

Sitka Seawalk Phase II (SFHWY00312) Public Comments - Personal information is redacted for those that requested their name not be associated with their comment.

Comment #	Date	Commenter Organization	Comment	Response Date
2-1	3/8/2024	Survey Monkey #1	Sitka Trail Works conducted a public survey in spring of 2022 to understand community needs and preferences around trail development. When asked about what type of environments they would like more trails in, "on the coast" was the most popular response, selected by the majority (57%) of the 787 respondents. Based on this data, we know that hundreds of Sitkans desire the views and fresh air of walks along the ocean. I think it is likely fair to say that this survey suggests a strong public backing for facilities like the Seawalk.	12/27/2024
2-35	3/7/2024 - written comment	Written Comment	This will be such a valuable community asset. We need more ADA accessible trails in town and the views of the water will make this one of the best.	12/27/2024
2-2	3/12/2024	Survey Monkey #2	Please, without delay, provide on this form and on the Sitka Sea Walk Phase II webpage an email address where comments and documentation can be sent. I believe that this form alone, in its present bare-bones form, is an inadequate means of soliciting public comments for a project of this scale and with the trade offs it has.	3/13/2024 & 3/14/2024
2-3	3/12/2024	Survey Monkey #3	I am not against the planned expansion of the sea walk per se. I do not think I realized that tons of rock etc.. will be added to the tidelands and eelgrass beds. I would not be in favor of adding to the rock already in place for the bridge. I have walked next to the road on the existing fill and think there must be some way to build an extension without dumping more rock into the environment. Perhaps the width of the proposed expansion should be narrowed.	12/27/2024
2-4	3/13/2024	Survey Monkey #4	Please do not harm any native species in this expansion. There are centuries old clam gardens underneath the bridge, is expansion really necessary? Who are we serving, locals? Tourists? Listen to the people, do not harm local flora and fauna when there is already a sidewalk there	No email
2-5	3/15/2024	Survey Monkey #5	As a charter boat captain, and Sitka business owner who brings visitors to Sitka, I would like to offer my support of this project. I would also like to acknowledge your design to reduce the impact on eelgrass beds and potential historic structures. This link will alleviate overcrowding and safety issues of people crossing the road below the bridge. It will also be an attractive, enjoyable, and educational trail for visitors and residents alike. As a resident, I know it will be the first place I take my friends and family when they come to town.	12/27/2024
2-6	3/15/2024	Survey Monkey #6	As a concerned citizen of Sitka, I feel that the sea walk extension project is an unneeded use of public funds. There is no need to disturb tidelands to provide MORE infrastructure for MORE tourists. The problem should be addressed rather by limiting tourist numbers so that there is no need to provide another walking access from the tendering dock to centennial hall. Even given the proposed new sea walk extension, people will likely continue to jaywalk Harbor Drive. I'd rather see \$ go to support Sitka police dept to enforce use of existing crosswalks.	12/27/2024
2-7	4/1/2024	Survey Monkey #7	I'll break this down in positives and negatives. Positives: 1)walkability 2)extending the walk toward Totem is good. 3)I prefer Section 3b if it can be made compatible with land owners Negatives: 1)I believe the cost are low . Just look at the Katlian Road or the Seaplane dock , things start this dollar amount and end up costing much more. Who will be paying for this overage? Is there is an unlimited pot of monies within the City for a project like this? 2) loss of parking spots. 3)existential crisis - perhaps we need to take pause and look at the environmental / carbon footprint of this project? The cost of moving all the rock needed are steep. The cost are more money . 4) lightering dock usage decline because of dock out the road. I'd say I'm on the fence. John Murray Sitka	12/27/2024

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2-8	4/4/2024	Survey Monkey #8	<p>I do not feel this extension of the Seawalk is necessary nor that every section of waterfront should be developed. To me this seems to serve more of a cruise ship tourist want than a resident need.</p> <p>I do appreciate pedestrian and cycling opportunities as someone that frequently gets around without a car, but this project takes away from Sitka's rural feel. There is also currently a nice secluded spot for people to take lunch in cards under the bridge and I see that going away with a Seawalk extension. While I appreciate the efforts that have gone into this project, I would strongly prefer section 2 in particular not be built. I think I efforts to improve Sitka's infrastructure would be better served by making protected or fully separated bike lanes for cyclists on high speed roads like HPR. In the past at least one cyclist was killed when a driver high on drugs struck him. That type of resident accommodating infrastructure is more desired than an extension of the Seawalk.</p>	No email
2-9	4/4/2024	Survey Monkey #9	<p>I have a few questions</p> <p>Why does it have to be 8ft wide. That seems excessive to me. We are a small city and smaller fits us better.</p> <p>I am wondering how many parking spots we lose and where they're located.</p> <p>I am concerned for the privacy and peaceful enjoyment of the Maksoutoff residents. It seems this project could easily be downscaled and more geared towards foot transport with less focus on sightseeing. Perhaps we could do with one viewing area very close to under the bridge and not have one closer to Maksoutoff.</p> <p>It is not clear on the CBS website where this project information is located. It took me quite awhile to find it and I am perhaps better versed than many others.</p> <p>The budget portion of the project, mostly where the money is coming from is confusing. The numbers don't logically add up and the amount CBS is paying is not clearly identified as cruise passenger tax. Most residents don't understand what that title means. I've been asked about that in several occasions.</p> <p>Overall I do like the project though I am not convinced it is in the best interest of the residents of Sitka at this time. Our large number of cruise passengers is extremely divisive and this seems to be fuel on the fire. From what I'm hearing it is not very popular and are expressing a lot of resentment about the focus on visitor enhancements.</p>	12/27/2024
2-10	4/5/2024	Survey Monkey #10	<p>A walk way along the shore line is a must have for pedestrians, to safely avoid the complexities of vehicular traffic and be able to freely move with property inhibitions.</p>	12/27/2024
2-11	4/5/2024	Survey Monkey #11	<p>The seawalk is for tourists only. Sitka s need funds to offset tourist impacts. Monies myst go to these concerns or tourists numbers must be limited.</p>	12/27/2024
2-12	4/6/2024	Survey Monkey #12	<p>Regarding the Seawalk by the bridge, my opinion and hope is for the tree not to be cut down. Build around it. That's my only concern about this part of the Seawalk. I like to see Eagles and other birds use the tree for there purpose in life.</p>	12/27/2024
2-13	4/6/2024	Survey Monkey #13	<p>I enjoy using the existing seawalk, and would absolutely use this next section (but only during winter.. too crowded downtown in summer). My concern is for the residents of Maksoutoff way.. they will be looking out to see hoards of tourists in their front yard/view! If the seawalk goes in, I would like to see a very narrow walkway along the O'Connell bridge with NO spots to stop and take in the view or sit, out of respect for the folks who live on maksoutoff way. This would keep folks moving in this section. Also planting lots of shrubs would help block the tourists from this neighborhood. Thanks!</p>	No email

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2-14	4/6/2024	Survey Monkey #14	<p>Proposed seawalk can connect authentic Tlingit place names along walkway. Totems can provide narratives for each location. Correct narratives for the Blarney Stone, Crescent Harbor petroglyphs are still there buried under the ground. If possible please restore this sacred site to its original state.</p> <p>Sheetka has beautiful oral traditions and history connected to crescent harbor. A casual visitor would enjoy knowing the culture and heritage of Sheetka.</p> <p>Lastly,expand the sidewalk corridor so you don't have to feel crowded by people. Maybe a bike lane is needed.</p>	12/27/2024
2-15	4/6/2024	Survey Monkey #15	<p>The project is a long-standing, community priority and, was thereby, included in numerous CBS planning documents since the early 2000's. It was originally a STIP nominated project submitted by CBS (in the same timeframe), as a needed safety improvement. The sidewalk ENDS and pedestrians(visitors, locals and MEHS students) are forced to make erratic/uncontrolled crossings at the base of the bridge where traffic is still at 35 mph speeds.</p> <p>The sea walk will enable people with mobility impairments, including Pioneer Home residents, to have a continuous, barrier free walk from downtown to the National Park, completing the final section of the project. Walking continues to be one of Sitka's the most popular activities, especially with Sitka's large senior population. The health benefits are obviously extremely significant. It will be heavily used by locals and by visitors.</p> <p>The sea walk site also has a very interesting attribute: Once you are behind the bridge at the sea walk elevation, all road noise ceases. The views are fabulous and the site restive, a little oasis downtown. This section of the sea walk will be an engaging, flat, barrier free walking opportunity downtown, one of very few.</p> <p>As usual NIMBY folks are always vocal on projects like this. I don't think the special interests of a few neighbors in any way outweighs the public interest and health and safety benefits. Experience shows that most folks who are NIMBY's later find their concerns were not realistic and in fact, enjoy the resulting project. This was so true with the Cross Trail and not only that, being close to the Cross Trail is now a positive value in real estate sales. I have a sidewalk associated with my residence and truly enjoy chatting with the walkers that use this area for their exercise.</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to comment.</p>	12/27/2024
2-16	4/6/2024	Survey Monkey #16	<p>I think this project is beneficial to the community and to our visitors. I walk this area several times a week and it would be great not to have to cross traffic on harbor drive.</p>	12/27/2024
2-17	4/7/2024	Survey Monkey #17	<p>Is this on behalf of locals or TOURISTS. More land taken and dismantled. Sitka is definitely not the same.</p>	12/27/2024
2-18	4/7/2024	Survey Monkey #18	<p>Why would you want to detour the visitors around the down town stores?? Make it go through down town. Who will do the upkeep of this section?? The City or the State?? I would hope you have that figured out before you build this.</p>	12/27/2024
2-19	4/7/2024	Survey Monkey #19	<p>I love this idea. It should it help with the congestion at crosswalks and the of tourists trying to cross the road (sometimes at the wrong spot) impeding traffic. It's a good use of head tax money that will help as the town struggles with high tourist numbers.</p> <p>Since there is already fill in that area it should cause much change to the marine environment. More rock is good habitat for small fish and other sea creatures.</p> <p>My only complaint is it's not big enough. Ideally outside of the bridge would be a good alternative bus loading and unload area. But that a project for another time perhaps.</p> <p>Build it.</p> <p>Bert Bergman</p>	12/27/2024

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2-20	4/7/2024	Survey Monkey #20	The sea walk is a beautiful asset to our community for locals and visitors alike. I personally welcome the idea of continuing to build more walking paths along our gorgeous coastline. As a local I use the sea walk multiples times a week. I believe Sitka needs to make more long-term commitments to investing in more walking in our downtown area. The idea that our tiny downtown streets be open to traffic year round is dangerous in this day and age with the current large size of vehicles, and the amount of vehicles we have now. Sitka has given vehicles priority in its downtown for far too long. More walking paths is a good thing, now and for the future.	No email
2-21	4/7/2024	Survey Monkey #21	Sitka Tribe said no. So should you. Further artificial armoring of the shoreline is not a good move.	No email
2-22	4/7/2024	Survey Monkey #22	Very much looking forward to this sea walk expansion providing additional pathway that is away from vehicle traffic and cross walks. My concern is the condition of the existing sea walk, and the continued maintenance required for all of the sea walk. The original sea walk sections are substantially lacking maintenance, some boards and areas have deteriorated nearly to the point that they're becoming unsafe and a liability to the city. What is the plan to properly maintain the sea walks moving forward? If the current "maintenance" plan doesn't change I would suggest building the new section of the sea walk with materials that can be neglected, specifically MillBoard decking or grating instead of watching the yellow cedar waste away from lack of maintenance.	No email
2-23	4/7/2024	Survey Monkey #23	Regarding section 2 I strongly support the selected route of along the shoreline close to the ocean. I believe the benefits associated with this design far outweigh concerns. The sea walk is a wonderful addition for recreational paths in Sitka for both visitors and residents,. Perhaps one unforeseen positive consequence is that it will provide a much needed wheelchair accessible and easily reached smooth walkway for our Pioneer home residents.	12/27/2024
2-24	4/7/2024	Survey Monkey #24	After viewing your meeting comments, I agree that the walkway along the water and off the street is the best route. I particularly like the way you are using Tommy Joseph's and Terry Rofgar's design input into the project and Rebekah Poulson's knowledge of marine history. It will relieve a lot of the street congestion in town and give tourists and all of us outstanding views of the water. Thanks for your thoughtful planning for the project.	12/27/2024
2-25	4/7/2024	Survey Monkey #25	I think that the city shouldn't go forward with this plan due to the route having potential to disrupt a traditional clam garden for the lingit people. Also because the Sitka tribe is opposed to this project there needs to be more collaboration with the tribe before any other action takes place. This is an old clam garden of our people and needs to be respected because it shows our history of this area since time immemorial. The route should avoid this precious area and go around it and make sure there is a safe buffer zone from the clam garden. Clam gardens are found in areas around our village sites and can be found all across southeast Alaska. In conclusion I am opposed to this project because of the potential disruption of a sacred site and consultation with sitka tribe needs to happen before any more progress or planning happens.	12/27/2024
2-26 - also sent by email	4/7/2024	Survey Monkey #26	Submitted by Survey Monkey and also as an email. Traffic flow, parking, aesthetics, access, foot traffic, reroute, off season, upkeep, weeks, walkability, light pollution, construction noise and traffic interruption	12/27/2024

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2-27	4/7/2024	Survey Monkey #27	<p>I am concerned about a project which I see as primarily benefiting cruise ship passengers. I know locals will use it, but I suspect not as much as locals use the already established parts of the Sea Walk. It just doesn't head in a direction that many locals will want to go, in my opinion.</p> <p>I don't want any decrease in parking.</p> <p>I am concerned about possible damage to sea grass.</p> <p>Both of these concerns are intensified by my belief that the main beneficiaries of this project are cruise ship visitors.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>	12/27/2024
2-28	4/7/2024	Survey Monkey #28	<p>The upcoming phase of the seawalk seems like the most expensive and ridiculous way to steer tourists around town. I don't see any benefit economically or for locals. Building a concrete path on the *outside* of the bridge seems like a huge waste of money and unnecessary burden to place on the marine environment.</p> <p>The main question for this project is: why? We already have a path on the inside of the bridge. There's gotta be a different way to help tourists cross the street...maybe we can hire some people to hold their hands?</p> <p>It seems the only reason this would be done is to create a holding cell for the hoardes of tourists that our town cannot accommodate, so let's just expand, spend more, build more, even if it's silly and ridiculous and wasteful.</p> <p>I don't like the idea of losing any more parking spaces. When downtown is closed, we not only lose all parking downtown but on some of the side streets as well. Centennial building & the library parking Lots are full of tour buses, kayak tours, and tour operators, etc. Crescent Harbor lot is already overfull. Fisherman do not have enough spaces to park at Crescent Harbor on any given day when they're trying to go to work. losing even a few more parking spaces for this project is unfortunate and will probably give justification for the city to mow some other place down to create a big ugly parking lot. All for something completely unnecessary and wasteful. I could see continuing the Seawalk from under the bridge to the end of Totem Square. But to go around the bridge to get there from the library makes no sense at all. Very disappointing project and way for us to waste money. Also definitely concerned about this totally unnecessary impact on marine life.</p>	12/27/2024
2-29	4/7/2024	Survey Monkey #29	<p>I don't think this section is necessary and would prefer less development along the marine way. I have concerns about tourist accessing the beach and harming habitat that they currently have access too.</p>	No email
2-30	4/7/2024	Survey Monkey #30	<p>The new portion of the sea walk is a complete waste of money. It's harmful to marine life, and not needed! There's plenty of sidewalks in the area. Let's start focusing on LOCALS and not just tourism.</p>	No email
2-31	4/7/2024	Survey Monkey #31	<p>I do not support this project as currently planned. I am concerned about the impact it would have on the environment, including upon eel grass beds. I want the historic clam bed in that location to be preserved, and not damaged or destroyed, as would presumably happen with the sea walk expansion. I would prefer the relatively undeveloped shoreline alongside the bridge to be left as it is.</p> <p>It seems that the same pedestrian traffic flow goals could be accomplished by improving the existing crosswalks and signage, rather than undertaking a major and expensive new development.</p>	12/27/2024
2-32	4/7/2024	Survey Monkey #32	<p>Currently there is not enough parking downtown for employees and staff of downtown businesses. Especially with big cruise tourist days when the downtown is closed to cars and street parking. Any parking space lost to this project needs to be made up somewhere else within easy walking distance of downtown.</p> <p>Adequate consideration needs to be given to the businesses and residences which will be impacted by hordes of tourists crowding the walkway and at times blocking access to buildings adjacent to and near the Seawalk.</p>	12/27/2024

