others) into the byway fold and discuss how marketing the mainland can benefit both the byway and these communities.

For example, Haines, Haines Junction, Whitehorse, Skagway and communities between (known as the Golden Triangle) should explore the roundtrip potential for a driving tour. Byway ship passengers could rent a vehicle in either Skagway or Haines and take a tour along this route: see the Scenic Haines Highway byway, visit the Bald Eagle Preserve, visit Whitehorse and enjoy other sights and destinations. The White Pass-Yukon Route railroad between Skagway and Lake Bennett could be another experience. After a couple of days on the mainland, with appropriate planning, the travelers could then resume their seafaring voyage in either Haines or Skagway.

There are several important components to making this successful. First, travelers need to be made aware of this and other potential mainland excursions they can take. Second, the ticketing and reservation system for Alaska's Marine Highway needs to be flexible enough to accommodate this type of travel— especially if the traveler decides to do this mid-trip. Third, the landside services need to be in place to support the activity. Fourth, the communities need to welcome these travelers and make accommodations for them 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: Itinerary planners in the above actions should explore the potential for these extended mainland experiences and describe in detail what they might look like, talk with potential partners and identify potential service or facility hurdles. Identify solutions.**

*The Historic White Pass and Yukon Route Railroad would be a positive partner to market the community of Skagway and the Yukon Territory.*



Work with British Columbia and Yukon tourism agencies to promote a two-country scenic highway experience by linking Alaska's Marine Highway with the Stewart-Cassiar Highway. Travelers could take the ferry from Bellingham, exit at Prince Rupert and then drive Highway 16 to Gitwagak. From there, they could follow Highway 37 north to Watson Lake. Then the Alaska Highway would take them into Whitehorse and then they could return to the Marine Highway via Skagway. In all, this would equate to approximately 1000 land driving miles. Combined with the Alaska's Marine Highway portion of the trip, this would allow a comfortable two-week vacation that would give the traveler a wide range of experiences without committing a month to driving the Alaska Highway or similar adventures.

- e. Action: Work with regional and provincial tourism organizations to develop special packages between late spring and early fall.**

Develop fly-sail packages with airlines that would allow the traveler to affordably fly into Seattle or Vancouver, pick up the Alaska's Marine Highway in Bellingham, sail to Juneau and fly home. Total trip time could be as short as three days and could be accomplished as a long weekend. For the traveling public that thinks of Alaska as a once in a lifetime trip, 'See the Inside Passage in three days and we'll do the driving!' would be appealing. Extending the sailing and itinerary beyond three days could also be accomplished with a fly-sail package. Allow passengers to sail a portion of the Inside Passage, then overnight in select communities to explore the community. The passenger would then board a different ship the following day (where the schedule allows) and continue their voyage of the Inside Passage, disembark in Juneau and return home by air.

- f. Action: Discuss packaging, ticketing and promotional opportunities with airlines.**



*A majority of roads that provide access to the port communities are either State or National Scenic Byways.*

The above itinerary ideas and resulting packages should be prominently promoted on board each ship 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.**

## INTERNATIONAL MARKETING

**h Action: Continue to work with regional and state travel entities on international marketing. Work with National Byways Program on same.**

Three key actions should be pursued:

- Draw more foreign journalists to cover Alaska's Marine Highway in international publications. In particular, provide these journalists with sets of clear, feasible travel itineraries at different times of year so that international visitors can more easily plan their Marine Highway travels.
- When an interpretive plan is prepared for the Marine Highway, include plan, design concepts and funding projections for putting key signs and interpretive facilities in other languages and use international pictographic symbols. Consult with the Alaska Travel Industry Association and tourism business owners along the route on the languages that should be targeted.
- Identify wayfinding signs along the route that should be translated into other languages and upgrade using international pictographic symbols and market these.

*Several communities that have a high volume of visitors are producing visitor information in other languages.*



## D. FACILITY AND COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENTS

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

## SOUTHEAST TERMINAL IMPROVEMENTS

Given that the terminals and 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. Many communities are not linked by road and the only access is by air or water. For passengers, the terminal is their first destination and opportunity to get local orientation about the community they are visiting. As a result, terminals need to evolve beyond waiting rooms and a place to purchase tickets.

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

### General actions for all terminals (unless otherwise noted).

- Many terminals are located out of the town center and are isolated. 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.

*Interpretation signage on the ships and terminals needs to be updated and requires a unifying graphic to create continuity. The Gold Rush sign (below) is one of the newest interpretation signs and most effective.*



- Each terminal needs to provide a unified, easy to identify **visitor information area** about the port community within the terminal. This wayfinding area must have the same graphics and layout as all other terminals to be easily identified but allow local character. All new terminals and remodels should have adequate space allocated for these areas. Maps, signs and interpretive panels must 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, Tongass National Forest and USFS campgrounds).
  - o A brief description of the intrinsic qualities found in the port community and, if appropriate, their location on maps.
  - o Information on how to get to the center of the community 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 aesthetic 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 which do 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. *Inside Passage*). 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 National Wildlife Refuge)
  - o Enlargement of the Alaska’s Marine Highway corridor segment (ie. *Inside Passage*) with attractions indicated. Provide topographic information and marine depth soundings. Indicate distances from port to port.

