



MATANUSKA-SUSITNA BOROUGH

Office of Public Affairs

350 East Dahlia Avenue, Palmer, AK 99654
(907) 745-9577 • psullivan@matsugov.us



Jan. 30, 2008

PRESS RELEASE

Patty Sullivan
Public Affairs Director

Ridership, no problem for Susitna ferry

PALMER – The Susitna ferry is projected to fill with regular riders in its first year of operation. Unlike most public ferry systems, the Susitna won't require much of a subsidy. In fact a conservative analysis predicts it could break even and possibly turn a profit within five years.

That's what Assemblymembers and the Mayor of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough heard in a briefing last night by Co-Inventor Lew Madden, also the Borough's Owner's Representative on the project.

“This is a ferry that will support economic development of Upper Cook Inlet,” Madden said. “This is analogous to the Chesapeake Bay in the 1700s. All that was waiting was a transportation infrastructure for the economies to develop.”

The draft numbers for fare prices are still very rough and more a starting point for demand analysis models. Fares for a person could range from \$6 to \$10 to travel from Port MacKenzie to Anchorage, and \$25 for a vehicle. The ferry ride cuts four hours off the roundtrip commute from Anchorage to Point Mac. The suggested fare is comparable to gasoline prices of \$36 roundtrip.

Borough Manager John Duffy says the fares are dependent on the demand and the cost to operate the ferry. “We will maximize the benefits to riders hopefully at no cost to the Borough?” Duffy said.

He called the break-even projections for the ferry “super news.” “The other thing,” Duffy said, “is that the ferry is already doing what it set out to do—stimulate economic development.”

The conservative ferry rider projections do not account for a new state prison, to be built nine miles up from the Port. Groundbreaking is expected this summer. The prison will create 350 jobs, drawing some employees from Anchorage and providing regular riders for the ferry. Also in the works, is the relocation to Point MacKenzie of a 60,000 square foot manufacturing plant and its employees. Snowmachine enthusiasts will likely be regular winter riders for fast access to Mat-Su trails.

The Susitna is a revolutionary development in ferry design. It is likely the most complex commercial ship to be built in the last 100 years. The Susitna will be the first ice breaking catamaran in the world.

Attached are Frequently Asked Questions on the Motor Vehicle Susitna ferry.
For more information call Patty Sullivan, Mat-Su Borough Public Affairs Director at (907) 745-9577 or psullivan@matsugov.us.