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2-33	4/7/2024	Survey Monkey #33	<p>I was unable to attend the meeting in March but listened to the presentation. So excuse me if I am off on my understanding of what we can comment on. My concern is losing more parking and having more tourists on the street where there are no cross walks. We lost parking in front of the building the Pub is in by Crescent Harbor. Yes, it was only 3-4 spots but it was a loss for sure. Slowly downtown and surrounding areas are becoming more and more congested to the locals during the now almost 6 month tour ship season. We already have to drive around town to get to town and honestly having the walkway seems to only add to the issue but I may be wrong.</p> <p>I am understanding from the map that in front of Sitka Realty those parking spaces are going to be gone. If you do take away parking re allocate other areas to take up the slack. Rent spaces from Wells Fargo for local use as an idea. Also the little beach by the Women's Club needs to be left alone if there is talk of displacing that area. Kids play there and the natural habitat needs to be left alone.</p> <p>I am also asking that you respect those residents on Maksoutoff St as who wants tourists taking pictures and prowling about your private space. We are being intruded upon enough with the high number of tourists. Also lights on this "path" seem like more privacy intrusion to those residents. I know you are trying to funnel the tourists to town and the lightering dock but it just seems like the cat would be out of the bag and tourists will be everywhere crossing the street below the bridge to get to the Cellar and other shops. I realize this is in the works and I hope you all take these ideas into consideration. Thanks for the consideration.</p>	No email
2-34	4/7/2024	Survey Monkey #34	<p>"How to waste mas monies" By Alaska DOT and City of Sitka. Hands down one of the worst ideas you've come up with yet! No, I would not recommend to a friend. Just curious who the brain trust is behind these "infrastructure" projects?</p>	12/27/2024
2-36	4/4/2024 - email	Email	<p>See email for full comment - John O'Connell Bridge is eligible for listing on NRHP and as a NHL; design with change approach to bridge and not compatible with unchanged bridge. 2020 scoping report is out of date due to changes in cruise industry infrastructure. Postpone roject for one year to allow for 106 process.</p>	12/27/2024
2-37	3/19/2024 - written/mail	Written/mail	<p>Thank you for including KCAW's NPR sat dish in your plans. We, and the community thank you for assuring continuous NPR Broadcasting.</p>	12/27/2024
2-38	4/6/2024 - email	Email	<p>See email for full comment - Cruise ships don't use lightering dock anymore. Look like tourist town, concern with losing rural status and subsistence rights. Encroach on Maksoutoff Street. Pedestrians will choice shortest path instead. Loss of parking. Use rock for other purposes. Loss of eelgrass, CO2 emissions during construction. Cost exceed \$3 million allotted. Project is a want and not a need.</p>	12/27/2024
2-40	4/7/2024 - email (amended has all attachments)	Email	<p>See email for full comment- Safety at foot of O'Connell Bridge; alternative route presented (town side of bridge); avoid jaywalking at library and near fudge shop. Downtown character - history of opposition to mass tourism. Reduction of Lightering facility. Sitka Rural Designation - fear of losing. Maintenance costs and demands on CBS. EA not CatEx - eelgrass (cumulative loss), rock and gravel resources, impact on climate. Expand project area to include all of Harbor Drive, Harbor Way, bridge and grounds in front of Centennial Hall.</p>	12/27/2024

From: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
To: [Ben Hughey](#)
Cc: [Lockwood, Gregory K \(DOT\)](#)
Subject: Response to Comments on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project (Comment #2-1 & 2-35)
Date: Friday, December 27, 2024 2:21:00 PM

Mr. Hughey-

Thank you for your patience. We have been evaluating new information and wanted to send all responses at the same time.

Thank you for your support of the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project and for sharing results of the 2022 public survey data supporting trails. Your comments will become part of the project record.

Thank you,

Greg Lockwood
Design Group Chief

Alaska Dept of Transportation and Public Facilities, Southcoast Region
Phone: (907) 465-2393



Kathryn Erickson

Environmental Impact Analyst, Southcoast Region

Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities

Office: 907.465.4498

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The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried out by DOT&PF pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the FHWA and DOT&PF, dated April 13, 2023 and executed by FHWA and DOT&PF.

ben@sitkatrailworks.org

1. Sitka Trail Works conducted a public survey in spring of 2022 to understand community needs and preferences around trail development. When asked about what type of environments they would like more trails in, "on the coast" was the most popular response, selected by the majority (57%) of the 787 respondents. Based on this data, we know that hundreds of Sitkans desire the views and fresh air of walks along the ocean. I think it is likely fair to say that this survey suggests a strong public backing for facilities like the Seawalk.

35. This will be such a valuable community asset. We need more ADA accessible trails in town and the views of the water will make this one of the best.

From: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
To: claplake@gmail.com
Cc: [Lockwood, Gregory K \(DOT\)](#)
Subject: Response to Comment on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project (Comment #2-3)
Date: Friday, December 27, 2024 2:22:00 PM

Ms. LaPerrier –

Thank you for your patience. We have been evaluating new information and wanted to send all responses at the same time.

Thank you for submitting comments for the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project. The project would add rock to the existing rock around the Sitka Harbor Bridge. We received some comments asking for a wider sidewalk and others for a narrower sidewalk to minimize impacts to the intertidal zone. A new eight-foot-wide sidewalk would create a multiuse path to benefit the community and visitors with a broad range of walking abilities. The existing sidewalk is only five feet wide and currently too narrow for wheelchair traffic to safely pass. The eight-foot width would allow passage of two wheelchairs at a time. A further description of rationale for width of the sidewalk can be found in the Sitka Sea Walk Phase II Update; Scoping Report dated September 24, 2020 at the project website (<https://www.cityofsitka.com/SitkaSeawalkPhaseII>) along with other project documents. The project has been designed to minimize fill in the tidelands and impacts to eelgrass beds. Fill would be placed during a recommended in-water window established by the Alaska Department of Fish & Game to minimize impact to spawning herring. Consultation with the NOAA Fisheries has occurred for Essential Fish Habitat and authorization from an U.S. Army Corps of Engineers permit would occur prior to construction.

Your comments will become part of the project record.

Greg Lockwood
Design Group Chief

Alaska Dept of Transportation and Public Facilities, Southcoast Region
Phone: (907) 465-2393



Kathryn Erickson

Environmental Impact Analyst, Southcoast Region

Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities

Office: 907.465.4498

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claplake@gmail.com

3. I am not against the planned expansion of the sea walk per se. I do not think I realized that tons of rock etc.. will be added to the tidelands and eelgrass beds. I would not be in favor of adding to the rock already in place for the bridge. I have walked next to the road on the existing fill and think there must be some way to build an extension without dumping more rock into the environment. Perhaps the width of the proposed expansion should be narrowed.

From: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
To: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
Subject: Response to Comment on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project (Comment #2-4)
Date: Monday, December 23, 2024 2:28:00 PM

Thank you for submitting comments for the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project. The manmade rock wall was evaluated and was initially confirmed to be outside the proposed project's area of potential effect. Evaluation of the project's effect to historic properties, including the site boundaries of the manmade rock wall, is ongoing along with continued consultation with the Sitka Tribe of Alaska. Although visible, the manmade wall may be considered a sensitive cultural resource and is, therefore, not being discussed publicly.

An eight-foot-wide sidewalk was chosen to create a multiuse path to benefit the community and visitors with a broad range of walking abilities. The project has been designed to minimize fill in the tidelands and impacts to eelgrass beds. Impacts to existing native species will be also minimized as much as possible and native species will be used in the landscaping.

Your comments will become part of the project record.

Greg Lockwood
Design Group Chief

Alaska Dept of Transportation and Public Facilities, Southcoast Region
Phone: (907) 465-2393



Kathryn Erickson
Environmental Impact Analyst, Southcoast Region
Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
Office: 907.465.4498
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NO EMAIL

4. Please do not harm any native species in this expansion. There are centuries old clam gardens underneath the bridge, is expansion really necessary? Who are we serving, locals? Tourists? Listen to the people, do not harm local flora and fauna when there is already a sidewalk there.

From: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
To: capt.blain@soundsailing.com
Cc: [Lockwood, Gregory K \(DOT\)](#)
Subject: Response to Comment on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project (Comment #2-5)
Date: Friday, December 27, 2024 2:22:00 PM

Captain Anderson –

Thank you for your patience. We have been evaluating new information and wanted to send all responses at the same time.

Thank you for your comments and support of the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project. Your comments will become part of the project record.

Greg Lockwood
Design Group Chief

Alaska Dept of Transportation and Public Facilities, Southcoast Region
Phone: (907) 465-2393



Kathryn Erickson

Environmental Impact Analyst, Southcoast Region

Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities

Office: 907.465.4498

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Capt.blain@soundsailing.com

5. As a charter boat captain, and Sitka business owner who brings visitors to Sitka, I would like to offer my support of this project. I would also like to acknowledge your design to reduce the impact on eelgrass beds and potential historic structures. This link will alleviate overcrowding and safety issues of people crossing the road below the bridge. It will also be an attractive, enjoyable, and educational trail for visitors and residents alike. As a resident, I know it will be the first place I take my friends and family when they come to town.

From: [Erickson, Kathryn H. \(DOT\)](#)
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [Lockwood, Gregory K. \(DOT\)](#)
Subject: Response to Comment on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project (Comment #2-6)
Date: Friday, December 27, 2024 2:22:00 PM

Thank you for your patience. We have been evaluating new information and wanted to send all responses at the same time.

Thank you for submitting comments for the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project. We understand you oppose the project, and we appreciate you sharing your concerns. There are challenges and opportunities in managing so many visitors coming from far and wide to share this unique landscape. Improving pedestrian safety and ADA accessibility is an important aspect of this project for both locals and visitors. A path with good features keeps a high percentage of visitors on the path exploring the next feature versus wandering off the path. The interpretive signage and nodes should keep most visitors engaged and moving along to the next node.

Your comments will become part of the project record. Per your request, your name will be redacted from your comment in the public record.

Greg Lockwood
Design Group Chief

Alaska Dept of Transportation and Public Facilities, Southcoast Region
Phone: (907) 465-2393



Kathryn Erickson
Environmental Impact Analyst, Southcoast Region
Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
Office: 907.465.4498
Keep Alaska Moving through service and infrastructure.



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6. As a concerned citizen of Sitka, I feel that the sea walk extension project is an unneeded use of public funds. There is no need to disturb tidelands to provide MORE infrastructure for MORE tourists. The problem should be addressed rather by limiting tourist numbers so that there is no need to provide another walking access from the tendering dock to centennial hall. Even given the proposed new sea walk extension, people will likely continue to jaywalk Harbor Drive. I'd rather see \$ go to support Sitka police dept to enforce use of existing crosswalks.

From: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
To: jmfish3@gmail.com
Cc: [Lockwood, Gregory K \(DOT\)](#)
Subject: Response to Comment on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project (Comment #2-7)
Date: Friday, December 27, 2024 2:22:00 PM

Mr. Murray-

Thank you for your patience. We have been evaluating new information and wanted to send all responses at the same time.

Thank you for submitting comments for the Sitka Seawalk Phase II project and providing both positives and negatives. Section 3b was selected as the proposed route based on public input.

In recent years there have been high rates of inflation which effect the cost of projects. Funding for the project is through the Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) and Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) with a 9% match from the Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF) and City and Borough of Sitka (CBS). CBS' portion is anticipated to be from commercial passenger vessel excise tax. Construction costs have been estimated for this project, including a 15% contingency added on that would hopefully cover any potential cost overruns. If there are cost overages, then these would be the responsibility of CBS. Most likely, the funds would come from CBS's share of the commercial passenger vessel excise tax.

With the construction of Section 2, no parking spots would be lost, and the future Section 1 would remove three spaces along Harbor Drive closest to Maksoutoff Street. Public feedback from the Seawalk project indicates that some residents of Maksoutoff Street support the removal of these parking spaces due to sight distance concerns they currently cause. These parking spaces might be removed in the near future regardless of the Seawalk project, due to their negative impact on sight distances. The Seawalk project is not solely responsible for the removal of these spaces but is addressing an existing safety issue that would likely need attention regardless.

The carbon footprint of transportation projects should be considered on a project-to-project basis. This project would have some impacts during construction (direct impacts) but would support active transportation in the long-term (indirect and long-term impacts). The direct impacts include the use of heavy machinery, construction vehicles, and transportation of materials over different length of time. These activities emit greenhouse gases (GHGs) such as carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), and nitrous oxide (N₂O). This project would build a sea walk to be used by pedestrians only and would support the use of so-called active transportation and support the minimization of emissions from vehicles. Please see the Alaska DOT&PF's Carbon Reduction Strategy for additional information: <https://dot.alaska.gov/stwdplng/cip/stip/projects/Assets/Alaska-DOTPF-Carbon-Reduction-Strategy.pdf>

Cruise ships have been consistently coming to Southeast Alaska and Sitka for the last 30 years. There have been no signs in decreasing numbers of tourists (except during Covid years). Although the use of the Lightering dock has shifted away from larger cruise ships, there is still a consistent number of tourists coming to Sitka. Improving pedestrian safety and ADA accessibility is an important aspect of this project for both locals and visitors.

Your comments will become part of the project record.

Greg Lockwood
Design Group Chief

Alaska Dept of Transportation and Public Facilities, Southcoast Region
Phone: (907) 465-2393



Kathryn Erickson

Environmental Impact Analyst, Southcoast Region

Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities

Office: 907.465.4498

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jmfish3@gmail.com

7. I'll break this down in positives and negatives.

Positives: 1)walkability 2)extending the walk toward Totem is good. 3)I prefer Section 3b if it can be made compatible with land owners

Negatives: 1) I believe the cost are low . Just look at the Katlian Road or the Seaplane dock , things start this dollar amount and end up costing much more. Who will be paying for this overage? Is there is an unlimited pot of monies within the City for a project like this? 2) loss of parking spots. 3) existential crisis - perhaps we need to take pause and look at the environmental / carbon footprint of this project? The cost of moving all the rock needed are steep. The cost are more money . 4) lightening dock usage decline because of dock out the road. I'd say I'm on the fence. John Murray Sitka

From: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
To: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
Subject: Response to Comment on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project (Comment #2-8)
Date: Friday, December 27, 2024 7:29:09 AM

Thank you for submitting comments for the Sitka Seawalk Phase II project and expressing your support for additional facilities for bicycles. Improving pedestrian safety and ADA accessibility is an important aspect of this project for both locals and visitors.

Your comments will become part of the project record.

Greg Lockwood
Design Group Chief

Alaska Dept of Transportation and Public Facilities, Southcoast Region
Phone: (907) 465-2393



Kathryn Erickson
Environmental Impact Analyst, Southcoast Region
Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
Office: 907.465.4498
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NO EMAIL

8. I do not feel this extension of the Seawalk is necessary nor that every section of waterfront should be developed. To me this seems to serve more of a cruise ship tourist want than a resident need.

I do appreciate pedestrian and cycling opportunities as someone that frequently gets around without a car, but this project takes away from Sitka's rural feel. There is also currently a nice secluded spot for people to take lunch in cards under the bridge and I see that going away with a Seawalk extension. While I appreciate the efforts that have gone into this project, I would strongly prefer section 2 in particular not be built.

I think I efforts to improve Sitka's infrastructure would be better served by making protected or fully separated bike lanes for cyclists on high speed roads like HPR. In the past at least one cyclist was killed when a driver high on drugs struck him. That type of resident accommodating infrastructure is more desired than an extension of the Seawalk.

From: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [Lockwood, Gregory K \(DOT\)](#)
Subject: Response to Comment on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project (Comment #2-9)
Date: Friday, December 27, 2024 2:22:00 PM

Thank you for your patience. We have been evaluating new information and wanted to send all responses at the same time. Thank you for submitting comments for the Sitka Seawalk Phase II project. Improving pedestrian safety and ADA accessibility is an important aspect of this project for both locals and visitors.

An eight-foot-wide sidewalk was chosen to create a multiuse path to benefit the community and visitors with a broad range of walking abilities. The existing sidewalk is only five feet wide and currently too narrow for wheelchair traffic to safely pass. The eight-foot width would allow passage of two wheelchairs at a time. A further description of rationale for width of the sidewalk can be found in the Sitka Sea Walk Phase II Update; Scoping Report dated September 24, 2020 at the project website (<https://www.cityofsitka.com/SitkaSeawalkPhaseII>) along with other project documents.

With the construction of Section 2, no parking spots would be lost, and the future Section 1 would remove three spaces along Harbor Drive closest to Maksoutoff Street. Public feedback from the Seawalk project indicates that some residents of Maksoutoff Street support the removal of these parking spaces due to sight distance concerns they currently cause. These parking spaces might be removed in the near future regardless of the Seawalk project, due to their negative impact on sight distances. The Seawalk project is not solely responsible for the removal of these spaces but is addressing an existing safety issue that would likely need attention regardless.

