

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPT. OF HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

Alaska Commission on Aging

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March 17, 2011

Representative Peggy Wilson
Alaska State Capitol, Room 408
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Subject: Support for CSHB 30

Dear Representative Wilson:

The Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA) is pleased to offer our support of CSHB 30, a bill to establish the Alaska Transportation Infrastructure Fund dedicated to support transportation projects using a combination of state and federal funds. This bill is sponsored by you and co-sponsored by Representatives Steve Thompson, Cathy Muñoz, and Craig Johnson.

Currently, Alaska is one of three states that does not provide financial support to operate public and community transportation systems. Transportation costs are rising dramatically and federal dollars are dwindling. Fuel costs, maintenance and insurance premiums are going up and providers are responding by reducing hours of service and raising fares. These changes impact seniors and others with disabilities who live on a fixed income and depend on community transit services. For local transit systems, State operating funds would help to incentivize their community transit systems to leverage maximum federal financial assistance for support of operating expenses for their public transit projects that could amount to \$12 to \$15 million of additional funds to Alaska for transit purposes.

Safe, accessible and affordable transportation options are essential for older Alaskans and people with disabilities so that they are able to access medical care, get to their job and volunteer placements and to participate in community life. Transportation is one of the top needs consistently identified in statewide surveys of these populations, including the elder-senior community forums and a statewide senior survey recently conducted by ACoA to determine priority concerns of older Alaskans.

Community transportation is a life-line for seniors and people with physical and cognitive disabilities to ensure a healthy quality of life. As the number of seniors in Alaska grows at a pace of four times the national average, the ACoA recommends that the state of Alaska support legislation and adequate funding for community transit systems that serve special needs populations.

Please accept our sincere appreciation for your efforts to support improvements for transportation in Alaska. We believe that CSHB 30 will help build the state's transportation infrastructure as well as local community transit services to improve services for all Alaskans, including Alaska's most vulnerable citizens. Please feel free to contact Denise Daniello, ACoA's executive director (465-4879 or denise.daniello@alaska.gov) should you require additional information about our position. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Sharon Howerton-Clark
Chair, Alaska Commission on Aging

Sincerely,



Denise Daniello
ACoA Executive Director