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Knowles Outlines Plans For State Roads, Ferries

By T.A. BADGER
Associated Press Writer

ANCHORAGE (AP) — Gov. Tony Knowles on Tuesday unveiled an ambitious 10-year, \$2.2 billion state transportation plan that focuses on upgrading Alaska's major thoroughfares and building a number of new roads where they would bring the greatest economic benefit.

The Knowles administration envisions spending about \$220 million a year for the next decade to complete the highway, road, ferry terminals and trails.

More than half of the money —

about \$120 million annually — would be used to rebuild the Parks, Glenn, Richardson, Seward and other highways, as well as main arteries in the state's largest cities and Alaska Marine Highway System facilities.

An estimated \$80 million would be allocated yearly for new roads. Knowles said he favored a road to Whittier, a 16-mile link between Nondalton and Iliamna and a 20-mile road between King Cove and Cold Bay on the Alaska Peninsula for transporting salmon to a community with a runway that could handle large planes.

"Now that's marketing Alaska and competing in an international economy," the governor said in a speech to the Downtown Rotary Club in Anchorage.

Knowles said building a road to Cordova — a priority plan under the Hickel administration — didn't pass muster among the most desired projects, but he didn't rule it out in the future.

The Knowles administration plan also calls for spending up to \$20 million a year on bicycle paths, scenic pullouts and other highway improvements aimed at both residents and tourists.

"When Ralph and Mabel in the Lower 48 are planning their trip of a lifetime to Alaska, the expansive trail system ought to be the first thing they see on a map," Knowles said.

He said his ultimate vision was a bicycle-trail system from Seward to Fairbanks.

The transportation plan is designed to get the most from the federal government before Congress changes the way it allocates federal highway funds.

Alaska now receives about \$6 for every \$1 it contributes to the federal highway fund. State Transportation Commissioner Joe Perkins said the law that established that formula is up for reauthorization by Congress next year, which opens the allocation to change.

The plan as proposed assumes Alaska will receive the same level of federal funds as it has in the past four years.

Knowles said the foremost highway project is rebuilding the Glenn Highway that is separated from the Seward Highway.

State Rep. Vic Kohring, R-Wasilla and a member of the House Finance Committee, was among those listening to Knowles' speech. He said afterward that he generally agreed with the governor's long-range plan, particularly as it calls for the federal government to pick up nearly the entire tab.

Proposed highway spending over the 10 years includes:

- Seward Highway — \$235 million
- Alaska Marine Highway System — \$230 million
- Glenn Highway — \$185 million
- Richardson Highway — \$135 million
- Parks Highway — \$130 million
- Sterling Highway — \$60 million
- Haines Highway — \$50 million
- Tok Cutoff — \$15 million
- Alaska Highway — \$10 million

Proposed urban road spending includes:

- Ketchikan — \$35 million
- Anchorage — \$25 million
- Fairbanks — \$25 million

WINNING WALKER — Sandi Hicks, left, presents Kara Sisk with two round-trip tickets on Alaska Airlines, one of the prizes awarded

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