For Maksoutoff Street residents, with signs and landscaping we can make some improvements to keep people on the right path. Landscaping is planned to visually separate the streetscape from the waterscape views. A path with good features keeps a high percentage of visitors on the path exploring the next feature versus wandering off the path. The interpretive signage and nodes should keep most visitors engaged and moving along to the next node. Although the currently funded section is beyond Sitka Realty and their parking area, we plan to put up signage beyond the limits of the extension to discourage people from leaving the path or going down Maksoutoff Street.

Funding for the project is through the Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) and Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) with a 9% match from DOT&PF and CBS. CBS' portion is anticipated to be from commercial passenger vessel excise tax. Maintenance costs for the Seawalk Phase II project, including custodial services, standard maintenance services, snow & ice management and equipment, are estimated to be \$5,600 annually. CBS is responsible for maintenance of the path and amenities and DOT&PF is responsible for maintenance of the fill and armor stone.

Please reach out if you have any difficulties accessing the project website and we can direct you to the information you are searching for.

Your comments will become part of the project record. Per your request, your name will be redacted from your comment in the public record.

Greg Lockwood
Design Group Chief

Alaska Dept of Transportation and Public Facilities, Southcoast Region
Phone: (907) 465-2393



Kathryn Erickson

Environmental Impact Analyst, Southcoast Region

Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities

Office: 907.465.4498

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9. I have a few questions

Why does it have to be 8ft wide. That seems excessive to me. We are a small city and smaller fits us better.

I am wondering how many parking spots we lose and where they're located.

I am concerned for the privacy and peaceful enjoyment of the Maksoutoff residents. It seems this project could easily be downscaled and more geared towards foot transport with less focus on sightseeing. Perhaps we could do with one viewing area very close to under the bridge and not have one closer to Maksoutoff.

It is not clear on the CBS website where this project information is located. It took me quite awhile to find it and I am perhaps better versed than many others.

The budget portion of the project, mostly where the money is coming from is confusing. The numbers don't logically add up and the amount CBS is paying is not clearly Identified as cruise passenger tax. Most residents don't understand what that title means. I've been asked about that in several occasions.

Overall I do like the project though I am not convinced it is in the best interest of the residents of Sitka at this time. Our large number of cruise passengers is extremely divisive and this seems to be fuel on the fire. From what I'm hearing it is not very popular and are expressing a lot of resentment about the focus on visitor enhancements.

From: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
To: snicky@gmail.com
Cc: [Lockwood, Gregory K \(DOT\)](#)
Subject: Response to Comment on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project (Comment #2-10)
Date: Friday, December 27, 2024 2:22:00 PM

Mr. Morisky-

Thank you for your patience. We have been evaluating new information and wanted to send all responses at the same time.

Thank you for your comment in support of the Sitka Seawalk Phase II project and safety for pedestrians. Your comments will become part of the project record.

Greg Lockwood
Design Group Chief

Alaska Dept of Transportation and Public Facilities, Southcoast Region
Phone: (907) 465-2393



Kathryn Erickson
Environmental Impact Analyst, Southcoast Region
Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
Office: 907.465.4498
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snicky@gmail.com

10. A walk way along the shore line is a must have for pedestrians, to safely avoid the complexities of vehicular traffic and be able to freely move with property inhibitions.

From: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
To: 1norcoast@gmail.com
Cc: [Lockwood, Gregory K \(DOT\)](#)
Subject: Response to Comment on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project (Comment #2-11)
Date: Friday, December 27, 2024 2:22:00 PM

Mr. Jim- Thank you for your patience. We have been evaluating new information and wanted to send all responses at the same time. Thank you for submitting comments for the Sitka Seawalk Phase II project. Improving pedestrian safety and ADA accessibility is an important aspect of this project for both locals and visitors.

Your comments will become part of the project record.

Greg Lockwood
Design Group Chief

Alaska Dept of Transportation and Public Facilities, Southcoast Region
Phone: (907) 465-2393



Kathryn Erickson
Environmental Impact Analyst, Southcoast Region
Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
Office: 907.465.4498
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1norcoast@gmail.com

11. The seawalk is for tourists only. Sitka s need funds to offset tourist impacts. Monies myst go to these concerns or tourists numbers must be limited.

From: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [Lockwood, Gregory K \(DOT\)](#)
Subject: Response to Comment on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project (Comment #2-12)
Date: Friday, December 27, 2024 2:22:42 PM

Thank you for your patience. We have been evaluating new information and wanted to send all responses at the same time. Thank you for submitting comments for the Sitka Seawalk Phase II project. We assume that you are referring to the trees along Harbor Drive/O'Connell Bridge that are just above the existing riprap shown in the middle of the photo below.



Unfortunately, the trees conflict with the edge of the seawalk and would be removed with this project. No bald eagle nests were identified within the project area. Vegetation clearing would follow guidelines established by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the Migratory Bird Act (16 USC 703-712) to protect migratory birds and their nesting habitats.

Your comments will become part of the project record. Per your request, your name will be redacted from your comment in the public record.

Greg Lockwood
Design Group Chief

Alaska Dept of Transportation and Public Facilities, Southcoast Region
Phone: (907) 465-2393



Kathryn Erickson
Environmental Impact Analyst, Southcoast Region
Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
Office: 907.465.4498
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12. Regarding the Seawalk by the bridge, my opinion and hope is for the tree not to be cut down. Build around it. That's my only concern about this part of the Seawalk. I like to see Eagles and other

birds use the tree for there purpose in life.

From: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
To: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
Subject: Response to Comment on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project (Comment #2-13)
Date: Friday, December 27, 2024 7:29:33 AM

Thank you for your patience. We have been evaluating new information and wanted to send all responses at the same time.

Thank you for submitting comments for the Sitka Seawalk Phase II project. A very narrow walkway would not meet the need to create a multiuse path to benefit the community and visitors with a broad range of walking abilities. The existing sidewalk is only five feet wide and currently too narrow for wheelchair traffic to safely pass. The eight-foot width would allow passage of two wheelchairs at a time and individuals with jogging strollers and dogs on a leash to comfortably be able to pass.

For Maksoutoff Street residents, landscaping is planned that may visually separate the streetscape from the waterscape views. A path with good features keeps a high percentage of visitors on the path exploring the next feature versus wandering off the path. Lookout nodes should help provide a controlled opportunity to enjoy the view versus going out into parking lots and jaywalking. The interpretive signage and nodes should keep most visitors engaged and moving along to the next node. Although the currently funded section is beyond Sitka Realty and their parking area, we plan to put up signage beyond the limits of the extension to discourage people from leaving the path or going down Maksoutoff Street.

Your comments will become part of the project record.

Greg Lockwood
Design Group Chief

Alaska Dept of Transportation and Public Facilities, Southcoast Region
Phone: (907) 465-2393



Kathryn Erickson

Environmental Impact Analyst, Southcoast Region

Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities

Office: 907.465.4498

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NO EMAIL

13. I enjoy using the existing seawalk, and would absolutely use this next section (but only during winter.. too crowded downtown in summer). My concern is for the residents of Maksoutoff way.. they will be looking out to see hoards of tourists in their front yard/view! If the seawalk goes in, I would like to see a very narrow walkway along the O'Connell bridge with NO spots to stop and take

in the view or sit, out of respect for the folks who live on maksoutoff way. This would keep folks moving in this section. Also planting lots of shrubs would help block the tourists from this neighborhood. Thanks!

From: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
To: Bob.sam1954@gmail.com
Cc: [Lockwood, Gregory K \(DOT\)](#)
Subject: Response to Comment on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project (Comment #2-14)
Date: Friday, December 27, 2024 2:22:00 PM

Mr. Sam –

Thank you for your patience. We have been evaluating new information and wanted to send all responses at the same time.

Thank you for submitting comments for the Sitka Seawalk Phase II project. Interpretive signs are being developed for this project. We appreciate your suggestions for signs to educate locals and visitors on the cultural and heritage of the area. A few of the other topics being considered include eelgrass and historic photos.

There are no plans for a bike lane, only pedestrian facilities. An eight-foot-wide sidewalk was chosen to create a multiuse path to benefit the community and visitors with a broad range of walking abilities. The existing sidewalk is only five feet wide and currently too narrow for wheelchair traffic to safely pass. The eight-foot width would allow passage of two wheelchairs at a time and individuals with jogging strollers and dogs on a leash to comfortably be able to pass.

Your comments will become part of the project record.

Greg Lockwood
Design Group Chief

Alaska Dept of Transportation and Public Facilities, Southcoast Region
Phone: (907) 465-2393



Kathryn Erickson
Environmental Impact Analyst, Southcoast Region
Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
Office: 907.465.4498
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Bob.sam1954@gmail.com

14. Proposed seawalk can connect authentic Tlingit place names along walkway. Totems can provide narratives for each location. Correct narratives for the Blarney Stone, Crescent Harbor petroglyphs are still there buried under the ground. If possible please restore this sacred site to its original state. Sheetka has beautiful oral traditions and history connected to crescent harbor. A casual visitor would enjoy knowing the culture and heritage of Sheetka.

Lastly, expand the sidewalk corridor so you don't have to feel crowded by people. Maybe a bike lane is needed.

From: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [Lockwood, Gregory K \(DOT\)](#)
Subject: Response to Comment on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project (Comment #2-15)
Date: Friday, December 27, 2024 2:37:00 PM

Thank you for your patience. We have been evaluating new information and wanted to send all responses at the same time.

Thank you for your comments and support of the Sitka Seawalk Phase II project. Improving pedestrian safety and ADA accessibility is an important aspect of this project for both locals and visitors. We appreciate you highlighting the gorgeous views and engaging area that this project would access.

Your comments will become part of the project record. Per your request, your name will be redacted from your comment in the public record.

Greg Lockwood
Design Group Chief

Alaska Dept of Transportation and Public Facilities, Southcoast Region
Phone: (907) 465-2393



Kathryn Erickson
Environmental Impact Analyst, Southcoast Region
Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
Office: 907.465.4498
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15. The project is a long-standing, community priority and, was thereby, included in numerous CBS planning documents since the early 2000's. It was originally a STIP nominated project submitted by CBS (in the same timeframe), as a needed safety improvement. The sidewalk ENDS and pedestrians(visitors, locals and MEHS students) are forced to make erratic/uncontrolled crossings at the base of the bridge where traffic is still at 35 mph speeds.

The sea walk will enable people with mobility impairments, including Pioneer Home residents, to have a continuous, barrier free walk from downtown to the National Park, completing the final section of the project. Walking continues to be one of Sitka's the most popular activities, especially with Sitka's large senior population. The health benefits are obviously extremely significant. It will be heavily used by locals and by visitors.

The sea walk site also has a very interesting attribute: Once you are behind the bridge at the sea walk elevation, all road noise ceases. The views are fabulous and the site restive, a little oasis downtown. This section of the sea walk will be an engaging, flat, barrier free walking opportunity

downtown, one of very few.

As usual NIMBY folks are always vocal on projects like this. I don't think the special interests of a few neighbors in any way outweighs the public interest and health and safety benefits. Experience shows that most folks who are NIMBY's later find their concerns were not realistic and in fact, enjoy the resulting project. This was so true with the Cross Trail and not only that, being close to the Cross Trail is now a positive value in real estate sales. I have a sidewalk associated with my residence and truly enjoy chatting with the walkers that use this area for their exercise.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

From: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
To: davidjpsea@gmail.com
Cc: [Lockwood, Gregory K \(DOT\)](#)
Subject: Response to Comment on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project (Comment #2-16)
Date: Friday, December 27, 2024 2:37:00 PM

Thank you for your patience. We have been evaluating new information and wanted to send all responses at the same time. Thank you for your comments and support of the Sitka Seawalk Phase II project. Improving pedestrian safety and ADA accessibility for both locals and visitors is an important aspect of this project.

Your comments will become part of the project record. Per your request, your name will be redacted from your comment in the public record.

Greg Lockwood
Design Group Chief

Alaska Dept of Transportation and Public Facilities, Southcoast Region
Phone: (907) 465-2393



Kathryn Erickson

Environmental Impact Analyst, Southcoast Region

Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities

Office: 907.465.4498

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davidjpsea@gmail.com

16. I think this project is beneficial to the community and to our visitors. I walk this area several times a week and it would be great not to have to cross traffic on harbor drive.

From: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
To: Rhondajr16@gmail.com
Cc: [Lockwood, Gregory K \(DOT\)](#)
Subject: Response to Comment on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project (Comment #2-17)
Date: Friday, December 27, 2024 2:23:00 PM

Ms. Reaney-

Thank you for your patience. We have been evaluating new information and wanted to send all responses at the same time.

Thank you for submitting comments for the Sitka Seawalk Phase II project. Improving pedestrian safety and ADA accessibility is an important aspect of this project for all pedestrians, locals and tourists.

Your comments will become part of the project record.

Greg Lockwood
Design Group Chief

Alaska Dept of Transportation and Public Facilities, Southcoast Region
Phone: (907) 465-2393



Kathryn Erickson

Environmental Impact Analyst, Southcoast Region

Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities

Office: 907.465.4498

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Rhondajr16@gmail.com

17. Is this on behalf of locals or TOURISTS. More land taken and dismantled. Sitka is definitely not the same.

From: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
To: kennywinger@yahoo.com
Cc: [Lockwood, Gregory K \(DOT\)](#)
Subject: Response to Comment on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project (Comment #2-18)
Date: Friday, December 27, 2024 2:23:00 PM

Mr. Winger - Thank you for your patience. We have been evaluating new information and wanted to send all responses at the same time.

Thank you for submitting comments for the Sitka Seawalk Phase II project. Improving pedestrian safety and ADA accessibility is an important aspect of this project for visitors and locals. Visitors would be able to enjoy the scenic views and also have an opportunity to peruse the downtown shops.

For the upkeep of this section, the City & Borough of Sitka (CBS) would be responsible for the path and amenities and DOT&PF would be responsible for the fill and armor stone. Maintenance costs for the Seawalk Phase II project, including custodial services, standard maintenance services, snow & ice management and equipment, are estimated to be \$5,600 annually.

Your comments will become part of the project record.

Greg Lockwood
Design Group Chief

Alaska Dept of Transportation and Public Facilities, Southcoast Region
Phone: (907) 465-2393



Kathryn Erickson
Environmental Impact Analyst, Southcoast Region
Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
Office: 907.465.4498
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kennywinger@yahoo.com

18. Why would you want to detour the visitors around the down town stores?? Make it go through down town. Who will do the upkeep of this section?? The City or the State?? I would hope you have that figured out before you build this.

From: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
To: b.r.bergman@att.net
Cc: [Lockwood, Gregory K \(DOT\)](#)
Subject: Response to Comment on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project (Comment #2-19)
Date: Friday, December 27, 2024 2:23:00 PM

Mr. Bergman-

Thank you for your patience. We have been evaluating new information and wanted to send all responses at the same time.

Thank you for your comments and support of the Sitka Seawalk Phase II project. Improving pedestrian safety and ADA accessibility is an important aspect of this project. The project would involve additional armoring of the shoreline and has been designed to minimize impacts to the intertidal zone and eelgrass.

Your comments will become part of the project record.

Greg Lockwood
Design Group Chief

Alaska Dept of Transportation and Public Facilities, Southcoast Region
Phone: (907) 465-2393



Kathryn Erickson

Environmental Impact Analyst, Southcoast Region
Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
Office: 907.465.4498
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b.r.bergman@att.net

19. love this idea. It should it help with the congestion at crosswalks and the of tourists trying to cross the road (sometimes at the wrong spot) impeding traffic. It's a good use of head tax money that will help as the town struggles with high tourist numbers.

Since there is already fill in that area it should cause much change to the marine environment. More rock is good habitat for small fish and other sea creatures.

My only complaint is it's not big enough. Ideally outside of the bridge would be a good alternative bus loading and unload area. But that a project for another time perhaps.

Build it.

Bert Bergman

From: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
To: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
Subject: Response to Comment on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project (Comment #2-20)
Date: Friday, December 27, 2024 7:30:09 AM

Mr. Chevalier-

Thank you for submitting comments for the Sitka Seawalk Phase II project. We are glad to hear you are enjoying Phase I of the Sitka Seawalk. The new path would enhance pedestrian safety.

Your comments will become part of the project record.

