

# JUNEAU ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT SEIS



JANUARY 2012

PROJECT NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 1

## Supplemental EIS Begins – DOT&PF Requests Your Comments

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) have initiated a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the Juneau Access Improvements (JAI) project.

Juneau, Alaska's capital city, with a population of more than 31,000 residents, is the largest community on the North American continent not connected to the continental highway system. The only public surface transportation available is the Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS), a state-owned ferry system connecting many of Alaska's southeast coastal communities. The JAI project is proposed to improve the connection between Juneau and the continental highway system through the Lynn Canal corridor. The project purpose is to reduce travel times and costs to the State and travelers, while providing greater opportunities for travel and capacity to meet demand.

FHWA issued a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD) for the JAI Project in 2006. A 2009 U.S. District Court decision ruled the FEIS was not valid because it did not consider an alternative that would improve surface transportation in Lynn Canal with existing AMHS assets. This ruling was upheld by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in 2011.

### Updates Planned

The SEIS will fully evaluate the impacts of the court-ordered alternative (Alternative 1B). The SEIS will also update information on the reasonable alternatives evaluated in the FEIS: No Action (Alternative 1), the East Lynn Highway to Katzehin with Shuttles to Haines and Skagway (Alternative 2B), the West Lynn Canal Highway (Alternative 3), and four marine alternatives that would construct new ferries specifically for the Lynn Canal corridor (Alternatives 4A-D).

The SEIS will address changes in current conditions, laws, and regulations since the FEIS was published. New or updated data may include:

- 2010 Census data
- Community comprehensive plans Juneau (2008), Skagway (2009), Haines (underway)
- Changed economic conditions and travel demand
- Construction and operations costs
- Wildlife and habitat surveys
- Tongass Land Management Plan (2008)
- Bald eagle nest locations
- Stellar sea lion haulout use

### Scoping Period Begins

FHWA and DOT&PF have begun the process of public and agency scoping for the JAI project SEIS by asking for input on the new alternative (Alternative 1B), updated FEIS reasonable alternatives, and new information about the project area. Scoping comments from resource agencies and the public will be used to determine the extent of information to be included in the SEIS. Deadline for scoping comments is February 20, 2012.

### Comment Guidance

Comments from the public, non-governmental organizations, and agencies can inform decisions about the need for additional preliminary design or environmental work. To provide helpful, meaningful, effective comments, please:

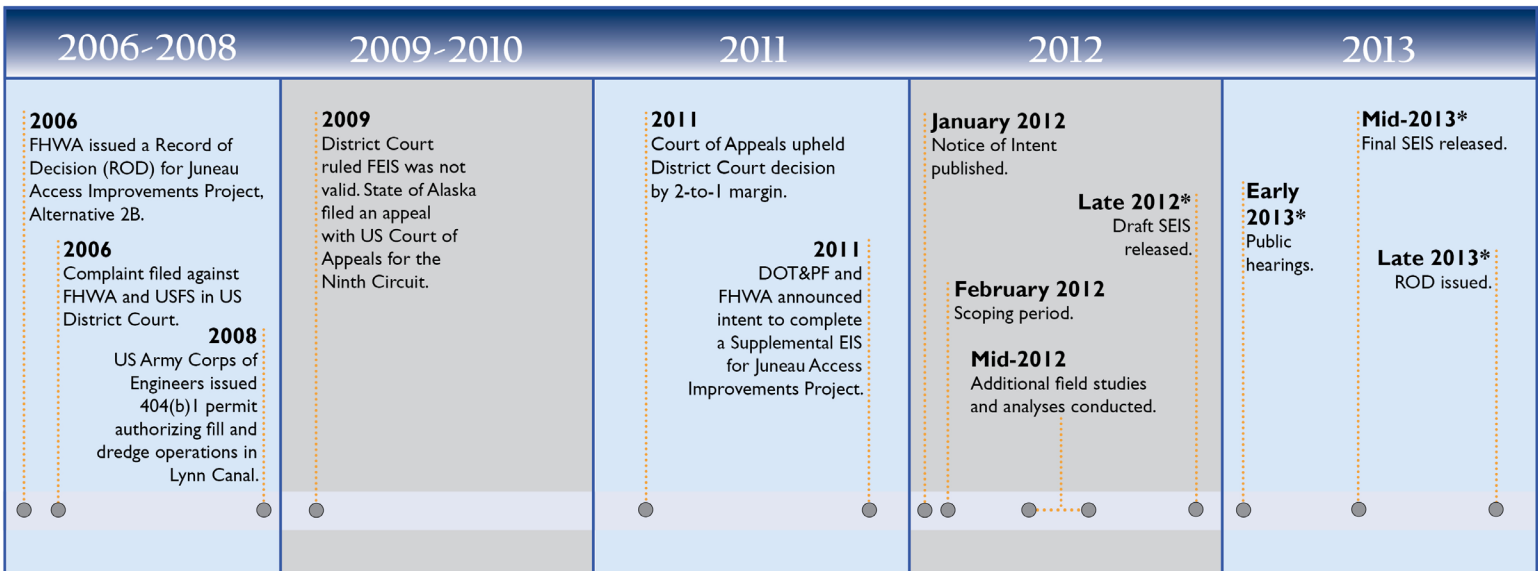
- Be specific.
- Recommend solutions.
- Highlight errors or omissions.
- Stay on topic.

