

***With Ferry Link on Yukon—***

# **Rep. Mike Bradner's Bill Calls For Fairbanks, Nome Highway**

State Rep. Mike Bradner, D-Fairbanks, has introduced a bill in the State House to develop a highway west from Fairbanks to Nome, and is urging more immediate completion by the temporary use of a ferry along the route paralleling the Yukon River.

Bradner said the TAPS Highway has created access to the Yukon on the Fairbanks end, and called for an immediate beginning of highway construction on the Nome end to make a highway connection to the river from the Seward Peninsula.

The Fairbanks legislator said skipping the mid-section of the highway along the river, and temporarily using a ferry, would bring the highway project within the realm of possible financing.

"The all-land route would cost upwards to \$300 million," Bradner stated, "while cutting out the 300 miles along the river, plus expensive bridge work, would bring the ferry route to a cost of only \$70 million."

Bradner said under projected federal and state highway funding there would be no possible way that Fairbanks and the Northwest could command the funds to build the all-land route within 10 years.

He continued: "The Yukon River ferry link in the highway system is a temporary solution for what will ultimately be an all land route."

Bradner described the ferry as simply Phase I in the all-land

highway."

"It just makes good sense to make use of this natural seasonal highway to get our foot in the door," he added.

"Such a route would allow cheap overland freight to flow into the mineral rich Seward Peninsula, and if costs are lowered may permit the mineral development necessary to build a deep water port on the Seward Peninsula to get minerals out," Bradner stressed.

The Fairbanks lawmaker says over-emphasis on oil development has made the Northwest the "forgotten land," despite the fact that it will undoubtedly one day be the "Mineral breadbasket" of Alaska.

Bradner, who is Chairman of the House Rules Committee, made no bones about the fact a highway west is one of his pet projects.

"Everyone's worrying about transportation north years after when they should have been," he said. "If we worry about an East to West highway link across Alaska now, and a deep water port in the West, then for once we may be ready," he added.

Bradner said he would seek to have the Yukon River officially declared part of the State Marina Highway System, pass a proposed general obligation bond funding

for ferry construction, and get the State to commit to beginning highway construction between Council and the Yukon River near Koyukuk.

He stated that a thrice weekly ferry service would be possible by only one ferry vessel operating between Koyukuk and the TAPS crossing. The ferries would be of sufficient size to carry about three hundred passengers if necessary, large cargo vans, and up to sixty cars.

Bradner first submitted the highway concept in 1967 and managed to get a \$2 million ferry appropriation in the last general ferry bond issue. However, that bond issue, principally for southeastern ferries, failed at the 1968 general election.

Also included in Bradner's proposal is a ferry vessel operating between the terminus of the Steese Highway from Fairbanks on the Yukon at Circle City, and the terminus of the Klondike Highway at Dawson City, Yukon Territory, some 285 miles upstream on the Yukon.

Bradner said the Upper Yukon Ferry could be started without any new highway construction, would turn the presently dead ended Steese Highway into a through route, and create one of the state's most beautiful tourist trips.