Greg Lockwood
Design Group Chief

Alaska Dept of Transportation and Public Facilities, Southcoast Region
Phone: (907) 465-2393



Kathryn Erickson
Environmental Impact Analyst, Southcoast Region
Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
Office: 907.465.4498
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NO EMAIL

20. The sea walk is a beautiful asset to our community for locals and visitors alike. I personally welcome the idea of continuing to build more walking paths along our gorgeous coastline. As a local I use the sea walk multiples times a week. I believe Sitka needs to make more long-term commitments to investing in more walking in our downtown area. The idea that our tiny downtown streets be open to traffic year round is dangerous in this day and age with the current large size of vehicles, and the amount of vehicles we have now. Sitka has given vehicles priority in its downtown for far too long. More walking paths is a good thing, now and for the future.

From: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
To: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
Subject: Response to Comment on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project (Comment #2-21)
Date: Friday, December 27, 2024 7:30:18 AM

Thank you for submitting comments for the Sitka Seawalk Phase II project. Continued consultation with the Sitka Tribe of Alaska is ongoing, along with an additional evaluation of the project's effect to historic properties. The project would involve additional armoring of the shoreline and has been designed to minimize impacts to the intertidal zone and eelgrass.

Your comments will become part of the project record.

Greg Lockwood
Design Group Chief

Alaska Dept of Transportation and Public Facilities, Southcoast Region
Phone: (907) 465-2393



Kathryn Erickson
Environmental Impact Analyst, Southcoast Region
Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
Office: 907.465.4498
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NO EMAIL

21. Sitka Tribe said no. So should you. Further artificial armoring of the shoreline is not a good move.

From: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
To: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
Subject: Response to Comment on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project (Comment #2-22)
Date: Friday, December 27, 2024 7:30:39 AM

Thank you for your patience. We have been evaluating new information and wanted to send all responses at the same time.

Thank you for submitting comments and suggestions on low-maintenance materials for the Sitka Seawalk Phase II project. The project has been designed with consideration for maintenance time and costs. Concerns raised from the earlier Sitka Seawalk project were factored into the design. Materials were chosen partly based on maintenance costs (i.e. concrete sidewalk with a colored concrete band). For the upkeep of this section, the City & Borough of Sitka (CBS) would be responsible for the path and amenities and DOT&PF would be responsible for the fill and armor stone.

Your comments will become part of the project record.

Greg Lockwood
Design Group Chief

Alaska Dept of Transportation and Public Facilities, Southcoast Region
Phone: (907) 465-2393



Kathryn Erickson

Environmental Impact Analyst, Southcoast Region

Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities

Office: 907.465.4498

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NO EMAIL

22. Very much looking forward to this sea walk expansion providing additional pathway that is away from vehicle traffic and cross walks.

My concern is the condition of the existing sea walk, and the continued maintenance required for all of the sea walk. The original sea walk sections are substantially lacking maintenance, some boards and areas have deteriorated nearly to the point that they're becoming unsafe and a liability to the city.

What is the plan to properly maintain the sea walks moving forward? If the current "maintenance" plan doesn't change I would suggest building the new section of the sea walk with materials that can be neglected, specifically MillBoard decking or grating instead of watching the yellow cedar waste away from lack of maintenance.

From: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
To: Barbaramorse2018@gmail.com
Cc: [Lockwood, Gregory K \(DOT\)](#)
Subject: Response to Comment on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project (Comment #2-23)
Date: Friday, December 27, 2024 2:23:00 PM

Ms. Morse-

Thank you for your patience. We have been evaluating new information and wanted to send all responses at the same time. Thank you for submitting comments for the Sitka Seawalk Phase II project. An eight-foot-wide sidewalk was chosen to create a multiuse path to benefit the community and visitors with a broad range of walking abilities, including wheelchairs.

Your comments will become part of the project record.

Greg Lockwood
Design Group Chief

Alaska Dept of Transportation and Public Facilities, Southcoast Region
Phone: (907) 465-2393



Kathryn Erickson
Environmental Impact Analyst, Southcoast Region
Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
Office: 907.465.4498
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Barbaramorse2018@gmail.com

23. Regarding section 2 I strongly support the selected route of along the shoreline close to the ocean. I believe the benefits associated with this design far outweigh concerns. The sea walk is a wonderful addition for recreational paths in Sitka for both visitors and residents,. Perhaps one unforeseen positive consequence is that it will provide a much needed wheelchair accessible and easily reached smooth walkway for our Pioneer home residents.

From: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
To: Stephen.morse30@gmail.com
Cc: [Lockwood, Gregory K \(DOT\)](#)
Subject: FW: Response to Comment on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project (Comment #2-24)
Date: Friday, December 27, 2024 2:37:00 PM

Mr. Morse –

Thank you for your patience. We have been evaluating new information and wanted to send all responses at the same time.

Thank you for your comments and support of the Sitka Seawalk Phase II project. We appreciate your kind words and agree that we are fortunate to have talented people working on this project.

Your comments will become part of the project record.

Greg Lockwood
Design Group Chief

Alaska Dept of Transportation and Public Facilities, Southcoast Region
Phone: (907) 465-2393



Kathryn Erickson
Environmental Impact Analyst, Southcoast Region
Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
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Stephen.morse30@gmail.com

24. After viewing your meeting comments, I agree that the walkway along the water and off the street is the best route. I particularly like the way you are using Tommy Joseph's and Terry Rofgar's design input into the project and Rebekah Poulson's knowledge of marine history. It will relieve a lot of the street congestion in town and give tourists and all of us outstanding views of the water. Thanks for your thoughtful planning for the project.

From: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
To: sjacksongamble@gmail.com
Cc: [Lockwood, Gregory K \(DOT\)](#)
Subject: Response to Comment on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project (Comment #2-25)
Date: Friday, December 27, 2024 2:24:00 PM

Shawaan Gamble –

Thank you for your patience. We have been evaluating new information and wanted to send all responses at the same time.

Thank you for submitting comments for the Sitka Seawalk Phase II project. The manmade rock wall was evaluated, and it was initially confirmed to be outside the proposed project’s area of potential effect. Evaluation of the project’s effect to historic properties, including determining the site boundaries of the manmade rock wall, is ongoing along with continued consultation with the Sitka Tribe of Alaska. Although visible, the manmade wall may be considered a sensitive cultural resource and is, therefore, not being discussed publicly.

Your comments will become part of the project record.

Greg Lockwood
Design Group Chief

Alaska Dept of Transportation and Public Facilities, Southcoast Region
Phone: (907) 465-2393



Kathryn Erickson
Environmental Impact Analyst, Southcoast Region
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sjacksongamble@gmail.com

25. I think that the city shouldn't go forward with this plan due to the route having potential to disrupt a traditional clam garden for the lingit people. Also because the Sitka tribe is opposed to this project there needs to be more collaboration with the tribe before any other action takes place. This is an old clam garden of our people and needs to be respected because it shows our history of this area since time immemorial. The route should avoid this precious area and go around it and make sure there is a safe buffer zone from the clam garden. Clam gardens are found in areas around our village sites and can be found all across southeast Alaska. In conclusion I am opposed to this project because of the potential disruption of a sacred site and consultation with sitka tribe needs to happen before any more progress or planning happens.

From: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [Lockwood, Gregory K \(DOT\)](#)
Subject: Response to Comment on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project (Comment #2-26)
Date: Friday, December 27, 2024 2:24:00 PM
Attachments: [Comments, March 2024.docx](#)
[image002.png](#)

[REDACTED]

Thank you for your patience. We have been evaluating new information and wanted to send all responses at the same time.

Thank you for taking the time to share your comments and concerns on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II project. The project is a continuation of an effort to enhance visitor and resident accessibility to the Sitka National Historical Park and downtown Sitka.

Traffic Flow. Planning for this project has been in the works for a long time. Although the use of the Lightering dock has shifted away from larger cruise ships, there is still a consistent number of tourists coming to Sitka. Cruise ships have been consistently coming to Southeast Alaska and Sitka for the last 30 years. There have been no signs in decreasing numbers of tourists (except during Covid years).



Figure 1 - Provided by Rain Coast Data, Juneau, Alaska.

Currently, uncontrolled crossings of Harbor Drive frequently occur. Improving pedestrian safety and

ADA accessibility for both locals and visitors is an important aspect of this project. Crossing Harbor Drive from the Centennial Building to Lincoln Street is outside the scope of this project. The City and Borough of Sitka (CBS) and Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF) will continue to collaborate on addressing jaywalking issues in the area. A project to add a crosswalk near Harrigan Centennial Hall has been nominated to the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) and is awaiting notice if it will be selected for funding.

The completion of Section 2 of the Seawalk is expected to provide a corridor to downtown that could significantly reduce jaywalking by tourists, as they won't need to cross Harbor Drive. This will be a proactive approach to improving pedestrian safety and traffic flow in that area.

Parking, aesthetics, and access. At the library, the river pebbles would remain in front of the library windows to create a buffer between the sidewalk and the library patrons. There would be a loss of 3 parking spaces along Harbor Drive with the proposed project. With the construction of Section 2, no parking spots would be lost, and the future Section 1 would remove three spaces along Harbor Drive closest to Maksoutoff Street. Public feedback from the Seawalk project indicates that some residents of Maksoutoff Street support the removal of these parking spaces due to sight distance concerns they currently cause. These parking spaces might be removed in the near future regardless of the Seawalk project, due to their negative impact on sight distances. The Seawalk project is not solely responsible for the removal of these spaces but is addressing an existing safety issue that would likely need attention regardless.

The 2014 Access Report is now 10 years old, there are some things that could be updated; however, as discussed above, there are still a consistent number of tourists coming to Sitka. Lincoln Street is narrow and closing Lincoln Street to vehicle traffic on "large cruise ship days" does change the concerns on those days. Uncontrolled pedestrian crossings of Harbor Drive still occur. A new eight-foot-wide sidewalk would create a multiuse path to benefit the community and visitors with a broad range of walking abilities. A path with good features keeps a high percentage of visitors on the path exploring the next feature versus wandering off the path. Lookout nodes should help provide a controlled opportunity to enjoy the view versus going out into parking lots and jaywalking. The interpretive signage and nodes should keep most visitors engaged and moving along to the next node.

The completion of Section 2 of the Seawalk is expected to provide a corridor to downtown that could significantly reduce jaywalking by tourists, as they won't need to cross Harbor Drive. This will be a proactive approach to improving pedestrian safety and traffic flow in that area. Adding more crosswalks may not make the situation safer. Visibility and other issues need to be considered. If crosswalks are too closely spaced, drivers tend to lose attention in scanning for pedestrians while pedestrians are given a false sense of security that they are in a marked crosswalk and therefore need to pay less attention for driver response to their crossing.

Reroute. For Maksoutoff Street residents, with landscaping we can make some improvements to keep people on the right path. Landscaping is planned to visually separate the streetscape from the waterscape views. The Seawalk would provide the public a chance to safely access coastal viewing areas with seating and relaxation areas without have to cross private property or climb on unsafe rocks. Although the currently funded section is beyond Sitka Reality and their parking area, we plan to put up signage beyond the limits of the extension to discourage people from leaving the path or going down Maksoutoff Street.

Off Season. Thank you for sharing your concerns about nighttime drinking and litter. A Maksoutoff Street resident also shared similar concerns about noise from people leaving the local bars. Your

concerns have been shared with CBS.

Upkeep. The project would be a great spot for walking dogs. Trash cans for easy pickup and disposal of pet waste are included in the project. Cleaning up after pets is required by law; perhaps if there were bags and trash cans readily accessible it would encourage people to do the right thing. Your concerns have been shared with CBS.

Thanks for sharing photos of maintenance issues from Phase I of the Seawalk. Concerns raised from the earlier Sitka Seawalk project were factored into the design for Phase II. Materials were chosen partly based on maintenance concerns. There will be no bricks in Phase II, just concrete sidewalk with a colored concrete band. For the upkeep of this section, the CBS would be responsible for the path and amenities and DOT&PF would be responsible for the fill and armor stone. Maintenance costs for the Seawalk Phase II project, including custodial services, standard maintenance services, snow & ice management, and equipment, are estimated to be \$5,600 annually.

Traffic and “Walkability”. The project involves creating a continuous eight-foot-wide path from the Sitka Public Library to Lincoln Street; therefore, providing a path all the way to the SNHP. The sidewalk would create a multiuse path to benefit the community and visitors with a broad range of walking abilities (including those not able to walk other Sitka trails). The eight-foot width would allow passage of two wheelchairs at a time, and individuals with jogging strollers and dogs on a leash to comfortably be able to pass. Currently, uncontrolled crossings frequently occur. The completion of Seawalk Phase II project would provide a safe and efficient alternative to crossing the busy Harbor Drive.

Light pollution. Currently streetlights along the Sitka Harbor Drive and bridge illuminate the area, causing light pollution throughout the area. We received comments from the public asking for lighting for safety and security. Focused lighting along the new seawalk would minimize additional light pollution and still allow for the walkway to be safety lit. The figure below shows existing conditions at night and a few examples of different lighting.

SEAWALK PHASE II – SECTION 2

Design Elements - Lighting



- WELL LIT IN RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENT TO PROVIDE SAFETY AND SECURITY.
 - “please provide as much lighting as possible. There is a pretty stretch on the original seawalk that I will not walk on when it is dark because it lacks lighting.”
- 12' OVERHEAD POLES TO PROVIDE BETTER SECURITY LIGHTING THAN BOLLARDS FOR LESS COST.
- CUT OFF LED LIGHT FIXTURES DESIGNED TO DIRECT LIGHT TO PATH AND MINIMIZE GLARE
- EXISTING BRIDGE LIGHTING THROUGHOUT AREA, MINIMAL ADDITIONAL IMPACTS FROM SEAWALK LIGHTS

13

Construction noise and traffic interruption. There would be unavoidable temporary construction impacts from this project, including noise and traffic disruptions. There are no plans to remove the bridge railing; during construction the seawalk would be accessed from near Sitka Realty or the lightering facility parking by land or by barge.

Your comments will become part of the project record. Per your request, your name will be redacted from your comment in the public record.

Thank you again for your comments,

Greg Lockwood
Design Group Chief

Alaska Dept of Transportation and Public Facilities, Southcoast Region
Phone: (907) 465-2393



Kathryn Erickson
Environmental Impact Analyst, Southcoast Region
Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
Office: 907.465.4498
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From: [REDACTED]

Sent: Sunday, April 7, 2024 5:31 PM

To: Lockwood, Gregory K (DOT) <greg.lockwood@alaska.gov>

Subject: Sitka seawalk phase II comments

You don't often get email from [REDACTED]. [Learn why this is important](#)

CAUTION: This email originated from outside the State of Alaska mail system. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Good evening—I've attached a letter with my comments about the undesirability of installing the Phase II of the seawalk project.

From: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [Lockwood, Gregory K \(DOT\)](#)
Subject: Response to Comment on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project (Comment #2-27)
Date: Friday, December 27, 2024 2:24:00 PM

Thank you for your patience. We have been evaluating new information and wanted to send all responses at the same time.

Thank you for submitting comments for the Sitka Seawalk Phase II project. Improving pedestrian safety and ADA accessibility is an important aspect of this project for both locals and visitors. With the construction of Section 2, no parking spots would be lost, and the future Section 1 would remove three spaces along Harbor Drive closest to Maksoutoff Street. Public feedback from the Seawalk project indicates that some residents of Maksoutoff Street support the removal of these parking spaces due to sight distance concerns they currently cause. These parking spaces might be removed in the near future regardless of the Seawalk project, due to their negative impact on sight distances. The Seawalk project is not solely responsible for the removal of these spaces but is addressing an existing safety issue that would likely need attention regardless.

There would be minor impacts to eelgrass. The project has been designed to minimize impacts to eelgrass beds and fill in the tidelands.

Your comments will become part of the project record. Per your request, your name will be redacted from your comment in the public record.

Greg Lockwood
Design Group Chief

Alaska Dept of Transportation and Public Facilities, Southcoast Region
Phone: (907) 465-2393



Kathryn Erickson
Environmental Impact Analyst, Southcoast Region
Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
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27. I am concerned about a project which I see as primarily benefiting cruise ship passengers. I know locals will use it, but I suspect not as much as locals use the already established parts of the Sea Walk. It just doesn't head in a direction that many locals will want to go, in my opinion.

I don't want any decrease in parking.

I am concerned about possible damage to sea grass.

Both of these concerns are intensified by my belief that the main beneficiaries of this project are

cruise ship visitors.
Thank you.

From: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [Lockwood, Gregory K \(DOT\)](#)
Subject: Response to Comment on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project (Comment #2-28)
Date: Friday, December 27, 2024 2:24:00 PM

Thank you for your patience. We have been evaluating new information and wanted to send all responses at the same time.

Thank you for submitting comments for the Sitka Seawalk Phase II project. The project is a continuation of an effort to enhance visitor and resident accessibility to the Sitka National Historical Park and downtown Sitka. Improving pedestrian safety and ADA accessibility is an important aspect of this project for both locals and visitors.

