



Tourism Commission Agenda

Thursday, March 13, 2025, 6:00 PM
Harrigan Centennial Hall, 330 Harbor Drive

Members: Devon Calvin, Ian Dempster, Vaughn Hazel
Bethany Lowrance, Carol Bryant-Martin, Alana Peterson, Jeremy Plank
Rachel Roy (ex officio), Amy Ainslie (ex officio)

- I. CALL TO ORDER**
- II. ROLL CALL**
- III. CONSIDERATION OF AGENDA**
- IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
- V. NEW BUSINESS**
 - A. TBMP Discussion
 - B. 2025 Downtown Traffic Management
 - C. Review of Draft Visit Sitka 2025-2027 3-Year Strategic Marketing Plan
 - D. Transit Safety & Efficiency Efforts
- VI. PERSONS TO BE HEARD** *(For items ON or OFF the agenda – not to exceed 3 minutes)*
- VII. ADJOURNMENT**



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

Meeting Minutes Tourism Commission

Officers: Chair Jeremy Plank; Vice Chair Ian Dempster; and Secretary Carol Bryant-Martin

Members: Devon Calvin; Vaughn Hazel; Bethany Lowrance; Alana Peterson; and Rachel Roy (Visit Sitka, ex-officio)

Staff Liaison: Amy Ainslie, P&CD Director; and Jessica Earnshaw, Deputy Municipal Clerk

Assembly Liaison: Chris Ystad

DATE: February 6, 2025

6:00 P.M.

Harrigan Centennial Hall

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Deputy Municipal Clerk Jess Earnshaw called the inaugural Sitka Tourism Commission meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. She noted that the Chair will call the meetings to order once elected by the commission members.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Carol Bryant-Martin; Vaughn Hazel; Bethany Lowrance; Alana Peterson; Jeremy Plank; Ian Dempster Riley; and Rachel Roy

Absent: Devon Calvin (excused)

Staff: Amy Ainslie, Planning & Community Development Director; and Jess Earnshaw, Deputy Municipal Clerk

Public: Teal West, Downtown Business Association

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. Introductions

Earnshaw gave an overview of her role with the City and recognized her colleague Amy Ainslie. She asked the Commission to share their name, professional backgrounds, and community affiliations.

B. Overview of Roberts Rules, Open Meetings Act, Meeting Guidelines

Deputy Municipal Clerk Jess Earnshaw provided the Commission with an overview of Roberts Rules of Order, the Open Meeting Acts, and Meeting Guidelines.

C. Meeting Intervals/Dates/Times

Commission members agreed to schedule future meetings on the second Thursdays of the month at 6:00 p.m.

D. Election of Officers

Earnshaw requested the Commission to elect officers.

Chair: Ian Dempster moved to nominate Jeremy Plank as the Chair. He accepted the nomination. The motion passed unanimously by a voice vote.

Vice Chair: Jeremy Plank moved to nominate Ian Dempster as the Vice Chair. He accepted the nomination. The motion passed unanimously by a voice vote.

Secretary: Ian Dempster moved to nominate Carol Bryant-Martin as the Secretary. She accepted the nomination. The motion passed unanimously by a voice vote.

E. Term Assignments

Earnshaw explained that since the Sitka Tourism Commission is newly formed, the expiration dates for the first terms will need to be staggered in accordance with mandates set forth in Ordinance 2024-21. Commissioners volunteered to serve 1 year, 2 year, or three years terms.

1 Year Term: Devon Calvin; Vaughn Hazel; and Alana Peterson

2 Year Term: Ian Dempster and Jeremy Plank

3 Year Term: Carol Bryant-Martin and Bethany Lowrance

F. Review of Existing Tourism-Related Goals, Projects, and Resources

Ainslie reviewed the list of plans and studies with the Commission and advised the members that she would give notice when the resources are available ready to view online. In addition, she indicated that a downtown traffic study and parking analysis can be accessed. She acknowledged that while there is not a current economic impact study for review, the City included lines items for community sentiment and economic impact studies in the budget for the new fiscal year.

G. Discussion on Near-Term Commission Goals and Priorities

The commission members discussed strategies for implementing a Tourism Best Management Practices (TBMP) program in Sitka, plans to address the top 10 issues that impact tourism in the city, and various ways to improve pedestrian safety.

IV. PERSONS TO BE HEARD (*For items ON or OFF the agenda and not to exceed 3 minutes*)

Earnshaw recognized Teal West to give words. She thanked the Sitka Tourism Commission members for their service and extended an invitation to visit the Downtown Business Association meetings.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Earnshaw stated that the next meeting will be scheduled for Thursday, March 13, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. at Harrigan Centennial Hall. With no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 7:38 p.m.

Minutes By: Carol Bryant-Martin, Secretary



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

A COAST GUARD CITY

MEMORANDUM

To: Chair Plank and Tourism Commission Members

From: Amy Ainslie, Planning & Community Development Director *AAA*

Date: March 7, 2025

Subject: New Business Items for March 13, 2025

Item A: TBMP Discussion

- Opportunity to discuss potential elements that can be implemented for 2025, and forward planning for full implementation in 2026
- Resource: Tourism Task Force Draft TBMP Guidelines

Item B: 2025 Downtown Traffic Management

- Review of 2024 Lincoln Street closure plan and municipal operations
- Discussion/recommendation on altering, cancelling, and/or augmenting closure plans
- Other traffic/pedestrian safety measures downtown
- Resources: 2024 Lincoln Street Closures
Short-Term Tourism Plan Excerpt – Lincoln Street
2022 Downtown Traffic Study

Item C: Review of Draft Visit Sitka 2025-2027 3-Year Strategic Marketing Plan

- Opportunity to provide input/comments on the draft 2025-2027 3-Year Strategic Marketing Plan as prepared by Visit Sitka.
- Resource: Draft Plan

Item D: Transit Safety & Efficiency Efforts

Opportunity for broader discussion on several transit-related issues flagged as priority issues at the February 6th meeting including:

- Bus routes
- E-bikes
- Sawmill Creek/Raptor Center crossing
- Multi-use paths
- Resources: Reference material for Item B – additional to be added to Tourism Commission webpage

Sitka’s Draft Tourism Best Practices (TBMP) Program

PARTNER HANDBOOK AND PROGRAM GUIDELINES FOR SITKA’S VISITOR INDUSTRY

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Sitka's Tourism Best Management Practices (TBMP) Program

Introduction

Sitka and Baranof Island, Alaska is Lingít Aaní, ancestral homeland of the Tlingít people who have been practicing their culture and way of life on these lands and waters for over 10,000 years. Gunalchéesh to the Tlingít people for their stewardship of this land since time immemorial.

The Sitka Tourism Best Management Practices (TBMP) program is modeled after the TBMP program first established in Juneau, 25 years ago. Ketchikan and Skagway have also modeled their TBMPs after Juneau's program. The SitkaTBMP is a voluntary compliance program for partners and organizations in the City and Borough of Sitka. Our TBMP is intended to minimize the impacts of tourism in a manner which addresses both resident and industry concerns while maintaining our quality of life and enhancing the visitor experience in Sitka.

These guidelines do not replace applicable city, state, or federal regulations.

As Sitka's visitor industry has grown, so have concerns about impacts to the community. By actively participating in this voluntary program, participants demonstrate their commitment to address key community concerns.

Partners agree to implement appropriate best practices, including but not limited to the recommendations of the TBMP, in their own policies and training of their staff.

Partners also agree to address issues or concerns raised by other partners, community partners and/or the City and Borough and other governmental agencies within a timely manner.

Partners comprise anyone signing on to the plan, including all tour and attractions operators, retail businesses serving visitor clientele, restaurants, shuttle, van and taxi operators, cruise ship docking facilities and the cruise lines themselves.

TBD: Sitka's TBMP program is administered by ___?___ with oversight and support from the Tourism Commission and the municipality and is funded through cruise vessel passenger tax revenue.

TBMP participating partners and organizations who successfully complete implementation and training requirements will be listed on the TBMP website and included in brochures and other promotional materials. Decals will be issued to partners for placement on tour vehicles and storefronts. Partners may include the TBMP logo in their own promotion.

General Agreements for All TBMP Partners

Sitka TBMP partners strive to provide a positive experience for our visitors while minimizing impacts to our community. Partners, organizations and individuals who wish to be recognized as TBMP compliant will abide by the agreements and standards set forth in the handbook and/or posted on a Sitka TBMP website.

Partners will be expected to observe the following practices:

- Conduct business in a legal and ethical manner and not use business practices that damage others through association.
- Emulate the highest standard of customer service.
- Take responsibility to ensure that visitors and community partners are treated with courtesy and respect, in such a way as to leave a positive impression on them.
- Accurately describe our products and services to address any safety, health related, legal or physical restrictions that customers should be aware of and to provide complete information on pricing, duration and location of tours and activities.
- Recognize it is in all our best interests to serve the needs and desires of the customer; and if our product is not appropriate, direct them to the service that best meets their needs.
- Strive to be good ambassadors of the community with accurate knowledge of the locations of public amenities nearby such as post office, bus stops, museums, restrooms, and government buildings.

Training: Partners agree to train all employees on the program objectives and practices and to conduct periodic training sessions for employees hired mid-season. Partners will strive to conduct business in a manner which exhibits common courtesy throughout the season. Employees of participating partners will be required to sign a “**TBMP Employee Partnership Agreement**” certifying that the employee has read, understands and agrees to abide by the Tourism Best Management Practices guidelines applicable to his/her job description.

Cultural Protocols: All partners agree to take steps to ensure accuracy and respect regarding interpretation of Alaska Native culture and other cultural groups, such as our Filipino community by participating in a scheduled training class. This includes fact-based research from recognized sources for tour interpretation and disclosure of the origin of items in the sale of retail products.

Contact Name: Partners agree to provide the TBMP hotline administrator with a contact name, telephone number, fax number and email address.

Work Sessions: Partners agree to participate in periodic work sessions to discuss progress made in attaining program goals.

Community Meetings: All TBMP partners agree to send a representative to an annual preseason community meeting to:

- Identify problem areas where traffic and pedestrian congestion creates conflicts.
- Identify areas of concern to residents.
- Formulate strategies to mitigate or avoid conflicts in these areas and measure the effectiveness of the mitigation strategies.

Partners also agree to attend a postseason community meeting to review the summer and note opportunities for improvement.

Response to TBMP Hotline: Partners agree to respond within 3 business days to calls and emails received via the Tourism Best Management Practices Hotline. Partners will provide the TBMP Hotline Administrator with a summary of their response. Callers will be asked to communicate as much information as possible, including name of participant business and/or staff member, description of the aircraft, watercraft, or vehicle, vehicle number if applicable, and date and approximate time of observation. Callers will also be asked to leave a name, phone number, and/or email address so the partners may respond. Callers are also encouraged to provide positive feedback via the hotline to recognize partners who are making a difference by following the guidelines and operating their business in a courteous and neighborhood-friendly manner.

Self-monitoring: All partners agree to improve their self-monitoring efforts through collaboration and encourage other partners who may not be observing the TBMP guidelines to improve their own compliance. These actions honor the spirit of TBMP and ultimately help all companies reduce tourism impacts in the community.

Ongoing Training of Employees; Partners agree to provide periodic training and coaching for their employees, to reinforce compliance with the guidelines that pertain to their operations.

Litter and Recycling: All TBMP partners are expected to be familiar with and comply with the anti-litter ordinance detailed in Sitka's General Code, Chapter 9.12. Partners are strongly encouraged to commit to a recycling program which is effective for their individual size and type of business. The City and Borough of Sitka and commercial property owners are asked to ensure there are adequate receptacles throughout the community for proper disposal of smoking material and trash.

Cleaning and Sanitation Protocols: All TBMP partners agree to maintain and update as needed, procedures for staff and guests to maintain infection control and mitigate the potential transmission of highly contagious viral diseases such as Norovirus Gastroenteritis and COVID-19 coronavirus. Partners will train staff and monitor policy implementation and agree to comply with all applicable local, state and federal regulations.

Wildlife Protocols: All partners agree to:

- Dispose of and secure trash in a manner which does not attract wildlife.
- Report bear sightings to the police department.
- Not to feed or bait* wildlife of any form and comply with the Sitka General Code Chapter 8.08.050 Fighting or Baiting of Animals.
- To be observant and watch for signs of distress as recommended by Alaska Department of Fish and Game guidelines on wildlife harassment.

Alaska's Smoke Free Workplace Laws: All partners comply with state laws pertaining to smoking in and around the workplace.

Accessibility: To better serve the number of visitors arriving in Sitka each year with limited mobility and/or visual or hearing impairments, TBMP partners agree to establish "best

practice” objectives to provide these visitors with a quality experience. SAIL (SE Alaska Independent Living) provides the following suggestions:

- Consider how best to make accommodation for customers with limited mobility and/or a visual or hearing impairment, as appropriate to their operation.
- Include accessibility information in tour/activity descriptions and have it readily available for those seeking details (i.e. how many steps? How long a walk? Are necessary service companions given complimentary space?).
- Train all employees in accessibility awareness, with focus on how best to accommodate requests for various types of assistance (mobility, hearing, visual, etc.), how to provide good customer service to those with disabilities or impairments, and when to seek additional help in doing so.
- Ensure clearances for wheelchairs or walkers.

Privacy and Security: Partners will train staff to ensure that customer data including but not limited to personal identification, credit/debit card numbers and security codes and other sensitive materials are handled with care to minimize potential identity theft and to safeguard privacy.

Emergency Procedures: Partners will ensure staff are trained to aid customers in the event of an emergency and understand policies and procedures.

TBMP Program Contacts- TBD— Add contacts

Transportation and Vehicles

Commercial passenger vehicles are required to comply with Sitka Municipal Code ordinances, Alaska State Administrative Statutes and US DOT regulations that pertain to the operation of commercial vehicles on public roadways. For purposes of this program, vehicles include motor coaches, buses, mini-buses, limos, vans, trolleys, taxis, motorcycles, airporters. (Residents should remember that tour vehicles are sometimes used for non-tour activities, including charters, government service contracts, school field trips and charity work. While this program focuses on tour activities, operators agree to conduct all activities in a courteous manner and to emphasize these guidelines during pre-season training.

School Zone Safety Protocols: All companies agree to pay special attention to watching for children, when approaching crosswalks, encountering stopped school buses and observing school zone speed limits.

Downtown Traffic/Staging: All companies utilizing staging areas should be aware of times when congestion into and out of these lots will be at peak level. Dispatchers and drivers will assist in promoting efficient traffic flow in the area by managing vehicle movements in a courteous manner and by yielding to other vehicles and users as necessary.

Traffic Flow: Drivers agree not to impede normal traffic flow by slowing down or stopping for sightseeing opportunities except in designated turnouts and will not pull over on bike lanes or walking paths or on the shoulder of roads. Drivers will be especially attentive to not slow down or stop when transiting intersections.

Empty Tour Vehicles: Drivers agree to not park in designated loading zones unless they are loading or unloading guests on tour.

Vehicle fluids and Emissions: Drivers of ALL VEHICLES agree to monitor any engine oil and/or fluid leaks and excess emissions/ black smoke when operating throughout the road system. This includes monitoring at all staging/loading zones, docks and attractions, as well as venues. Should any vehicle exhibit a leak of a substantial nature or visible emissions in excess, the operator should be prepared to immediately pull the vehicle from service until repaired. Any vehicle exhibiting signs of a mechanical failure should pull over immediately at the next safe location for repairs. This is to ensure vehicle failures do not block public rights-of-way.

Engine Idling: Drivers of ALL VEHICLES agree to turn engines off at every reasonable opportunity when loading and unloading passengers and/or when staging in the various loading zones, staging areas and tour venues throughout Sitka. Vehicles should not sit with engines idling while actively loading, unloading, or waiting for passengers to arrive. Engines should be started only when the vehicle is ready to move, and thereafter, only when the vehicle is in motion or in traffic. Exceptions include safety related issues, including vehicles that may need to idle in order to defog windshields and windows, situations where vehicles

with air brakes may need to idle to build air pressure or when weather requires engines to remain on for guest comfort.

Noise Abatement: Drivers of ALL VEHICLES agree to NOT use Compression Braking (commonly known as Jake Braking, Engine Braking, etc.) in the City and Borough of Sitka, except in emergency situations.

Bells and Public Address (PA) systems should not be utilized in any tours unless the noise is restricted to the cabin of the vehicle.

Transiting Residential Neighborhoods: Drivers agree to avoid transiting residential neighborhoods within the City and Borough of Sitka unless conducting a specific pick-up or drop-off in the immediate vicinity, including Katlian and Jeff Davis Streets.

ADA Zones Not for Staging: Drivers utilizing equipment with a wheelchair lift will use the designated ADA zones only for active loading and unloading and not for staging of vehicles.

Safety Backing: All motor coaches, buses, mini-buses and vans will take special care when backing out of loading/unloading zones. When preparing to back, drivers should be aware of the backup beepers and the sound they make and should strive to spend as little time as possible in reverse. Drivers should only shift into reverse when they are ready to commence backing to minimize beeper sounds.

Safety on Roadways: Drivers will take caution when encountering pedestrians, cyclists, and animals on narrow roadways, bike lanes and school zones throughout the city and companies will take this into consideration during their driver training programs. Drivers should strive to operate in a manner which exhibits common courtesy throughout their daily travels. Extra caution when approaching crosswalks. All drivers should be trained on the changing/reduced speed limits throughout the downtown and highway areas. Operators are required to use headsets or Boom mics and NOT hand held microphones. By law and in the interest of safety, all operators agree to abide by Sitka's **no cell phone** policy when their drivers are operating a vehicle except in the case of an emergency.

Resource Scheduling: Operators agree to assign vehicles to scheduled tours and transfers in a manner which efficiently maximizes the use of all vehicles on duty. The number of vehicles and type of equipment will be assigned to a tour or transfer based on capacity needs on a given day. Operators will collaborate with partners/vendors to find opportunities to minimize the number of vehicles on the road whenever possible.

Training of Schedulers: Operators will train all schedulers to take advantage of synergies that are present in the Sitka tourism transportation industry. Schedulers should strive to better serve their constituents and community stakeholders by minimizing vehicles on the road whenever possible.

Crossing Guards: Crossing Guards may be positioned in strategic locations in order to promote safety and facilitate vehicle and pedestrian movement throughout the downtown corridor. TBMP members should be mindful of their presence and obey their instructions.

Identifiers for All Shuttle and Tour Vehicles: Operators agree to ensure all vehicles are easily identifiable with the company name clearly visible on both sides, from a reasonable distance and even while the vehicle is moving.

Local Recreation Areas: Drivers agree not to use **Sandy Beach, ___?___ and ___?___** as tour destinations. **Define potential local use only areas. See Recommendations.**

As always, Operators are responsible for abiding by Alaska State Statutes governing operation of vehicles on state roadways including but not limited to stopping, standing or parking on highways, unlawful obstruction or blocking traffic, and pedestrians on highways.

Flightseeing (Fixed Wing, Floatplanes & Helicopter):

Flightseeing operations are subject to Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations and operational requirements. Mt. Edgecumbe landing trips are also subject to US Forest Service permit requirements. Although the following guidelines are designed to minimize noise, safety and flight operations take precedence over noise abatement procedures. Operators will conduct pre-season training in a manner which emphasizes these guidelines.

Routes and Aircraft Identifiers: Operators agree to provide the following to TBMP administrator who will make the information available to interested partners of the public:

- Established flight routes
- Common factors influencing route choice, such as weather, turbulence and traffic.
- Aircraft colors or other distinguishing characteristics useful in identifying individual operators.

Seaplane Floats: Commercial use is permitted from the seaplane float. Operations for commercial use of seaplane float is managed and regulated by the Sitka Harbor Department

Altitude: Operators follow voluntarily agreed upon routes for tour flights and maintain minimum altitudes of 1,500 feet for helicopters operating above residential areas, except during takeoff, landing or when deviations are required by weather or traffic.

Fly Neighborly: Helicopter operators agree to conduct flightseeing tours in accordance with the Helicopter Association International (HAI) Fly Neighborly Program. The Fly Neighborly Program is a voluntary noise reduction program designed to be implemented worldwide by local helicopter operators, large and small. Additional information on this program can be viewed on the HAI website— www.rotor.com

Operating Times: Operators agree not to schedule flightseeing tour departures before 7:30 a.m. or after 7:00 p.m. and to complete all tour flights by 8:00 p.m. Operators agree to

minimize tour support operations out-side of these hours. Operators agree to take the same care to minimize their impacts during non-tour flight operations.

Wildlife Viewing: Operators conducting air tours within the Sitka area agree to minimize impacts to backcountry users and wildlife. Operators will not circle, hover, harass or decrease altitude for wildlife viewing. Flightseeing operators also agree to avoid key mountain goat kidding areas.

Walking, Hiking, Bicycling Tours

Commercial use of public trails may be permitted on some municipal, State Parks, National Forest, and National Park lands. All commercial use of public land requires permitting.

Permitted use: Commercial operators are responsible for understanding public land ownership and obtaining permits from each agency. Operators agree to follow group size regulations and avoid crowding on trails.

Identifiers for Tour Guides: All operators agree to ensure tour guides are easily identifiable and that company names are visible on guides' attire and company vehicles.

Peer enforcement: All operators agree to report unpermitted commercial use to the appropriate public land manager. A list of permitted operators is available from each agency.

Trail Conditions & Maintenance: Operators agree to report trail conditions and trail abuse to appropriate regulatory agencies. Operators agree to educate guides on basics of trail maintenance standards to adequately detect emerging issues of erosion and damage. Operators using public trails agree to annually dedicate at least one paid day for at least one guide to support a trail maintenance project, led by the agency or Sitka Trail Works.

