

04AUG22

Honorable Mayor and Assembly

Back in 2007 one of Mayor Bourcy's last official acts was appointing a Port Advisory committee. Not long after, the newly formed Municipality of Skagway commissioned a comprehensive study to explore the diverse options available for Port Development. What eventually came out of these efforts was a project known as the Gateway project. The Gateway project was focused on the western side of the Skagway harbor specifically the ore basin containing the Broadway and Ore docks and the accompanying uplands. In effect the land and tidelands that compose the White Pass lease. The primary goal of the Gateway project was to enhance the industrial capacity of the Port of Skagway while simultaneously maintaining and enhancing the cruise component of our waterfront.

The reasons for this were many. The exponential growth in the Alaska cruise industry resulting in heretofore unknown industrial scale tourism and the accompanying increase in cruise ship size, the expiration in 2023 of the Municipal Tidelands lease, a record-breaking burst in Yukon mining exploration activity, the outreach of Selwyn Mine president Harlan Meade, and the overriding need to meet the demands placed on our port from the various stakeholders doing business in Skagway. The primary focus and goal were to insure a viable conduit for industrial use of the Port of Skagway.

While cruise industry tourism has become the primary engine of our local economy, it was made possible by the previous industrial development that created the Port of Skagway to begin with. Skagway has been the Gateway to the Yukon since the Gold Rush of 1898, and many would argue prior to that. Our community, our economy, and our survival depend on the foundation that industrial port use provides. This means freight, fuel, and ore. These year-round businesses are what keep our Industrial Use Klondike Highway open year-round. Tourism does not.

While the Gateway project had its ups and downs and evolved over the years it culminated in a 10-million-dollar grant from the State of Alaska and a 5-million-dollar bond approval from the voters of Skagway. The legacy of those efforts has come down to the current ore dock project. I applaud the efforts of the Municipality concerning the planning and engineering of the new Ore dock project. The new multi-faceted ore dock will ensure that the industrial foundation of our waterfront survives and thrives for the next 50 years. This project is critical. I thank you for all the action taken to date.

I do however caution the Assembly that there are some serious concerns with the current design. We need to take a pause and modify the project a bit to get the best benefit for the community. I believe this is all achievable without losing any serious momentum. We can get the design right and continue with a project that everyone can be proud of. Now is the time to work with our engineering firm and make the necessary changes to do the project right the first time.

Sincerely,

Tom Cochran