With the construction of Section 2, no parking spots would be lost, and the future Section 1 would remove three spaces along Harbor Drive closest to Maksoutoff Street. Public feedback from the Seawalk project indicates that some residents of Maksoutoff Street support the removal of these parking spaces due to sight distance concerns they currently cause. These parking spaces might be removed in the near future regardless of the Seawalk project, due to their negative impact on sight distances. The Seawalk project is not solely responsible for the removal of these spaces but is addressing an existing safety issue that would likely need attention regardless.

The project has been designed to minimize impacts to eelgrass beds and fill in the tidelands.

Your comments will become part of the project record. Per your request, your name will be redacted from your comment in the public record.

Greg Lockwood
Design Group Chief

Alaska Dept of Transportation and Public Facilities, Southcoast Region
Phone: (907) 465-2393



Kathryn Erickson
Environmental Impact Analyst, Southcoast Region
Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
Office: 907.465.4498
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28. The upcoming phase of the seawalk seems like the most expensive and ridiculous way to steer tourists around town. I don't see any benefit economically or for locals. Building a concrete path on the *outside* of the bridge seems like a huge waste of money and unnecessary burden to place on the marine environment.

The main question for this project is: why? We already have a path on the inside of the bridge. There's gotta be a different way to help tourists cross the street...maybe we can hire some people to hold their hands?

It seems the only reason this would be done is to create a holding cell for the hoardes of tourists that our town cannot accommodate, so let's just expand, spend more, build more, even if it's silly and ridiculous and wasteful.

I don't like the idea of losing any more parking spaces. When downtown is closed, we not only lose all parking downtown but on some of the side streets as well. Centennial building & the library parking Lots are full of tour buses, kayak tours, and tour operators, etc. Crescent Harbor lot is already overfull. Fisherman do not have enough spaces to park at Crescent Harbor on any given day when they're trying to go to work. losing even a few more parking spaces for this project is unfortunate and will probably give justification for the city to mow some other place down to create a big ugly parking lot. All for something completely unnecessary and wasteful. I could see continuing the Seawalk from under the bridge to the end of Totem Square. But to go around the bridge to get there from the library makes no sense at all. Very disappointing project and way for us to waste money. Also definitely concerned about this totally unnecessary impact on marine life.

From: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
To: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
Subject: Response to Comment on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project (Comment #2-29)
Date: Friday, December 27, 2024 7:30:53 AM

Thank you for submitting comments for the Sitka Seawalk Phase II project. Tourists are currently accessing the beach in front of Maksoutoff Street and the new pathway would create a corridor for the movement of pedestrians. This would help reduce the congestion while also providing a chance for safe access to coastal viewing with seating and relaxation areas without having to cross private property or climb on unsafe rocks.

Your comments will become part of the project record.

Greg Lockwood
Design Group Chief

Alaska Dept of Transportation and Public Facilities, Southcoast Region
Phone: (907) 465-2393



Kathryn Erickson
Environmental Impact Analyst, Southcoast Region
Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
Office: 907.465.4498
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NO EMAIL

29. I don't think this section is necessary and would prefer less development along the marine way. I have concerns about tourist accessing the beach and harming habitat that they currently have access too.

From: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
To: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
Subject: Response to Comment on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project (Comment #2-30)
Date: Friday, December 27, 2024 7:31:09 AM

Ms. Coleman-

Thank you for your patience. We have been evaluating new information and wanted to send all responses at the same time. Thank you for submitting comments for the Sitka Seawalk Phase II project. Improving pedestrian safety and ADA accessibility is an important aspect of this project for both locals and visitors. The project would involve additional armoring of the shoreline and has been designed to minimize impacts to the intertidal zone and eelgrass.

Your comments will become part of the project record.

Greg Lockwood
Design Group Chief

Alaska Dept of Transportation and Public Facilities, Southcoast Region
Phone: (907) 465-2393



Kathryn Erickson

Environmental Impact Analyst, Southcoast Region

Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities

Office: 907.465.4498

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NO EMAIL

30. The new portion of the sea walk is a complete waste of money. It's harmful to marine life, and not needed! There's plenty of sidewalks in the area. Let's start focusing on LOCALS and not just tourism.

From: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
To: cmoconn@gmail.com
Cc: [Lockwood, Gregory K \(DOT\)](#)
Subject: Response to Comment on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project (Comment #2-31)
Date: Friday, December 27, 2024 2:24:00 PM

Ms. O'Connell-

Thank you for your patience. We have been evaluating new information and wanted to send all responses at the same time.

Thank you for submitting comments for the Sitka Seawalk Phase II project. Improving pedestrian safety and ADA accessibility is an important aspect of this project. The project would involve additional armoring of the shoreline and has been designed to minimize impacts to the intertidal zone and eelgrass.

The manmade rock wall was evaluated, and it was initially confirmed to be outside the proposed project's area of potential effect. Evaluation of the project's effect to historic properties, including the manmade wall, is ongoing, along with continued consultation with the Sitka Tribe of Alaska. Although visible, the manmade wall may be considered a sensitive cultural resource and is, therefore, not being discussed publicly.

The completion of Section 2 of the Seawalk is expected to provide a corridor to downtown that could significantly reduce jaywalking by tourists, as they won't need to cross Harbor Drive. This will be a proactive approach to improving pedestrian safety and traffic flow in that area. Adding more crosswalks may not make the situation safer. Visibility and other issues need to be considered. We need to take care to manage crosswalk density. Too dense and drivers tend to lose attention in scanning for pedestrians while pedestrians are given a false sense of security that they are in a marked crosswalk and therefore need to pay less attention for driver response to their crossing.

Your comments will become part of the project record.

Greg Lockwood
Design Group Chief

Alaska Dept of Transportation and Public Facilities, Southcoast Region
Phone: (907) 465-2393



Kathryn Erickson

Environmental Impact Analyst, Southcoast Region

Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities

Office: 907.465.4498

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cmoconn@gmail.com

31. I do not support this project as currently planned. I am concerned about the impact it would have on the environment, including upon eel grass beds. I want the historic clam bed in that location to be preserved, and not damaged or destroyed, as would presumably happen with the sea walk expansion. I would prefer the relatively undeveloped shoreline alongside the bridge to be left as it is. It seems that the same pedestrian traffic flow goals could be accomplished by improving the existing crosswalks and signage, rather than undertaking a major and expensive new development.

From: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [Lockwood, Gregory K \(DOT\)](#)
Subject: Response to Comment on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project (Comment #2-32)
Date: Friday, December 27, 2024 2:24:00 PM

Thank you for your patience. We have been evaluating new information and wanted to send all responses at the same time.

Thank you for submitting comments for the Sitka Seawalk Phase II project. Improving pedestrian safety and ADA accessibility is an important aspect of this project. With the construction of Section 2, no parking spots would be lost, and the future Section 1 would remove three spaces along Harbor Drive closest to Maksoutoff Street. Public feedback from the Seawalk project indicates that some residents of Maksoutoff Street support the removal of these parking spaces due to sight distance concerns they currently cause. These parking spaces might be removed in the near future regardless of the Seawalk project, due to their negative impact on sight distances. The Seawalk project is not solely responsible for the removal of these spaces but is addressing an existing safety issue that would likely need attention regardless.

The City & Borough of Sitka has been implementing strategies to mitigate impacts to businesses and residences from tourists. As you mentioned, on big cruise ship tourist days, vehicle traffic on Lincoln Street has been limited. Additional mitigation of tourism impacts include the following:

- One-year long “Tourism Task Force” that advised the Assembly on tourism management and mitigation measures ranging from the number of annual cruise visitors, on-going public processes to continually address tourism management needs, a Tourism Best Management Practices (TBMP) program, permitting changes, regulation changes, zoning changes, development policies, and regional approaches to managing/mitigating tourism impacts. These recommendations from the Tourism Task Force were adopted by the Assembly and action planning is in progress.
- Installation of temporary restroom facilities downtown
- Increased cleaning/servicing of permanent restroom facilities
- Increased trash services in the downtown area
- Increased seasonal staffing at Harrigan Centennial Hall, Fire Department, and Police Department
- Increased parking enforcement in downtown parking lots
- A call line and email address for citizen issues/complaints regarding tourism
- Digital, “offline” viewable wayfinding app to reduce pressure on telecommunications bandwidth
- Increased public communications regarding cruise ship calendar, street closures, and sidewalk obstructions
- Residential utility account credits using surplus revenue from the summer season

Please see the *Final Tourism Task Force Recommendations* at the following link:

<https://www.cityofsitka.com/TourismTaskForce>

Your comments will become part of the project record. Per your request, your name will be redacted from your comment in the public record.

Greg Lockwood
Design Group Chief

Alaska Dept of Transportation and Public Facilities, Southcoast Region
Phone: (907) 465-2393



Kathryn Erickson

Environmental Impact Analyst, Southcoast Region

Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities

Office: 907.465.4498

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32. Currently there is not enough parking downtown for employees and staff of downtown businesses. Especially with big cruise tourist days when the downtown is closed to cars and street parking. Any parking space lost to this project needs to be made up somewhere else within easy walking distance of downtown.

Adequate consideration needs to be given to the businesses and residences which will be impacted by hordes of tourists crowding the walkway and at times blocking access to buildings adjacent to and near the Seawalk.

From: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
To: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
Subject: Response to Comment on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project (Comment #2-33)
Date: Friday, December 27, 2024 7:31:23 AM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Thank you for submitting comments for the Sitka Seawalk Phase II project. We appreciate you taking the time to listen to the presentation on the City & Borough of Sitka website. Improving pedestrian safety and ADA accessibility is an important aspect of this project. With the construction of Section 2, no parking spots would be lost, and the future Section 1 would remove three spaces along Harbor Drive closest to Maksoutoff Street. Public feedback from the Seawalk project indicates that some residents of Maksoutoff Street support the removal of these parking spaces due to sight distance concerns they currently cause. These parking spaces might be removed in the near future regardless of the Seawalk project, due to their negative impact on sight distances. The Seawalk project is not solely responsible for the removal of these spaces but is addressing an existing safety issue that would likely need attention regardless.

There are no plans to impact the beach between the library and the Woman’s Club. For Maksoutoff Street residents, landscaping is planned that may visually separate the streetscape from the waterscape views. The Seawalk would provide the public a chance to safely access coastal viewing areas with seating and relaxation areas without have to cross private property or climb on unsafe rocks. Signs are being considered to deter people from wandering down Maksoutoff Street.

Currently streetlights along the Sitka Harbor Drive and bridge illuminate the area, currently causing light pollution throughout the area. We received comments asking for lighting for safety and security. Focused lighting along the new seawalk would minimize additional light pollution and still allow for the walkway to be safety lit. The figure below (from the March presentation) shows existing conditions at night and a few examples of different lighting.

SEAWALK PHASE II – SECTION 2

Design Elements - Lighting

WELL LIT IN RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENT TO PROVIDE SAFETY AND SECURITY.

- “please provide as much lighting as possible. There is a pretty stretch on the original seawalk that I will not walk on when it is dark because it lacks lighting.”
- **12’ OVERHEAD POLES TO PROVIDE BETTER SECURITY LIGHTING THAN BOLLARDS FOR LESS COST.**
- **CUT OFF LED LIGHT FIXTURES DESIGNED TO DIRECT LIGHT TO PATH AND MINIMIZE GLARE**
- **EXISTING BRIDGE LIGHTING THROUGHOUT AREA, MINIMAL ADDITIONAL IMPACTS FROM SEAWALK LIGHTS**

13

Your comments will become part of the project record.

Greg Lockwood
Design Group Chief

Alaska Dept of Transportation and Public Facilities, Southcoast Region
Phone: (907) 465-2393



Kathryn Erickson

Environmental Impact Analyst, Southcoast Region
Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
Office: 907.465.4498
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NO EMAIL

33. I was unable to attend the meeting in March but listened to the presentation. So excuse me if I am off on my understanding of what we can comment on. My concern is losing more parking and having more tourists on the street where there are no cross walks. We lost parking in front of the building the Pub is in by Crescent Harbor. Yes, it was only 3-4 spots but it was a loss for sure. Slowly downtown and surrounding areas are becoming more and more congested to the locals during the now almost 6 month tour ship season. We already have to drive around town to get to town and honestly having the walkway seems to only add to the issue but I may be wrong.

I am understanding from the map that in front of Sitka Realty those parking spaces are going to be gone. If you do take away parking re allocate other areas to take up the slack. Rent spaces from Wells Fargo for local use as an idea. Also the little beach by the Women's Club needs to be left alone if there is talk of displacing that area. Kids play there and the natural habitat needs to be left alone.

I am also asking that you respect those residents on Maksoutoff St as who wants tourists taking pictures and prowling about your private space. We are being intruded upon enough with the high number of tourists. Also lights on this "path" seem like more privacy intrusion to those residents. I know you are trying to funnel the tourists to town and the lightering dock but it just seems like the cat would be out of the bag and tourists will be everywhere crossing the street below the bridge to get to the Cellar and other shops. I realize this is in the works and I hope you all take these ideas into consideration. Thanks for the consideration.

From: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
To: alaskasfreshest@gmail.com
Cc: [Lockwood, Gregory K \(DOT\)](#)
Subject: Response to Comment on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project (Comment #2-34)
Date: Friday, December 27, 2024 2:24:00 PM

Mr. Andersen-

Thank you for your patience. We have been evaluating new information and wanted to send all responses at the same time.

Thank you for submitting comments for the Sitka Seawalk Phase II project.

Your comments will become part of the project record.

Greg Lockwood
Design Group Chief

Alaska Dept of Transportation and Public Facilities, Southcoast Region
Phone: (907) 465-2393



Kathryn Erickson

Environmental Impact Analyst, Southcoast Region

Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities

Office: 907.465.4498

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alaskasfreshest@gmail.com

34. "How to waste mas monies" By Alaska DOT and City of Sitka. Hands down one of the worst ideas you've come up with yet! No, I would not recommend to a friend. Just curious who the brain trust is behind these "infrastructure" projects?

From: [Erickson, Kathryn H. \(DOT\)](#)
To: thadpoulson@yahoo.com
Cc: [Lockwood, Gregory K. \(DOT\)](#)
Subject: Response to Comment on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project (Comment #2-36)
Date: Friday, December 27, 2024 2:24:00 PM
Attachments: [SFHWY00312_Sitka_Harbor_Bridge_DOE_20230502.pdf](#)
[SIT-01150_Building_Form.pdf](#)

Mr. Poulson-

Thank you for your patience. We have been evaluating new information and wanted to send all responses at the same time.

Thank you for submitting comments on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II project.

As you pointed out, the John O'Connell Bridge, also known as the Sitka Harbor Bridge, is of historical significance as the first modern cable stayed girder bridge constructed in Alaska. During the Section 106 process and evaluation of historic properties for this project, DOT&PF determined the bridge eligible to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under Criterion C and the Alaska State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurred with the determination on May 22, 2023. The significant, defining features of the bridge are the harp design of the stays, the free-standing pylons, and the box girders which solved a critical stiffness and corrosion problem. All of the defining features are part of the bridge superstructure.

The proposed seawalk will pass below the bridge superstructure. The project does not adversely affect the historic property because the project will not affect the attributes which are historically significant (the superstructure) which make the bridge eligible to the NRHP. Since the ground surface below the bridge superstructure is already paved, and a sidewalk present, the Sitka Seawalk project does not detract from the historic property's setting or association. It was determined that the project does not have an adverse effect on the bridge and the State Historic Preservation Office concurred with this determination on May 22, 2023.

Attached is the Determination of Eligibility for the Sitka Harbor Bridge and Alaska Office of History and Archaeology Building Inventory Form.

Your comments will become part of the project record.

Thank you,

Greg Lockwood
Design Group Chief

Alaska Dept of Transportation and Public Facilities, Southcoast Region
Phone: (907) 465-2393

Kathryn Erickson
Environmental Impact Analyst, Southcoast Region
[Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities](#)
Office: 907.465.4498



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From: Thad Poulson <thadpoulson@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 4, 2024 7:39 PM
To: Lockwood, Gregory K (DOT) <greg.lockwood@alaska.gov>
Subject: Comment on Sitka Sea Walk Phase III

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Comment on Sitka Sea Walk Phase II

April 4, 2024

From Thad Poulson
1 Maksoutoff Street
Sitka, Alaska 99835
(907) 747-3219 days
(907) 738-8488 cell

The current concept for Sitka Sea Walk Phase II has been under development for a number of years, and the latest "scoping report" available to the public is dated Sept. 24, 2020.

