



# Municipality of Skagway

GATEWAY TO THE KLONDIKE

P.O. BOX 415 SKAGWAY, ALASKA 99840

(PHONE) 907-983-2297 – Fax 907-983-2151

[WWW.SKAGWAY.ORG](http://WWW.SKAGWAY.ORG)

**SENT VIA EMAIL ONLY**

November 5, 2019

John MacKinnon, Commissioner  
Department of Transportation & Public Facilities  
State of Alaska  
P.O. Box 112500  
Juneau, AK 99811-2500  
[john.mackinnon@alaska.gov](mailto:john.mackinnon@alaska.gov)

**RE: Alaska Marine Highway Scheduling**

Dear Commissioner MacKinnon,

We were sorry to learn of the additional repairs needed for the MV LeConte. The state's financial woes coupled with the aging fleet of vessels have combined to form the perfect storm for the Alaska Marine Highway System (no pun intended).

Residents of Skagway, Haines and many other communities depend on the marine highway for safe and reliable winter travel, particularly for health care needs. We know that your planners and schedulers are doing everything in their power to provide what service they can during this crisis.

In the hopes of helping find a solution we are wondering if either of the following scheduling concepts might be a possibility. Here is some background.

A few years back, the mayors of Skagway and Haines and a small delegation met with Deputy Commissioner Mike Neussl to discuss the Alaska Class Ferries (ACFs), then under construction. One of the topics of discussion was routing. The original design studies for the new boats proposed, among other routes, a direct round trip from Auke Bay to Skagway that could be accomplished within the 12-hour rule. Captain Neussl, after checking with the Coast Guard, confirmed that this would be possible.

Our question is, would it be possible to put the MV Tazlina into service in Lynn Canal two days a week, sailing one day a week round trip from Auke Bay to Haines and the next day roundtrip from Auke Bay to Skagway?

This schedule would accomplish the following: a Tuesday/Wednesday scenario would give residents the ability to schedule their health care appointments mid-week and catch the MV

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Matanuska back home on the weekend. It would also give Juneau residents a reasonable turn-around time for recreation in the Yukon.

This schedule would allow the MV Tazlina to service Hoonah, Gustavus, and other Panhandle communities on alternative days.

A second option would be to put the ship into Lynn Canal on an Auke Bay/Haines/Skagway/Auke Bay route, but we have no information on whether or not the Coast Guard would allow an exception to the 12-hour rule for a schedule of this length. We are assuming this route would be an additional two hours beyond the rule.

Obviously, Skagway is concerned and stands ready to offer any assistance we can. We are committed to working jointly with the State to solve any and all ferry-related problems. Thank you for your efforts on our behalf.

Sincerely,



Andrew Cremata, Mayor  
[mayor@skagway.org](mailto:mayor@skagway.org)

cc: Governor Michael Dunleavy  
Ben Stevens, Chief of Staff  
Senator Jesse Kiehl  
Representative Sara Hannan  
Captain John Falvey Jr.  
Deborah Schnabel, Haines Borough Manager  
Rorie Watt, City and Borough of Juneau Manager  
Southeast Conference