

Airport bill aimed at Atka isolation

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JUNEAU — Atka, the farthest-out village on the Aleutian Chain receives mail and passenger/freight transportation once a

month, weather permitting. The Atka population of 140 is serviced by a World War II harbor tug under contract from the Bureau of Indian Affairs. In winter the contract specifies

service will be provided once every two months. The barge sails from Adak, making the trip in twelve to fourteen hours, conditions permitting and passengers are not provided

overnight accommodations on the tug.

After ten years of looking for help to resolve the burdensome means of transportation, House Bill 169 has been introduced in

the Tenth Legislature by Representative Osterback, D-Sand Pt., to provide \$50,000 for a feasibility study to build an airstrip at Atka.

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Atka airport ...

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Osterback says that in researching the situation, amphibious aircraft were not recommended due to the large distance between Atka and Adak, the largest airport close enough to service Atka. Larger aircraft with capabilities for passengers and freight could service the Island provided a 5,000 foot airstrip were available. Atka's former airstrip is an old World War II metal-matted runway too deteriorated to land on and to date no one has determined repair costs.

Representative Osterback said "I believe this is a great state and excluding some people from mail service is wrong...For medical services, transportation or whatever, everybody should be treated equally in the state."

There have been reported instances of the tug's arrival and rapid departure, leaving residents only hours to answer a month's stack of mail; reported passage of deadlines without reply from Atka residents, and lost mail and personal belongings on the required skiff ride from the Atka beach to the waiting tug.