# Why an SEIS?

A Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) is required when there are substantial changes or significant new information relevant to environmental concerns that were not identified in the FEIS. In this situation, the requirement to analyze a new alternative makes an SEIS necessary.

## Scoping

The purpose of scoping is to identify the significant issues related to the proposed action. Scoping for the JAI project SEIS will focus on those changes or new information that are the basis for preparing the SEIS and that were not included in the FEIS.



## Juneau Access Improvements Project SEIS Timeline

\* Anticipated Schedule



# Juneau Access Improvements Project SEIS Reasonable Alternatives

## Changes since the FEIS

Since the FEIS was issued in 2006, the Fast Vehicle Ferry (FVF) Fairweather is no longer deployed in Lynn Canal during the summer; it now is routed to Sitka, Angoon, and Petersburg. The Malaspina is operating as a summer Lynn Canal shuttle. The Aurora is no longer planned to be deployed in Lynn Canal. The new Alaska Class Ferry (ACF), designed for system-wide capability, is planned to replace the Malaspina in Lynn Canal.

## FEIS reasonable alternatives to be updated

Seven reasonable alternatives from the 2006 FEIS will be updated. These include:

- Alternative 1. No Action
- Alternative 2B. East Lynn Canal Highway to Katzechin, shuttles to Haines and Skagway
- Alternative 3. West Lynn Canal Highway
- Alternative 4. Marine Alternatives
  - ◆ Alternative 4A. FVF Service from Auke Bay
  - ◆ Alternative 4B. FVF Service from Berners Bay
  - ◆ Alternative 4C. Conventional Monohull Service from Auke Bay
  - ◆ Alternative 4D. Conventional Monohull Service from Berners Bay

All Build alternatives will be updated based on current information, including projected vessel availability. As explained above, the Malaspina is scheduled to be replaced with the first ACF. Build alternatives that require a conventional speed vessel with approximately the same vehicle capacity of the ACF incorporate the ACF into the alternative. FHWA and DOT&PF are also considering a new alternative, Alternative 1B. - Enhanced Service with Existing AMHS Assets (see blue box on next page). Please note that alternative descriptions are preliminary and minor changes may occur based on scoping and additional analysis.

# New Alternative Under Consideration

## ALTERNATIVE 1B. ENHANCED SERVICE WITH EXISTING AMHS ASSETS

Alternative 1B is distinct from Alternative 1 (No Action). While the No Action Alternative reflects existing and planned service based on AMHS efforts to optimize the use of AMHS ferries considering all routes and users, Alternative 1B focuses on improving Lynn Canal corridor routes specifically. This would alter other existing routes. Alternative 1B would approximately double summer service in Lynn Canal by deploying both the Malaspina and the Fairweather.