Noise Abatement: All tour operators agree to monitor the volume and use of their microphones and outside speakers in a manner which reduces their impact on others.

Resource Protection: Operators agree to protect the environment by encouraging clients do not litter, walk off trail, cut switchbacks, or otherwise damage vegetation and soils adjacent to trails. Operators agree to train guides in Leave No Trace principles and encourage an ethic of care for the land.

State Highways (Halibut Point Rd and Sawmill Creek Rd): Cycling guides agree to instruct clients to use bike lanes and ride single file to the right side of the right lane. A guide will always be in the lead to make sure that clients descend hills at a safe speed. Efforts will be made to keep groups as close together as safely possible.

Bikes and E-bikes: Operators agree to provide each bike rider with a card listing safety precautions and biking rules of the road, including hand signals for bikers. Operators agree to

install bells on ebikes to alert pedestrians and pets of their approach. Operators will encourage riders to use the bike lanes and travel on the right-hand side of the road. Operators will encourage bikers to wear helmets and other safety gear, such as bright colors or reflective clothing.

Safety on Roadways: Drivers will take caution when encountering pedestrians, cyclists, and animals on narrow roadways, bike lanes and school zones throughout the city and companies will take this into consideration during their driver training programs. Drivers should strive to operate in a manner which exhibits common courtesy throughout their daily travels, such as paying attention to biker hand signals, slowing down and giving at least three feet of space.

Trailhead Parking: Operators agree to use all trailhead parking in a courteous and responsible manner and to pay special attention to independent users.

Yield to Other Users: Guides agree to instruct clients to yield to all other users on commercially used trails.

Sitka National Historic Park: In order to keep the Park safe for all users, riding bikes or e-bikes on trails within Sitka National Park is expressly prohibited by Park rules.

Cruise Ships

Emission Standards: All cruise vessels agree to comply with the Marine Vessel Visible Emissions Standards (18 AAC 50-.070) and take all available and reasonable steps to minimize stack effluents on approach to, departure from and while in port in Sitka.

Southeast Alaska Voluntary Waterway Guide: All Cruise ships agree to follow the guidelines included in the Marine Safety Task Force's [Southeast Alaska Voluntary Waterway Guide](#).

P.A. Announcements, Signals and Outdoor Entertainment: Cruise Line Agencies of Alaska (CLAA), Cruise Line Industry Association-Alaska (CLIA Alaska) and individual cruise lines will work to minimize vessel announcements, whistle signals, and outdoor entertainment (movies and use of music, bands or DJ) while docked or anchored within the City of Sitka. Cruise ships are also asked to monitor their outside speakers, announcements and entertainment on approach to and departure from Sitka. Cruise Line Agencies and cruise lines will ensure that shipboard staff understand the importance of this specific guideline. Certain signals and announcements are necessary and required by the US Coast Guard or are necessary for safety reasons.

Courteous use of vessel floats: Cruise ship tender operators agree to use the designated floats at Crescent Harbor or at the bridge dock in a safe and responsible manner. Tender

operators also agree to minimize their wake on approach to and in the harbors, and to operate in a manner which exhibits common courtesy to all others.

Port No Wake Zone: Cruise ships and their lightering tenders over 23 feet in length are required to comply with No Wake requirements in 33 CFR Alaska; navigation. Operators are responsible for their wakes.

Marine Tour Operators, Fishing Charters, Water Taxis and Kayak Tours

Marine tour operators and charter/sportfishing operators will take all available and reasonable steps to minimize impacts to coastal residents and other vessel operators. Vessel operators will strive to minimize the impacts of their wake on other watercraft, docks and beaches throughout Sitka area coastal waterways, including popular crabbing and recreational boating grounds.

Rules of the Road: Marine tour operators agree to adhere to all applicable USCG rules of the road during operation.

Noise Abatement: Marine tour operators agree to monitor the volume and use of their onboard PA systems and outside speakers in a manner which reduces the impact on residents and recreational boaters.

Marine Mammal Viewing: Marine Operators will follow all applicable federal regulations regarding marine mammal viewing and actively participate in Whale Sense, whom establishes guidelines surrounding the viewing of marine mammals. To that regard, each operator will ensure the following:

- Become a member of the Whale Sense organization
- Ensure all licensed operators have conducted the required annual training as part of the whale sense program.
- Ensure all standard operating procedures are in line with the guidelines and regulations established by whale sense.

The link to whale sense is: <https://whalesense.org/>

Whale Sense's regulations are here: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2016-09-08/pdf/2016-21278.pdf>

Port No Wake Zone: Marine sightseeing/tour vessels and charter fishing boats over 23 feet in length are required to comply with 33 CFR Alaska; navigation. Operators are responsible for their wakes.

Vessel Engine Idling: All marine vessel operators (including charter fishing captains) agree to minimize engine idling at every reasonable opportunity. This includes loading and unloading of passengers and/or when standing-by in vessel loading zones. In the interest of reducing emissions, whenever it is deemed safe and prudent by vessel captains, engines should be turned off. Engines should not be started until the vessel is ready to get underway.

Downtown & Retail Partners

All partners agree to comply with City of Sika Municipal Code Chapter 14.12 and 14.16 regarding commercial sign and advertising devices and obstruction of sidewalks, as applicable.

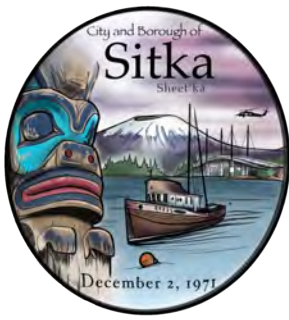
Buildings and Grounds: Merchants will be responsible for keeping their locations neat and welcoming, to include monitoring sidewalks immediately in front of their establishment, sweeping as needed and picking up and properly disposing of litter. Merchants will not place their business' accumulated daily refuse into street-side, public refuse containers.

Seasonal merchants: In order to promote safety and a welcoming feel to downtown during the winter months are asked to utilize ways to brighten up their storefronts in the off season when the business is shut down and refrain from covering windows with brown paper. Consider keeping display windows lit (LED lighting).

Sales Tactics: Merchants and their employees agree to:

- Cooperate with municipal employees including but not limited to police, downtown ambassadors, crossing guards, public works, planning department and revenue staff.
- Refrain from handing out flyers or leaflets outside of their place of business and not engaging in sidewalk hawking or any other disruptive or aggressive physical behavior in order to lure potential customers.
- Refrain from displaying misleading signage or advertising and agree not to post stickers or signage in their windows indicating “cruise ship preferred or guaranteed shopping venue.”
- Refrain from reproducing and displaying logos for any cruise line without the line's express written permission.
- Refrain from using false advertising (going out of business, closing soon, etc.) as a sales tactic.

Appendices- Resources *TBD*—add relevant resources, contacts and toolkits.




CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

A COAST GUARD CITY

MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor Eisenbeisz and Assembly Members

Thru: John Leach, Municipal Administrator

From: Amy Ainslie, Planning & Community Development Director 

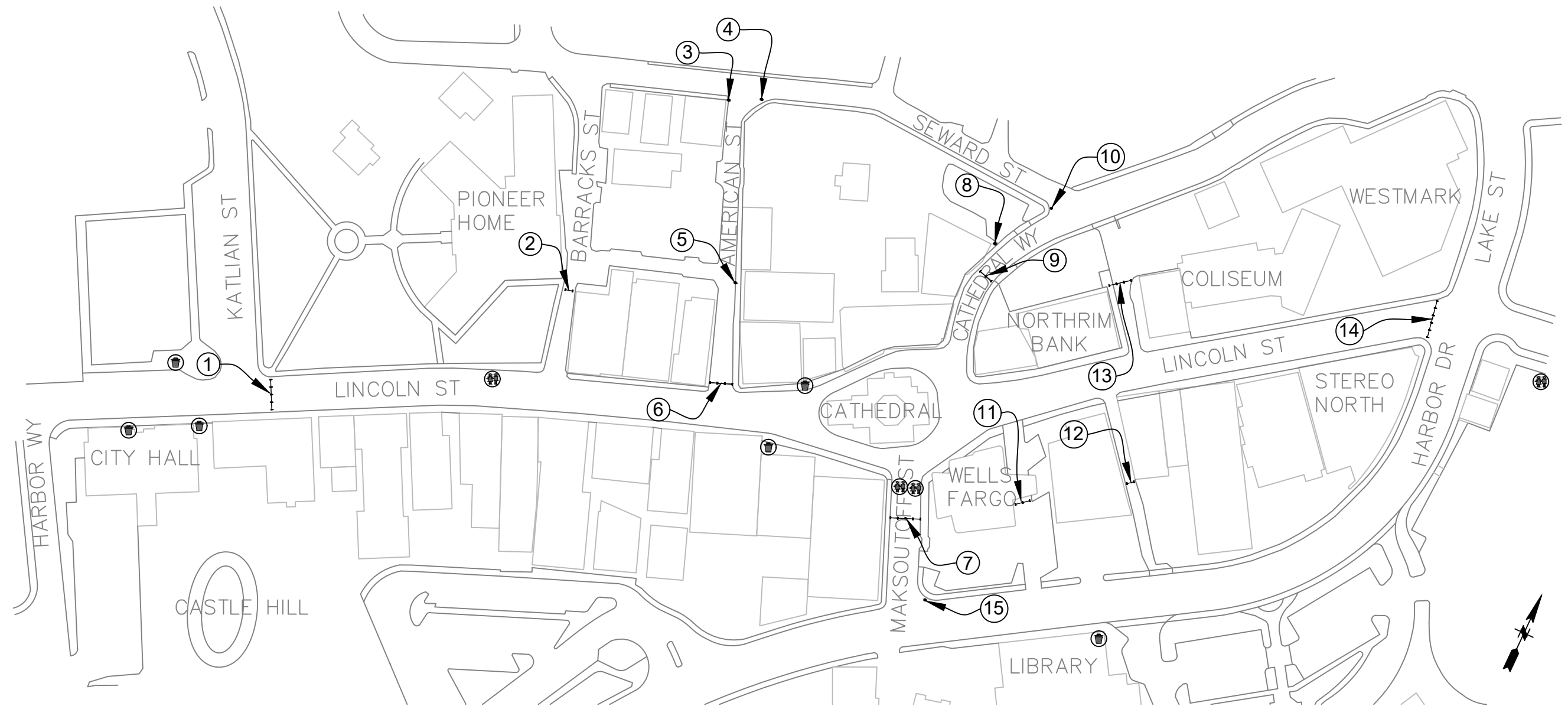
Date: March 20, 2024

Subject: Summer Tourism Operations – Lincoln Street Closures

In accordance with the Short-Term Tourism Plan, CBS staff is working to implement its summer tourism operations. 2024 operations will largely be consistent with 2023 including:

- Lincoln Street will be closed to vehicular traffic between Lake and Katlian Streets on days when 5,000 or more passengers are scheduled to be in town (based on the lower-berth capacity published on the Cruise Line Agencies of Alaska calendar). No parking will begin at 9AM, and the street will be closed to vehicular traffic from 10AM – 4PM. Street signage and closure procedures will remain the same.
- The standard-size portable restroom unit will be placed on Lincoln Street near the intersection of Barracks Street. As the access stairs utilize the roadway, the restroom will only be open when the street is closed. CBS will continue to make the restroom available for rental in conjunction with other community events in which Lincoln Street is closed.
- Communications will also be consistent with 2023, including a published cruise ship calendar with street closures noted, email notifications, and a phone line and email address available for citizen questions and concerns.
- Increased trash service in the downtown area.

Additionally, staff will be looking to augment the temporary streets crew with staff positions dedicated to pedestrian safety along Harbor Drive and at the Lake/Lincoln intersection. Staff is also continuing to advocate for additional improvements to traffic flow at the intersection, including striping and signage, and work proactively on plans for 4th of July to better preserve local festivities. The FY24 budget includes appropriations for these expenses.



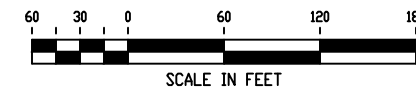
BARRICADES AND SIGNS TABLE			
#	TYPE	QUANTITY	DESCRIPTION
1	BARRICADE	4	STOP ROAD CLOSED
2	BARRICADE	1	STOP ROAD CLOSED
3	SIGN	1	ONE WAY DO NOT ENTER
4	SIGN	1	ONE WAY DO NOT ENTER
5	SIGN	1	ONE WAY; NO RIGHT TURN
6	BARRICADE	3	STOP ROAD CLOSED
7	BARRICADE	4	STOP ROAD CLOSED & LOADING ZONE
8	SIGN	1	STOP NO OUTLET
9	BARRICADE	2	STOP ROAD CLOSED
10	SIGN (A-FRAME)	1	NO OUTLET
11	BARRICADE	2	STOP ROAD CLOSED
12	BARRICADE	1	STOP ROAD CLOSED
13	BARRICADE	3	STOP ROAD CLOSED
14*	BARRICADE	5	STOP ROAD CLOSED
15	SIGN	1	CLOSED TO THRU TRAFFIC

*NOTE: ALL EXCEPT #14 ARE 1 SIGN PER 1 BARRICADE. #14 WILL REQUIRE ONLY 3 SIGNS ON 5 BARRICADES.

ICON LEGEND	
	RESTROOMS
	GARBAGE BINS
	NO PARKING 9AM TO 4PM TOW AWAY ZONE

1. LINCOLN STREET CLOSURE HARBOR WAY TO LAKE STREET

HALF-SIZE SCALE: 1" = 120'




City and Borough of Sitka
 DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
 100 LINCOLN STREET • SITKA, ALASKA 99835
 TEL (907) 747-1804 FAX (907) 747-3158

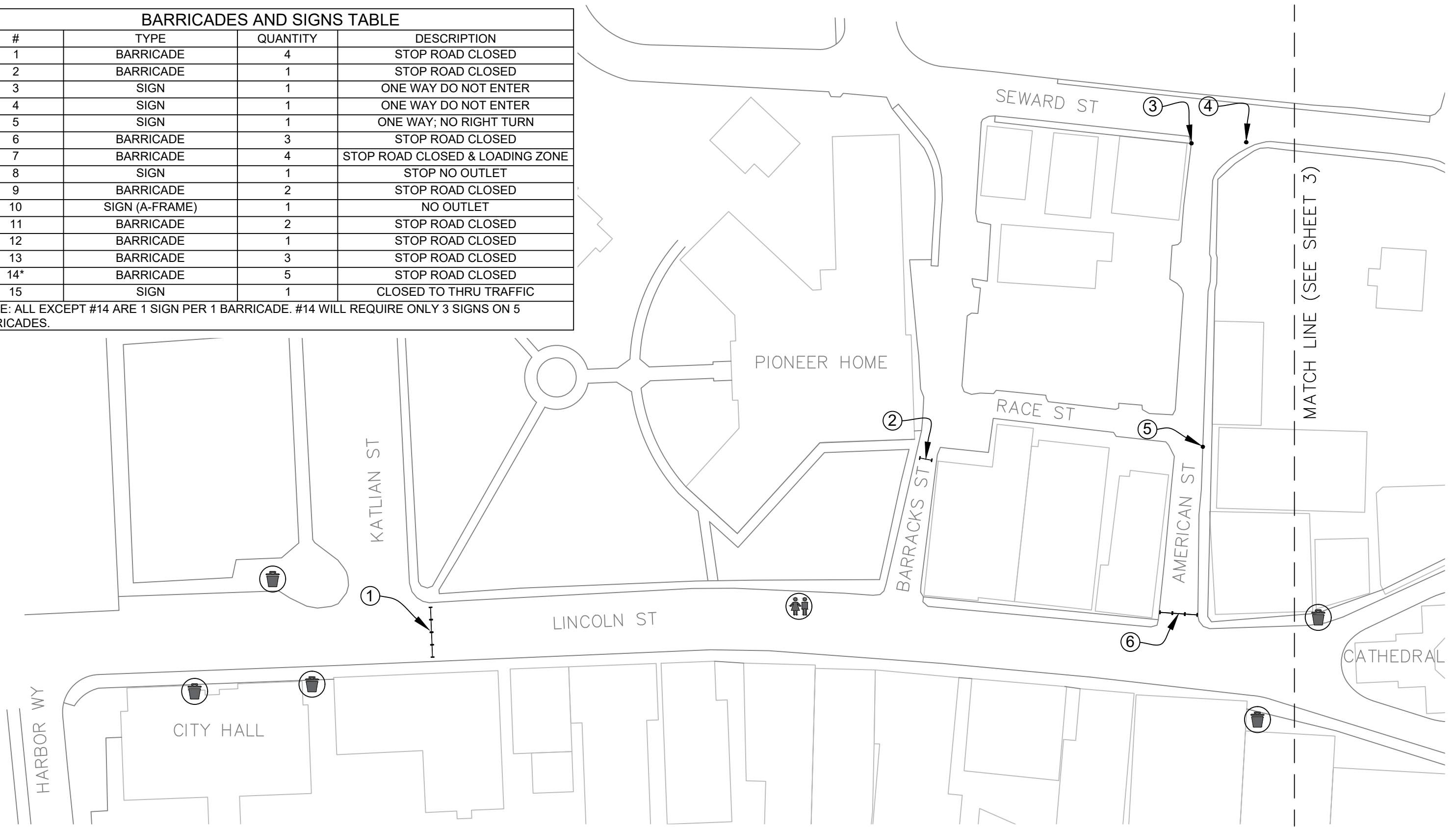
**LINCOLN STREET
 TOURISM
 CLOSURE**

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SHEET NO. 1 / 3	

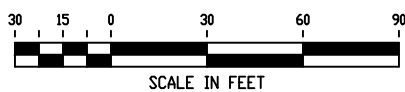
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4	SIGN	1	ONE WAY DO NOT ENTER
5	SIGN	1	ONE WAY; NO RIGHT TURN
6	BARRICADE	3	STOP ROAD CLOSED
7	BARRICADE	4	STOP ROAD CLOSED & LOADING ZONE
8	SIGN	1	STOP NO OUTLET
9	BARRICADE	2	STOP ROAD CLOSED
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13	BARRICADE	3	STOP ROAD CLOSED
14*	BARRICADE	5	STOP ROAD CLOSED
15	SIGN	1	CLOSED TO THRU TRAFFIC

*NOTE: ALL EXCEPT #14 ARE 1 SIGN PER 1 BARRICADE. #14 WILL REQUIRE ONLY 3 SIGNS ON 5 BARRICADES.



HALF-SIZE SCALE: 1" = 60'



**2. LINCOLN STREET CLOSURE
KATLIAN ST TO AMERICAN ST**

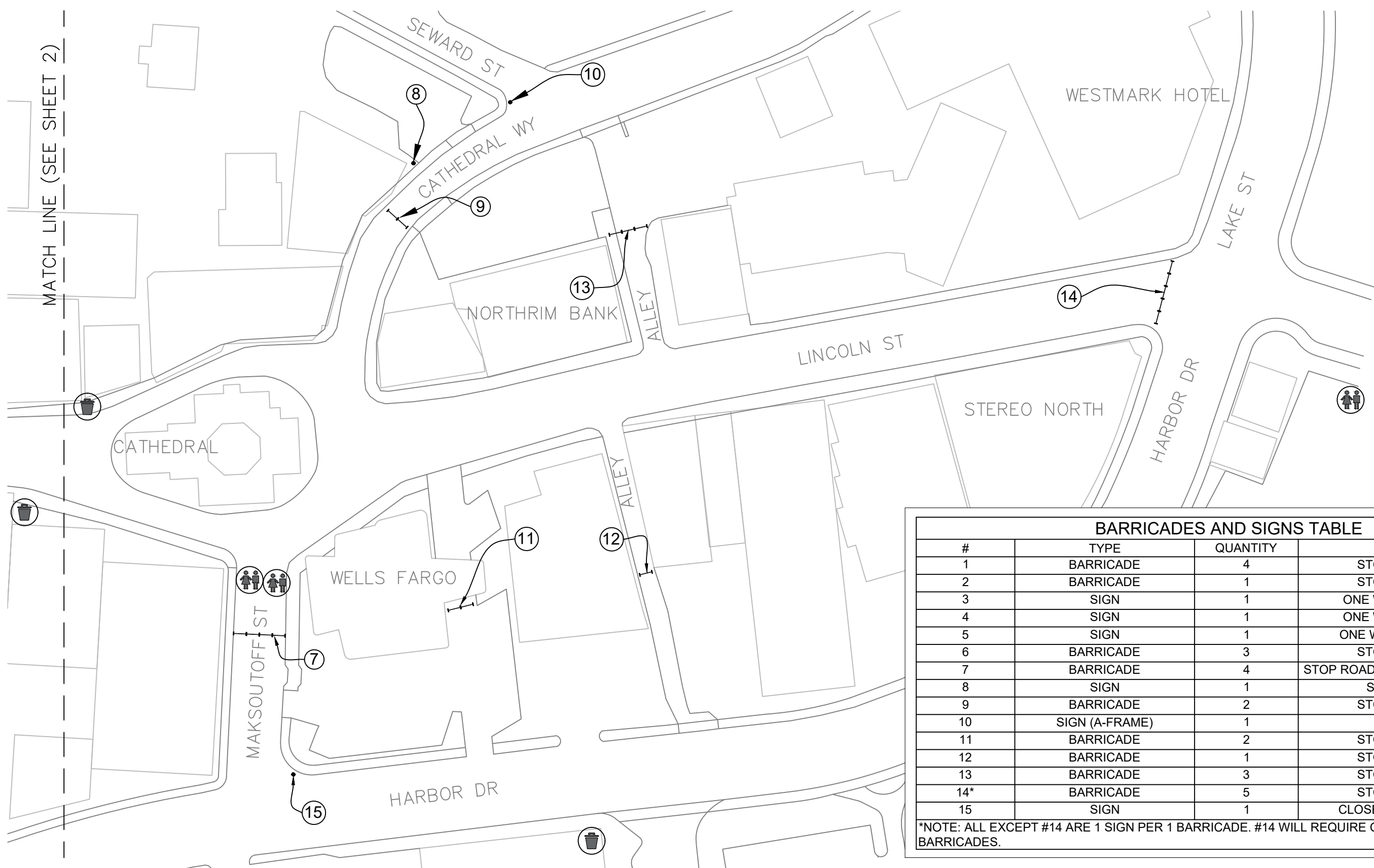


City and Borough of Sitka
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
100 LINCOLN STREET • SITKA, ALASKA 99835
TEL (907) 747-1804 FAX (907) 747-3158

**LINCOLN STREET
TOURISM
CLOSURE**

DRAWN: JJH	SCALE: 1" = 60'
CHECKED: RV	DATE: 07.27.2022
DRAWING NAME: lincoln-st-closure.dwg	
SHEET NO. 2 / 3	

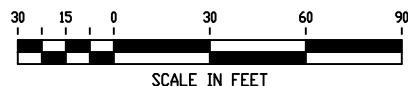
MATCH LINE (SEE SHEET 2)




BARRICADES AND SIGNS TABLE			
#	TYPE	QUANTITY	DESCRIPTION
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2	BARRICADE	1	STOP ROAD CLOSED
3	SIGN	1	ONE WAY DO NOT ENTER
4	SIGN	1	ONE WAY DO NOT ENTER
5	SIGN	1	ONE WAY; NO RIGHT TURN
6	BARRICADE	3	STOP ROAD CLOSED
7	BARRICADE	4	STOP ROAD CLOSED & LOADING ZONE
8	SIGN	1	STOP NO OUTLET
9	BARRICADE	2	STOP ROAD CLOSED
10	SIGN (A-FRAME)	1	NO OUTLET
11	BARRICADE	2	STOP ROAD CLOSED
12	BARRICADE	1	STOP ROAD CLOSED
13	BARRICADE	3	STOP ROAD CLOSED
14*	BARRICADE	5	STOP ROAD CLOSED
15	SIGN	1	CLOSED TO THRU TRAFFIC

*NOTE: ALL EXCEPT #14 ARE 1 SIGN PER 1 BARRICADE. #14 WILL REQUIRE ONLY 3 SIGNS ON 5 BARRICADES.

