

Greater Southeast Alaska Conservation Community

P. O. Box 6064
Sitka, AK 99835

May 1, 2014

Governor Sean Parnell
P.O. Box 110001
Juneau, AK 99811

Dear Governor Parnell

Subject: Legislature's Proposed \$35 Million Capital Budget Item – Juneau Access Project

As a region-wide organization with a board and membership consisting primarily of Southeast Alaska residents, the Greater Southeast Alaska Conservation Community urges you to veto the \$35 million appropriation included in the Legislature's Capital Budget for work on a segment of the proposed Juneau Access project - a road between Juneau and the Katzehin River.

We understand that the purpose of this legislation is to secure matching federal highway funds. However, it is premature to appropriate funds for this project before the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) is made available for public review, particularly in light of other important funding needs in Alaska like maintenance of existing infrastructure and education.

As a conservation organization, we are deeply concerned whether the DEIS will sufficiently address the monetary and non-monetary costs of the proposed road project as they relate to public resources such as wildlife, water quality, and salmon runs. In particular, five of our nine Board members are or were active commercial fishermen with decades of experience in fishery habitat issues and we are concerned about road construction impacts on the fishery business because road construction can adversely affect water quality and fish habitat in numerous ways through erosion, fish passage restrictions and habitat fragmentation.

Further, there have been serious questions as to the validity of the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities' estimates of both the direct and indirect costs of the Juneau Access Project and the potential benefits that would result from it. For example, there are 36 avalanche chutes and 112 identified land and rock slide areas in the proposed 50-mile road extension which are likely to cost more to address than DOT&PF has heretofore estimated. There have also been serious questions about the assumptions and validity of the department's cost comparison between the Alaska Marine Highway System's operation in Lynn Canal and the road.

Again, the matter of how well DOT&PF has considered these issues as well as the other environmental risks needs to be the subject of thorough analysis in the DEIS and should not be presumed by a \$35 million appropriation before the fact. In sum, we request that you allow for the democratic process and public review to occur prior to any further appropriation of funds.

Sincerely,

Paul Olson
President