SEASON	ROUTE	FREQUENCY
<b>SUMMER</b>		
Malaspina	Skagway/Haines/Juneau/Haines/Skagway	Daily
Fairweather	Juneau/Haines/Juneau/Skagway/Juneau	Five days per week
	Angoon	Unchanged
New ACF	Direct service to Sitka and Petersburg	Six days per week to Sitka, one day per week to Petersburg
Mainline vessel round trips through Lynn Canal		Two days per week
<b>WINTER</b>		
Le Conte, Fairweather, or New ACF	Juneau/Haines/Skagway/Haines/Juneau	Minimum of three days per week
Mainline vessel round trips through Lynn Canal		One day per week

The analysis of this alternative will include evaluation of the use of additional staff at terminals to reduce loading and wait time, additional reservation staff for longer call-in service hours, and fare reductions to reduce traveler cost and promote greater ridership. While this alternative avoids initial capital costs, the aging Malaspina will still need refurbishment and replacement at some point in the future. These costs would be included in the economic analysis of this alternative.

### Comparing Ferries

Fairweather:	Fast Vehicle Ferry (32 knots, 36 cars)
Alaska Class Ferry:	Conventional Monohull (in development; 17 knots, 60 cars)
Malaspina:	Conventional Monohull (16.5 knots, 88 cars)
LeConte:	Conventional Monohull (14.5 knots, 34 cars)

# FEIS reasonable alternatives

## ALTERNATIVE 1. NO ACTION

The No Action Alternative is based on the Malaspina and subsequently the new ACF operating between Juneau and Haines/Skagway daily in summer. In winter, shuttle service between Juneau, Haines, and Skagway would be provided a minimum of three times per week by a combination of the LeConte, Fairweather, or the new ACF. The No Action Alternative also includes approximately two mainline vessel round trips per week through Lynn Canal (originating in either Bellingham or Prince Rupert) in summer and one per week in winter. This is essentially a continuation of existing service. The new ferry is scheduled to join the fleet in 2017. No new capital improvements will be designed specifically for Lynn Canal.

## ALTERNATIVE 2B. EAST LYNN CANAL HIGHWAY TO KATZEHIN, SHUTTLES TO HAINES AND SKAGWAY

This alternative would construct the East Lynn Canal Highway from Echo Cove to a point north of the Katzehin delta, with shuttle ferries providing service from a Katzehin terminal to both Haines and Skagway. The ACF would provide shuttle service from Katzehin to Skagway, and a new conventional monohull shuttle would operate on the Katzehin to Haines route. In summer, another new shuttle would operate between Haines and Skagway, while in winter this connection would be through the Katzehin terminal. Mainline ferry service would end at Auke Bay.

*Changes to Alternative 2B since the FEIS:* Minor alignment and design changes—including a potential interim ferry terminal at Comet—have been incorporated into Alternative 2B due to advanced geotechnical studies, permitting activities, and new financial information since 2006. Alternative 2B is anticipated to be constructed in two distinct phases. Initial construction would be from Cascade Point to either Slate Cove or Comet, with interim summer service ferry service provided by the ACF or the Malaspina, depending on the timing of construction. The highway north to Katzehin, the Katzehin terminal, and new shuttle vessels would be constructed in a second phase, when funding becomes available. After shuttles begin operating from Katzehin, the highway from Echo Cove to Cascade Point would be upgraded to the East Lynn Canal Highway geometry.



