

# Hot boats for cool routes...and warm ones, too



**F**ast ferries will figure prominently in Southeast Alaska's future under a long-term transportation plan recently detailed by the state's governor.

More than \$1.8 billion in spending is envisioned for highway and ferry projects over a 20-year period in the Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan (SATP). Some \$1.3 billion of the spending is expected to be covered by federal grants.

"Transportation is the lifeblood of a region, and in Southeast Alaska, transportation means roads and ferries," Governor Frank Murkowski said. "Our plan uses the right mix of transportation links to give Alaskans access to jobs and economic opportunities, access to neighboring communities, and access to the world at large."

Many of the island communities in Southeast Alaska depend on regular ferry service as a vital and sole link to the mainland.

The Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) took delivery of its first fast vehicle ferry, the 250-passenger, 35-vehicle M/V *Fairweather*, earlier this year from Derecktor Shipyards, Bridgeport, Conn. The *Fairweather* operates between Juneau, Haines, Skagway and Sitka. The shipyard is building a sister vessel, the M/V *Chenega*, which will be added to the fleet next year.

Under the SATP, new fast ferries will be used to cover road gaps of 70 miles or more, and older, mainline feeder ferries will be retired.

Other recommendations made by SATP include:

- Frequent ferry service to Haines and a new ferry terminal near the Katzechin River.

- A new terminal serving Sitka from the east or northeast of Baranof Island for more frequent, less expensive ferry service
- A short shuttle ferry connecting Kake and Petersburg across the Wrangell Narrows
- A short ferry shuttle connection to the north end of Prince of Wales Island near Red Bay.
- The replacement of two aging mainline ferries at a cost of about \$240 million on Juneau-Bellingham routes.

#### NOT HIGH-SPEED, BUT...

While it's not looking for a speedy vehicle ferry, the Inter-Island Ferry Authority, Prince of Wales Island, Alaska, recently issued a Request for Proposals for the detail engineering and construction of a near sister vessel to the Subchapter K, passenger/vehicle ferry *Prince of Wales*.

The RFP is for detail engineering, construction, completion, testing and delivery of the M/V *Stikine*, a 195 passenger, 30 car, Subchapter K steel-hulled, vehicle/passenger ferry, for year round service in Southeast Alaska. The M/V *Stikine* will be the IFA's second ferry and will be built for delivery in the spring of 2006.

The *Prince of Wales* cost some \$12 million to build in 2001.

The new ferry will have a length overall of 197 feet, 6 inches, a beam of 53 feet, and a design draft between 9 and 12 feet. The ship will have geared diesel propulsion with twin, controllable pitch propellers.

#### LAKE EXPRESS SUCCESS

While the *Fairweather* was the first high-speed vehicle ferry