

## Tustumena May Return in October

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

The ferry Tustumena is set to come back into service in October. That's the latest word, via email, from Department of Transportation Commissioner Patrick Kemp. He said welding should be done on the vessel by the end of this week and painting, weather permitting, will happen over the weekend. From there, Kemp said the ferry will undergo three weeks stability testing and sea trials before it gets the green light to sail.

The Alaska Marine Highway System seems optimistic about the Tustumena's return to service, at least enough to include it in its proposed ferry schedule for 2014. AMHS released the proposed schedule this week and opened it up for public comment and review.

The Tustumena is set to begin sailing in October, with a month-long overhaul for maintenance in April. Every ship in the highway's fleet is required to have annual maintenance inspections. The Tustumena's return in October aligns with the plan to layup the Kennicott for capital project improvements between October and mid January. However, Kemp said the Kennicott will not be pulled from service until the Tustumena is operational.

In general, the proposed schedule allows for two Aleutian chain trips per month by the Tustumena and the Kennicott will return its focus to Gulf crossings between Bellingham and Southwest Alaska.

Written comments on the plan are due to the Department of Transportation by September 10. A statewide teleconference to accept public comments is scheduled for September 11. You can find a link to the full proposed schedule, and how to submit a comment, by [clicking here](#).