HALF-SIZE SCALE: 1" = 60'



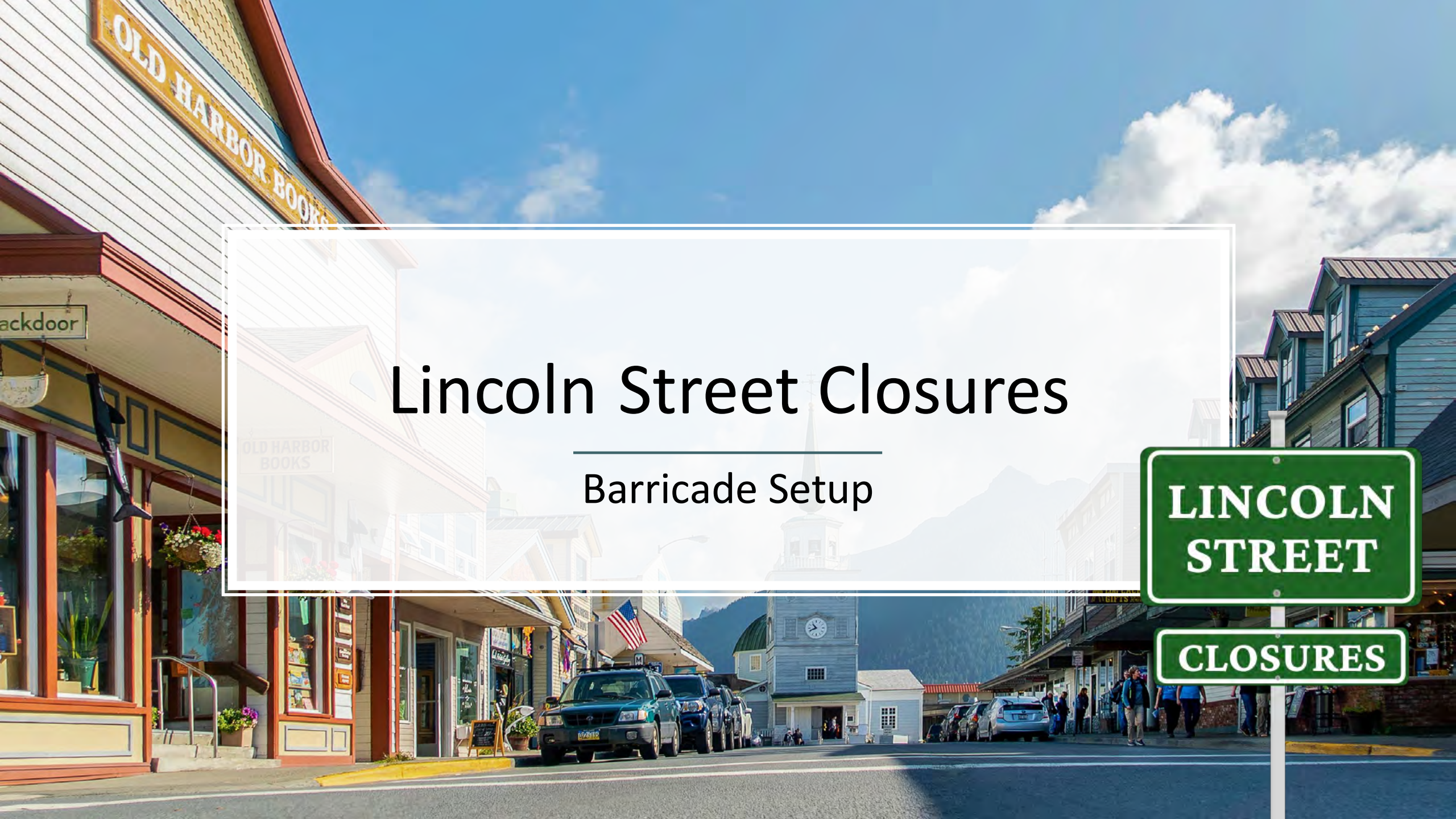
3. LINCOLN STREET CLOSURE MAKSOUTOFF ST TO LAKE ST



City and Borough of Sitka
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
100 LINCOLN STREET • SITKA, ALASKA 99835
TEL (907) 747-1804 FAX (907) 747-3158

**LINCOLN STREET
TOURISM
CLOSURE**

DRAWN: JJH	SCALE: 1" = 60'
CHECKED: RV	DATE: 07.27.2022
DRAWING NAME: coln-st-closure.dwg	
SHEET NO. 3 / 3	



Lincoln Street Closures

Barricade Setup

LINCOLN
STREET

CLOSURES

Lincoln and Lake

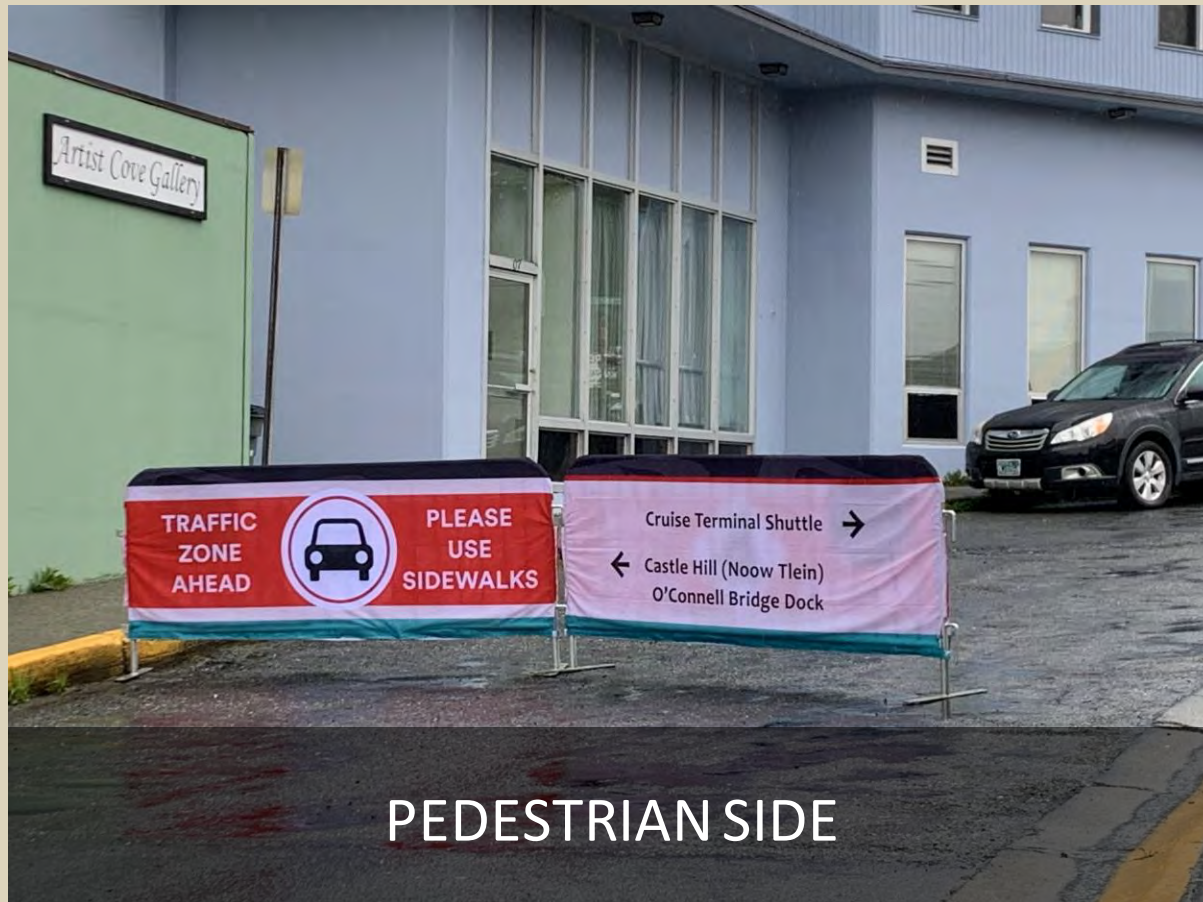


PEDESTRIAN SIDE



TRAFFIC SIDE

Cathedral Way



PEDESTRIAN SIDE



TRAFFIC SIDE

Northrim Bank



PEDESTRIAN SIDE



TRAFFIC SIDE

American Street



PEDESTRIAN SIDE



TRAFFIC SIDE

Barracks Street



Maksutoff and Harbor



PEDESTRIAN SIDE



TRAFFIC SIDE

Maksutoff and Lincoln

LINCOLN STREET
CLOSURES



Wells Fargo



PEDESTRIAN SIDE

TRAFFIC SIDE

First National Bank Alaska

LINCOLN
STREET

CLOSURES



PEDESTRIAN SIDE



TRAFFIC SIDE

Lincoln and Katlian



PEDESTRIAN SIDE



TRAFFIC SIDE

LINCOLN STREET

The section of Lincoln Street from Lake Street to Katlian Avenue contains the majority of downtown retail stores, restaurants, churches, and historic sites. This area is beloved by locals and visitors alike for its authentic, small-town feel. Given its importance, discussion of plans for Lincoln Street took place throughout the planning process.

A level of service (LOS) analysis was completed to better understand the capacity limitations of the pedestrian space on Lincoln Street. As listed on the table below, different levels of service indicate the speed, freedom of movement, and likelihood of pedestrian-to-pedestrian collisions.

- LOS A indicates total free movement, at any speed, and almost no likelihood of bumping into another person.
- LOS F is akin to a people slowly shuffling in a queue, with no freedom to choose speed or direction of movement. Even at this extremely low level of service, the sidewalk space on Lincoln Street can only accommodate about 1600 pedestrians.
- Higher levels of service providing a more pleasant pedestrian experience are only possible in the 500-800 pedestrian range.

After reviewing the level of service analysis, it became apparent to the Planning Commission that sidewalk space alone on this stretch of Lincoln Street cannot comfortably support our forecasted visitor numbers. The full description of each level of service is available in the appendix.

Lincoln Street Assumptions for LOS Analysis

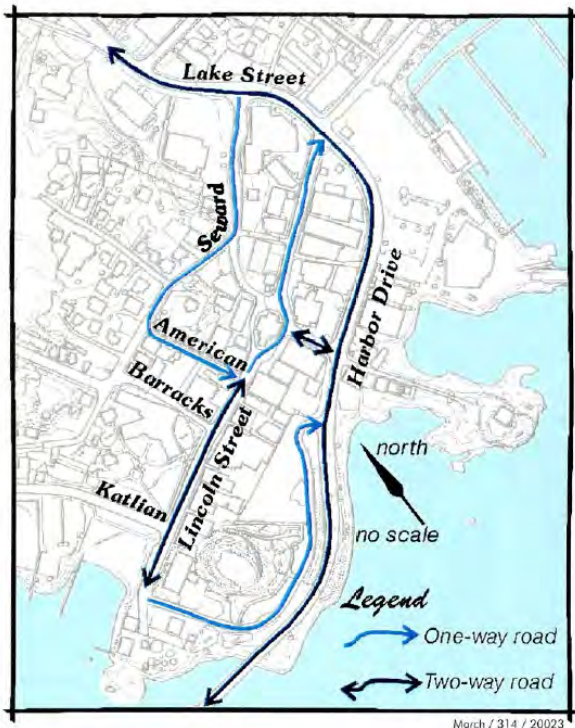
Driving Lane Width (x2)	12 ft.
Parking Lane Width (x2)	8 ft.
Sidewalk Width (x2)	5 ft.
Length of Street	1,300 ft.
Total Square Footage	65,000 s.f.

Pedestrians supported at each LOS

	Total pedestrian S.F. available	Pedestrians supported at each LOS					
		LOS A	LOS B	LOS C	LOS D	LOS E	LOS F
No closure – sidewalk space only	13,000	213	317	520	813	1,444	1,625

Staff reviewed and analyzed several options; some were options proposed in the Gateway Plan and others were a result of public comment/staff generation – all are described and detailed below. The first five options presented were studied, but ultimately not recommended by staff for consideration. Staff review included Planning, Public Works, Police, and Fire departments. Recommended options start on page 19.

Studied Options - Not Recommended



Lincoln Street is two-way between Katlian and American; it becomes a one-way from American to Harbor Drive for east-bound traffic. West-bound traffic enters Lincoln via Seward and American streets. To make more room for wider sidewalks, on street parking is removed from one side of Lincoln and accommodated in the Castle Hill lot.

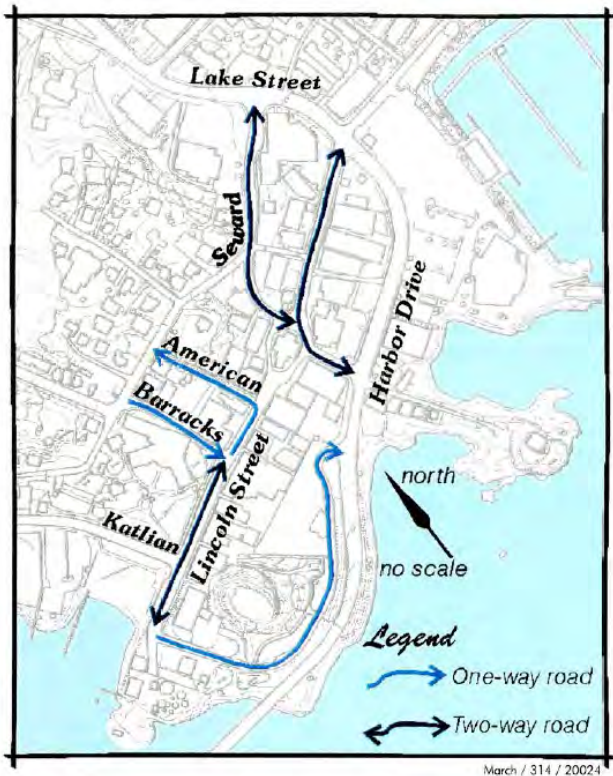
Gateway Plan Option 1

Pros

- Maintains vehicular access to downtown amenities
- Could maintain downtown parking

Cons

- Funnels traffic to substandard routes (Seward & American)
- Does not make optimal use of Harbor Drive
- Does not create more space for pedestrians on the west end of Lincoln where more is needed
- Would be confusing as a temporary solution (i.e. if not in place consistently day-to-day during the season or as a built design)



There is 2-way traffic on Lincoln Street between Katlian and Barracks; American becomes one-way going north and Barracks becomes one-way going south. Lincoln is closed around St. Michael's except on the southeast side.

Gateway Plan Option 2

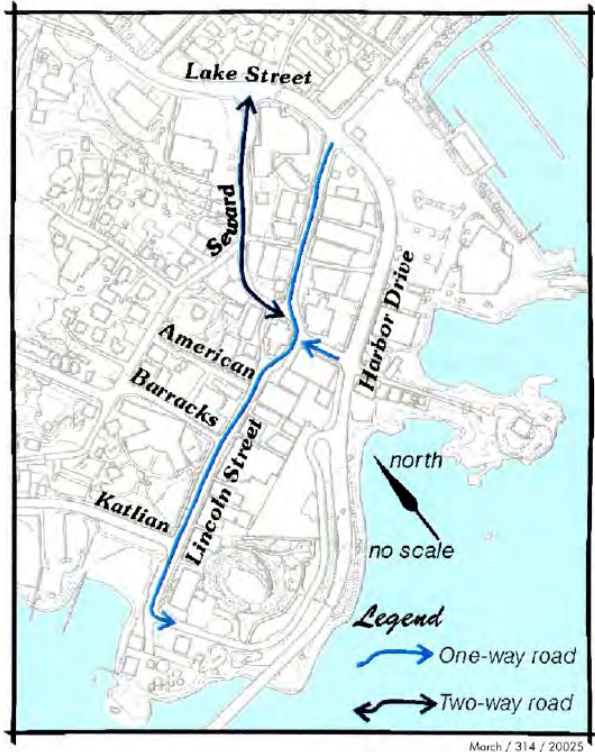
Pros

- Maintains vehicular access to downtown amenities
- Could maintain downtown parking
- Removes traffic from in front of St. Michael's

Cons

- Funnels traffic to substandard routes (Seward & Cathedral, American & Barracks). Cathedral Way lacks adequate width to be two-way without major redesign/loss of parking
- Does not make optimal use of Harbor Drive
- Does not create more space for pedestrians on the west end of Lincoln where it is needed
- Would be confusing as a temporary solution (i.e. if not in place consistently day-to-day during the season or as a built design)

Gateway Plan Option 3



Lincoln Street is one-way, running from east to west. All traffic flows around the south side of St. Michael's, leaving room for pedestrians on the north.

Pros

- Maintains vehicular access to downtown amenities
- Could maintain some downtown parking

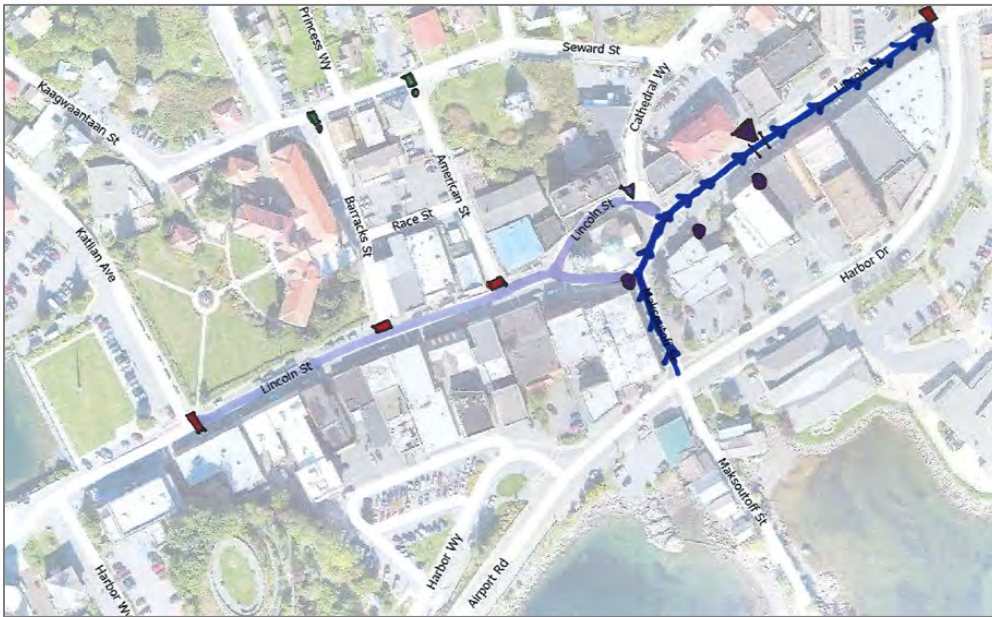
Cons

- Funnels traffic to substandard routes (Seward & Cathedral). Cathedral Way lacks adequate width to be two-way without major redesign/loss of parking
- Does not work well as a temporary (rather than built) solution – traffic would have to cross lanes and go the “wrong way” around the church.
- In order to keep Cathedral, American, and Barracks open, traffic would have to cross pedestrian spaces which can exacerbate bottlenecks at these intersections

Overall, the downtown traffic designs as proposed in the Sitka Gateway Plan are more suited to permanent/built alterations of streets and traffic flows in the downtown area as opposed to temporary solutions created with signage, barricades, cones, etc. None are suitable for regular mobilization and demobilization if flexibility based on daily passenger count is desired.

