

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



October 11, 2023

The Honorable Senators Murkowski and Sullivan  
The Honorable Representative Peltola

RE: Mail Delivery in the Mat-Su Valley

Dear Senators Murkowski, Sullivan, and Representative Peltola,

We draw your attention to the Matanuska Valley's need to have highway contract delivery at cluster-boxes for existing subdivisions and those being built in the future.

As you know, with over 117,000 inhabitants, the Mat-Su is the fastest growing area in Alaska. We have dozens of new subdivisions in the planning or building stages. Transportation on our streets and main thoroughfares is a major problem as we struggle for funding each year to build a more accommodating infrastructure in an effort to mitigate the growing congestion. It is inefficient and environmentally costly for every individual to drive to the few local post offices available to retrieve mail and sometimes later again to send mail in the Mat-Su Valley. The long lines at post offices all over Alaska are getting longer every day. Previous letters and requests from state legislators identifying these similar problems are of record.

You likely know that the Mat-Su has had problems with contract post offices which do not meet standards (or their USPS Contracts), as well as problems with rampant theft from traditional "doghouse" mailboxes on poles.

Mail delivery from postal trucks driving down rural roads and dropping mail in every box at the end of driveways along those routes (e.g., Palmer to Glennallen and other rural areas) is too inefficient and expensive for subdivisions in the Valley and the USPS has moved to consolidated delivery points. The USPS will not provide cluster mailboxes at these consolidated delivery points. This is why we have seen cluster-boxes or clusters of doghouse boxes as a requirement by the Post Office in the past.

The cluster-boxes in subdivisions of late are usually managed by contractors. Many neighborhoods have been banding together to pay for and install these lock boxes which are vandal proof to mitigate theft issues themselves but end up needing to utilize managed contractors.

These contractors apply for permits through the MSB for locations, design them, install, maintain them, and charge for the usage of these subdivision cluster-boxes while alleviating long lines in inclement weather, high traffic problems, parking problems, availability problems that come with the entire valley driving to the post office. They mitigate theft issues, repair broken doors, frozen locks, or make complete replacements if damaged.

We appreciate and need our contractors to continue this work. Like many things involving the government, contractors providing the service is often a wise budget choice for the community and areas like the Valley.

We join together to write this letter at this time because we believe the USPS needs to work more cooperatively with the contractors and not abandon the cluster-box model for mail delivery in Mat-Su.

It has come to our attention that the local postmaster is now wishing to discontinue cluster-box service altogether for new locations along with additional boxes at already approved USPS mail delivery points. The progression is evident through the non-issuing of the USPS arrow keys which are needed to secure the cluster mailboxes these contractors are putting in place and stopping new cluster-box contract extensions, making it impossible for new subdivisions to get secure mail delivery.

There is no federal regulation to disband their usage. With this point in mind, we are told that the local postmaster has not answered emails and appears not to be making any attempt to resolve issues with these contractors. One contractor told us, in their discussion with the Alaska District Manager, that they had explained they would write to our federal delegation about this issue and his response was still inexorable refusal to engage in communication about the matter.

The Mat Su Legislative Delegation would like to thank you in advance for your consideration in this matter. We fully support the need for the US Postal Service to continue providing cluster-boxes for subdivisions and to continue allowing the usage of existing cluster-boxes in the Mat-Valley as the benefits are immeasurable.

Respectfully,



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Rep. George Rauscher, Co-Chair



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Sen. David Wilson, Co-Chair



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Rep. Cathy Tilton



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Sen. Shelley Hughes



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Rep. DeLena Johnson



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Sen. Mike Shower



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Rep. Kevin McCabe



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Rep. Jesse Sumner