The Tongass National Forest has numerous recreation facilities that are popular year round, including public use cabins.



- 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, Hoonah and Native culture) 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 would be an additional type of interpretation and should not replace the static maps and information above which do not breakdown and require minimal maintenance.
- o Provide secure and aesthetic display space at each terminal for local art work, 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., Dutch Harbor: history-WWII, and cultural- Russian Orthodox). 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.

*All ships have high quality artwork and cultural artifacts on board, but require better interpretation.*



- Some travelers who travel the Marine Highway do not have a motorized vehicle and travel by foot, kayak, or bicycle once they get off the ships. The ships accommodate these alternative modes of travel, however many port communities do not provide services for them at the terminal. 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 rather than an industrial waterfront setting. The gateway 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.** Where required complete a unified study of the entire system. Action on the above recommendations will do much to move the Marine Highway system toward being more unified and visitor-oriented.

*Kayaking is popular along the Inside Passage due to the protected waters and endless potential for remote beaches. All Marine Highway ships can carry kayaks.*



## 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.

### **Bellingham, WA**

This is the largest terminal and provides most all visitor services conveniently located in the terminal. This gateway terminal provides a great facility to start your voyage on the Alaska's Marine Highway.

#### **Actions:**

- Provide maps, charts, interpretive panels and interactive kiosks that allow for self service information collecting rather than having to go through the visitor center.
- Provide internet connections and locations to plug in laptops.

*During the summer months, tour operators will meet the ships.*



### **Prince Rupert, BC**

This is a large terminal combined with a US/Canada Customs Facility that passengers must clear before entering the terminal and boarding the ships, and exit upon disembarking at Prince Rupert.

#### **Actions:**

- This is a major port of entry for the Marine Highway and many passengers are looking for more information on their sailing and the communities they will be visiting. If possible, include a manned Marine Highway/Alaska Visitor Center at this port to help with passenger queries.
- Provide more passenger amenities and services within the terminal area as this is a secure area and many passengers are isolated in the terminal for long periods of time once they have cleared Customs. This could be accomplished by providing food and beverage service by a vendor and providing an expanded outdoor waiting area.
- Provide secure storage for bicycles and other items before entering Customs and the secure terminal area.
- Provide interpretation on the existing mounted animals.
- Expand the Canada/US partnership of the Marine Highway through interpretation and displays. Expand on the cultural and historic similarities and differences between British Columbia and Alaska.
- Provide Canadian/British Columbia visitor services for those disembarking the Marine Highway and continuing their travels through Canada.

**Ketchikan**

This community has a large terminal with many services.

**Actions:**

- Expand and interpret existing display of historic Marine Highway items.
- Provide a safe pedestrian/non motorized transportation route through the paved area surrounding terminal.
- This is a primary gateway to the Marine Highway as it is the first Alaskan community along the Inside Passage. Provide expanded visitor services for passengers about the Marine Highway, and the Inside Passage.

**Wrangell**

This is a small downtown terminal with visitor services in the immediate vicinity of the terminal.

**Actions:**

- Provide interpretation for carvings and salmon in the terminal. Expand displays where possible to tell a more complete story.
- Provide more information on travel experiences in the immediate area and along the byway to be located at the terminal. Highlight the Wrangell Petroglyphs, Stikine River/LeConte Wilderness Area and timber industry are possible stories to interpret.
- Increases in visitation may require an increase in terminal sizing.

**Petersburg**

This mid sized terminal has many of the features of the larger terminals with local character.

**Actions:**

- Pursue planned partnerships with the local museum, Forest Service and others to increase interpretation and visitor services at terminal.

**Kake**

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

**Actions:**

- Identify at the ramp area where a visitor can get additional visitor information.
- Identify the location of public restrooms for visitors.
- Provide basic shelter and seating dockside at the ramp area.

*Some terminals are newer and therefore provide more visitor services but all meet the basic needs of passengers.*



### **Sitka**

This community has a mid sized terminal located 13 miles from the community.

#### **Actions:**

- Provide an off-road path connecting the terminal to the community for non-motorized users.
- Provide interpretation for the existing salmon mounts.
- Capitalize on opportunities for partnership (displays and interpretation) with the neighboring Sitka Historic National Park and Forest Service's Starrigaven Recreation Area both of which are less than ½ mile from the terminal.

### **Angoon**

This is a small community with limited visitor services in a small building converted to a makeshift terminal.

#### **Actions:**

- Provide a small terminal building designed to meet the needs of the Marine Highway and its passengers.

### **Tenakee Springs**

Due to the community's small population of just over 100 inhabitants and lack of a terminal, many of the aforementioned improvements are not realistic.

#### **Actions:**

At the ramp provide the following:

- Identify where to get additional visitor information.
- Identify the location of public restrooms.
- Improve lighting at dockside shelter.

### **Hoonah**

This is a small terminal with many basic services.