Staff considered ways that the Gateway Plan recommendations could be modified to better suit a temporary/short-term option. Those concepts are presented on the next page, though neither are recommended options.

Modified Gateway Options 1 and 2

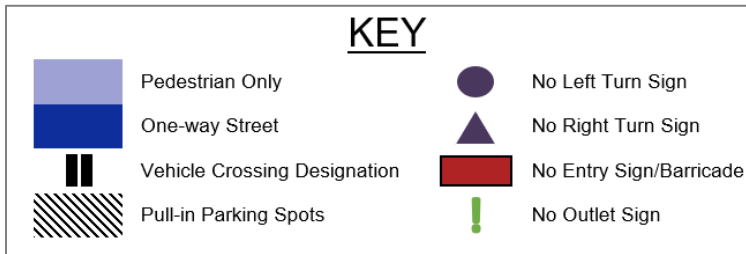


Pros

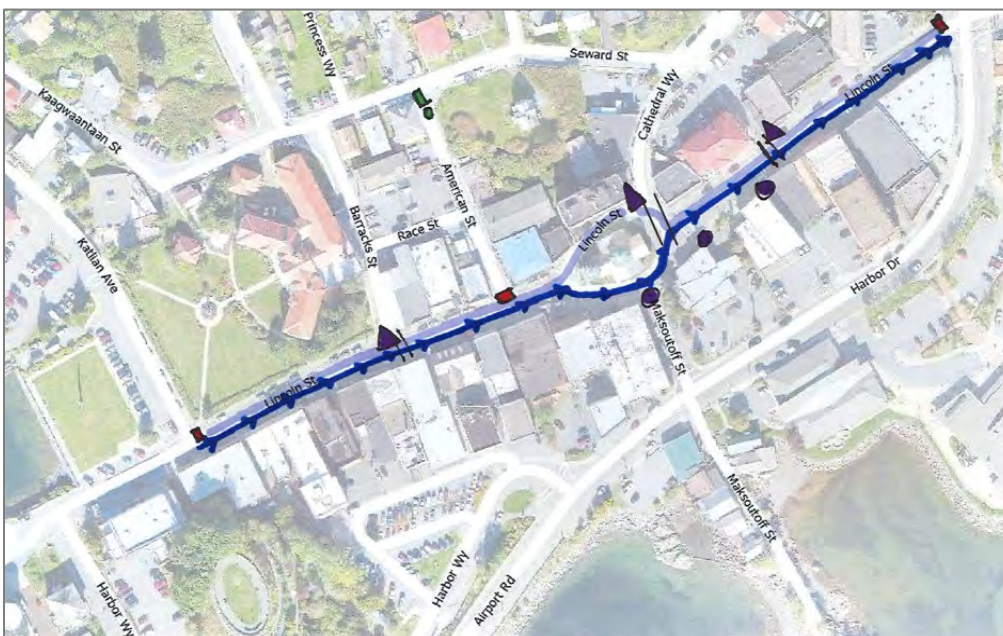
- Maintains vehicular access to bank drive-thrus
- Could maintain some downtown parking
- Opens pedestrian space on the west end of Lincoln

Cons

- Adds left-turn traffic to Lake/Lincoln intersection
- Intensive to mobilize and demobilize regularly



Modified Gateway Option 3



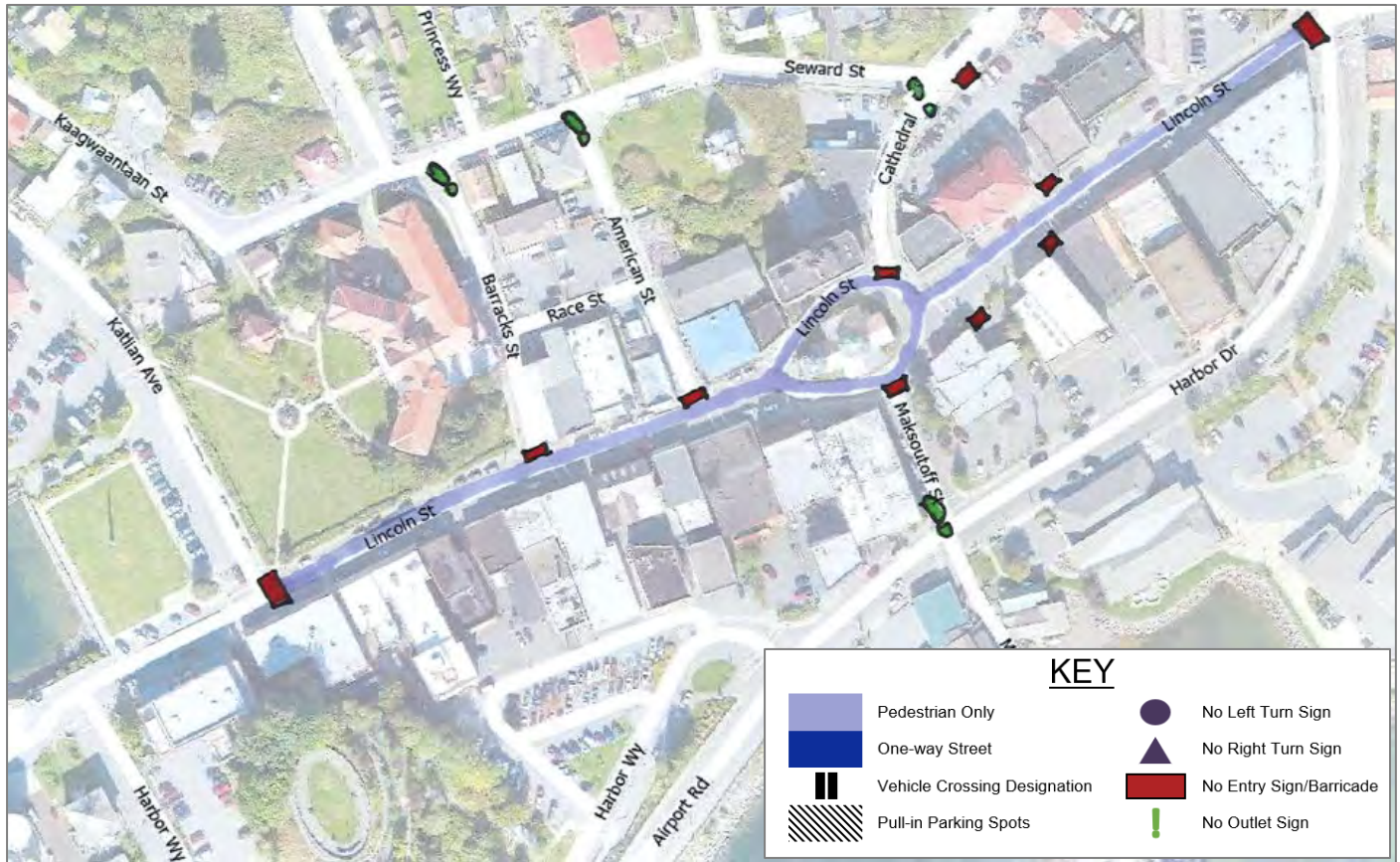
Pros

- Maintains vehicular access on bank drive-thru and pharmacy side of street
- Maintains some downtown parking
- Opens pedestrian/amenity/vending space in west bound lane

Cons

- Adds left turn traffic at Lake/Lincoln intersection
- More streets (Cathedral, American, Barracks) either need to be closed or will have to cut across pedestrian space

Full Closure Option



Description

- Lincoln Street is closed to vehicles from the Lake/Lincoln Intersection to the Lincoln/Katlian Intersection
- Feeder routes (Barracks, American, Moksoutoff, Cathedral, and other unnamed alleys) blocked from entry
- Closures could be on a consistent schedule (M-F) or based on daily passenger count

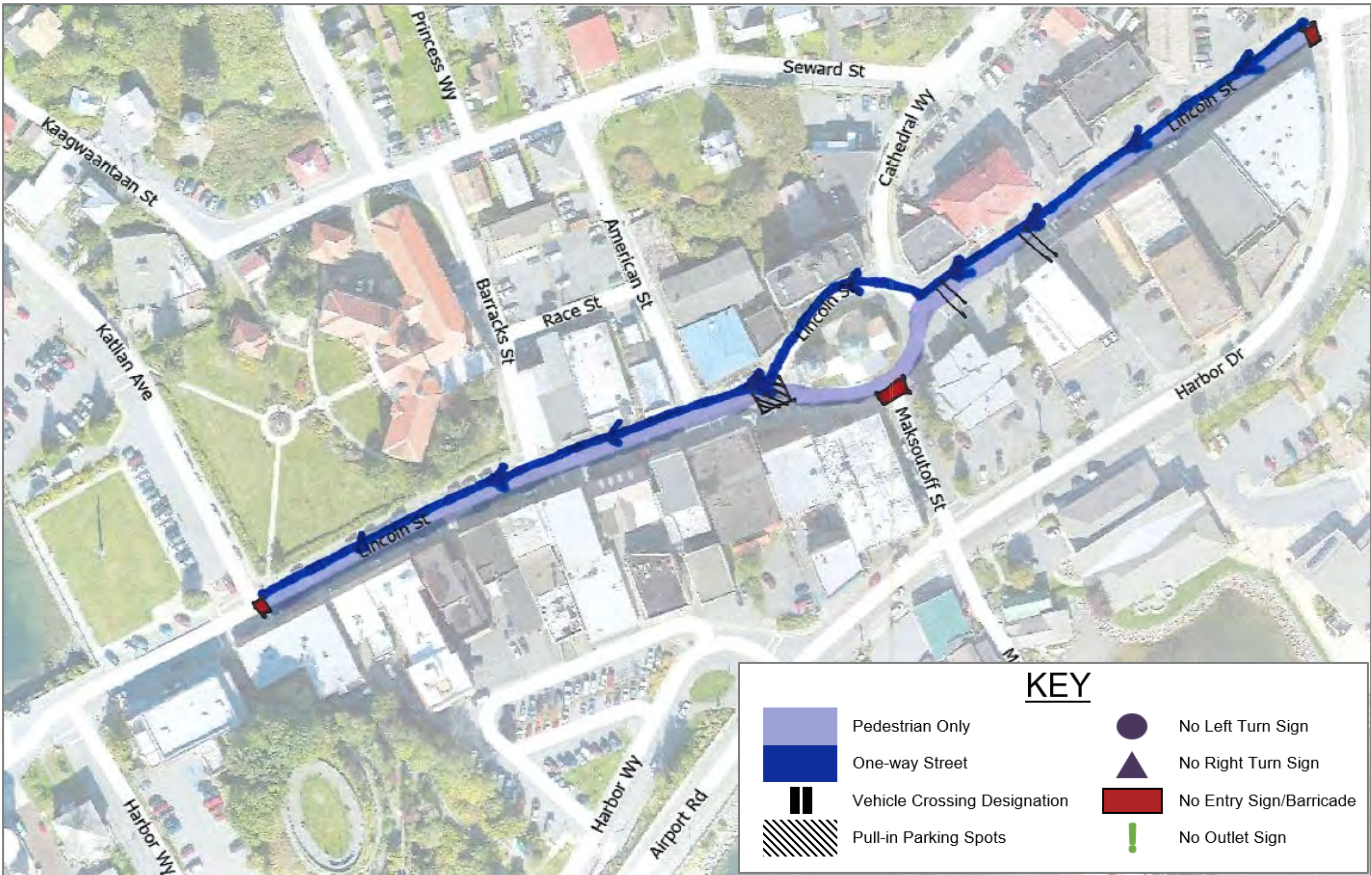
Pros

- Allows maximum pedestrian space and clearly separates pedestrians from vehicles
- Opens maximum spaces for amenities (benches, water stations, garbage cans, potentially vending, etc.)
- Equitable for both ends/sides of Lincoln Street merchants/entities

Cons

- Maximum loss of parking
- Maximum impact on vehicular access to locally demanded services (primarily pharmacy and bank drive-thrus)
- Complicates Pioneer Home emergency access
- Necessitates new downtown stop for The Ride
- Congestion remains around Totem Square/end of Lincoln

One-Way Option



Description

- Lincoln Street remains open to vehicular traffic one-way westbound
- Pedestrian space and amenity/vending staging can take place in the eastbound traffic/parking lanes. Amenities/vending could potentially be staged for the whole season. This would decrease labor needs for daily mobilization/demobilization and allow locals and independent travelers to partake in off-hours
- “Vehicle crossing designations” available at bank drive-thrus
- A temporary median would be needed to separate pedestrians and vehicles
- Pull-in parking spaces designated near churches
- Would be in place all season (too labor/storage intensive to mobilize/demobilize daily)

Pros

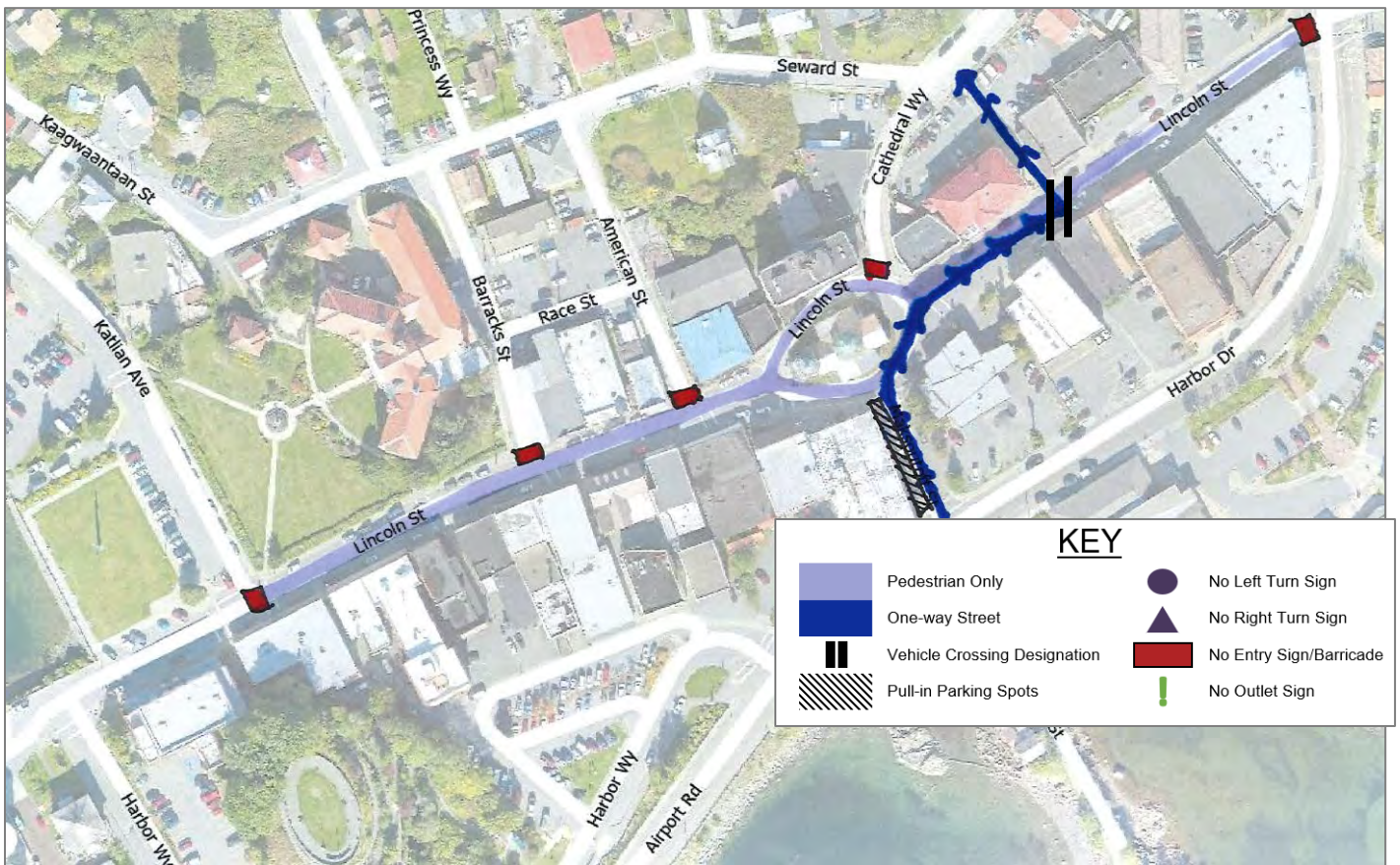
- Allows more vehicular access to Lincoln Street while reducing pedestrian and vehicle conflict
- Maintains vehicular access to downtown amenities & use of bank drive-thrus
- Lower loss of parking
- Provides for better emergency access to Pioneer Home
- Possible reduction in jaywalking due to median barriers

Cons

- Less space opened for pedestrians and other amenities
- Vehicles and pedestrians still intermingled to some degree
- Necessitates new downtown stop for The Ride
- Congestion remains around Totem Square/end of Lincoln
- North side of street gets vehicular access but less pedestrian space, vice versa for the south

A **Hybrid Option** was also proposed as a recommended option. Lincoln could be fully closed when needed (perhaps based on passenger volume) but staged to re-open as the One-Way Option. This would allow for amenities and potential vending to be staged in the east bound lane for the whole season and not have to demobilize when the street is reopened. This provides more flexibility to accommodate moderate and high passenger count days. However, it comes with the pros and cons of both options when in place and would be more labor intensive than the One-Way Option alone.

A **Full Closure Modification** was also sketched to address accessibility for bank drive-thrus. The design below allows one-way traffic up Maksoutoff St., in part of the eastbound lane of Lincoln, and then directs traffic up the unnamed alley between 315 and 321 Lincoln. This would create proper vehicle alignment to utilize all three of the downtown bank drive-thrus, accommodate for ADA access from Lincoln Street, and it would also open the opportunity to add pull-in parking along Maksoutoff Street in the unused lane. However, the crossing from the eastbound lane to the westbound lane to access the alley will be difficult to design. Traffic movement onto Seward Street will increase use of the uncontrolled intersection at Seward and Lake Streets, while not included in the plan recommendations, a traffic conductor may be needed if this option is selected.



The level of service analysis was then updated to include the two main recommended options along with a comparison matrix.

Pedestrians supported at each LOS

	Total pedestrian S.F. available	Pedestrians supported at each LOS					
		LOS A	LOS B	LOS C	LOS D	LOS E	LOS F
No closure – sidewalk space only	13,000	213	317	520	813	1,444	1,625
Full Closure Option	65,000	1,066	1,585	2,600	4,063	7,222	8,125
One-Way Option	39,000	639	951	1,560	2,438	4,333	4,875

Option Comparison Matrix

Factors	Full Closure Option	One-Way Option
Parking	✗ Highest impact on parking	✓ Moderate impact on parking
Convenience	✗ Highest impact on vehicular access to downtown retail and services	✓ Lesser impact on vehicular access to downtown retail and services
Pedestrian Safety	✓ Best separation of vehicles and pedestrians	✗ Some intermingling of vehicles and pedestrians
Visitor Experience	✓ Maximum pedestrian and amenity space	✗ Moderate pedestrian and amenity space
Logistics	✗ Very labor intensive for set-up and take down on a daily/weekly basis	✗ Needs most equipment for temporary medians/fencing
Flexibility	✓ Provides flexibility to be fully open in off-hours/days and change with passenger levels	✗ Has to stay in place season-long – too labor and storage intensive to demobilize regularly
Amenities/Vending	✗ No opportunity to permanently stage amenities/vending for season	✓ Opportunity to permanently stage amenities/vending for full season and offers off-hour enjoyment opportunities

✓ Comparative Advantage ✗ Comparative Disadvantage

After consideration of these options and hearing public comment, the Planning Commission voted 4-1 to recommend the Full Closure Option from 10am to 4pm on days with 3,000 or more cruise passengers with the stipulation that efforts to find downtown parking solutions be prioritized.

Traffic Data Collection Findings and Observations Memorandum

December 21, 2022

Project# 27735

To: Amy Ainslie, Planning Director
City and Borough of Sitka
100 Lincoln Street
Sitka, AK 99835

From: Andrew Ooms, PE; Claire Dougherty, PE and Megan Mannion, EIT

CC: PTS - Dan Kirsch, PE and Jenny Liljedahl, PE,

RE: City of Sitka Traffic Study

INTRODUCTON

The City and Borough of Sitka (CBS) retained the services of a consultant team comprised of Kittelson & Associates, Inc. (Kittelson) and Huddle AK to prepare a tourism focused traffic study, and to conduct related stakeholder outreach, building upon the *Sitka Short-Term Tourism Plan* prepared by CBS staff in advance of the 2022 summer tourist season. A major component of this supporting traffic study included the collection of significant data, including vehicular and pedestrian traffic counts, parking counts, public bathroom observations, and field observations for 3 days in August 2022. Data was collected on a 'large cruise ship day' representing peak passenger conditions in Sitka with the daytime closure of Lincoln Street to vehicles, as well as on a smaller business-as-usual day during which Lincoln Street remained open to vehicles while more than 1,000 pedestrians were present in order to assess a range of cruise ship tourism driven conditions in Sitka.

This memorandum is the first of two traffic-focused reports that will be prepared for the CBS and focuses on summarizing the quantitative traffic data collected and qualitative field observations, and stakeholder feedback heard in August 2022. This memorandum also includes intersection operations analyses for four key intersections and pedestrian crossing analyses at eight key crossing locations.

