

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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## Charlie Huggins Senator

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### Sponsor Statement for Senate Bill 152

*“An Act relating to municipal transportation systems and to regional transit authorities.”*

The Municipality of Anchorage and the Matanuska-Susitna Borough have approved a Memorandum of Agreement that commits both entities to cooperate in the development of a Regional Transit Authority (“RTA”) for the purpose of increasing commuter service between the two communities.

It is important to plan for regional transit service in South-central Alaska now so that we are prepared for the future. Conservative estimates indicate that more than 14,000 people commute between Mat-Su and Anchorage every day and this number is projected to grow to 30,000 within 15 years. Fluctuating fuel costs and over-capacity roadways are driving the public demand for transit service to record highs. Park-and-ride lots are overflowing and bus services in both Anchorage and Mat-Su are experiencing double-digit ridership growth, with over 700 people on a waiting list for vanpools.

Thousands of RTAs exist in communities large and small across the nation and are a proven effective and efficient approach to managing cross-jurisdictional service. These authorities plan and deploy multi-modal services that are funded by a variety of sources, including federal, state, and local contributions and “fare box” revenue.

Enabling legislation is required to create RTAs. There is precedent in Alaska for forming multi-jurisdictional authorities: The Municipal Port Authority Act, Alaska Statutes 29.35.600 - .730, provides for the establishment of port authorities by one or more municipalities, and the Regional Solid Waste Management Authority Act, Alaska Statutes 29.35.800 - .925, provides for the establishment of regional solid waste management authorities. SB 152 will provide the framework to authorize the RTA and empower it to enter into contracts; accept contributions, grants, or loans from any public or private agency; incur obligations and issue bonds; and acquire, manage, and convey real property in furtherance of its mission.

The creation of an RTA is recommended in both the Anchorage and Mat-Su Borough Long Range Transportation plans, as well as in a 2002 Commuter Rail Study that was commissioned by the Alaska Railroad Corporation.

By planning regionally, we can best meet increasing demands on Alaska's busiest commuter corridor and manage the integrated system as it matures.

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