M/V Malaspina (Conventional Monohull Ferry)



M/V Fairweather (Fast Vehicle Ferry)

## **ALTERNATIVE 3. WEST LYNN CANAL HIGHWAY**

This alternative would extend Glacier Highway to Sawmill Cove with new terminals constructed at Sawmill Cove and William Henry Bay. Two new conventional monohull shuttle ferries would be constructed to operate between Sawmill Cove and William Henry Bay. A highway would be constructed from William Henry Bay to Haines via Pyramid Island, connecting to Mud Bay Road. A new shuttle ferry would provide service between Haines and Skagway. Mainline ferry service would end at Auke Bay.

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## **ALTERNATIVE 4. MARINE ALTERNATIVES**

Each of the four marine alternatives would provide new shuttle ferry service in Lynn Canal. All of these alternatives involve point-to-point shuttle service with no intermediate stops. A new Haines-Skagway shuttle is included in each alternative. All options would require construction of a new double stern berth at the Auke Bay terminal. These options are based on continuing approximately two mainline vessel round trips per week in summer and one per week in winter, similar to mainline service under the No Action Alternative.

### **ALTERNATIVE 4A. FVF SERVICE FROM AUKE BAY**

- ◆ Construct two new fast vehicle ferries to provide twice a day summer service from Auke Bay to Haines and Skagway.
- ◆ In winter, a single FVF would provide one trip between Juneau and Haines and one trip between Juneau and Skagway each day.

### **ALTERNATIVE 4B. FVF SERVICE FROM BERNERS BAY**

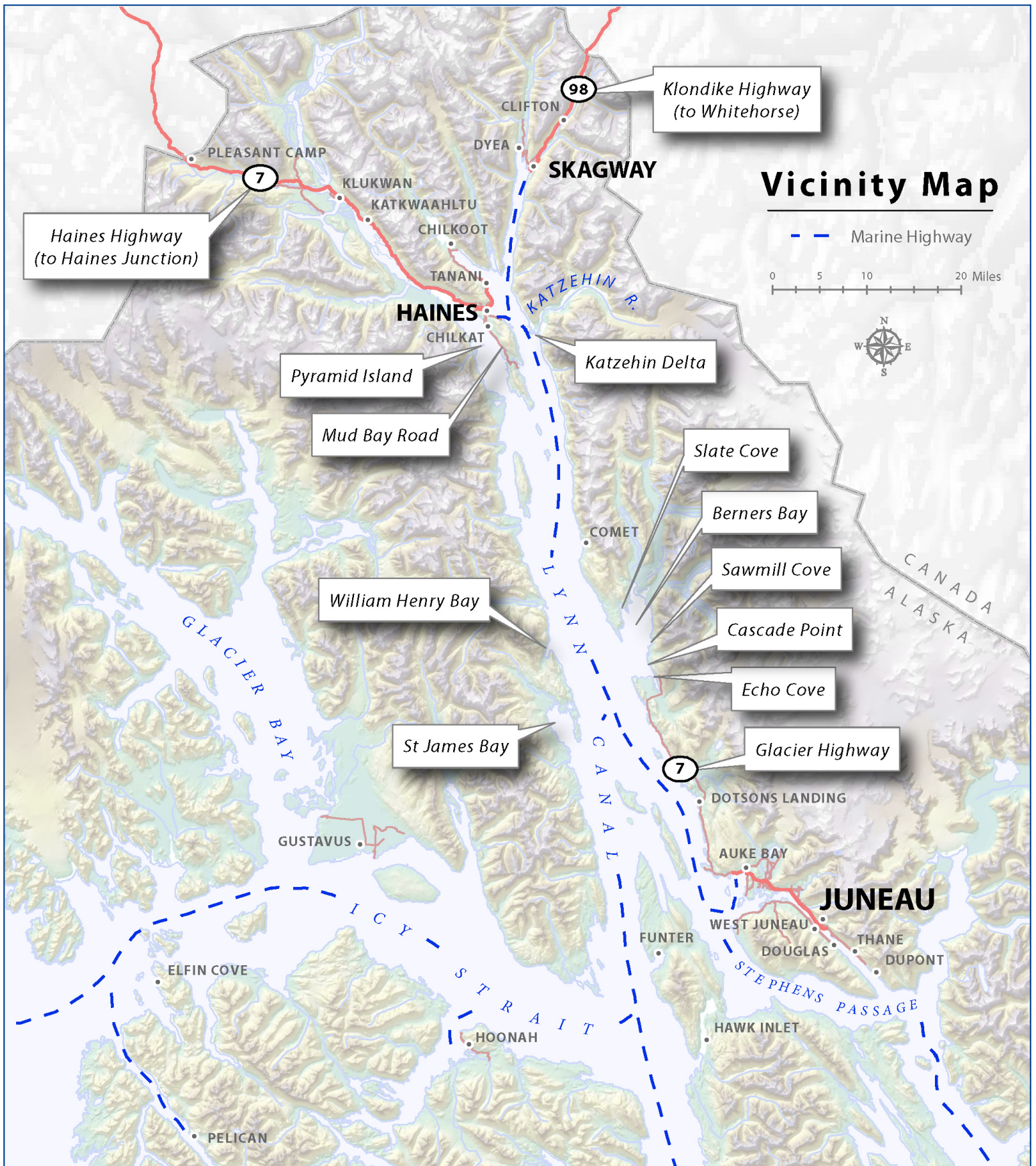
- ◆ Extend Glacier Highway to Sawmill Cove in Berners Bay.
- ◆ Construct a ferry terminal at Sawmill Cove.
- ◆ Construct two new fast vehicle ferries to provide four trips per day from Sawmill Cove to Haines and two trips per day to Skagway in the summer. In winter a single FVF would provide daily service from Auke Bay to Haines and Skagway.