Following this memorandum, a Traffic Study Report will be prepared that will include additional concept evaluation, and more specific project, traffic control, wayfinding and planning recommendations, feasibility assessments and cost estimates.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As an outcome of the *Sitka Short-Term Tourism Plan*, which was developed in advance of the 2022 summer cruise ship season, CBS hired a traffic engineering team to collect traffic data and conduct field observations on multiple dates in August 2022 in order to:

- Understand the traffic impacts of the Lincoln Street closure on downtown circulation, pedestrian activity, wayfinding, road user behavior, resident travel impacts and downtown parking.
- Quantify the range of bus, vehicle and pedestrian activity on quieter and larger volume cruise ship tourism days, and increase understanding as to how tourists flow from SCCT to downtown and back.
- Document traffic volume data, intersection operations and pedestrian crossings as justification for the Alaska Department of Transportation (DOT&PF) to make changes to state-managed transportation facilities in Sitka.
- Support planning for continued tourism growth in Sitka.

Key Traffic Data Trends and Observations

- The Lake Street/Lincoln Street traffic signal serves significant tourism related pedestrian demand.
 - **The lack of left-turn lanes at the Lake Street / Lincoln Street intersection, in combination with high pedestrian demand many hours of the day can lead to significant vehicular delay and queues on Lake Street.**
 - While the timing of tourism related pedestrian activity varies based on cruise ship arrival and departure times, on a high volume tourism day, **pedestrian volumes crossing Lake Street (Harbor Drive) at the Lake Street / Lincoln Street intersection can exceed 500 pedestrians per hour for 7 hours of the day.**
 - **On lower volume tourism days, pedestrian demand still exceeds 200 pedestrians per hour 6 hours of the day.**
- There is significant pedestrian crossing activity across Harbor Drive between Harrigan Centennial Hall and Lincoln Street, with more than 14,000 pedestrian crossings a day on high volume cruise ship days.
 - **On high volume cruise ship tourism days, there are more pedestrians crossing Harbor Drive than vehicles driving along Harbor Drive.**
 - While a majority of pedestrians (8,500) utilize the signalized crosswalks at the Lake Street / Lincoln Street intersection, more than 3,000 pedestrians a day crossed Harbor Drive mid-block in front of Harrigan Centennial Hall.
 - Lack of obvious wayfinding and active (physical) routing leads to many pedestrians choosing to cross Harbor Drive wherever is convenient.
- **Overall, the Lincoln Street closure to vehicular traffic works well for accommodating the thousands of pedestrians present downtown on high volume cruise ship tourism days.**
 - When Lincoln Street is closed to traffic, there is no observable increase in traffic on adjacent roadways such as Seward Street and Katlian Street.
 - Many residents interviewed cited waiting until Lincoln Street is open to vehicles to visit downtown.
- When Lincoln Street remains open to vehicle traffic on lower volume tourism days:
 - There is more pedestrian activity on the Lincoln Street corridor than vehicle use.
 - The existing sidewalks seemed to reasonably accommodate the 1,000 – 2,000 daily pedestrians present in the downtown area.
- When Lincoln Street is closed, downtown parking lots are more highly utilized, with 10% of spots available midday as compared to 20-25% of spots available on a lower tourism volume Lincoln Street open day.
- **Harrigan Centennial Hall is a focal point of tourism related activities downtown as the drop-off and pickup location for thousands of visitors a day.**
 - With more than 500 vehicles entering the main parking lot daily, including nearly 200 bus trips, and serving as the launching point for thousands of pedestrians, there are conflicts at the driveways and throughout the parking lot.
- There is also regular tourism related pedestrian crossing activity on Sawmill Creek Road at Raptor Way (leading to the Raptor Center), and between the Fortress of the Bear parking area and main facility.

Next Steps

Following the fall CBS Assembly and Planning Commission End-Tourism-Season work session, the transportation engineering team will work with CBS staff to develop transportation related recommendations to inform tourism planning efforts for 2023 and beyond, which will be further documented in a forthcoming Traffic Study.

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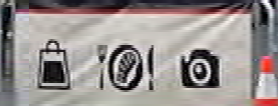
Appendices

- Appendix A - Stakeholder Outreach Summary
- Appendix B - City and Borough of Sitka Staff Feedback Summary
- Appendix C - Traffic Count Data
- Appendix D - Intersection Operations Worksheets

LEFT TURN
YIELD
ON GREEN



CLOSED TO VEHICLES
WALK YOUR BICYCLE



WELCOME TO
Sitka

Yak'ei haat
yaa kunaytin.
(It's good that you traveled here.)

CLOSED TO VEHICLES
FOOT TRAFFIC ONLY



SITKA TOURISM CONTEXT

Tourism Planning in Sitka

During the early summer through late fall months, Sitka experiences significant tourism activity, with most visitors arriving via cruise ship for single day escapades. Approximately 8,400¹ residents call Sitka home. Planning for growth in Sitka due to increasing cruise ship tourism began with the *Sitka Gateway Plan (1998)* and the *Sitka Short-Term Tourism Plan (2021)*.

2022 Cruise Season

Development of the *Sitka Short-Term Tourism Plan* was prioritized by the CBS following the announcement of forecast record cruise ship visitors (480,000 in 2022), following the COVID-19 pandemic which resulted in low cruise ship passenger volumes in 2020 and into 2021. Additionally, the opening of the privately owned Sitka Sound Cruise Terminal (SSCT) approximately 6 miles north of downtown Sitka further evolved tourism logistics in Sitka. Historically, cruise ships visiting Sitka would anchor offshore of downtown and lighter (water taxi) passengers to the Crescent Harbor or O'Connell Bridge docks. However, with the development of the SSCT, larger capacity cruise ships dock north of town and passengers are primarily transported to and from downtown Sitka via 45-60 passenger coach buses. Refer to Figure 1 for a visual display of where the key tourist facilities are located around Sitka.

As an outcome of the *Sitka Short-Term Tourism Plan*, which was a collaborative effort with CBS staff, the Assembly and the Planning Commission and included outreach to industry professionals, merchants, tour operators and the public, it was determined that the full closure of Lincoln Street to vehicular traffic from 10 AM – 4 PM on summer days forecast to have 3,000 or more cruise passengers was necessary to accommodate high pedestrian volumes through downtown.

Development of a Lincoln Street closure calendar involved Cruise Line Agencies of Alaska, Visit Sitka and CBS staff. Based on observations and feedback in early summer 2022, the passenger threshold for a Lincoln Street closure was increased to 5,000 or more on a capacity basis. The Lincoln Street closure calendar is regularly updated and shared with the public for planning purposes and Visit Sitka posts signs downtown in advance of closures.



Photo 1 – Visit Sitka Lincoln Street Closure Public Schedule

City of Sitka Traffic Study

This traffic study championed by the CBS specifically collected traffic data on multiple dates in August 2022 during which Lincoln Street open to vehicular traffic and closed to vehicular traffic in order to:

- Understand the traffic impacts of the Lincoln Street closure on downtown circulation, pedestrian flows and crossing activity, wayfinding, road user behavior, resident travel impacts and downtown parking.
- Quantify the range of bus, vehicle and pedestrian activity on quieter and larger volume cruise ship tourism days, and increase understanding as to how tourists flow from SSCT to downtown and back.
- Document traffic volume data, intersection operations and pedestrian crossings as justification for the Alaska Department of Transportation (DOT&PF) to make changes to state-managed transportation facilities in Sitka.
- Effectively plan for continued tourism growth in Sitka - The 2023 cruise ship season is forecast to bring 570,000 visitors to Sitka, including more than 30 days with 7,000+ visitors.

¹ Alaska Department of Labor, 2021 population estimate for Sitka (8,387).

SITKA TRAFFIC DATA

The core data collection effort in mid-August 2022 included intersection traffic counts and pedestrian counts, as well as peak period downtown parking counts and bathroom observations. Based on staff field observations and interviews with community members (Appendix A) and CBS staff (Appendix B), four key intersection and eight key pedestrian crossing locations were selected for more detailed analysis, as shown on Figure 1. Video data was collected over the course of three days, Tuesday – Thursday to capture conditions with Lincoln Street open to vehicular traffic and when Lincoln Street is closed. While Tuesday and Wednesday were the main data collection dates, some camera battery challenges led to make-up data collection on Thursday.

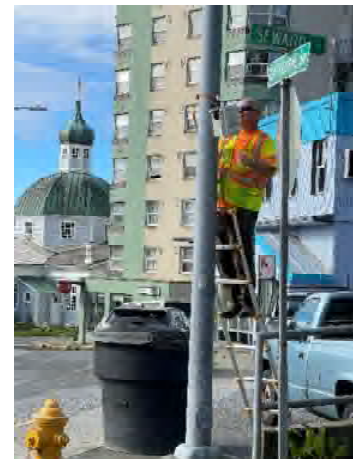


Photo 2 – Traffic Data Camera Placement

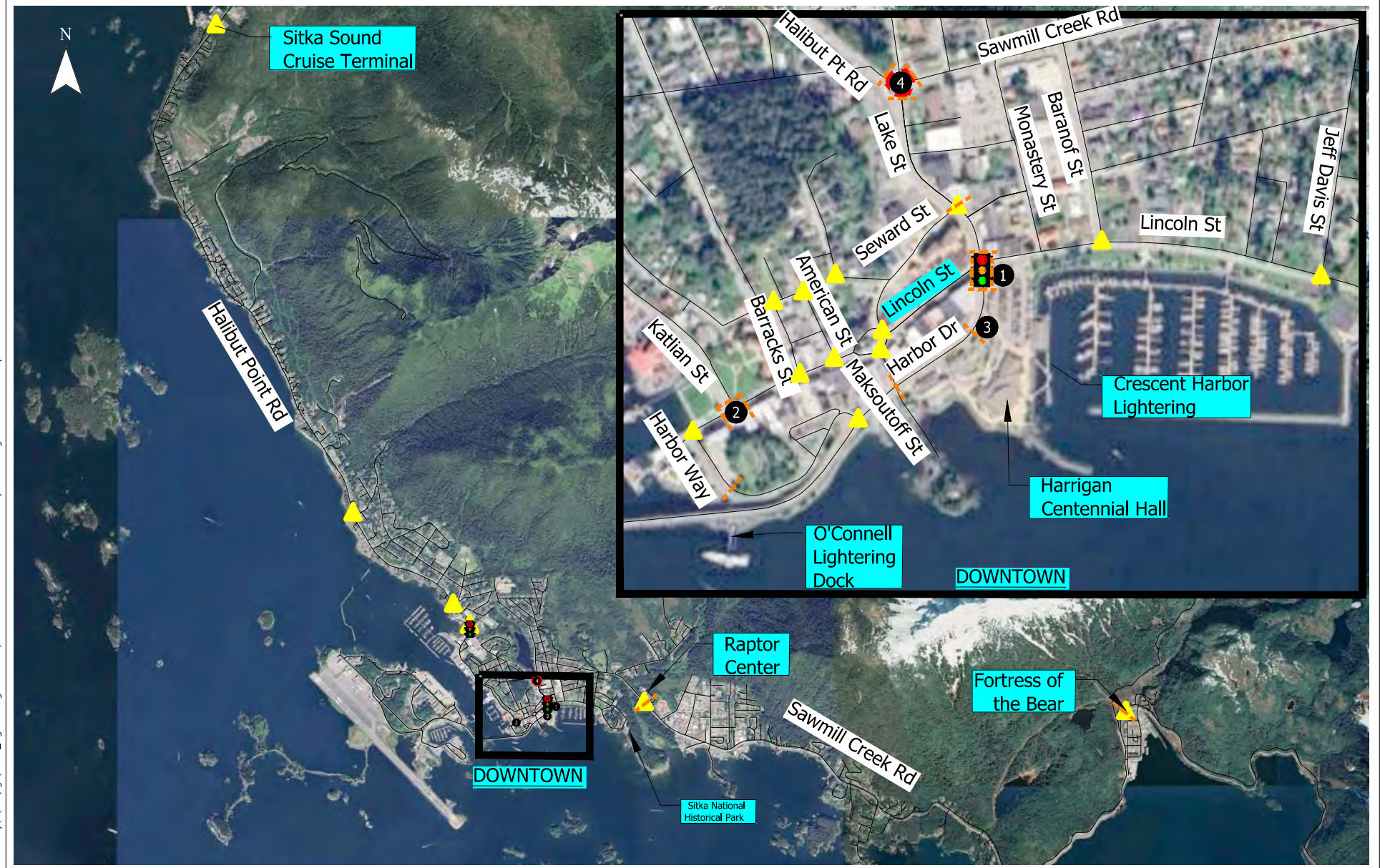
On the dates of data collection, Sitka experienced partly sunny skies, with temperatures in the low to mid 60s – while the exact number of tourists that chose to disembark each cruise ship are not known, the mild weather and traffic data suggest that a relatively high percentage of tourists were present in downtown Sitka on the days data was collected.

Table 1. August 8 – 12, 2022 Visitor Numbers and Lincoln Street Closure Schedule

Day of Week	Anticipated Potential Visitors Based on Cruise ship Capacity	Actual Visitor Numbers	Percent Actual Visitors from Ship Capacity Potential
Monday	5,314	4,302	81%
Tuesday	8,395	7,792	93%
Wednesday	2,104	1,853	88%
Thursday	5,832	4,861	83%
Friday	3,020	2,649	88%

Green highlighted signifies Lincoln Street was closed to vehicular traffic 10 AM – 4 PM
Bold indicates the primary days traffic data was collected.

At the time traffic data was collected, there was active construction activity on Sawmill Creek Road from Lake Street to Jeff Davis Street, with one-way flagging restrictions from 7 AM – 7 PM. While this construction activity led to additional delays for vehicles on Sawmill Creek Road and at times notable vehicle queues, the lack of alternative routes and review of traffic data does not suggest this activity significantly impacted the traffic volume data collected in August 2022.



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- Key Tourism Facilities
- # Key Intersection Study Location
- Key Pedestrian Crossing Study Location
- Additional Traffic Data Count Location
- Existing Roundabout Intersection
- Existing Traffic Signal

Traffic Study Area
Sitka, Alaska

Figure
1

Traffic and Pedestrian Volumes

While Sitka roadways do experience typical commuter PM peak hour activity, high volume cruise ship days can also create a midday peak when high pedestrian volumes greatly impact vehicle traffic operations. The timing of peak periods may vary based on cruise ship arrival and departure times. Field observations and traffic counts suggest the midday peak vehicular and pedestrian activity downtown generally occurs from 11 AM to 2 PM.

The following sections further detail traffic volume data at key intersections and pedestrian crossing locations selected for more detailed analysis. While traffic count data was collected at some additional locations as shown on Figure 1, field observations and discussions with community members do not suggest specific capacity or safety concerns at these locations. Therefore, more detailed analysis of data at these locations is not provided at this time, however all traffic data is provided in Appendix C, should further analysis become necessary in the future.

The Alaska Traffic Data online database provides DOT&PF historical data including average annual daily traffic (AADT) and monthly average daily traffic (MADT) on key Sitka roadways. Figure 2 conveys the approximate scale of AADT within Sitka. The highest volume roadways include:

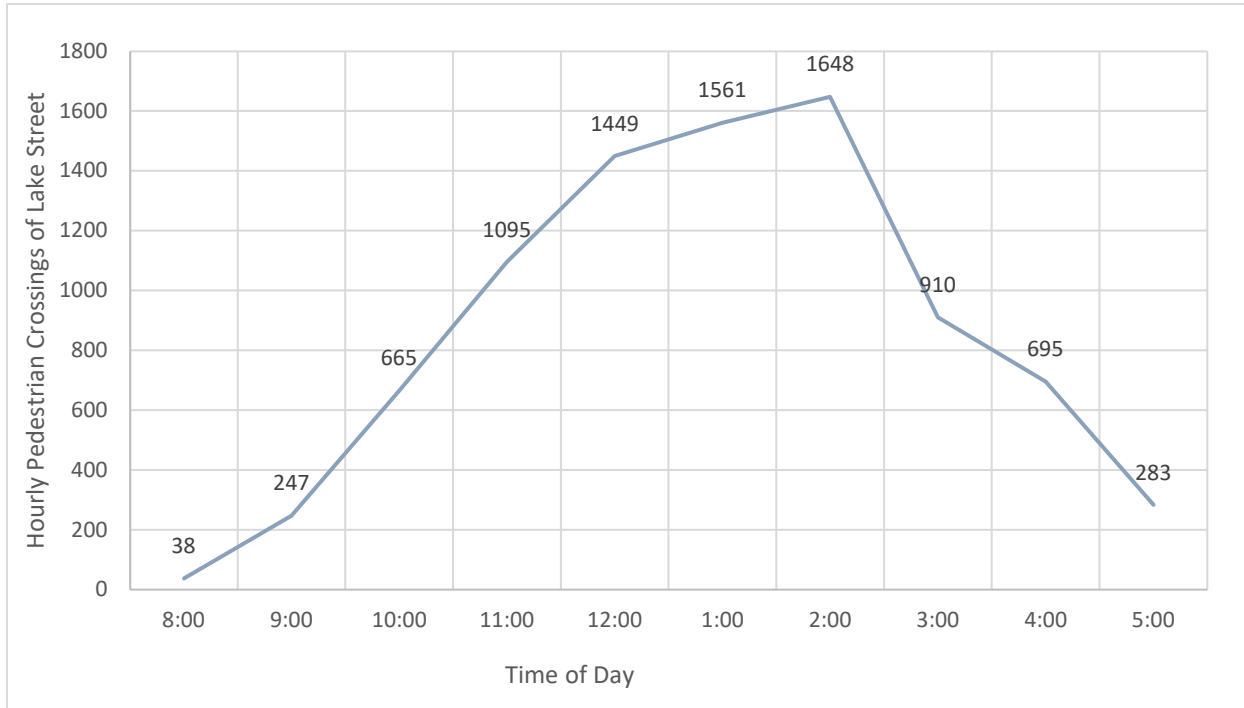
- Halibut Point Road, which experiences an approximate AADT of 9,500 vehicles per day and an approximate MADT of 10,000 – 11,000 vehicles per day during the summer.
- Sawmill Creek Road, which experiences an approximate AADT of 8,300 vehicles per day and an approximate MADT of 9,000 vehicles per day during the summer.
- Lake Street, which experiences an approximate AADT of 7,000 vehicles per day.
- Harbor Drive, which experiences an approximate AADT of 5,000 vehicles per day.

Though not an especially high vehicle volume roadway, it is noted that DOT traffic data estimates an AADT on Lincoln Street of approximately 5,000 vehicles per day. On high volume tourism days, Lincoln Street also serves several thousand pedestrians a day.

Figure 3, based on pedestrian counts collected in August 2022 on a high volume tourism day, displays the significant pedestrian demand between the Harrigan Centennial Hall parking lot, where tourists from SSCT are dropped off and picked up, and the downtown Lincoln Street corridor. On a peak day, there were more than 14,000 pedestrian crossings of Lake Street (Harbor Drive) observed. While a majority of pedestrians (8,500) utilize the signalized crosswalks at the Lake Street / Lincoln Street intersection, more than 3,000 pedestrians crossed Harbor Drive mid-block in front of Harrigan Centennial Hall. Field observations indicate that lack of obvious wayfinding and active (physical) routing leads to many pedestrians choosing to cross Harbor Drive wherever is convenient.

While the timing of tourism related pedestrian activity varies based on cruise ship arrival and departure times, on a high volume tourism day, pedestrian volumes crossing Lake Street (Harbor Drive) at the Lake Street / Lincoln Street intersection can exceed 500 pedestrian per hour for 7 hours of the day, as shown in Exhibit 1. Additionally, during the midday peak period, more than 1,600 pedestrians utilize the intersection to cross Lake Street (Harbor Drive).

Exhibit 1. Hourly Pedestrian Crossing Volumes of Lake Street at the Lake Street / Lincoln Street Intersection.