That scoping report, by PND Engineers, Inc., states in the introduction, page iv of v: "The project is not expected to affect buildings or sites older than 50 years during construction."

That statement is not correct. The John O'Connell Bridge, where major design changes and conversions for new uses will take place, has been more than 50 years old for the past several years.

The bridge was built by the Alaska Department of Highways in 1970 and 1971.

Sitka Sea Walk Phase II will be paid for with federal funds.

The John O'Connell Bridge is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places and as a National Historic Landmark, under more than one criterion of historic significance in the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

On Sept. 11, 2022 the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) Alaska Section celebrated the 50th anniversary of the John O'Connell Bridge by naming it an Alaska Historic Civil Engineering Landmark.

If it has not already begun, an NHPA Section 106 review of the Sea Walk Phase II plans should start immediately because they affect this historic site.

Major structural and design changes proposed on one of the four abutments on approaches to the bridge are not compatible with the design and purpose of the John O'Connell bridge, which have been unchanged since the bridge was built.

There is no pressing need for Sea Walk Phase II construction to start this year. The assumptions in the 2020 scoping report are out of date because of major changes in cruise industry infrastructure that have taken place in Sitka since 2020. Postponing the project for one more year will allow time for a full Section 106 process.

In the meantime I suggest the DOT and the city may wish to consider hiring downtown crossing guards to help direct cruise visitors this summer.

End comment

Thad Poulson

From: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
To: rich@kcaw.org
Cc: [Lockwood, Gregory K \(DOT\)](#)
Subject: Response to Comment on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project (Comment #2-37)
Date: Friday, December 27, 2024 2:24:00 PM

Mr. McClear-

Thank you for your patience. We have been evaluating new information and wanted to send all responses at the same time.

Thank you for your comments and support of the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project.

Your comments will become part of the project record.

Greg Lockwood
Design Group Chief

Alaska Dept of Transportation and Public Facilities, Southcoast Region
Phone: (907) 465-2393



Kathryn Erickson

Environmental Impact Analyst, Southcoast Region

Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities

Office: 907.465.4498

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rich@kcaw.org

37. Thank you for including KCAW's NPR sat dish in your plans. We, and the community thank you for assuring continuous NPR Broadcasting.

Richard McClear, KCAW-FM Raven Radio Foundation, rich@kcaw.org

From: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
To: mmkurzer20@gmail.com
Cc: [Lockwood, Gregory K \(DOT\)](#)
Subject: Response to Comment on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project (Comment #2-38)
Date: Friday, December 27, 2024 2:24:00 PM

Ms. Kurzer-

Thank you for your patience. We have been evaluating new information and wanted to send all responses at the same time. Thank you for taking the time to share your comments on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II project. Below are responses or comments on the various concerns that you raised.

1. Yes, planning for this project has been in the works for a long time. Cruise ships have been consistently coming to Southeast Alaska and Sitka for the last 30 years. There have been no signs in decreasing numbers of tourists (except during Covid years). Although the use of the Lightering dock has shifted away from larger cruise ships, there is still a consistent number of tourists coming to Sitka. Improving pedestrian safety and ADA accessibility for both locals and visitors is an important aspect of this project. There are challenges and opportunities in managing so many visitors coming from far and wide to share this unique landscape.
2. The status of Sitka as a rural community and what it means for subsistence rights has been raised during this project. It is not expected that the Seawalk project would invite a nonrural designation proposal for Sitka. According to the Policy on Nonrural Determinations by the Federal Subsistence Board adopted on January 11, 2017, the process for granting or rescinding rural status has changed significantly in the last decade. Per a Final Rule made by the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture in November of 2015, specific rural determination guidelines and criteria, including population data, aggregation of communities, and a decennial review were removed. Instead, the Federal Subsistence Board now makes determinations using a comprehensive approach that may consider such factors as population size and density, economic indicators, military presence, industrial facilities, use of fish and wildlife, degree of remoteness and isolation, and any other relevant material including information provided by the public. Further, the process for making a "nonrural determination" (i.e. a community losing its rural status) can only be initiated by an individual, organization, or community submitting a proposal to the Federal Subsistence Board requesting such action, and the proposer bears the burden of proof that the determination is warranted. When considering whether a project will threaten Sitka's rural status, the two questions that need to be answered are 1) does this project substantially change the community based on the comprehensive factors used by the Federal Subsistence Board for nonrural designations; and 2) does this project pose a risk to the status or subsistence access of another organization/community such that it would invite a nonrural determination proposal. On the first, there are no longer thresholds in determining rural status that this project would "trigger". From a comprehensive perspective of Sitka's community, the Seawalk project does not change our population or density, it is not expected to be an economic driver (beyond the minor economic contribution it will make during construction) or revenue generating asset, it does not enable/directly support military presence, it is not an industrial facility, is not expected to impact residential use of fish and wildlife, nor will it change the degree of remoteness and isolation of our community. On the second, it is not expected that the Seawalk project would pose a risk to individuals/organizations/other community's rural status or access to/competition for subsistence resources, and therefore it is not expected that the Seawalk project would invite a nonrural designation proposal for Sitka.
3. For Maksoutoff Street residents, we can make some improvements to keep people on the right path with signs and landscaping. Landscaping is planned to visually separate the streetscape from the waterscape views. A path with good features keeps a high percentage of visitors on the path exploring the next feature versus wandering off the path. Lookout nodes should help provide a controlled opportunity to enjoy the view versus going out into parking lots and jaywalking. The interpretive signage and nodes should keep most visitors engaged and moving along to the next node. Although the currently funded section is beyond Sitka Realty and their parking area, we plan to put up signage beyond the limits of the extension to discourage people from leaving the path or going down Maksoutoff Street.
4. The project would provide an 8-foot pathway and a corridor for the movement of pedestrian,

along with providing scenic coastal views. Visitors and locals would have the option to experience Sitka's beauty and the convenience of a safe pathway.

5. With the construction of Section 2, no parking spots would be lost, and the future Section 1 would remove three spaces along Harbor Drive closest to Maksoutoff Street. Public feedback from the Seawalk project indicates that some residents of Maksoutoff Street support the removal of these parking spaces due to sight distance concerns they currently cause. These parking spaces might be removed in the near future regardless of the Seawalk project, due to their negative impact on sight distances. The Seawalk project is not solely responsible for the removal of these spaces but is addressing an existing safety issue that would likely need attention regardless.
6. There are various options for sources for rock and other materials, both in Sitka or barged in from nearby. There are limited options for developed rock sources accessible by the existing road system in Sitka; however, new material sites may be developed based on need. The decision of where to source materials for this project would to be left for the Contractor to decide.
7. The project would involve loss of eelgrass and construction impacts, including carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions. There would be additional armoring of the shoreline to accommodate the new 8-foot wide seawalk. The project has been designed to minimize impacts to the intertidal zone and eelgrass.

The carbon footprint of transportation projects should be considered on a project-to-project basis. This project would have some impacts during construction (direct impacts) but would support active transportation in the long-term (indirect and long-term impacts). The direct impacts include the use of heavy machinery, construction vehicles, and transportation of materials over different length of time. These activities emit greenhouse gases (GHGs) such as carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), and nitrous oxide (N₂O). This project would build a sea walk to be used by pedestrians only and would support the use of so-called active transportation and support the minimization of emissions from vehicles. Please see the Alaska DOT&PF's Carbon Reduction Strategy for additional information:

<https://dot.alaska.gov/stwdplng/cip/stip/projects/Assets/Alaska-DOTPF-Carbon-Reduction-Strategy.pdf>

8. In recent years there have been high rates of inflation which effect the cost of projects. Funding for the project is through the Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) and Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) with a 9% match from the Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF) and the City & Borough of Sitka (CBS). Construction costs have been estimated for this project, including a 15% contingency added on that would hopefully cover any potential cost overruns. If there are cost overages, then these would be the responsibility of the City and Borough of Sitka. Most likely, the funds would come from the City & Borough of Sitka's share of the commercial passenger vessel excise tax.
9. Adding more crosswalks may not make the situation safer. Visibility and other issues need to be considered. If crosswalks are too closely spaced, drivers tend to lose attention in scanning for pedestrians while pedestrians are given a false sense of security that they are in a marked crosswalk and therefore need to pay less attention for driver response to their crossing. A new eight-foot-wide sidewalk would create a multiuse path to benefit the community and visitors with a broad range of walking abilities. The completion of Seawalk Phase II project would provide a safe and efficient alternative to crossing Harbor Drive.

This project has support from the local government and residents, many wanting to enjoy walking along the proposed seawalk. We received comments both strongly in favor of the project and against the project, along with suggestions for improvements or mitigation.

Your comments will become part of the project record.

Thank you for your comments,

Greg Lockwood

Design Group Chief

Alaska Dept of Transportation and Public Facilities, Southcoast Region
Phone: (907) 465-2393



Kathryn Erickson

Environmental Impact Analyst, Southcoast Region

[Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities](#)

Office: 907.465.4498

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From: Martina Kurzer <mmkurzer20@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, April 6, 2024 3:20 PM
To: Lockwood, Gregory K (DOT) <greg.lockwood@alaska.gov>
Subject: Sitka Sea Walk segment 2, phase 2 - Comment

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To Whom it May Concern

I attended the public meeting on the expansion of the Sitka Sea Walk project, segment 2, phase 2, offered by DOT planners and engineers on March 7 at Harrigan Centennial Hall (HCH) in Sitka.

I have a few concerns and am happy to share them here:

1. Planning for the Sea Walk project was started many years ago. The segment in question was meant to offer more space for foot traffic between the lightering dock under the O'Connell Bridge and HCH. After the cruise ship dock at Halibut Point Road opened, most cruise ships don't use the lightering dock anymore. There is no need to build this segment of the Sea Walk. This project needs to be canceled.
2. The extended Sea Walk will make Sitka look even more like a tourist town. It adds to our infrastructure as a whole that might be quoted later by other agencies to justify that Sitka won't qualify as a rural community anymore. If we lose the status as a rural community, a lot of our citizens will lose subsistence rights and will regret it. This is an issue that is rarely mentioned.
3. The Project will encroach onto the back sides of private residences on Maksoutoff Street. I feel sorry for the owners and residents because this will affect their daily lives and their property values.

4. As a walker I know that there is a very nice route between HCH and the west end of Lincoln Street at Totem Square. I also know that pedestrians who are adverse to walking like using the shortest route between A and B. In this case, it's the existing sidewalks. Assuming they would choose the longer distance on the outside of the bridge is not realistic.

5. There are a few parking spots along the highway right by Sitka Realty (228 Harbor Drive). They are essential for the customers of the Sitka Food Coop across the road in the basement of the Franklin Building, on the corner of Maksoutoff St. and Harbor Drive. Losing these parking spots will create an extra barrier for this business to serve its customers.

6. A lot of rock needs to be mined and moved to create this walkway. Rock is a rare commodity in Sitka and needs to be conserved for use over time for more important projects. I find it sad that it will be used for a purpose that is not really needed.

7. There are a few other environmental considerations to consider, like the loss of eelgrass alongside the ramp of the bridge and CO2 emissions for mining, producing, and transporting materials, not to speak of construction itself.

8. Assuming that after years of high inflation the cost for this project will exceed the allocated \$3 million I think the planners should reevaluate if this project is still useful and appropriate. I think it is not.

9. In my opinion, one or two added pedestrian crossings and signage should be enough to make walking from HCH to Lincoln Street safe for visitors and locals alike, as well as for vehicle operators on Harbor Drive.

Overall I say that this project is a want and not a need, a pile of allocated money in search of an expense, or a belated project that shows waste of funds and inflexibility of government planning. It might also demonstrate the lack of collaboration with the local government and residents that might prefer available funding to go into projects that are really needed.

The only beneficiaries for this walkway would be locals like me who like to walk and would incorporate the new route into their daily exercise program.

Sincerely,

Martina Kurzer

108 Herb Didrickson Street, Sitka, AK 99835

From: [Erickson, Kathryn H \(DOT\)](#)
To: larryedwards@gci.net
Cc: [Lockwood, Gregory K \(DOT\)](#)
Subject: Response to Comment on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project (Comment #2-40)
Date: Friday, December 27, 2024 2:24:00 PM
Attachments: [Amended Comments of Larry Edwards on Seawalk Phase 2 7Apr24.pdf](#)

Mr. Edwards,

Hello! Thank you for your patience. We have been evaluating new information and wanted to send all responses at the same time. Thank you for submitting additional comments on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II project. We appreciate the detailed and thoughtful comments with photos, newspaper articles and an audio clip to support your arguments.

1. New considerations and information - Thank you for sharing your thoughts on an alternative way to address pedestrian safety. I appreciate the images with labels explaining your comments. Improving pedestrian safety and ADA accessibility is an important aspect of this project for both locals and visitors. Adding more crosswalks may not make the situation safer. Visibility and other issues need to be considered. If crosswalks are too closely spaced, drivers tend to lose attention in scanning for pedestrians while pedestrians are given a false sense of security that they are in a marked crosswalk and therefore need to pay less attention for driver response to their crossing. A new eight-foot-wide sidewalk would create a multiuse path to benefit the community and visitors with a broad range of walking abilities. The completion of Seawalk Phase II project would provide a safe and efficient alternative to crossing Harbor Drive. The project is a continuation of an effort to enhance visitor and resident accessibility to the Sitka National Historical Park and downtown Sitka. A path with good features keeps a high percentage of visitors on the path exploring the next feature versus wandering off the path. Lookout nodes should help provide a controlled opportunity to enjoy the view versus going out into parking lots and jaywalking. The interpretive signage and nodes should keep most visitors engaged and moving along to the next node. The Seawalk would provide the public a chance to safely access coastal viewing areas with seating and relaxation areas without having to cross private property or climb on unsafe rocks.

Harbor Drive is an Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF) managed right-of-way. The City and Borough of Sitka (CBS) has requested an additional crosswalk leaving Harrigan Centennial Hall and sponsored a grant proposal through the Alaska Statewide Transportation Alternatives (TAP) in 2023 to have a crosswalk with RRFB pedestrian crossing signs installed but was unsuccessful in both attempts. Signage has had limited effect and installing a barricade such as a rope or fence would result in significant on-street parking loss. CBS, in partnership with DOT&PF, continue to work on solutions for jaywalking in this area. A project to add a crosswalk near Harrigan Centennial Hall has been nominated to the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) and is awaiting notice if it will be selected for funding.

2. Downtown Character – There is a long history of tourism in Sitka going back to the late 1880s, when visitors were carried by steam ship through Alaska’s Inside Passage. Your letter covers the more recent history of opposition to tourism, including some changes that were made and others that were not supported. There are challenges and opportunities in managing so many visitors coming from far and wide to share this unique landscape.

3. Utilization of the O’Connell Dock - The Lightering dock use has shifted away from larger cruise

ships; however, there is still a consistent number of tourists coming to Sitka. Cruise ships have been coming to Southeast Alaska and Sitka consistently for the last 30 years.



Figure 1 - Provided by Rain Coast Data, Juneau, Alaska.

There have been no signs in decreasing numbers of tourists (except during Covid years). Improving pedestrian safety and ADA accessibility is an important aspect of this project for both locals and visitors.

4. Sitka’s Rural Designation - It is not expected that the Seawalk project would invite a nonrural designation proposal for Sitka. According to the Policy on Nonrural Determinations by the Federal Subsistence Board adopted on January 11, 2017, the process for granting or rescinding rural status has changed significantly in the last decade. Per a Final Rule made by the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture in November of 2015, specific rural determination guidelines and criteria, including population data, aggregation of communities, and a decennial review were removed. Instead, the Federal Subsistence Board now makes determinations using a comprehensive approach that may consider such factors as population size and density, economic indicators, military presence, industrial facilities, use of fish and wildlife, degree of remoteness and isolation, and any other relevant material including information provided by the public. Further, the process for making a “nonrural determination” (i.e. a community losing its rural status) can only be initiated by an individual, organization, or community submitting a proposal to the Federal Subsistence Board requesting such action, and the proposer bears the burden of proof that the determination is warranted. When considering whether a project will threaten Sitka’s rural status, the two questions that need to be answered are 1) does this project substantially change the community based on the comprehensive

factors used by the Federal Subsistence Board for nonrural designations; and 2) does this project pose a risk to the status or subsistence access of another organization/community such that it would invite a nonrural determination proposal. On the first, there are no longer thresholds in determining rural status that this project would “trigger”. From a comprehensive perspective of Sitka’s community, the Seawalk project does not change our population or density, it is not expected to be an economic driver (beyond the minor economic contribution it will make during construction) or revenue generating asset, it does not enable/directly support military presence, it is not an industrial facility, is not expected to impact residential use of fish and wildlife, nor will it change the degree of remoteness and isolation of our community. On the second, it is not expected that the Seawalk project would pose a risk to individuals/organizations/other community’s rural status or access to/competition for subsistence resources, and therefore it is not expected that the Seawalk project would invite a nonrural designation proposal for Sitka.

