Assembly Weighs in on Tusty's Recent Delay

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

Two weeks ago the Kodiak City Council unanimously passed a resolution requesting the governor and legislature develop a long-term solution to ensure full and uninterrupted ferry service to Kodiak. During Thursday’s borough meeting, the assembly followed suit and passed a similar resolution.

The formal statements from Kodiak’s two governing reflect frustration over the ferry Tustumena’s most recent service delay announcement. In July the Alaska Marine Highway System said service is delayed indefinitely for the time being.

The ship is currently in Seward Ships Dry Dock, and has been since November. Poor welds and inferior materials have caused the year-long delays and the latest delay when they failed to pass Coast Guard inspection.

During Thursday’s meeting Mayor Jerome Selby said he’d be meeting with City Mayor Pat Branson and Kodiak’s Juneau delegation to try and call the Department of Transportation commissioner to talk directly about the effects reduced ferry service has had on Kodiak. He said they will also try to make a call to the governor and calling on Kodiak’s municipal government to help solve the problem.

“We’re going to be asking, obviously, the assembly and the council to be looking at capital projects. Specifically dealing with a replacement for the Tusty. And this is now going to now be an agenda item at the AML board meeting in a couple weeks, as well because we’re going to try and get statewide support behind addressing our primary transportation mode here for Southwest Alaska. It’s kind of like, oh, the highway between Fairbanks and Anchorage washed out and we’ll see if we can figure out a solution in a year or so, would be the response from the state is kind of what’s happened to us with the Tusty. And that’s not really an acceptable response to be looking at our main line of transportation and a state highway system being out of service for, who knows how long at this point.”

Assemblyman Aaron Griffin said the borough should use this opportunity to figure out how to better help Kodiak’s village communities, who have been greatly affected by the reduced ferry service.

“I think that an outage such as
this really puts a certain amount of weight on us as an assembly, as community planners, for the borough as a whole, to take a look at our inter-borough transportation plan. That we have to have contingencies for this. That there’s something that we can do to help our outlying communities or at least attempt to try and relieve some of the impact of this when the state drops the ball.”

The assembly unanimously passed the resolution.