

July 17, 2023

Federal Highway Administration  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE.  
Washington, DC 20590

Re: Letter of Support for State of Alaska's DOT&PF Applications for the Ferry Service Rural Communities Program

To the Honorable Pete Buttigieg,

Please accept this letter of support for the grant applications submitted by the State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities Ferry Service Rural Communities Program. These projects will support the Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) in their efforts to provide an essential service throughout Coastal Alaska and beyond.

AMHS serves more than 30 communities covering 3,500 miles of coastline by transporting passengers, vehicles, and equipment between coastal communities. This service helps meet the social, educational, health and economic needs of Alaskans. AMHS provides year-round and seasonal scheduled ferry service throughout Southeast and Southwest Alaska, extending south to Prince Rupert, British Columbia and Bellingham, Washington. The system connects communities with each other, regional centers, and the continental road system. AMHS also provides a coastal transportation alternative between Anchorage and the "Lower 48" states versus driving the Alaska Highway.

Funding for vessel maintenance and replacement, operating support, and shoreside improvements helps to sustain and improve an essential transportation system for Alaska, and beyond. We look forward to working with DOT&PF and the AMHS in their efforts, including discussions about installation of shore-side charging should electric ferry serve our community in the coming years.

These projects will support the Justice40 Initiative by strengthening the resiliency of a vital transportation system in the face of extreme impacts from climate change and by connecting disadvantaged rural communities to commerce, health and social services, and providing an economical way to bring food and other goods and services in. As a public transportation system, AMHS is an integral part of Alaska's highway system, reaching many rural communities that would otherwise be cut off from the rest of the state and nation. The AMHS and its ferries are a lifeline for many communities, ensuring the ability to access goods and services, and delivering necessary construction materials and freight for infrastructure improvements. Oftentimes, the AMHS is the only alternative transportation for freight to be shipped by barge or air, which is highly weather dependent and extremely expensive. The AMHS also plays an integral role in supporting and stabilizing commerce in the maritime, tourism and fishing industries.

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Together, these projects and Ferry Service Rural Communities Program will make a true impact on the lives of Alaskans, as well as the future of Alaska's economy and environment.

Sincerely,