5. Maintenance - As you pointed out, there have been some maintenance issues with the earlier Sitka Seawalk project. The proposed project has been designed with consideration of those previous issues for maintenance time and costs. Materials were chosen partly based on maintenance costs (i.e. concrete sidewalk with a colored concrete band instead of bricks). Maintenance costs for the Seawalk Phase II project, including custodial services, standard maintenance services, snow & ice management and equipment, are estimated to be \$5,600 annually.

6. Level of Environmental Document - The Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF) determined that this project qualifies under the Code of Federal Register (CFR) Title 23 §771.117 (c)(3) construction of bicycle and pedestrian lanes, paths, and facilities, based on DOT&PF’s and Federal Highway Administration’s (FHWA’s) experience with projects with similar actions and impacts. A Categorical Exclusion was completed and approved for this project on February 22, 2024. The proposed project was evaluated based on the current design and not what was included in the 2014 “Phase II Access Program Project proposal.”

The proposed project was determined not to cause any significant impact to the human environment, individually or cumulatively. The Categorical Exclusion document evaluated the environmental consequences for the project, including right-of-way impacts, social and cultural impacts, economic impacts, land use and transportation plans, impacts to historic properties, wetland impacts, water body involvement, fish and wildlife, threatened and endangered species, invasive species, contaminated sites, air quality, floodplain impacts, noise impacts, water quality impacts, construction impacts, and section 4(f)/6(f) per the requirements of NEPA and DOT&PF’s MOU with FHWA. There are no unusual circumstances or significant impacts that would require an environmental assessment.

Climate Change - You raised the issue of climate change. The carbon footprint of transportation projects should be considered on a project-to-project basis. This project would have some impacts during construction (direct impacts) but would support active transportation in the long-term (indirect and long-term impacts). The direct impacts include the use of heavy machinery, construction vehicles, and transportation of materials over different length of time. These activities emit greenhouse gases (GHGs) such as carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), and nitrous oxide (N₂O). This project would build a sea walk to be used by pedestrians only and would support the use of so-called active transportation and support the minimization of emissions from vehicles. Please see the Alaska DOT&PF’s Carbon Reduction Strategy for additional information:

<https://dot.alaska.gov/stwdplng/cip/stip/projects/Assets/Alaska-DOTPF-Carbon-Reduction-Strategy.pdf>

Sources of Materials - There are various options for sources for rock and other materials, both in Sitka or barged in from nearby. There are limited options for developed rock sources accessible by the existing road system in Sitka; however, new material sites may be developed based on need. The decision of where to source materials for this project would be left for the Contractor to decide. This project has support from the local government and residents, many wanting to enjoy walking along the proposed seawalk. We received comments both strongly in favor of the project and against the project, along with suggestions of improvements.

Your comments will become part of the project record.
Thank you,

Greg Lockwood
Design Group Chief

Alaska Dept of Transportation and Public Facilities, Southcoast Region
Phone: (907) 465-2393



Kathryn Erickson
Environmental Impact Analyst, Southcoast Region
Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
Office: 907.465.4498
Keep Alaska Moving through service and infrastructure.



The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried out by DOT&PF pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the FHWA and DOT&PF, dated April 13, 2023 and executed by FHWA and DOT&PF.

Larry Edwards
Box 6484
Sitka, Ak 99835
7 April 2024

Greg Lockwood, DOT&PF Project Manager
Sitka Seawalk Phase II Project
via email: greg.lockwood@alaska.gov

Subj: Comments on the Sitka Seawalk Phase II project

Dear Mr. Lockwood and project team;

I am a Sitka resident, and I commented on this project previously in January 2023. My comments today include new considerations and information. Additionally, I argue that the project team's response of February 10, 2023 to my previous comments is mistaken in several regards.

1. New considerations and information

A. Safety at the foot of O'Connell Bridge

The approach to improving safety in the planning for Seawalk Phase 2 seems to me akin to locking the front door to one's house while leaving the backdoor and all the windows unlocked. Let me explain.

A premise of the Scoping Report is (emphasis added):

*"A large portion of the Phase II alignment follows Harbor Drive. An existing sidewalk follows a similar alignment but currently dead ends at the O'Connell Bridge without a crosswalk to reach the Castle Hill State Historic Site and Totem Square. This currently results in frequent uncontrolled and unsafe crossings by pedestrians. ... *The Sitka Sea Walk Phase II aims to remedy these issues and improve safety by constructing an alignment that follows the seaward side of the O'Connell Bridge approach embankment until it crosses under the bridge to create a separation between pedestrians and vehicular traffic using the bridge.*" (Jan. 2020 scoping document, 7th page in PDF.)*

Similarly, also see pages labeled 4 and 15 of 24 in the 2014 Phase II Access Program Project Proposal.

The problem with this reasoning is that it fails to consider how visitors southbound on the Segment 2 of the Seawalk will behave. Many of them, when passing the foot of the bridge, are likely to see other visitors going up the bridge sidewalk on the other side of the highway — and want to make an uncontrolled crossing to



get to what must be a great view up there, including a view in the opposite direction to what they saw from under the bridge. Other visitors at that point at the foot of the bridge will see – across the highway – the Mean Queen Restaurant, food trailers, two flower shops, other shops and other tourists across the highway, as well as people up on top of Castle Hill. They too will have an impulse for an uncontrolled crossing of Harbor Drive, to get to those places.

It seems to me that this will create a much greater safety problem at the foot of the bridge than exists presently.

B. Harbor Way to Maksoutoff – Making it Safe on the Town Side.

The alternative to the above safety problem posed by implementing Segment 2 of Seawalk Phase 2 is to have visitors continue to use the sidewalk that is alongside the town side of the bridge. The sidewalk is well aligned with an existing crosswalk (photo below), and an optional additional crosswalk would be useful – and actually is much needed for residents anyway.

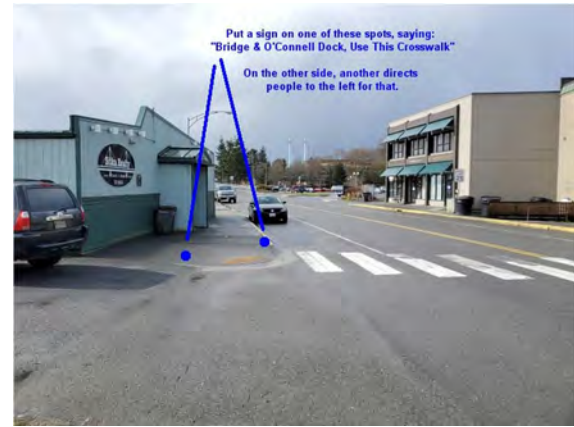
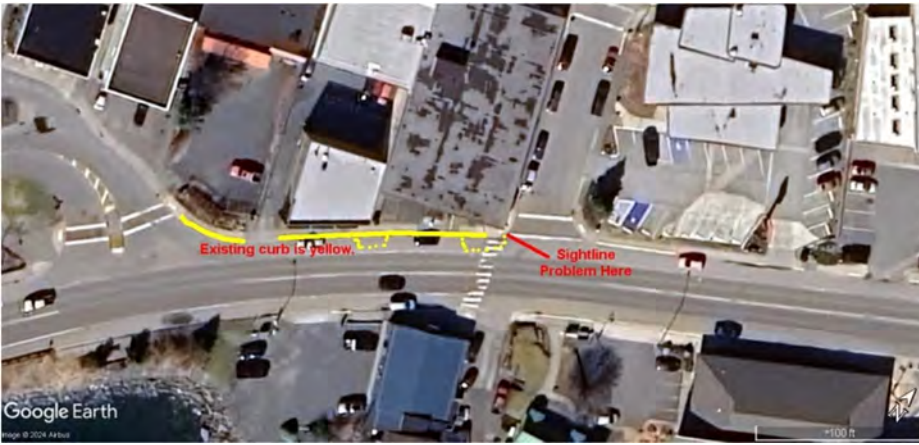
These crosswalks can serve visitors who go to adjacent businesses and Lincoln Street, as well as those going to Centennial Hall.

The latter would continue along the town side of Harbor Drive (see below), and cross Harbor Drive at either the existing crosswalk at Maksoutoff Street or a new *additional* one that is much needed at the Library (see



further below.) At the foot of the bridge, where the sidewalk meets the crosswalk and also turns to enter the bridge sidewalk, a “Do Not Cross” sign should be placed to dissuade crossing Harbor Drive.

There is a safety hazard at the corner of Maksoutoff and Harbor Drive (see photo below), on the downtown side. The curb between the aforementioned crosswalk and that corner is all yellow – no parking (except maybe loading). Vehicles frequently park right close to the Maksoutoff Street corner, greatly impairing the sightline of vehicles at the Maksoutoff stop sign, especially if the parked one in an SUV or big pickup. The solution is to widen the sidewalk there for some distance to ensure a good sightline, and this would also make the sidewalk very accessible (while presently it isn't). A similar widening “bulb” could be used at another location where that sidewalk is narrow. In between or beyond the bulbs, parking could be allowed. This adds parking, instead of taking parking away as in the present Seawalk II plan. More parking in this stretch of Harbor Drive is vital because the downstairs of the building on that corner is a food co-op which is quite busy at times, with customers carrying out big boxes of groceries. This would provide new legitimate (not yellow curb) parking, while alleviating the sightline problem for vehicles at the Maksoutoff stop sign.

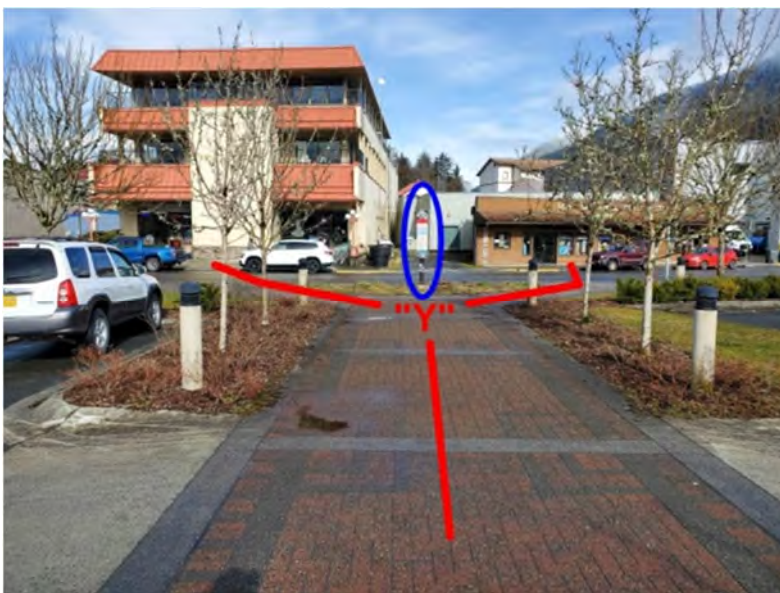


C. Avoiding Jaywalking at the Library and Near the Fudge Shop.

Jaywalking is well-known to be prevalent at Library’s corner and at the end of the straight-line promenade that leads from the Centennial Hall’s main entrance to the curb of Harbor Drive and attractions across the highway. I believe both of these jaywalking locations are a far greater hazard than present jaywalking at the foot of the bridge. Until last year we had a boat across the bridge at Sealing Cove and travelled the bridge frequently. I have never seen a problem at that uncontrolled crossing, at any time of the year.

A cross walk should be added from the Library’s corner straight across Harbor Drive. It is a logical crossing, because visitors (and residents) headed to town have sightlines there through alleys to Lincoln Street. Having crosswalks both here and at Maksoutoff Street will help disperse visitors over sidewalks on both sides of the street, and to and from the alleys.

The problem with Jaywalking at the fudge shop is that the prominent walkway from Centennial Hall to Harbor Drive leads people to a place where many can’t go where they want to, without Jaywalking. The problem is with the layout of that part of the grounds. At the “Y” at the end of the walkway, people are lined up for either The Bike Shop or the fudge shop. The problem seems obvious, and the fix is easy — it will direct people to where they should be, and away from where they shouldn’t be.



The Left Photo identifies the problem. One part of the fix is to move the sign (also circled in blue in the left photo) back to the curb-line just before the promenade crosses the bus lane. The sign’s right and left arrows will then direct people to one direction or the other of the

actual Seawalk at the Centennial Building premises, instead of onto a problematic sidewalk on Harbor Drive that isn't part of the Seawalk. The sign should also have a vertical arrow labeled "Parking Lot Only." Another sign across the bus lane can also say "To Parking Only."

This photo explains the rest of the fix. It makes it clear in every way possible that this is not throughway, and it utilizes the freed up space for much needed additional parking.



D. Conclusion on the safety issues

Both the scoping document and the fed application

I believe the vision explained above in sections A through C is appropriate, visitor friendly and overall the safest alternative. It fixes existing problems, and does not create the major new one at the foot of the bridge that the proposed Segment 2 would create. Further, it avoids entirely the objections of residents of the southward stretch of Maksoutoff Street. In that regard, it seems disingenuous that the project maps showing Segment 2 end at the realty office parking lot, and omit those residences and their relationship to the project — that is unfair presentation.

A possible explanation for why the project has not identified the holistic alternative presented above — of using the existing Harbor Way sidewalk and the other improvements for different Segment 1 and Segment 2 of Seawalk Phase 2 — is this. Going back as far as the original 1997 concept of a seawalk (originally called a boardwalk), the focus has been on a particular alignment from end to end of the combined Phases 1 & 2. It seems that this has limited what is now considered to be the project area, and what kind of construction and throughway alignment will or will not be considered. This put on blinders in the planning process, and excluded the fixing of the truly serious jaywalking problems that could be addressed through an openness to additional alternatives for the project. In fact, a big part of this defect in the project's planning is that in large part the project has been as a "marketing tool." (See e.g. p. "7 of 24" in the 2014 Phase II Access Program Project Proposal, among several others in the project's documentation.) Sitka no longer needs this "marketing tool," if in fact it ever did. The problem now is extreme overtourism, particularly from the market segment (cruise) whose overflow this project is largely targeted to address. It is time for a new vision!

2. Downtown Character

"No place stays special by accident." (VIP 2.0, others). Sitka is rapidly losing what makes it special, incrementally through increasing cruise visitor numbers (directly) and the incessant reaction by some in the leadership of the community (and in state government) to add more infrastructure to accommodate the growth, and moreover to do so in a way that is fancy and urbanized, and takes Sitka away from its rural, small town character. This is true citywide, but especially in the core area of downtown, O'Connell Dock to Centennial Hall, and on to Sitka National Historic Park.

Tourism should conform to rural, small-town Sitka. Sitka should not conform to tourism — nor should Sitka be expected to conform, or be forced to conform to tourism.

A. A Substantial History of Resistance to Mass (Cruise) Tourism in Sitka

There is a substantial history of opposition to mass tourism, particularly in the downtown area but also including the bus traffic that would have resulted from a once-proposed city tidelands sale for a dock at the old mill site, where large cruise ships could tie up. This history goes back at least to 1998, when a proposal to build a downtown cruise dock was defeated by 69% to 31%. In July 2004, under public pressure Shee Atika, Inc. and Sheldon Jackson College dropped their plan for a cruise dock in front of the college. In October 2004, Prop 1 passed 3014 to 710, a margin of *over* 4-to-1, requiring a vote of the people for any lease of city tidelands for a dock for ships of over 200 foot length. Because that left some related issues unresolved, in 2005 Sitkans for a Clear Vote applied for a ballot proposition but was denied by the city clerk. On the 9th try, petition books were finally issued in August 2006, with 20 carriers getting 991 signatures in 6 days. At the polls in October the measure passed 65% to 35%. Some in the business community proposed in 2012 that the Assembly put a downtown dock on the ballot, and the Assembly voted 5-0 not to do so.

B. Beyond that History to a Present, Focused Resistance

In September and October 2023 in an ad hoc effort, two applications for initiatives to greatly reduce cruise tourism were submitted, but denied to go out for signatures by the city clerk. Between November 2023 and February an organization coalesced to make a third attempt. The organization, Small Town SOUL (subtitle “save our unique lifestyle”),¹ is a 501(c)(4) nonprofit. This third attempt is in preparation, and imminent. Like the first two, it would cut cruise tourism about in half, back – as an initial step – to the level of the century’s first decade. As the project’s documentation notes, Sitka’s assembly approved Visitor Industry Plan 2.0 in 2007, after rejecting a much different version 1.0 earlier that year. Version 2.0 did not settle the controversy of cruise visitation numbers. The controversy went to sleep as cruise numbers took a deep dive at the start of the Great Recession following 2008 that lasted for a decade. The cruise boom (bomb?) announced in 2021 and starting in 2022 reawakened that deep controversy in the community.