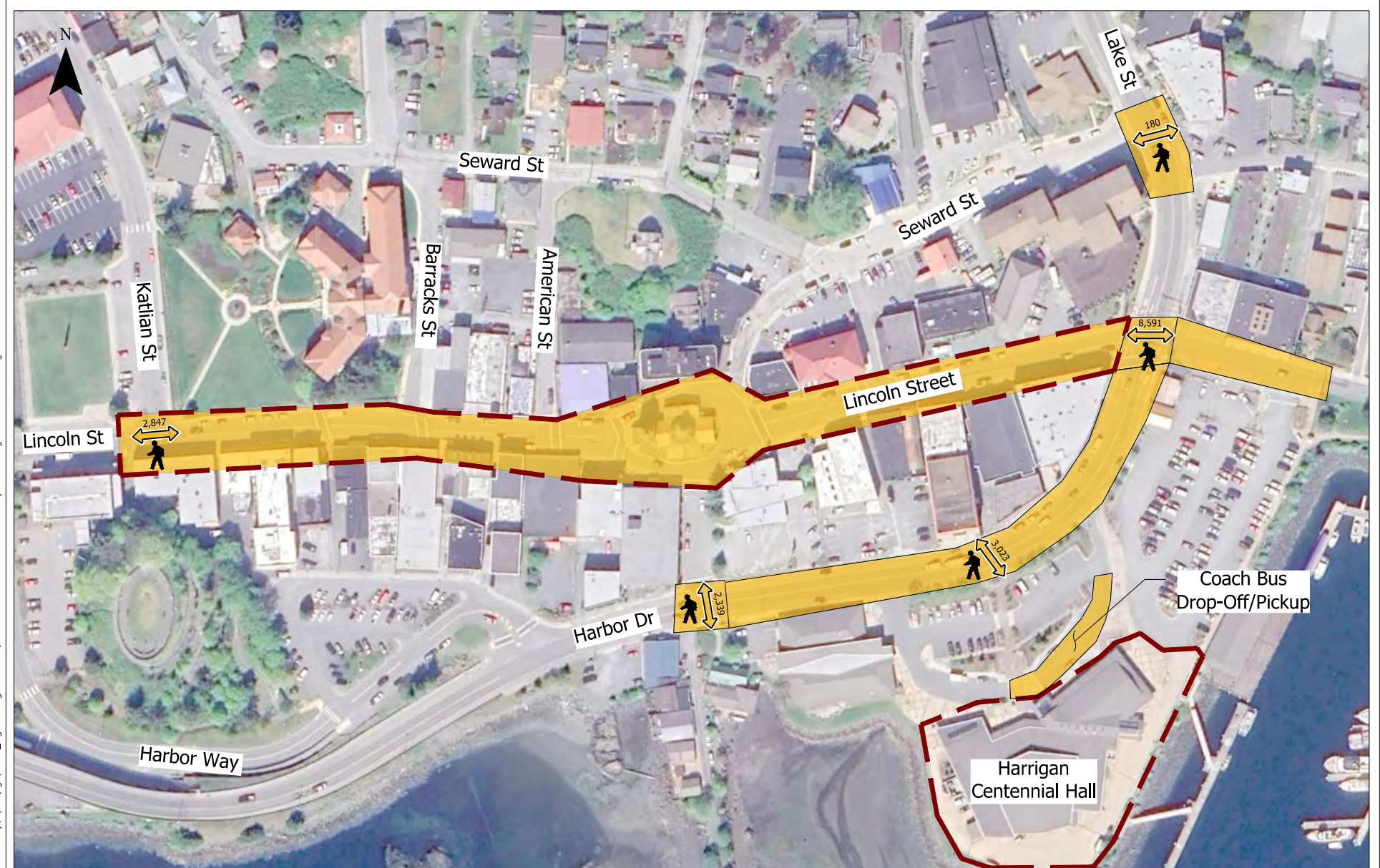
H:\27\27735 - City of Sitka Traffic Study\report\figs\27735_Figures.dwg Dec 22, 2022 - 9:03am - mmammon Layout Tab: Figure 2 - Sitka AADT






- <1,000 AADT
- 1,000 - 3,000 AADT
- 3,000 - 5,000 AADT
- 5,000 - 8,000 AADT
- >8,000 AADT

Traffic Volumes Overview
Sitka, Alaska

Figure
2



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-  HIGH PEDESTRIAN ACTIVITY AREAS
-  DAILY PEDESTRIAN VOLUMES
-  KEY PEDESTRIAN DESTINATIONS

Downtown Daily Pedestrian Activity
 High Volume Tourism Day (Lincoln Street Closed)
 Sitka, Alaska

Figure 3

Intersection Operation Methodology

Vehicle intersection operations analyses were assessed at key, high-volume downtown intersections during the midday and PM peak hours considering vehicular and non-motorized activity on a day when Lincoln Street remained open to vehicular traffic and on a day in which Lincoln Street was closed to vehicular traffic. The intersection analyses assess a volume-to-capacity ratio and average delay, the latter of which is used to assign a level-of-service (LOS). Intersection LOS is analogous to the letter grades in a school report card. Motorists using an intersection that operates at LOS A experience very little delay, while those using an intersection operating at LOS F will experience long delays. Traffic operations for signalized intersections are reported for the intersection as a whole, while unsignalized intersection operations are reported for the critical movement, typically the minor street turning movement.

Synchro 11 software was used for analyzing signalized and stop-controlled intersections and HCS7 for the roundabout intersection. These analyses provide level-of-service (LOS), delay, and volume-to-capacity ratio (V/C) results following Highway Capacity Manual (HCM) 6th Edition methodology.

While intersection operations were conducted consistent with HCM methodology and reported herein, the high pedestrian volumes and pedestrian platooning behaviors throughout downtown Sitka on peak tourism days are outside the conditions and vehicle-pedestrian interactions reflected in the HCM analyses. Therefore, the reported HCM measures of effectiveness may not accurately capture real-world conditions during extreme pedestrian flows and the intersection operations analyses are supplemented with field observations.



LINCOLN STREET FUNCTIONALITY AND OBSERVATIONS

Lincoln Street is a key downtown corridor that serves many functions— it facilitates access to downtown shops, businesses, and restaurants, includes distinct landmarks and tourist attractions such as St. Michael's Orthodox Cathedral, connects vehicular traffic to Katlian Street and provides parking downtown.

From Lake Street to Katlian Street, Lincoln Street serves two-lane vehicular traffic with one way traffic circulating around St. Michael's Orthodox Cathedral. On-street parking is generally provided on both sides of Lincoln Street, with parking restrictions in the vicinity of the six crosswalks.

Curb tight, continuous sidewalks are provided on both sides of the street, generally with a minimum width of 5 feet between building fronts and curb face, however there are periodic obstructions by signs, fire hydrants, light posts and retail related items that effectively narrow the usable sidewalk width for pedestrians.

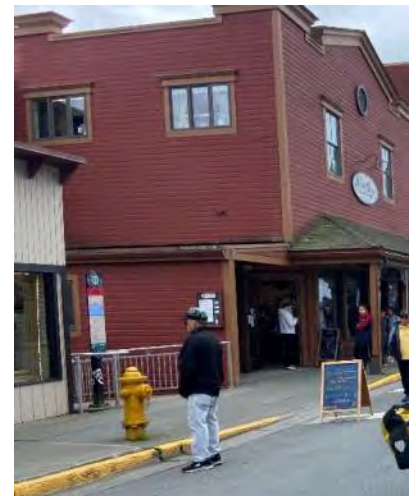


Photo 3 - A fire hydrant, building columns and shop signs reduce effective sidewalk width on Lincoln Street

Lincoln Street Traffic Volumes

Vehicle Traffic

When open to vehicular traffic, westbound vehicle volumes are double eastbound volumes most hours of the day. On closure dates, vehicle volumes are similar from 8:00 – 9:00 AM but taper after 9:00 AM before the 10:00 AM closure. Vehicle volumes rebound from 4:00-5:00 PM when the Lincoln Street closure is removed. When Lincoln Street remains open to vehicular traffic, approximately 210 vehicles travel Lincoln Street during the midday peak hour as compared to approximately 240 vehicles during the PM peak hour.

Exhibit 2. Lincoln Street (Open) – Vehicular Hourly Volume Profile

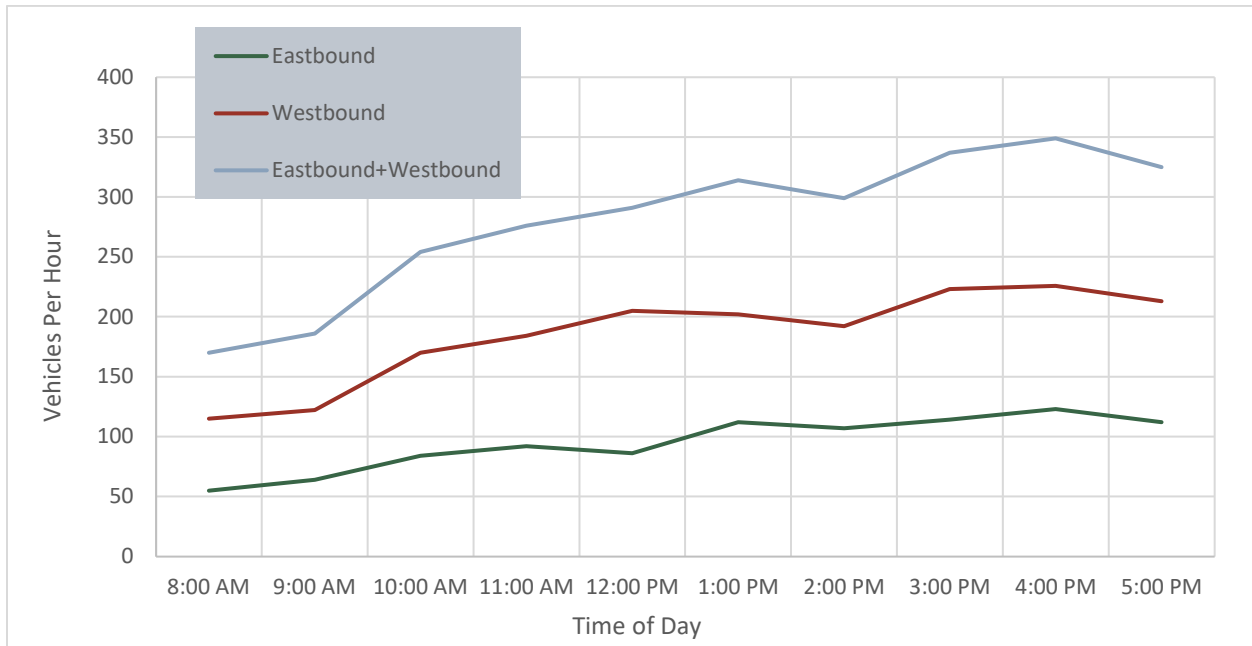
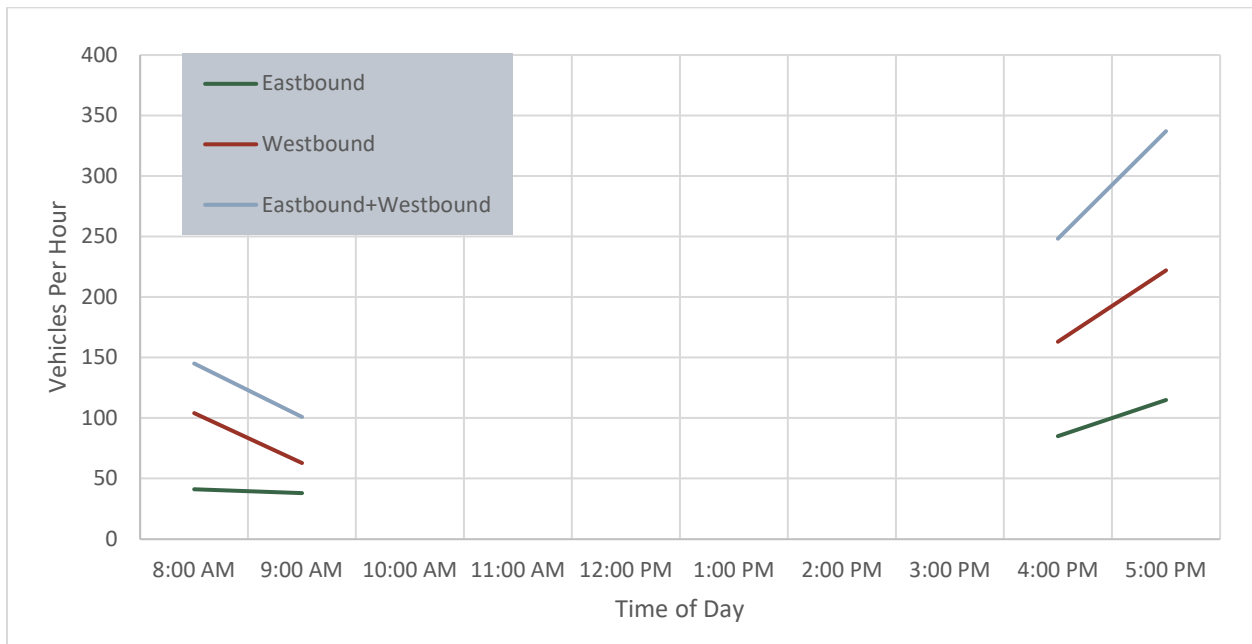


Exhibit 3. Lincoln Street (Closed) – Vehicular Hourly Volume Profile



Pedestrian Traffic

When Lincoln Street is closed to vehicular traffic, pedestrians are able to walk on Lincoln Street and cross anywhere between Lake Street and Katlian Street.

When Lincoln Street is open to vehicular traffic, there are six crosswalks provided, in addition to the crosswalks at the bounding Lincoln Street / Katlian Street and Lincoln Street / Lake Street intersections. Pedestrian activity was counted at all crosswalks, as well as the intermediary zones on a day Lincoln Street was open to vehicular traffic. Figure 4 summarizes daily pedestrian activity patterns on Lincoln Street, from Lake Street to Katlian Street on a day when Lincoln Street remained open to vehicular traffic.

Key findings from the Lincoln Street pedestrian data include:

- The most heavily used crosswalk, with daily volumes exceeding 1,400 crossings in the crosswalk, was leading to St. Michael’s Orthodox Cathedral.
- While pedestrian crossing volumes are higher at the crosswalk than at the intermediary zones, there are anywhere from 100 to more than 600 crossings outside of striped crosswalks along Lincoln Street over the course of a day. However, considering the relatively low conflicting vehicle volumes even when Lincoln Street remains open to vehicular traffic, this is to be expected as there are a lot more pedestrians than vehicles present in the environment.
- Field observations indicated that drivers on Lincoln Street were traveling at low speeds and anticipated pedestrian crossings along the Lincoln Street corridor.

Additionally, dated pedestrian infrastructure was observed along Lincoln Street, including curb ramps lacking detectable warning mats, flat landings and in some locations, visibly steep sidewalk cross slopes.

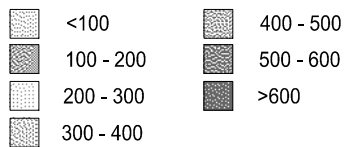


Photo 4 - Pedestrian Ramp lacking detectable warning mat and flat landing



Photo 5 – Pedestrian Curb Ramp lacking detectable warning mat

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Lincoln Street (Open to Vehicles) Pedestrian Crossing Activity
Daily Crossings
Sitka, Alaska

Figure
4

Lincoln Street Closures Observations and Feedback

- Setting up and tearing down the temporary Lincoln Street closures are collaborative between CBS Maintenance and Operation staff, CBS Police and Visit Sitka staff.
 - In order to reduce the manpower necessary to set-up the closures, permanent infrastructure to accommodate pedestrians would be preferred by CBS staff.
- General feedback from residents and downtown businesses is positive.
 - While there may be some inconveniences in terms of parking, the value of the additional space is clear on big days as folks can zigzag and freely explore downtown.
 - Lack of vehicular traffic creates a quieter, low conflict environment and provides space for additional vendors.
 - Even non-tourism-oriented businesses on Lincoln Street can see the necessity for limiting vehicles on Lincoln Street on busy tourism days.
 - The 2022 tourist season is noticeably busier than 2019.
- Peak activity is generally 11 AM – 2 PM but daily visitor timing is very dependent on the cruise ship schedules. Some days, visitors are arriving downtown as early as 7 AM or the last bus to SSCT is as late as 7 PM.
 - Fedex and UPS delivery drivers wish the closure started later than 11 AM, as they only have about 1 hour in the morning to complete all downtown deliveries.
- The closure of Lincoln Street does not result in an observable increase in traffic on adjacent/downtown fringe roadways, as verified by data collected on Seward Street and Katlian Street. Rather most residents expressed that they instead avoid Lincoln Street until after the closure is complete to access downtown businesses or chose to walk the closure. Residents interviewed stated that upcoming closure dates are well known and advertised, though Lincoln Street closure schedule changes due to changing cruise ship schedules are not uncommon.
- Though there are signs asking for bicycles to be walked on Lincoln Street during closure, several bicycles were observed riding but there generally seemed to be adequate street space to accommodate an occasional bicyclist. A limited number of scooters and electric bicycles were observed on Lincoln Street as well.

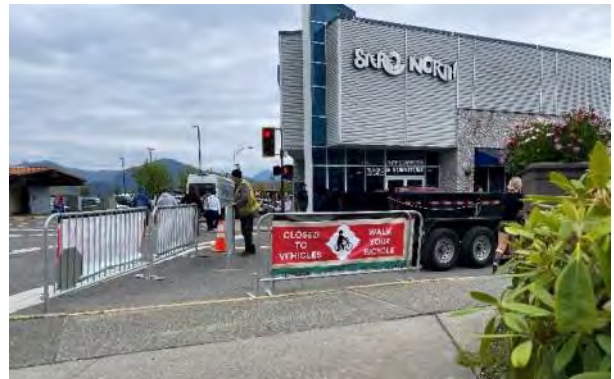


Photo 6 - CBS Staff Set Up Lincoln Street Closure



Photo 7 - Bicyclist within the Lincoln Street Closure



Photo 8 - Parked vehicles not removed before the Lincoln Street closure set-up begins at 9 AM get 'barnacled' – Though cheaper than getting towed, a fee must be paid to release the barnacle device

Lincoln Street Open Observations

- The Lincoln Street sidewalks seemed to reasonably accommodate the 1,000 – 2,000 visitors present on the day in which Lincoln Street remained open.
- Street parking on Lincoln Street appeared at most 50 percent utilized during daytime hours.
- There are several Lincoln Street crosswalks at which drivers displayed varying yielding behavior. While most vehicles travelled slowly and seemed to anticipate pedestrians, an occasional vehicle would accelerate quickly to get through a crosswalk before approaching pedestrians could begin to cross the street.
- Businesses on Lincoln Street noted more audible street noise from vehicle engines on days Lincoln Street remains open to traffic.
- Peak pedestrian activity on Lincoln Street occurs midday (11:00 AM – 2:00PM) whereas the vehicular peak period is late afternoon (4:30 PM-5:30 PM).

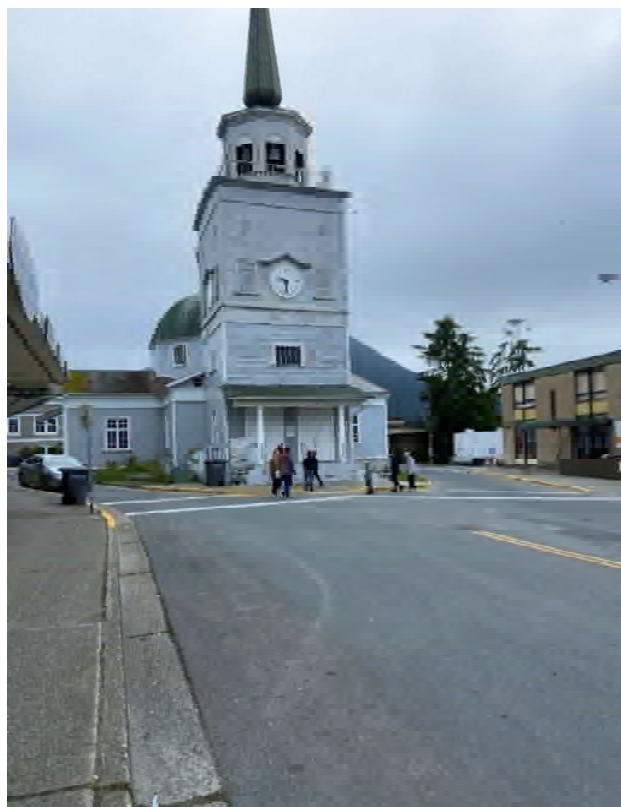


Photo 9 – Vehicle yielding to pedestrians in front of St. Michaels



Photo 10 – Pedestrians, bicyclist, parked vehicles and a circulating vehicle on Lincoln Street

After the August 2022 field visit and data collection effort, there were a few days in late September and early October in which cruise ship capacity volumes exceeded 5,000 but Lincoln Street remained open to traffic as closures were complete for the season. While the later season fall weather may have resulted in a low percentage of tourists disembarking from the cruise ships, CBS staff noted that pedestrian and vehicle movement along Lincoln Street was slow.



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LAKE ST / LINCOLN ST INTERSECTION

The Lake Street / Lincoln Street intersection is one of two intersections in Sitka controlled by a traffic signal. As the only signalized crossing of Harbor Drive from Harrigan Centennial Hall to the downtown shops and restaurants located along Lincoln Street, this intersection experiences high vehicular and significant pedestrian demand, particularly midday on high volume cruise ship days.

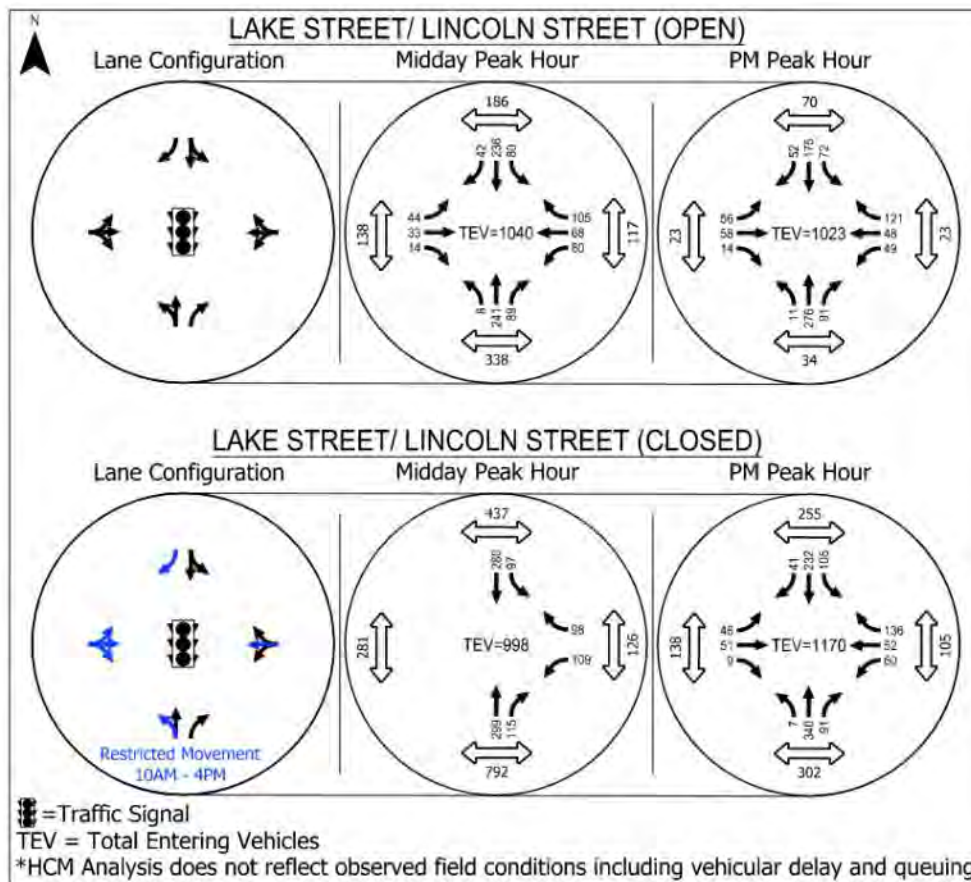


Photo 11 - Multiple pedestrian groups cross Lake Street (Harbor Drive) to access Lincoln Street.

