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SENATOR BERT K. STEDMAN *CO-CHAIR SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE*

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Senator Stedman Dismayed by Administration's Unilateral Action to Sink the Gravina Island Bridge *Years of Work and Planning Dismissed*

(SITKA) – Sen. Bert Stedman (R-Sitka) was astounded by Gov. Sarah Palin's announcement today that she was unilaterally cancelling the Gravina Island Bridge project.

"Improving access to Gravina Island has been an economic priority for the community of Ketchikan, the State of Alaska and our congressional delegation for over 30 years. I'm shocked that the Governor would ignore the significant energy, hard work and financial resources already invested in the project", Stedman said.

The Gravina Access project was conceived to provide a hard road link from the community of Ketchikan to neighboring Gravina Island. "To many Ketchikan residents, this project is a litmus test of the state's willingness to invest in our community's economic future. Anyone who has studied the project knows how ridiculous it is to suggest that it is simply a bridge to the Ketchikan airport. To have it characterized as such is disturbing and demonstrates a limited understanding of the project", commented Senator Stedman.

The Alaska Congressional delegation appropriated \$223 million for the Gravina Access Project in the 2005 Federal Highway appropriation bill. Last year, the state legislature appropriated \$10 million in state matching funds. Since the project's inception, over \$50 million has been committed to moving it forward. As recently as two weeks ago, the Department of Transportation met with Ketchikan leaders to discuss the project and to explore alternatives that would meet the needs of the community.

Senator Stedman said, "The only thing that has prevented this project from moving forward is the Department of Transportation's unwillingness to make it a priority. The environmental work has been done and a record of decision issued. With the proper leadership and initiative, this administration could allocate federal funds as originally intended and work with the legislature on a funding plan that doesn't jeopardize other important statewide priorities."

"This Governor never misses an opportunity to advocate for involving Alaskans in the governmental decision making process. So it's troubling that she would take such drastic unilateral action without consulting either the legislature or the affected community."

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