The week after the first recent initiative was applied for, last September, port city municipal managers from around Southeast (plus tourism directors of those cities that have them) met in Sitka. From a recording of the meeting, the tenor was – as former Juneau city manager Rory Watt put it – “...we think that absent a change, we’re gonna get ballot initiatives and those ballot initiatives are gonna pass.”

The point of the history presented above plus Watt’s expression of the current situation, relative to the Seawalk 2 project, is that a dramatic reduction in cruise tourism in Sitka is quite possible, and one cut in visitation made soon may, in time, lead to further reduction. This situation calls into question whether this project should race ahead in its present form before the matter reaches a new reality – probably later this year – and whether the project leaders’ safety concerns used to justify a hugely expensive seawalk on the seaward side of the bridge would still be important enough to push ahead in its present form. In contrast, the alternative I have presented makes sense regardless of the size of cruise visitation, and will alleviate three existing significant safety problems while avoiding creating a new one, at the foot of the bridge, that conceivably could be even worse than all those others combined.

3. Utilization of the O’Connell Dock

If there is a dramatic reduction in cruise visitors in Sitka, as a result of an initiative (or higher fuel prices), the Sitka Cruise Terminal can be expected to capture as many of the

¹ Small Town SOUL: <https://smalltownsoul.org>

remaining ships as it can, as customers. Use of the O'Connell Dock as a lightering facility would likely become negligible, with it mainly being used by high-end yachts. This has been the case in the past. (Sitka Sentinel 28 May 2015, "City, Old Sitka Share Cruise Ships").² Few visitors would need to use the overly fancy as-proposed Seawalk 2 Segment 2. The best practice would be to try to funnel visitors from yachts at O'Connell Dock onto Lincoln Street, to boost the economy – and the alternative I have proposed above does that. People – whether from cruise lighters or off of yachts – will eventually find Centennial Hall anyway, and the more passes they make through downtown the better for business.

4. Potential Impact on the Core of Sitka's Subsistence Use — Sitka's Rural Designation

The incremental accumulation of infrastructure from projects like Seawalk Phase 2, and especially infrastructure of an urbanized rather than rural character, puts at risk the continuation of something that is at the core of Sitka's soul.

The harvesting and use of subsistence resources is a vital part of life for residents of Sitka, and especially the practices of subsistence (including sharing) and consumption of those foods that are cultural and traditional. Several times, from the beginning of federal subsistence qualifications in Alaska in 1980, Sitka has had to fight for the rural designation that allows subsistence rights here. Under Title VIII of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (1980), Sitka has a much larger population than is generally allowed for a community to be designated as rural, a maximum of 2500. Only special considerations have *saved our soul*, and not by much. Some increment of development(s) is likely to put us over even the liberal bending of the line, thus far done for us, when our status is challenged next.

Sitka's situation was eloquently described by a gentleman who testified at the January 16 town hall hearing on cruise tourism held by Sitka's Tourism Task Force (transcribed from a recording by KCAW, and showing vocal emphasis):³

I am a year-round Sitka resident, homeowner and taxpayer.

I support a 300,000 cap annual, and a 3500 daily cap. I am concerned about the proposed plans to build additional infrastructure to spread tourism out over a daily average. That's flawed and risky.

Why? In 2010, Sitka had to go to battle and defend its rural status, after the State of Alaska, and the Outdoors Council requested the Federal Subsistence Board to review that status. At that time, Sitka exceeded the 2500 person threshold for the communities, so we had to go to secondary criteria to defend our rural status. That criteria was: your use of subsistence resources; your isolation from the road system; your economy base; *and your infrastructure* within the community.

In 2017, the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture signed into regulation a new set of criteria for the rural determination status. Basically the way it says right now is, a petitioner has to show what has changed within a community for it to lose its rural status. *What has happened* in Sitka since 2010? We have - *blown - the - doors - off - of - infrastructure*. We have put in a \$140 million dam expansion. We built a new hatchery out at Gary Paxton Industrial Park. We put in a *new dock* at a Gary Paxton Industrial Park. I'm not sure when Silver Bay came online, if that was post 2010, but they may be part of that new infrastructure.

We are planning on putting in a new and expanded *boat haul out* – new infrastructure. We have a *new expanded regional hospital* – new infrastructure. We have a *new Coast Guard presence*; we are having a fast response cutter coming in – new infrastructure. Both with the hospital and with the Coast Guard Cutter, we are going to see an increase in our population. We actually took a

² Appended to these comments. (Note that CBS failed to record the hour of the hearing between its two breaks. KCAW had a good quality recording of the whole hearing.)

³ The recording is attached to my email transmitting these comments.

decrease from 2010 – we're going to go back up. But both of those entities provide year round living-wage jobs, and opportunities for Sitkans to go out and get those jobs.

The other thing, we are putting in a new and expanded *floatplane dock*. We have the new and expanded airport coming down the line – more infrastructure. And then we have a new cruise ship dock – more infrastructure. I've heard rumors that the industry is putting in a new theater on the AML lot – new infrastructure. I've heard AML is moving to the Sportsman's Association – more infrastructure.

So what happens when we lose our rural status? We lose your ability to go set subsistence [halibut] skates. You lose your ability to harvest Redoubt Lake sockeye. You'll use that January deer hunt. And then on the state level, the state will follow suit and come right behind it like they've done in every other community, and make Sitka a non-subsistence zone. What do you lose then you lose your ability to harvest sockeye at Redoubt? When you lose your ability to harvest subsistence herring eggs, seaweed?

There's a great deal at risk here folks. You really need to think this through. Thank you

Sitka really needs to rein in its appetite for more and more infrastructure, for those reasons. That is especially true for projects that really are wants rather than needs, or that are overly fancy (rather than functional), or make Sitka's setting more urban-like. Seawalk Phase 2 Segment 2 fits all three of those categories – to a T – and adds risk unnecessarily.

5. Sitka has More Than It Can Reasonably Maintain Already

A big point in trying to sell the entire span of the Seawalk project has been to maintain a consistent “look and feel” from end to end. Besides presenting the above described risks if this overly fancy appearance is expanded throughout Sitka's waterfront district, neither the look nor the feel is all that great in some parts, as shown in the photos below.

And that is not just a matter of appearance, but of the cost and the demand on finite city staff labor to maintain it. Sitka does not need more of this — more hand rails, more lighting, more pavement — to maintain. Already, city wide, Sitka has much more maintenance and public works reconstruction to do than it is able to do, at least without great stress. Projects that create more maintenance needs over time should not be welcomed, and Sitka would do well to refuse those that really are wants – like the as-proposed Segment 2 – rather than real needs.

The alternative I have proposed will not add any maintenance cost or labor burdens, other than striping one additional crosswalk annually and maintaining some shrubs where the promenade through the Centennial Hall parking lot presently ends.



6. This Project Needs a NEPA Environmental Assessment — Not Categorical Exclusion.

As pointed out in my January 2023 comments on this project, and as further reinforced by all of the sections above in these comments, this project should not have a categorical exclusion from detailed NEPA analysis, at least with an environmental analysis. The community human environment will be affected by this project in the several ways pointed out, all of which involve whether the project will improve or be detrimental to the human environment in Sitka. As well, covered in my 2023 comments, there are the issues of:

- 1) Impacts to the eel grass bed, and the cumulative loss to date of eel grass in tidelands near the center of town;
- 2) the commitment of a resource (rock and gravel) that in the past has been critically limited in Sitka and likely will be again in the long-term (among other sources around the same time: Sitka Sentinel 19 March 2015, "Sitkans Hear Details For Katlian Rd. Plan"⁴; and
- 3) impact on the climate (and on people worldwide who rely on a stable climate) from the use of fossil fuels in hauling materials and in construction for what is really (as proposed) an unnecessary project.

The response to my 2023 misconstrued, it seems deliberately, my comments on those issues and dismissed them. They need to be reconsidered.

For that reason, for the failure to consider any alternatives other than those hardwired into this project from the beginning, and for the best long-term interests of Sitkans, an environmental assessment should be prepared for the project — or (apart from Segment 3) the project should be cancelled.

The excuse for claiming the project is categorically excluded from NEPA is on page "7 of 24" of the 2014 "Phase II Access Program Project Proposal." The text is cursory:

"Permitting and compliance work will be minimal due to the alignment being located on fill or roadway shoulder. No in-water work is planned and no wetlands are present so ACOE jurisdiction is minimal. NEPA will be very streamlined as well due to the nature of the project area. The project will not impact any cultural or archeological sites."

It fails to consider any of the impacts on the human environment covered in the comments and my 2023 comments (in which I also said a categorical exclusion is unsupportable).

7. Conclusion

Except for Segment 3 (from the O'Connell Dock to Totem Square), before the project can proceed as planned an environmental assessment is necessary and other alternatives (such as the one above) need to be considered. Also, the project area should be expanded to include all of Harbor Drive, Harbor Way, bridge and the grounds in front of Centennial Hall.

As a different approach with low impacts (while solving three existing safety problems) the alternative I have proposed can, it seems, be pursued under a categorical exclusion. It can also be done at far lower cost and with a minimal use of material resources and with minimal climate harming emissions during construction.

⁴ Although the main topic of the story is the Katlian Bay Road, it identifies the road as an important link to a rock source, of which then current and future prospects on the road system are extremely limited. Since the time of the article (2015) it was found that the bridges at Katlian Bay are too expensive to construct for reaching the rock source. Additionally, the partly constructed road has suffered multiple landslides (as local former Forest Service road engineer Ben Mitchell had predicted early on. Further, the project is now stopped and demobilized due to severe cost overruns.

I oppose Segment 2 of Phase 2 as proposed, and ask that proposal be cancelled for the reasons I have given.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Larry Edwards". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "L" and "E".

Larry Edwards

Appended: Two cited news articles.

Attached to my email: An audio clip of the cited 16 Jan 2024 testimony.

City, Old Sitka Share Cruise Ships

By SHANNON HAUGLAND
Sentinel Staff Writer

The shift of some cruise ships from city lightering facilities to the Old Sitka Dock is costing the city some business, but isn't expected to have a substantial impact on the harbor department, harbor officials said.

"I'm not worried yet," said Harbor Master Stan Eliason.

The city charges \$1,145.87 a day for cruise ships to use the city lightering docks at Crescent Harbor or under O'Connell Bridge. That's up from \$916.70 last year.

Eliason forecast the city will receive \$82,502 from 72 cruise ship visits for the season using lightering facilities, but knows that number is somewhat flexible since some ships cancel and some this year will choose to use the privately owned Old Sitka Dock, managed by Chris McGraw.

So far this year, two cruise ships have shifted from using the city lightering docks to going to Old Sitka Dock. The city has also added one ship visit so far for the lightering docks, picking up some of those lost revenues.

"It's not much, but who knows what will happen in the future?" Eliason said.

He said he does appreciate having some advance notice when cruise ships change their plans for using the lightering facility, and he works closely with Cruise Line Agencies to stay abreast of the schedules. He said shops downtown may add employees or cancel them when the tendering or docking plans change; and the city security guard may gain or lose hours for the same reason at O'Connell Bridge or Crescent.

"Fred Reeder (Cruise Line Agencies port director) contacts me so we

can get the information to the business folks," Eliason said. "Businesses sometimes add an employee if it's on one side or the other."

When ships tie up at the Old Sitka Dock, buses bring passengers to Centennial Hall, with the cost paid in part from the commercial passenger excise tax. Halibut Point Marine Services, which owns Old Sitka Dock, picks up the transportation tab for the ships that had not been scheduled in advance of the season, said McGraw.

The city has been generating new revenues in recent years from mooring large yachts at O'Connell Bridge at a rate of \$900 a day.

"It's probably the nicest facility in Alaska for that," Eliason said. "Right downtown, a private gangway ... We're always looking for revenue."

It's early in the season, but Eliason
Continued on back page



With Annahootz Mountain in the background, the cruise ship Westerdam ties up at the Old Sitka Dock. The shift of some cruise ships from city lightering facilities to the dock is costing the city some business. (Sentinel Photo)

Ships . . .

Continued from page 1

said so far it's been going well.

"It's getting busy," he said.

Old Sitka Dock has 30 cruise ship visits scheduled for this year, and McGraw said so far it's been going well. It's the third year of operation for the dock and so far nine ships, including the Westerdam, have used it for their Sitka stops.

"Everything has been going as planned," McGraw said. He estimates he needs nine to 12 buses to serve the cruise ship passengers coming into town from his facility, six and half miles from downtown. He said he's been pleased to see new stops from new cruise ship companies coming to Sitka, including two port visits by Norwegian Cruise Line, two from Celebrity Infinity and one from Celebrity Millennium.

Reeder said the net effect of using the Old Sitka Dock is positive, given the extra 20 jobs or so created at the facility, and the savings from reducing the security staff at the city lightering facilities. He agreed that the season has been going well so far. "Touch wood," he added.

Sitkans Hear Details For Katlian Rd. Plan

By SHANNON HAUGLAND
Sentinel Staff Writer

The new nine-mile, single-lane road to Katlian Bay should provide new opportunities for subsistence, recreation and resource development, the Chamber of Commerce was told Wednesday.

Keith Karpstein, design group chief for the Department of Transportation, outlined at the weekly luncheon the details of the \$16 million road that will be started in mid 2016 and finished a year later if the project goes as planned.

The \$14 million for the Katlian road was in the statewide \$454 million transportation bond issue approved by the voters in 2012.

Karpstein, speaking to a packed house at the Westmark, said the exact cost of the road will be known once contractors' bids are received. He concluded his presentation by taking a few questions from the audience. Later that afternoon Karpstein and his DOT colleagues from Juneau held an open house, with a similar presentation, at Centennial Hall. More than 30 people attended the open house in addition to the dozens who went to the Chamber luncheon, Karpstein said.

"There are some folks that like it, and some folks that don't," Karpstein said today from Juneau. "Overall, I think, the folks who attended the meeting are excited about the project and would like to see it move forward."

The road would be an extension

of Halibut Point Road past its existing terminus at Starrigavan.

The majority of the concerns raised by residents at the open house related to the cost of the project at a time when the state is experiencing severe financial challenges.

"They wanted to know why are we spending money with the current budget crisis," Karpstein said. He clarified that money for this project is not from the general fund, but comes from the multimillion-dollar general obligation bond passed by the voters.

One of those commenting at the open house said he would prefer that the area remain pristine and untouched, but overall most were pleased with the prospect of more opportunities to get out and enjoy more remote areas for recreation, hunting and fishing, Karpstein said.

Access to a prospective rock quarry is given as another reason for the road, as well as providing access to Shee Atika Inc. lands, and "new material sources on state, federal and Native corporation land."

"Sitka currently has a finite road system that provides limited passenger vehicle access for recreation and subsistence activities," Karpstein said in his Power Point presentation at both the Chamber and the open house. "Sitka has a shortage of developable material sources for future projects on the existing road system."

The plans show the road will:

- start at the northern end of HPR, and end at a new U.S. Forest Service trailhead.

- have a 25 mph speed limit.

- have a single 12-foot-wide lane, with two-foot-wide shoulders and 100 pullouts for passing, spaced about 600 to 1,000 feet apart.

- have a number of viewpoints and an end-point comprising a parking area, fire ring and pit toilet.

- include a 150-foot bridge crossing Katlian River, plus five smaller bridges crossing other streams.

- be open year-round, although Karpstein said he doesn't believe the state plans to clear snow in the winter. Regular road maintenance is expected, however, he said.

Karpstein said about 97 acres of land will be affected, including 12 acres of wetlands for which mitigation will be needed. Four anadromous streams will be crossed, but planners may learn of more during further investigations.

The project is currently at the 35 percent design phase; Karpstein said he and his team will return later to update residents on the progress and planning for the project. He said he also intends to post the plans, including maps and designs for the road and bridges, on the department's web page.

The department is still collecting public comments on the project. They may be submitted to the department before 4 p.m. Friday, April 3. Those with questions about commenting may call Deborah Holman at 465-1828.

In an interview today Sen. Bert Stedman said from Juneau the project is not likely to be derailed by the current financial crisis.

"It's unlikely that would happen - it

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Plan . . .

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was voted on by the people," he said. "As we're trying to work through the next few years, we have to be careful we don't mess up our long-term projects over our short-term problems. That includes the Mt. Edgecumbe pool, and this project."

The Mt. Edgecumbe pool is also funded through a state general obligation bond.