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Secretary Sally Jewell  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, NW – MS 7729  
Washington, DC 20240

Secretary Jewell:

As I await your response to my letter of January 17, 2014, requesting that you reverse your decision to reject a life-saving road corridor for the remote village of King Cove, Alaska, I am writing to determine what the Department of the Interior is doing to live up to the promises and commitments you have made both to village residents and to me.

As you know, the press release announcing your decision on the King Cove road included several statements describing your apparent intentions on this life-and-death issue. While you chose to deny the surest option to provide safe and reliable emergency medical access for the residents of King Cove – a short, one-lane gravel road that would be used only for non-commercial purposes – you also led us to believe that your decision was not the absolute end of your Department's involvement.

The following statements were either directly or indirectly attributed to you in Interior's press release of December 23, 2013, which was entitled, "Secretary Jewell Issues Decision on Izembek National Wildlife Refuge Land Exchange and Road Proposal."

*Directly Attributed to You:* "I understand the need for reliable methods of medical transport from King Cove, but I have concluded that other methods of transport remain that could be improved to meet community needs."

*Ascribed to You:* "Given the serious concerns raised by King Cove residents, the Secretary today reiterated the Department's commitment to assist in identifying and evaluating options that would improve access to affordable transportation and health care for the citizens of this remote Alaska community."

*Directly Attributed to You:* "We will continue to work with the State of Alaska and local communities to support viable alternatives to ensure continued transportation and infrastructure improvements for the health and safety of King Cove residents."

More than seven weeks have now passed since the announcement of your decision on the day before Christmas Eve. Despite the commitments you made above, neither you nor anyone else in your Department have made further statements or announced further actions on this issue.

While I am hopeful that you are reconsidering your rejection of this important road corridor, I was both surprised and disappointed that Ms. Rhea Suh, currently the Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management, and Budget at Interior, was unable to answer any of my questions about your Department's subsequent actions on this matter.

I questioned Ms. Suh during a nomination hearing held last week by the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. In light of her inability to provide answers, I now pose the same – and additional – questions to you.

1. What have you – or anyone else at Interior – done to ensure that the residents of King Cove have access to “reliable methods of medical transport” since you rejected the proposed road on December 23, 2013?
2. What have you – or anyone else at Interior – done to “assist in identifying and evaluating options that would improve access to affordable transportation and health care for the citizens” of King Cove since December 23, 2013?
3. What have you done to “work with the State of Alaska and local communities to support viable alternatives to ensure continued transportation and infrastructure improvements for the health and safety of King Cove residents” since December 23, 2013?

With the health and safety of the residents of King Cove still directly threatened, I expect that you fully understand why I am unwilling to let this matter recede. I also expect that you understand why I am unwilling to allow your Department to do nothing to help the Alaskans it has promised to assist, yet, to this point, only further imperiled. Accordingly, I look forward to hearing your plan to protect the residents of King Cove, as well as your prompt and thorough answers to each of the questions above.

Sincerely,



Lisa Murkowski  
United States Senator