



**City of Gustavus, Alaska**  
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July 29, 2020

Admiral Tom Barrett  
Chair, Alaska Marine Highway Reshaping Work Group  
[Dot.amh-reshaping@alaska.gov](mailto:Dot.amh-reshaping@alaska.gov)  
Via e-mail

Subject: Essential Community Ferry Needs for Gustavus

Dear Admiral Barrett:

I am writing you in response to your request for input on the essential community ferry needs for Gustavus dated July 22, 2020. Although I have submitted multiple documents such as resolutions, letters, and testimony on this subject (attached), I am happy to provide a response. As you will see in this response, for Gustavus: Save our Road, Save our City!

First, it is important to understand that Gustavus is not on the road system – besides the ferry. It is also important to be aware that Gustavus does not have a barge ramp. Transportation of goods, services, and people are only available by plane or boat. Most of this is done via commercial service such as Seaplanes and the ferry. The weather in this region makes travel via seaplane unreliable. In addition, the amount of cargo that can be shipped via seaplane is very limited. Finally, the cost of travelling via seaplane is unaffordable for many.

The ferry offers reliable, predictable, and safe transportation to and from Gustavus. Medical appointments, food, materials for home repairs, or equipment for construction and other purposes can only come by ferry. Please keep these points in mind as you read the responses below.

**Baseline Ferry Service – what service does the ferry provide in support of essential economic and social wellbeing that cannot be met by other means such as commercial air or barge service?**

As identified above, the City does not have a barge landing available. Therefore, essential economic and social wellbeing is only provided by the ferry; seaplanes cannot accommodate the scope necessary to fulfill the need. The ferry provides safe, reliable service for both commercial and residential purposes. Grocery shopping, medical appointments, connections for trips to the lower 48, provisions, and the list continues.

**Does the need change between winter and summer?**

No. Clearly, the winter months does not have the number of people that rely on the ferry. Many are seasonal residents and business owners, as well as visitors. But the need for essential services of the approximately 550 full-time residents does not change.

**What frequency of service would address the essential service need?**

The community of Gustavus NEEDS service twice a week, every two weeks at a MINIMUM. It is necessary to have the turnaround be 1 or 2 days so that people can meet appointments, shop for food and supplies, and other personal activities. Service this summer has attempted to follow this schedule, but did not consistently, and it was a hardship on some. However, if Gustavus could get twice a week, twice a month with a 1 or 2 day turnaround, it would provide the ability to keep our town viable.

**Frequency of Use by Gustavus School**

The Gustavus School is part of the Chatham School District. The school utilizes the ferry for many of the same purposes as the town – supplies, materials, transportation of teachers, students, and parents for activities and other needs.

**Is it movement of people, vehicles, or freight that is most important to your community?**

It is all of the above. As discussed previously, all of the movement choices are important. Ferries without the ability to deliver cargo, transport vehicles for people to get around Juneau affordably, or deliver/pick-up goods is critical.

**Can essential passenger and vehicle service address your requirements?**

No. As described above, cargo/freight – both coming and going – is critical to the businesses and residents of Gustavus.

**Other perspective or ideas that could assist in structuring a more reliable system.**

I realize that you may read this response and say, “oh, another community asking for everything,” but that is not the case. Gustavus NEEDS the ferry to survive. The Alaska Marine Highway is our road. Just like pavement, highways, or railroads, the ferry system is our transportation lifeline. SAVE OUR ROADS, SAVE OUR CITY.

Sincerely,



Calvin Casipit, Mayor