

## AMHS Reform: Tactical Strategy

The legislature demonstrated confidence that AMHS has a pathway towards improved sustainability through introduction of HB 412 and their FY 2019 budget actions.

Southeast Conference, the AMHS Reform Steering Committee, and supporters need to build momentum between now and the 2019 session. Clearly articulated benefits, urgency, and considerable public support are essential for achieving proposed legislative changes.

### *Task 1: Confirm Key Messaging*

AMHS Reform talking points should be the foundation of every communication. Communication opportunities include civic presentations, media interviews, interim hearings, and community meetings. Drawing on project documents and discussions, the messaging may incorporate the following points:

- The AMHS Reform Steering Committee is pursuing legislation to transition the ferry system to a Public Corporation, creating a more sustainable organization.
- Benefits of this new business model include infusion of private sector expertise, enhanced revenue generation potential, consistent leadership, longer planning horizon, and greater alignment of management and labor interests.
- Without significant change, the system is at risk of failure. State General Fund support dropped by \$35 million in the past five years (\$124 million to \$89 million). Service levels, ridership, and related economic benefits also declined.
- As currently structured, AMHS experiences funding and schedule uncertainty, frequent turnover in politically appointed positions, short-term planning horizon, cumbersome procurement processes, indirect labor negotiations, and political influence over operational decisions.
- Full privatization is not an option; Alaskans lose too much in essential services. However, private sector expertise and efficiencies will be gained through the Board and new public-private partnerships.
- Urgent action is needed to preserve this essential transportation linkage between coastal Alaska and the state's economic and service hubs.

### *Task 2: Utilize AMHS Reform Communication Tools*

The Steering Committee established several communication tools and resources:

- *Case for AMHS Reform:* This brochure summarizes the value of changing AMHS from a line agency to a public corporation; illustrates the dramatic decrease in state funding; and contains data about widespread use among Alaskans and the economic importance of non-residents.

- PowerPoint Presentations: Presentations have been updated to reflect actions during the 2018 session and can be tailored to reflect the audience and level of detail needed.
- AMHS Reform website: The website includes all project documents, presentations, meeting notices, public comments, and other relevant documents.
- Several resource documents can be found on the project website including:
  - *Phase 1 Governance Study* (which examined marine highway models in other locations, their approach to governance, and applicability to AMHS)
  - *Phase 2: Strategic Business and Operational Plan* (contains detailed discussion about the benefits of a public corporation, numerous options to generate new revenues, and an operational analysis)
  - *The Economic Impacts of the Alaska Marine Highway System*

### *Task 3: Maintain Effective Legislative Communication*

Thank key legislators for introduction of HB 412 and for financial support for AMHS. Contact information for legislators can be found on [www.akleg.gov](http://www.akleg.gov).

Coordinate with the House Transportation committee on interim field hearings and related public meetings.

### *Task 4: Mobilize Statewide Support*

Public outreach tasks include the following:

- Present information to Chambers of Commerce, Rotary and other service groups, School Boards, City Councils, and Borough Assemblies. Ask attendees to contact legislators about the importance of AMHS funding and proposed legislation. Target communities on the road system, highlighting the statewide benefits of resident and non-resident travel.
- Solicit support from associations with common interests including Alaska Municipal League, Southeast Conference, Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference, Prince William Sound Economic Development District, other ARDORs, Alaska Travel Industry Association, and Alaska Chamber. Activities may include giving presentations and providing articles for their newsletters with links to the AMHS Reform website.
- Continue to post project updates, media stories, and meeting announcements on the [www.amhsreform.com](http://www.amhsreform.com) website. Sending email blasts is an extremely efficient way to alert people when targeted communications are needed. Updates can include links to legislators' emails and phone numbers.

- Establish strong communications with municipalities, their lobbyists, tribal entities, and Alaska Municipal League. These entities can amplify communications and alert the Steering Committee to suggestions and concerns.
- Distribute short stories (300- to 500-word) stories at key points such as introduction of reform legislation. Articles can be sent directly to media outlets and distributed via newsletters published by local Chambers, trade organizations, and other supporters.

#### *Task 5: Implement Interim Measures and Refine Strategies Before the Next Session*

Interim Measures identified in Phase III can help demonstrate the value of reforms and facilitate transformation to a Public Corporation.

Legislation will need to be reintroduced in 2019 with the convening of a new legislature. The strength of the public support generated by the AMHS Steering Committee will directly influence the momentum for introduction and passage of a new bill.

The Steering Committee should evaluate and update communication strategy, tools, and tactics before the 2019 Session commences. Coordination and communication between the Steering Committee, AMHS supporters, communities, tribal governments, and key contacts should be well-established by this time. Updated analysis of AMHS passenger and revenue data should be incorporated into communication tools.