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C.E. Furbish
668, 7th and Alaska St.
Skagway, AK 99840

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Statewide Planning Office
Division of Program Development
3132 Channel Drive, Suite 200
Juneau, AK 99801-7898

Dear Governor Murkowski,

Thank you for considering the following comments on the Draft Fiscal Year 2006-2008 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

Due in part to a congressional mandate to spend over $450 million on the Knik Arm and Gravina Bridges, the Department of Transportation announced that funding for the State's "core" transportation program had been reduced. This revelation came as a severe disappointment to communities across the state that were counting on long awaited projects that had been either canceled or delayed in the Draft STIP in order to fund the two controversial bridges. It is nothing short of insulting to know that roughly two-thirds of the transportation projects proposed for future funding in the January 2005 Fy2004-2006 STIP Amendment 8 have been eliminated from DOT's latest plan. These cuts include:

- $311 million for the Seward Highway safety and congestion relief improvements
- $256 million for projects deemed critical for gas pipeline construction
- $323 million for the Community Transportation Program, which funds sanitation and evacuation roads and other critical projects for Alaska's towns and villages.

Congress has since lifted the mandate to use the $450 million for the two "Bridges to Nowhere" as they are nationally known. The Department of Transportation now has the unique opportunity to reevaluate how we should spend our transportation dollars.

I look forward to commenting in the coming months on an amendment to the FY2006-2008 which does **not** prioritize the controversial Knik Arm Bridge, Gravina Bridge, and Juneau Road over other more critical needs of the State.

Sincerely,

C.E. Furbish

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