



# Regional Partnerships

The following projects were supported by KPEDD as they aligned with one or more of the CEDS goals;

- **As a regional Arctic Energy Ambassadors with technical support of DOE's Arctic Energy Office**, KPEDD has been working to develop regional, place based and collaborative energy leadership in Alaska, along with resources and knowledge sharing partnerships in alignment with DOE's Arctic Energy Strategy and the nation's clean energy transition. The goals outlined during the project period included; (1) Articulating community and regional energy needs through a cohort of local champions, (2) Connecting stakeholders and promote professional and regional capacity development through ongoing DOE training and engagement, (3) Providing regional technical assistance to advance project development, (4) Developing regional or statewide projects, with solutions to energy issues that could be replicated through the Arctic, and (5) Encouraging regional projects championed by Ambassadors to be vetted through an online energy project portal created to better connect stakeholders to funding opportunities and technical resources.
  - **Discussion with the Alaska Department of Transportation to become a Regional Planning Organization (RPO)** were ongoing at the end of the reporting period. EDDs met collectively and discussed having a foundational set of deliverables that were consistent amongst all groups to create continuity of programs. It is the intent of the legislature that the DOT increase consultation and collaboration with local municipalities by establishing RPOs to advance the identification and planning for locally driven projects where there is both interest and capacity. The role of an RPO is to (1) identifies local transportation needs, (2) help facilitate and develop the conduction of transportation planning, (3) assists local governments in identifying transportation priorities and goals, (4) support the statewide transportation planning process in non-metropolitan areas of the state, (5) serve areas with population sizes less than 50,000, (6) collaborate with DOT to increase cooperation, consultation, and communication regarding projects and areas of priority.
  - **KPEDD continued joint efforts to develop the three-legged stool of workforce development (childcare, housing and public transportation)** alongside regional coalition members to provide opportunities for workforce retention and attraction. In order to fill existing labor gaps, support infrastructure must be in place. Real estate booms after the pandemic (in an effort to diversify individual assets) nearly collapsed the housing market leaving little to no opportunities for local investment in communities like Homer and Seward. Regulation changes during the period limited the number of childcare providers and limited (although currently growing) public transportation options have drastically limited job candidate options in each community at every level. During the project period, KPEDD spoke at housing, transportation and childcare working groups to provide applicable infrastructure data, connect user groups and stakeholders with resource providers including funding sources, provide planning assistance to implement change, and measure public needs through community surveys.
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- **Cordova Telecom Cooperatives' (CTC) proposed USDA ReConnect Round Five grant proposal:** "FISH West", Fiber Internet Serving Homes for Chugach Villages West of Seward. The intent of this project is to deliver highspeed internet services via Fiber-To-The-Home to the geographically isolated communities of Nanwalek and Port Graham, Alaska; as well as provide a subsea fiber optic cable around the Kenai Peninsula between Seward and Homer that will enable key redundancy for the residents of those two Tribal communities and the neighboring community of Seldovia. This project works to create new broadband connectivity within the state of Alaska that will play a pivotal role in reducing transport costs and keeping internet prices affordable for these communities and their stakeholders.
- **Grant application support for the State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities Ferry Service Rural Communities Program.** This project will bolster the Alaska Marine Highway System (AMHS) in their efforts to provide an essential service throughout Coastal Alaska and beyond. AMHS serves more than 30 communities covering 3,500 miles of coastline by transporting passengers, vehicles, and equipment between coastal communities. This critical service helps meet the social, educational, health and economic needs of Alaskans. AMHS provides year-round and seasonal scheduled ferry service throughout Southeast and Southwest Alaska, extending south to Prince Rupert, British Columbia and Bellingham, Washington. The system connects communities with each other, regional centers, and the continental road system. AMHS also provides a coastal transportation alternative between Anchorage and the "Lower 48" states versus driving the Alaska Highway. Funding for vessel maintenance and replacement, operating support, and shoreside improvements helps to sustain and improve an essential transportation system for Alaska, and beyond. These projects will support the Justice40 Initiative by strengthening the resiliency of a vital transportation system in the face of extreme impacts from climate change and by connecting disadvantaged rural communities to commerce, health and social services, and providing an economical way to bring food and other goods and services in. As a public transportation system, AMHS is an integral part of Alaska's highway system, reaching many rural communities that would otherwise be cut off from the rest of the state and nation.
- **The development and expansion of the BUMPS bus service.** For the past five years BUMPS has been the sole provider of low-cost public transit connecting communities along the western Kenai Peninsula's Sterling Highway. Having low-cost public transportation is imperative to the economic growth and sustainability of underserved rural communities by providing public transportation. The addition of Low-No emissions buses would reduce the amount of greenhouse gases, avoid adverse environmental impacts in the surrounding area, and reduce pollution. KPEDD has supported community development efforts and participated in services that will assist with economic resources and benefit residents of the Kenai Peninsula.

