

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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## SENATE DISTRICT R - HOUSE DISTRICT 35

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### **Seward Ferry Service to Continue Through Summer of 2005**

(Homer) Senator Gary Stevens (R-Kodiak) and Representative Paul Seaton have received word from Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT) Commissioner Mike Barton that ferry service to Seward will continue at least through the summer of 2005. DOT's move will halt temporarily a provision of the previous administration's 1999 Southwest Alaska Transportation Plan calling for Seward to be dropped from Alaska Marine Highway System AMHS next year. The delay will also give the community time to develop an economic impact study on the effects of losing service, and also allows AMHS officials to confer with other communities impacted by potential changes in the Southwest Alaska Transportation Plan.

With the transportation plan slated for amendments by the current administration, both legislators urged DOT to wait until those revisions are complete before making any changes to Seward's ferry service.

"The Alaska Marine Highway System is crucial to the transportation infrastructure of the coastal communities of Senate District R and Seward is an important part of that link," explained Senator Stevens. "I am pleased the department agreed with Representative Seaton and myself that revisions to the transportation plan and what impacts they will have on the other ports in the district need to be thoroughly assessed before measures such as eliminating Seward from the route are taken prematurely."

Both lawmakers stressed the strong local participation at Seward meetings they co-sponsored with AMHS was a key factor in the department's decision to revisit the issue.

"I greatly appreciate all the people who got involved in this issue and I hope that the public served by the Alaska Marine Highway System will continue to stay involved in the process," Representative Seaton commented. "You have an opportunity to contribute meaningful testimony on this issue. I look forward to joining you as an active participant in the discussion."

(For more information, contact Lauren Radcliffe in Representative Seaton's office at 235-2921, or Doug Letch in Senator Stevens's office at 486-4925)

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