Traffic Data

Traffic counts were collected at Lake Street / Lincoln Street during the midday and PM peak hours on a Lincoln Street open and closed day. On a Lincoln Street open day, the observed midday peak hour was from 11:45 AM to 12:45 PM and the PM peak hour was from 4:30 PM to 5:30 PM. On a Lincoln Street closed day, the midday peak was from 11:30 AM to 12:30 PM and the PM peak hour was from 4:15 PM to 5:15 PM. Traffic counts and lane configurations are provided in Exhibit 4.

Exhibit 4. Lake Street / Lincoln Street Midday and PM Peak Hour Vehicle and Pedestrian Volumes



As shown in Exhibit 4, the intersection experiences relatively consistent midday and PM peak hour vehicular volumes regardless of Lincoln Street closure status. However, the pedestrian volumes at the intersection are notably higher on the higher volume tourism day when Lincoln Street is closed.

An HCM based intersection operations analysis suggests the intersection of Lake Street / Lincoln Street operates at LOS A or B on a Lincoln Street closed and open day, except for the PM peak hour on a Lincoln Street closed day, which operates at LOS F and high delay. Hourly intersection operations on a Lincoln Street closed day are provided in Table 2. HCM LOS calculations for this intersection are driven by southbound left turn demand and the PM peak hour results on a Lincoln Street closed day include an observed volume exceeding the HCM method capacity for that movement, which is not possible in the real world. Additionally, the HCM based intersection operations results do not accurately reflect observed field conditions during peak conditions, which include extensive queuing and delay during the peak hours on both a Lincoln Street open and closed day. The HCM methodology may not fully capture the impacts of the high peak period pedestrian volumes and the capacity impacts on the conflicting vehicle movements, so HCM results were not included in Exhibit 4.

Table 2. Lake Street / Lincoln Street (Closed Day) 11 AM – 6 PM Traffic Volumes and Operations

Time	TEV	Pedestrians	LOS	Delay (sec)
11 AM – 12 PM	828	1,479	B	13.8
12 PM – 1 PM	933	2,008	B	15.5
1 PM – 2 PM	887	2,123	B	14.0
2 PM – 3 PM	777	2,027	B	13.0
3 PM – 4 PM	854	1,210	B	13.6
4 PM – 5 PM	1,080	952	F	208.8
5 PM – 6 PM	903	441	B	11.5

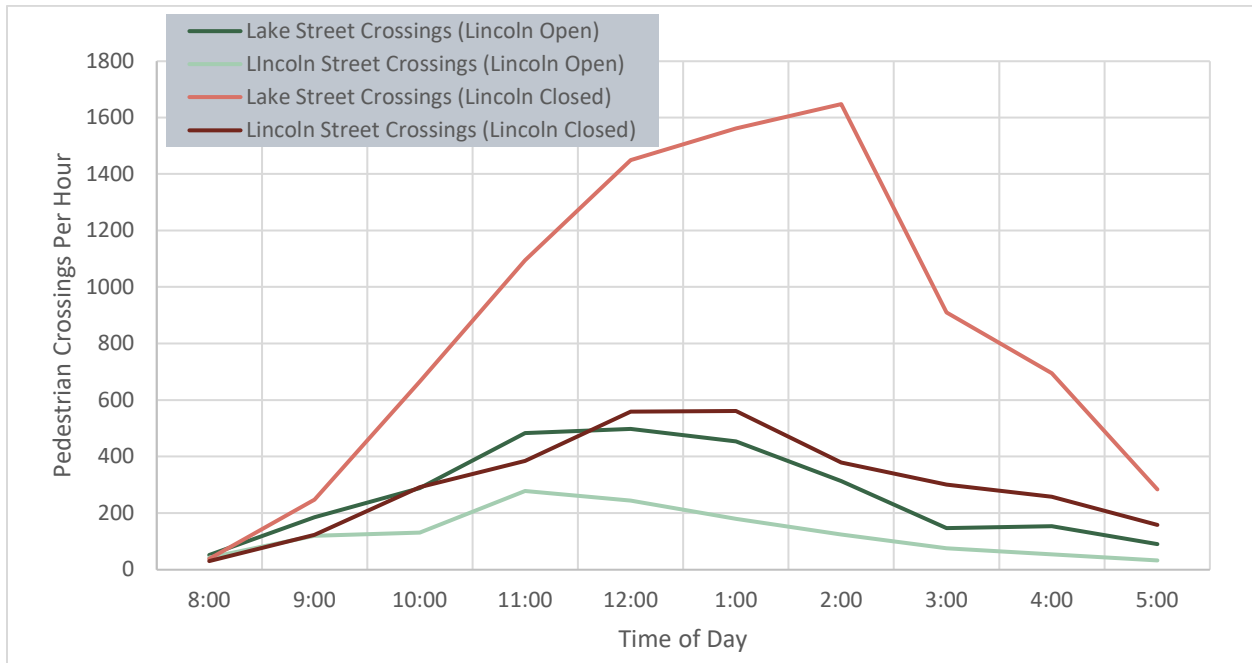
*HCM Analysis does not reflect observed field conditions including vehicular delay and queuing

As shown in Exhibit 4, the existing intersection lane configuration at the traffic signal does not include left-turn lanes, and therefore left-turning vehicles, who experience delays yielding to through vehicles and pedestrians, can create significant queues on Lake Street, at times extending all the way to the Halibut Point Road-Sawmill Creek Road / Lake Street roundabout, which is located less than a ¼ mile north. Multiple cycle failures were observed in which a permissive left or right-turn vehicle, yielding to pedestrians and oncoming vehicles, was not able to progress due to the continuous movement of pedestrians throughout the green phase.

As shown in Exhibit 5, the Lake Street / Lincoln Street intersection experiences significant pedestrian demand outside of the midday and PM peak hours. On higher tourism days, more than 500 pedestrians an hour use the intersection to cross Lake Street (Harbor Drive) 7 hours of the day, with more than 200 pedestrians per hour also using the intersection to cross the Lincoln Street approaches. On lower volume tourism days, pedestrian demand still exceeds 200 pedestrians per hour 6 hours of the day.

Pedestrians crossing the Lake Street / Lincoln Street intersection experience an average signal delay of between 17 and 21 seconds per person, depending on the leg waiting to cross and the time of day. This translates to over 8 hours of person-delay for people waiting to cross Lake Street during peak hour conditions.

Exhibit 5. Lake Street / Lincoln Street Intersection Pedestrian Activity (Open and Closed)



Traffic Volume Observations

- Intersection vehicle volumes are relatively consistent between midday and PM peak hours, regardless of Lincoln Street closures or scale of cruise ship visitors.
- The intersection experiences significant pedestrian demand, with over 1,000 pedestrians traversing the intersection during the midday peak on a Lincoln Street closure day. During high volume tourism days, hourly pedestrian demand to cross Lake Street (or Harbor Drive) at the intersection exceeds 500 pedestrians per hour for several hours of the day.
- During midday and PM peak periods, the intersection experiences relatively high heavy vehicle (truck) percentages on the Lake Street through movements (7-20 percent of all traffic), likely associated with construction in the area. Additionally, buses represent 5–14 percent of all traffic—the intersection experiences 20-30 bus trips per hour per direction during peak periods.

Other Observations and Feedback

- A pedestrian crossing phase must be activated by a pedestrian utilizing the push button, otherwise no pedestrian walk symbol is displayed. This frequently leads to confusion, frustration and out-of-turn crossing decisions by some pedestrians due to uncertainty if the button had been pressed, if the phase would come up, or the presence of the button at all. The push buttons are located on dark colored decorative poles which can make it challenging to find the push buttons.
- There generally appeared to be adequate space behind the curbs to accommodate waiting pedestrian platoons at each corner of the intersection, however the scale of some pedestrian platoons resulted in delayed crossing starts, resulting in pedestrians beginning to cross during the flash-don't-walk phase and crossing times extending into the don't walk phase. It has been reported to us that pedestrian platoons can exceed available crosswalk width at times.
- Pedestrian platoon volumes are so high that right or left-turning vehicles correctly yielding to pedestrians may not be able to turn before the signal changes at the end of the pedestrian phase, which was observed to lead to driver frustration and vehicular queues.
- DOT&PF traffic signal specialists also visited Sitka in summer 2022 to observe peak hour operations that the Lake Street / Lincoln Street intersection and are looking into changes such as:
 - Programming a constant pedestrian phase during heavy pedestrian volumes, regardless if a push button is used.
 - Addition of left-turn lanes on the north and south (Lake Street) approaches if there is adequate width.
- DOT&PF crash data indicates six crashes occurred at Lake Street / Lincoln Street between 2015-2020. Five of these crashes were property damage only crashes, and the one injury crash involved a pedestrian.



Photo 12 – Pedestrian Push Buttons on dark background decorative pole



Photo 13 – Though southbound vehicular traffic has a green signal, a scooter crossing and vehicle turning from Lake Street out-of-turn inhibit southbound vehicular traffic from progressing

OTHER KEY SITKA INTERSECTIONS

Katlian Street / Lincoln Street Intersection

The Katlian Street / Lincoln Street intersection is located at the west end of the Lincoln Street corridor. A three-leg intersection, the Katlian Street approach is stop-controlled while the two Lincoln Street approaches are free movements. There are crosswalks on all three approaches, and a continuous sidewalk along the Lincoln Street shop frontages.

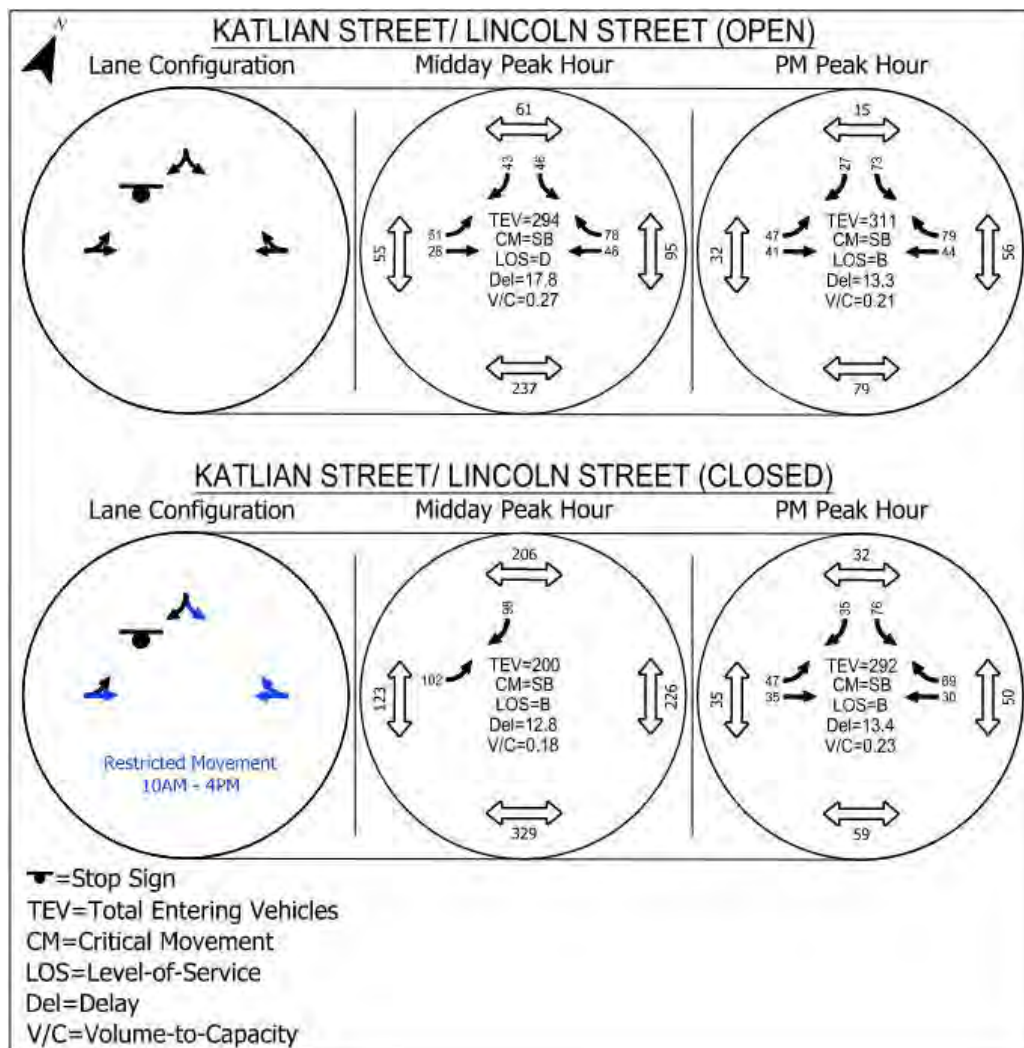
Traffic Data

Traffic counts were collected at Katlian Street / Lincoln Street during the midday and PM peak hours on both a Lincoln Street open and closed day. On a Lincoln Street open day, the observed midday peak hour was from 12:00 PM to 1:00 PM and the PM peak hour was from 4:30 PM to 5:30 PM. On a Lincoln Street closed day, the midday peak hour was from 11:45 AM to 12:45 PM and PM peak hour was from 4:15 PM to 5:15 PM. Traffic counts, lane configurations, and traffic operations are provided in Exhibit 6.



Photo 14 – Katlian Street /Lincoln Street Intersection during closure

Exhibit 6. Katlian Street / Lincoln Street Intersection Midday and PM Vehicle and Pedestrian Volumes



As shown in Exhibit 6, the critical stop-controlled southbound movement at the Katlian Street / Lincoln Street operates between LOS B and D. These results suggest that there can be high vehicular delay (more than 15 seconds) for southbound vehicles during some peak hour conditions, but overall pedestrian volumes are higher than vehicular volumes at this intersection, particularly during high volume tourism days when Lincoln Street is closed.

Traffic Volume Observations

- Vehicle volumes are higher during the PM peak than the midday peak, regardless of Lincoln Street closure, but pedestrian volumes are notably higher during the midday peak.
- During the Lincoln Street closure, vehicle volumes at the Lincoln Street / Katlian Street intersection are approximately 50 percent lower during the midday peak hour as compared to when Lincoln Street remains open to vehicular traffic.
- At this intersection, midday peak hour pedestrian volumes on large cruise ship days with Lincoln Street closed are more than double pedestrian volumes as compared to a smaller cruise ship day. PM peak hour pedestrian volumes are the same on a large cruise ship day and a smaller cruise ship day.
- DOT&PF crash data showed no history of pedestrian or vehicle crashes at this intersection.
- While there are no explicit operational or capacity concerns at the intersection, confusion of some bicyclists and drivers approaching the closure was observed.

- While the Lincoln Street closure traffic control plan includes barriers at Lincoln Street just east of Katlian Street, there are no signs explicitly directing motorized vehicles to an alternate route.



Photo 15 – E-Bikes stop on road approaching Lincoln Street

Halibut Point Road-Sawmill Creek Road / Lake Street

The Halibut Point Road-Sawmill Creek Road / Lake Street intersection is a single lane roundabout intersection that functions as a gateway to downtown, particularly for tourists arriving via coach bus from SSCT. Constructed by DOT&PF in 2009, the four-approach roundabout includes crosswalk signing and striping on all four approaches.

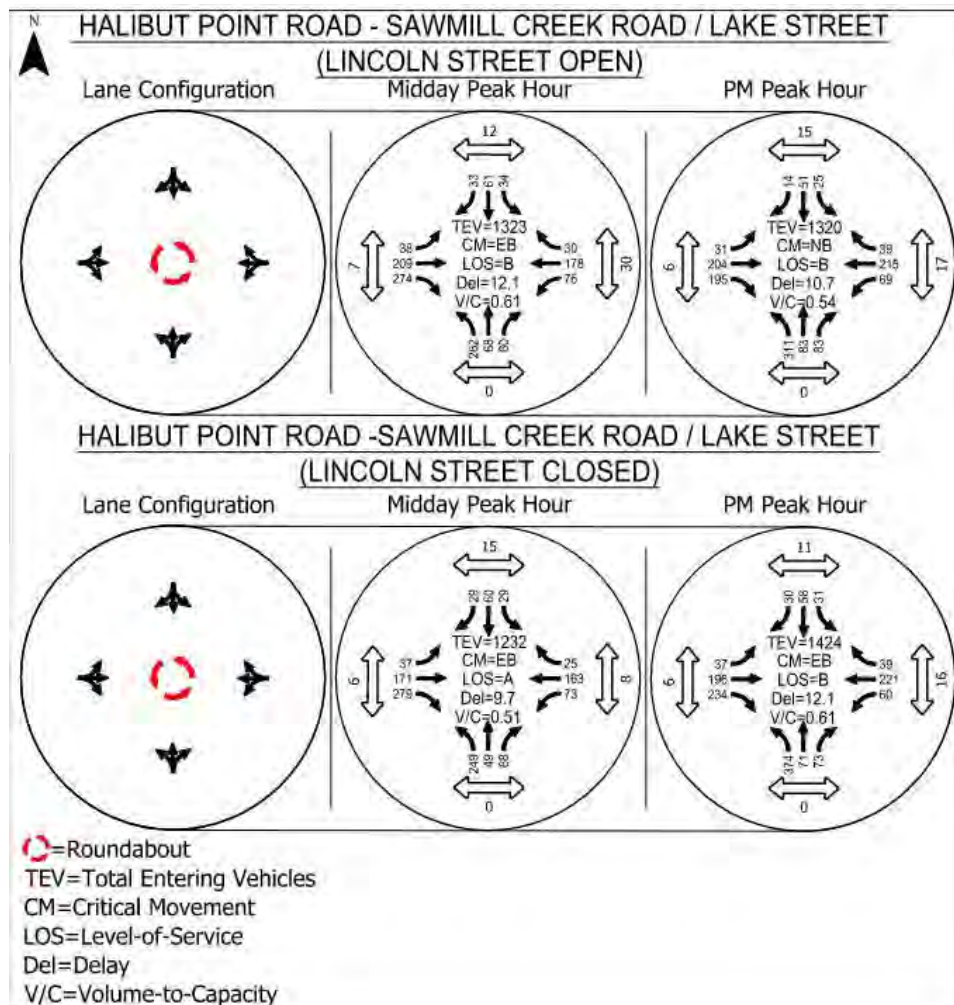


Photo 16 - Coach bus approaches the roundabout from Halibut Point Road

Traffic Data

Traffic counts were collected Halibut Point Road-Sawmill Creek Road / Lake Street during the midday and PM peak hours on a Lincoln Street open and closed day. The observed midday and PM peak hours were the same on a Lincoln Street open and closed day, 12:00 PM to 1:00 PM during the midday peak and 4:30 PM to 5:30 PM during the PM peak, respectively. Traffic counts, lane configurations, and traffic operations are provided in Exhibit 7.

Exhibit 7. Halibut Point Road - Sawmill Creek Road / Lake Street Vehicle and Pedestrian Volumes and Intersection Operations



As shown in Exhibit 7, the roundabout operates at LOS A or B during midday and PM peak hour conditions during a Lincoln Street open and closed day. It is noted that traffic volumes are relatively similar and the lane configuration does not change whether or not Lincoln street is open or closed.

While the HCM intersection operations analysis does not suggest capacity constraints at the intersection, extensive queueing from the Lincoln Street / Lake Street intersection was observed to impact roundabout operations during peak periods, which is not accounted for in the reported HCM analysis. At times, southbound vehicular queues on Lake Street would extend from the Lincoln Street / Lake Street intersection, inhibiting circulating vehicles at the roundabout.

Traffic Volume Observations

- This intersection is the highest vehicular volume intersection in downtown Sitka during midday and PM peak hours.
- Midday peak hour vehicle volumes are comparable to PM peak hour volumes.
- Highest volume movements during midday and PM peak hours are from eastbound Halibut Point Road to southbound Lake Street and from northbound Lake Street to westbound Halibut Point Road.
- Peak hour pedestrian volumes are consistent between a lower cruise ship volume day (Lincoln Street remains open) and a higher cruise ship volume day (Lincoln Street closure).
 - At this intersection, pedestrian crossings only have a minor impact on vehicle operations.
- Peak hour queues extending north from the Lincoln Street / Lake Street intersection impact operations at the roundabout.
- DOT&PF crash data shows there were no reported crashes involving a pedestrian or bicycle at this intersection.