### **ALTERNATIVE 4C. CONVENTIONAL MONOHULL SERVICE FROM AUKE BAY**

- ◆ Utilize two conventional monohull shuttles to provide daily summer service from Auke Bay to Haines and Skagway. One of the shuttles would be the new ACF; the second shuttle would be a new ferry.
- ◆ In winter, a single shuttle would alternate between running one day to Haines and one day to Skagway.

### **ALTERNATIVE 4D. CONVENTIONAL MONOHULL SERVICE FROM BERNERS BAY**

- ◆ Extend Glacier Highway to Sawmill Cove in Berners Bay.
- ◆ Construct a ferry terminal at Sawmill Cove.
- ◆ Construct two new conventional monohull shuttles to provide twice-a-day service from Sawmill Cove to both Haines and Skagway in the summer. Alternating day service from Auke Bay to Haines and Skagway would be provided in the winter.



## Project Vicinity Map

# JUNEAU ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT SEIS

## How to be involved and stay informed

FHWA and DOT&PF continue to be interested in your input regarding the alternatives and environmental studies required for the SEIS. Comments are welcome at any time, but to be included for consideration in the Draft SEIS, they **must be received no later than Monday, February 20, 2012.**

Visit the project Web site at [www.juneauaccess.alaska.gov](http://www.juneauaccess.alaska.gov) if you would like to:

- ◆ Learn more about the project updates
- ◆ Submit comments
- ◆ Be added to the project mailing list

There are many ways to provide comments, including:

- Submit a comment form (available on the Web site to print out and mail)
- Fax comments to: (907) 465-2016
- Email comments to: [juneauaccess@alaska.gov](mailto:juneauaccess@alaska.gov)
- Submit comments through the Web site: [www.juneauaccess.alaska.gov](http://www.juneauaccess.alaska.gov)
- Mail comments to:

Reuben Yost, Project Manager  
DOT&PF Southeast Region  
Juneau Access Improvements Project SEIS  
P.O. Box 112506  
Juneau, Alaska 99811-2506

We appreciate your interest and input in this project.

For more information, visit our Web site at:

[www.juneauaccess.alaska.gov](http://www.juneauaccess.alaska.gov)

***Remember, the deadline for scoping comments is  
Monday, February 20, 2012***