#### **Actions:**

- Interpret the Tlingit culture found in this community at the terminal.
- Establish partnership with the neighboring Icy Straights tourism destination that is currently only open to cruiseship passengers.

The M/V Kennicott arriving at the Sitka terminal.



### Auke Bay (Juneau)

This is a large terminal with many services and makes it perhaps one of the best for the level and variety of services it provides.

#### Actions:

- Provide year round visitor center host or modify visitor center to be effective without an attendant. Use as prototype for other larger terminals.
- Upgrade touch screen kiosks with more information and use as prototypes for other terminals.
- Upgrade existing interpretation and visitor services and create unified message, continuity and appearance.
- Improve safety through construction of a separated sidewalk from the terminal to Auke Bay and Forest Service's Auke Bay Recreation Area.

### Pelican

Pelican's small population of just over 100 people and lack of a terminal, results in many of the aforementioned improvements not being realistic.

#### Actions

Due to only monthly sailings to the community, when possible provide the following:

- Identify where to get additional visitor information.
- Identify the location of public restrooms.
- Provide basic shelter and seating dockside.

### Haines

This is a mid sized terminal with many services.

#### Actions:

- Update the existing diorama and provide more interpretation for it.
- This is a primary gateway to the Marine Highway as it is linked to the Haines Highway. Provide full visitor services for passengers about the Marine Highway, the Inside Passage and for those disembarking at Haines.

### Skagway

This is a mid sized terminal with many services found in larger terminals.

#### Actions:

- Work with the National Park Service to improve interpretation of existing facilities.
- This is a primary gateway to the Marine Highway as it is linked to the Klondike Highway. Provide full visitor services for passengers about the Marine Highway, the Inside Passage and for those disembarking at Skagway.

- 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 terminal improvements forward. Action on the above recommendations will do much to move the Marine Highway system toward being more unified and visitor-oriented.

*This diorama in the Haines terminal is a great feature that many passengers stop to look at. Unfortunately there is little information about the diorama and the information to the right is unrelated.*



## 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 following outlines comments appropriate for all ships to make the travel experience world class.

- Many ships have good quality art on board and several issues must be considered in its display:
  - Better descriptions needed for each art piece. Tell each piece's story. Make more connections between 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 laid out by a professional 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 information at the Purser's Desk into digital form that can be easily updated and accessed throughout the ship.
- Provide adequate electrical outlets in areas that the Marine Highway wants to promote the use of laptops and other electronic equipment.

The *M/V Malaspina* sailing along Lynn Canal just south of Skagway.



- Provide satellite hook up to all ships to regularly download information for passengers including news, weather, and sports, and provide information on kiosks.
  - Provide internet hook ups for those with laptops and planning trips or requiring additional information while at sea.
  - Provide historic and recent photographs of communities visited and information about them. Provide community pamphlets that outline itinerary based on amount of time in port and things to see and do.
  - 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 and laid out by a professional looking at all ships in the fleet and individual ship needs.
  - 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.
  - Outdoor seating on the side decks is limited to using lifejacket boxes. Provide seating 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 Marine Highway needs to partner with organizations who specialize in interpretive displays. This display is at the Juneau Airport and would be appropriate for the Marine Highway.*



## COMMUNITY PLANS AND IMPROVEMENTS

The byway program should work to support and integrate its 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.
- Create parks and/or 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.

*Coastal Alaska was settled due to its abundant natural resources. Fishing, mining and the timber industry still plays an important role along the Inside Passage and must be part of the byway story.*



## 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 interesting cultural, historical and recreational attractions. The following actions attempt to address these challenges.

**a. Action: An Alaska's Marine Highway land transportation task force should be formed as a subcommittee of the *Inside Passage's* full byway group in order to explore the issue of improving shoreside 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.

Marine Highway ships can accommodate a wide range of vehicles including RVs and tour buses.



**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 passengers spend at 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).

**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.

**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 key orientation information.
- 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.**

*Passenger satisfaction is pretty high when the sun is shining on the solarium deck.*



## INTERPRETATION AND INFORMATION

Interpretation will be a major long term project for all of the *Inside Passage* communities. It will help to tie the sailing experience to the landside experience.

**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, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and other agencies but also foster partnerships with other agencies and organizations including Native corporations, non-profits and the communities. 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) and use international pictographic symbols for international passengers. Update or replace aging interpretation and develop new opportunities for the ships, terminals and communities.

**b. Action: Collect information for travelers about port communities.** Prepare a template on community information and request that each community complete the forms. (See Appendix for a sample template.) 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.

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.

**c. Action: Ensure key information is translated into other languages.** Where possible all key interpretive material listed in this chapter should be translated into other languages to meet the needs of international passengers. Prioritize translations based on nationality and languages spoken by international passengers of the Marine Highway.

*Numerous museums tell a variety of stories about this route, its communities, and its people. Partnerships with local museums and organizations are essential.*



## 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.**



There is no other National Scenic Byway like the Alaska's Marine Highway.

## 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, or working with the US Forest Service to improve their interpretation facilities on board.