Other Observations

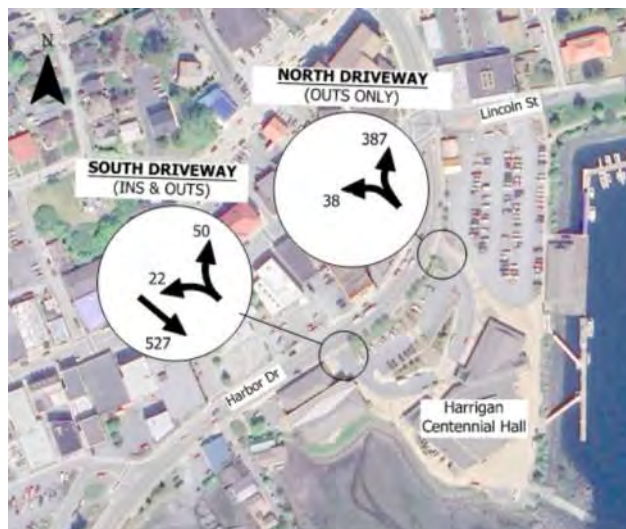
- Vehicular yielding behavior at the crosswalks is varied. While most vehicles approaching the roundabout were decelerating and appropriately yielding to pedestrians, an occasional vehicle was observed to accelerate through the crossing in advance of a pedestrian.
- The pedestrian crossings within the splitter median island lack detectable warning mats, consistent with current roundabout design best practices.
- Residents interviewed suggested that additional center island landscaping, in combination with decorative banners/signage could help to reinforce the intersection as the gateway to downtown and to welcome visitors arriving to downtown via coach bus through the intersection.

Harrigan Centennial Hall / Harbor Drive

The main Harrigan Centennial Hall parking lot is the epicenter of activity particularly during high tourism volume days. Serving coach tour bus unloading and loading operations, as well as tour shuttles, taxis and passenger vehicles, the driveways and parking lots experience consistent vehicular and pedestrian traffic throughout the day.

Driveway counts were collected at the two driveways to the main parking lot on the day of a Lincoln Street closure, as shown in Exhibit 8. The southern driveway serves entering and departing passenger vehicles, though most vehicles depart via the north driveway which is exit only. All coach buses, shuttles and taxis enter via the south driveway and depart through the north driveway. Upon departure, most vehicles are making a right-turn to go north on Harbor Drive.

Exhibit 8. Harrigan Centennial Hall Driveways and Daily Vehicle Volumes



In order to assist the CBS and Harrigan Centennial Hall with future planning activities, driveway activity is summarized by total entering and departing vehicles, as well as by vehicle type from 6:00 AM to 8:00 PM in Table 3.

Driveway Observations and Feedback

- Hourly driveway volumes are relatively consistent from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM.
- Passenger vehicles comprise the highest proportion of vehicles entering and departing, however during peak periods, coach bus volumes (20-30 per hour) are nearly as high as passenger vehicles.
- Egress movements from both driveways can be complicated by high pedestrian activity across Harbor Drive (photo), as well as pedestrian activity across the driveways and throughout the parking areas.
- During busy coach bus loading times, if there is not adequate curb space for an additional coach bus to enter the parking lot as communicated via radio, buses will pass by Harrigan Centennial and stage at the UAA SE campus parking lot until curb space is available.
- The CBS Library, which shares the Harrigan Centennial Hall parking lot, notes:
 - The increased activity in the parking lot during peak tourism hours has led to local residents to change their visit times to occur later in the day so that they can find parking in front of the library.
 - With the increased coach bus traffic turning in, and pedestrian volumes throughout the Harrigan Centennial parking lot and on Harbor Way, it can be challenging for vehicles to turn out of the south driveway.



Photo 17 - Pedestrians cross Harbor Drive at the north Harrigan Centennial driveway, which can inhibit departing vehicles

Table 3. Harrigan Centennial Driveway Activity Summary

Hourly Start Time	Entering Vehicles						Departing Vehicles					
	All Vehicles	Passenger Vehicles	Shuttles	Buses	Taxis	Other Vehicles (Trucks)	All Vehicles	Passenger Vehicles	Shuttles	Buses	Taxis	Other Vehicles (Trucks)
6:00 AM	8	7	0	0	0	1	5	2	1	0	1	1
7:00 AM	11	10	0	1	0	0	10	9	0	1	0	0
8:00 AM	26	15	1	6	0	4	17	6	1	5	1	4
9:00 AM	43	28	0	14	0	1	30	11	0	12	6	1
10:00 AM	49	23	0	24	0	2	45	19	0	23	1	2
11:00 AM	54	25	3	23	2	1	47	16	3	24	4	0
12:00 PM	53	27	1	22	1	2	49	23	1	21	3	1
1:00 PM	54	29	1	23	1	0	52	24	1	23	3	1
2:00 PM	49	23	1	25	0	0	50	19	2	26	2	1
3:00 PM	51	29	0	21	0	1	52	26	0	21	4	1
4:00 PM	62	31	2	28	0	1	64	32	2	23	6	1
5:00 PM	43	33	1	9	0	0	34	23	1	9	1	0
6:00 PM	16	13	1	2	0	0	22	13	0	7	1	1
7:00 PM	8	7	0	1	0	0	20	15	1	2	0	2
TOTAL	527	300	11	199	4	13	497	238	13	197	33	16

Harrigan Centennial Hall Tourist Circulation Observations and Feedback

Harrigan Centennial Hall is a focal point of tourism circulation downtown and a gateway to their Sitka visit as it is where the majority of cruise ship visitors first arrive from buses or the lightering docks. During peak periods, more than 30 buses may be actively shuttling to/from the SSCT, and tour operators and taxis also use Harrigan Centennial Hall for drop off and pickup. From Harrigan Centennial Hall, visitors may be trying to go to the harbors, parks and playgrounds to the east and/or the downtown shops and restaurants to the west, which requires crossing Harbor Drive. Harrigan Centennial Hall also hosts several conferences and conventions and shares a parking lot with the adjacent Sitka Public Library and Crescent Harbor.

- Harrigan Centennial circulation is seen as the most significant bottleneck in downtown circulation and was consistently cited as a major safety concern by stakeholders and residents interviewed based on:
 - Bus loading limitations lead to long queues for tourists waiting to go back to SSCT.
 - Pedestrian activity throughout the Harrigan Centennial Hall parking lot, across driveways and along Harbor Drive impacts bus ingress and egress.
- Upon arrival at Harrigan Centennial Hall, many visitors don't know where to start: where to go for more information on amenities/activities, how to read the Visit Sitka maps and displays, how to get to downtown shops and restaurants.
 - The lack of a clear route or crossing location to get from Harrigan Centennial Hall across Harbor Drive to Lincoln Street compounds this confusion.
 - The purposeful blocking of the 'tabletop' between Harrigan Centennial parking lots contributes to pedestrian circulation confusion, as the canopy blocks the most direct pedestrian route to Harbor Drive and downtown shops and restaurants. (photo)
- Staffing is a challenge, for both Harrigan Centennial Hall as well as Alaska Coach Tours (ACT). A lack of dedicated staff for crowd management such as organizing the bus waiting line, directing visitors where to go and overseeing bus loading leads to long lines, long wait times and frustration.
 - There is curb space for 3-4 coach buses to be loaded concurrently but there is only 1 long line of people waiting to load. Even at busy times, generally only one or sometimes two buses are simultaneously being loaded. Wait times can be upwards of 30 – 45 minutes.
 - Despite limited pre-staging of passengers, each bus can consistently load in less than 5 minutes.
- Centennial Hall staff controls operations in the parking lot.
 - ACT only has 4 bus spots on the curb but would desire the entirety of the loop and suggest tour operators pick up directly at cruise ship terminal - however cruise companies, and tour operators push back on this idea to reduce congestion at Harrigan Centennial Hall.
- At peak times, there can be upwards of 30 shuttles/buses transporting tourists from SSCT to Centennial.
- Visit Sitka is planning to install additional barricade covers/signage saying 'Heavy Traffic Zone, Use Sidewalk' for key locations such as the Harrigan Centennial parking lot walkway to Harbor Drive.
- The upcoming DOT&PF Seawalk Extension project may be an opportunity to expand circulation options from Harrigan Centennial Hall.



Photo 18 - Canopy blocking the 'tabletop'



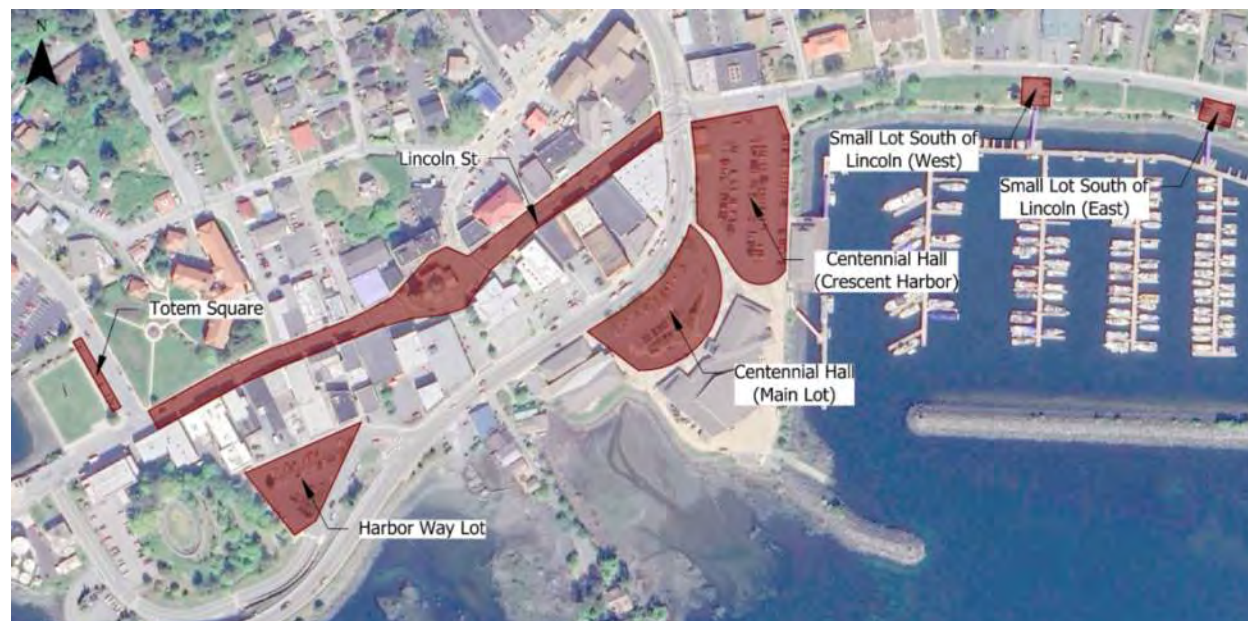
Photo 19 - Bus loading line wraps around the back of Harrigan Centennial Hall

DOWNTOWN PARKING SUMMARY

Parking Data Collection

Downtown parking supply and usage was observed and documented at two midday times periods on a high volume cruise ship day (Tuesday, August 9th) when Lincoln Street was closed to vehicular traffic, and a lower volume cruise ship day (Wednesday, August 10th) at the locations highlighted on Exhibit 9.

Exhibit 9. Downtown Parking Areas Observed



Not included in this detailed parking study is the available street parking on both sides of Harbor Drive, on-street parking on the east side of Lake Street, north of Lincoln Street or A&B Harbor parking just west of Totem Square. The Harbors division within CBS notes that long-term harbor parking downtown is a challenge for many harbor patrons.

Table 4 summarizes observed parking supply (inventory) and percent utilization during these snapshots in time. As shown, the overall parking utilization during a Lincoln Street closed day is approximately 10-13% higher than a Lincoln Street open day. This is in part due to 64 parking spaces along Lincoln Street being no longer available while Lincoln Street is closed to vehicular traffic. Under these conditions, the nearby by Totem Square, Harbor Way and Centennial (Crescent Harbor) parking lots are highly utilized. During all time conditions observed, there were at least 10 parking spots available in the Centennial Hall main lot.

Additionally, this data suggests that even on a Lincoln Street closed day, when the number of available parking spaces are reduced, there is adequate parking available to meet current demand within the downtown area, though not necessarily in every available parking lot at a given time.

Table 4. Parking Study Summary

	Lot	Inventory	12:00 PM		2:00 PM	
			Occupied Spaces	% Utilization	Occupied Spaces	% Utilization
Lincoln Street Closed (High Volume Tourist Day)	Totem Square	14	14	100%	14	100%
	North Side of Lincoln St.	32	-	-	-	-
	South Side of Lincoln St.	32	-	-	-	-
	Harbor Way Lot	54	54	100%	54	100%
	Centennial Hall (Main)	41	27	66%	29	71%
	Centennial Hall (Crescent Harbor)	132	126	95%	119	90%
	Small Lot South of Lincoln St. (West)	10	6	60%	7	70%
	Small Lot South of Lincoln St. (East)	8	6	75%	6	75%
	Total (Excluding Lincoln St.)	259	233	90%	230	89%
Lincoln Street Open (Lower Volume Tourist Day)	Totem Square	14	13	93%	13	93%
	North Side of Lincoln St.	32	14	44%	14	44%
	South Side of Lincoln St.	32	18	56%	12	38%
	Harbor Way Lot	54	51	94%	42	78%
	Centennial Hall (Main)	41	30	73%	26	63%
	Centennial Hall (Crescent Harbor)	132	117	89%	123	93%
	Small Lot South of Lincoln St. (West)	10	10	100%	8	80%
	Small Lot South of Lincoln St. (East)	8	6	75%	6	75%
	Total	323	259	80%	244	76%

Parking Observations and Feedback

- Though there's a perception of lack of parking downtown, particularly during Lincoln Street closures, the efforts spent this last year to clean up parking lots, including moving The Ride from Crescent Harbor to be curbside on Lincoln Street has helped to open up more parking near Crescent Harbor.
- During the data collection days in August, our field observers noted general ease in finding parking downtown within 1-2 blocks of any given destination even during a Lincoln Street closure.
- Crescent Harbor Parking Lot – A sight distance concern was expressed regarding vehicles departing to Lincoln Street from the Crescent Harbor adjacent Centennial Harbor parking lot. When The Ride buses are parked on Lincoln Street close to the parking lot driveway, the buses can restrict sight distance looking west on Lincoln Street. In order to preserve sight distance, it is suggested the red bus lane striping be pulled back to before curb radius, which should still allow space for 2 buses at a time while increasing sight distance for departing vehicles.



Photo 20 - Centennial Hall / Crescent Harbor driveway to Lincoln Street, looking west at The Ride loading zone

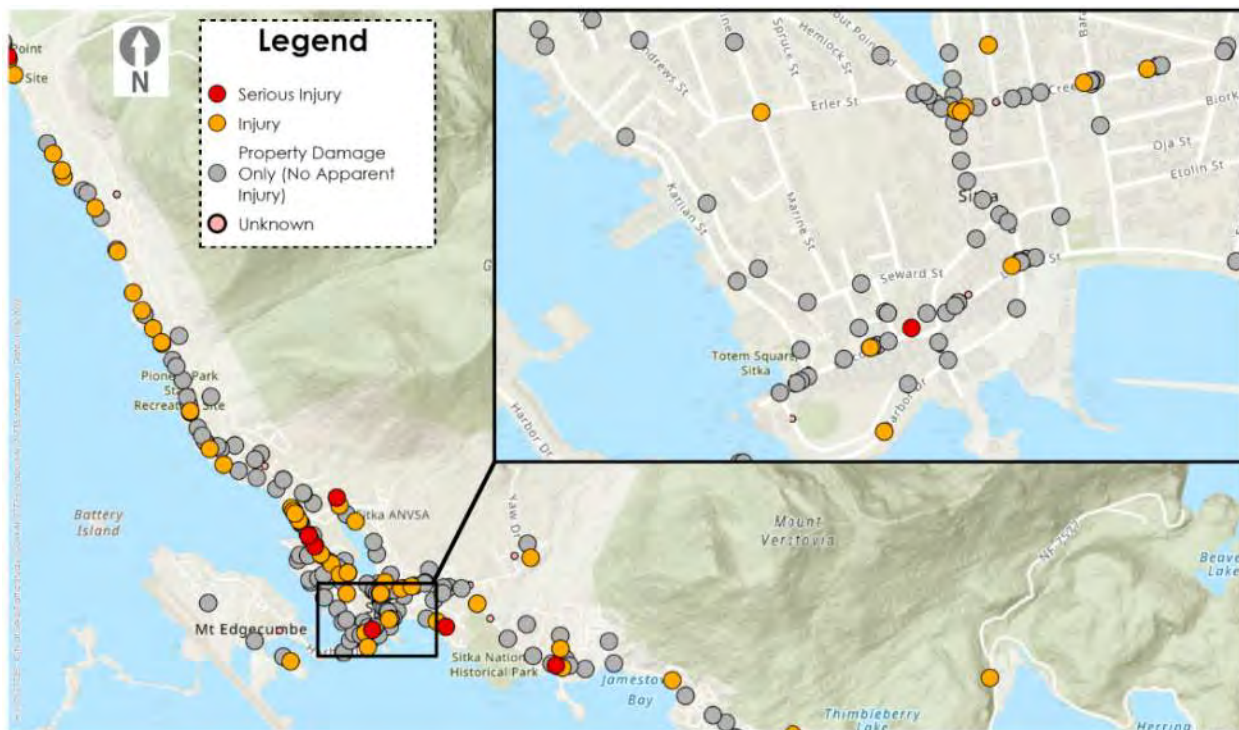
SITKA TRAFFIC SAFETY SUMMARY

Existing Traffic and Safety Analysis

DOT&PF provided geocoded crash data for the entirety of the CBS from 2015-2020, representing the most recent six years' worth of crash data. While crash analyses most typically look at the most recent five years of crash data, COVID-19 significantly impacted tourism and travel patterns in 2020, therefore all six years' worth of data has been analyzed. This data was spatially mapped and reviewed for trends.

Exhibit 10 displays the crash data by severity. Overall, there were 307 crashes in Sitka during the six year period, including nine serious injury crashes occurring between 2015-2020 within the City of Sitka. Four of these serious injury crashes occurred along streets highlighted in this study: three along Halibut Point Road and one along Lincoln Street. Of the three serious injury crashes along Halibut Point Road, two of the crashes were single vehicle crashes (run-off-road) and one crash involved a driver failing to yield to the right-of-way of a bicycle. The serious crash along Lincoln Street in the downtown area involved a pedestrian and is further detailed in Table 5. While the crash data indicates that there were no fatal crashes in Sitka, conflicting data fields suggest that some of the crashes coded as serious injury may have led to fatalities.

Exhibit 10. Sitka Crashes by Severity (2015-2020)



Downtown Sitka Crash History

DOT&PF crash data indicates that three pedestrian crashes and one bicycle crash occurred along Lincoln Street between 2015-2020, with the approximate locations displayed on Exhibit 11.

Table 5 provides additional information about each of these crashes. As noted, all three pedestrian involved crashes along Lincoln Street cited driver inattention and failing to yield to a pedestrian right-of-way.

Exhibit 11. Pedestrian and Bicycle Crash Locations on Lincoln Street



Table 5 – Pedestrian and Bicycle Crash Summary along Lincoln Street (2015-2020)

Intersection	Date	Severity	Action	Circumstances
Lincoln Street (Near Couplet at St. Michael’s)	Aug. 2017	Serious Injury	Driver traveling southbound through couplet, pedestrian crossing Lincoln Street	Driver failed to yield to pedestrian right-of-way
Lincoln Street / Barracks Street	Nov. 2017	Injury	Driver making a northbound left turn onto Barracks Street	Driver failed to yield to pedestrian right-of-way
Lincoln Street / Lake Street	June 2019	Injury	Driver making an eastbound left turn onto Lake Street	Driver failed to yield to pedestrian right-of-way
Lincoln Street (between Jeff Davis Street and College Drive)	Aug. 2020	Serious Injury	Vehicle traveling northbound made contact with bicycle on roadway	No additional information available

Table 6 further summarizes crash types and crash severity at the two highest volume downtown study intersections, and along Lincoln Street. As shown in Table 6, 22 crashes occurred at the Halibut Point Road-Sawmill Creek Road / Lake Street roundabout between 2015-2020. Most of these crashed were property-damage only crashes. Six crashes occurred at Lake Street / Lincoln Street between 2015-2020. Five of these crashes were property damage only (PDO) crashes, and the one injury crash involved a pedestrian, which was previously summarized in Table 5.

Table 6 – Study Intersection Crash Summary

Intersection or Segment	Crash Type						Severity			Total
	Angle	Side-swipe	Rear-end	Fixed Object	Ped/Bike	Other	PDO	Injury	Fatal	
Lincoln St (between Lake St. and Katlian St.)	1	4	2	0	2	3	10	2	0	12
Lake Street / Lincoln Street	2	0	3	0	1	0	5	1	0	6
Halibut Point Road-Sawmill Creek Road / Lake Street	9	0	7	4	0	2	19	3	0	22

Outer Sitka Crash History

The most recent six years of crash data provided by DOT&PF was also reviewed in areas beyond the downtown study area to identify any crash trends within the larger Sitka area. Two specific trends were identified:

- Pedestrian or bicycle involved crashes in the vicinity of the Halibut Point Road / Peterson Avenue intersections, and
- Turning vehicle crashes and run-off-the-road vehicle crashes on Sawmill Creek Road and Halibut Point Road leading to injuries.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Crashes Near Halibut Point Road / Peterson Avenue

Pedestrian or bicycle crashes that occurred outside of the downtown area are displayed in Exhibit 12. As shown, there is a cluster of pedestrian and bicycle crashes near the Halibut Point Road / Peterson Avenue and Halibut Point Road / Brady Street intersections, and at the north end of Lake Street. This is an area of high pedestrian and bicycle traffic due to the proximity to Sitka High School and downtown Sitka. Of these crashes, six of the eight resulted in injuries, two being a serious injury.

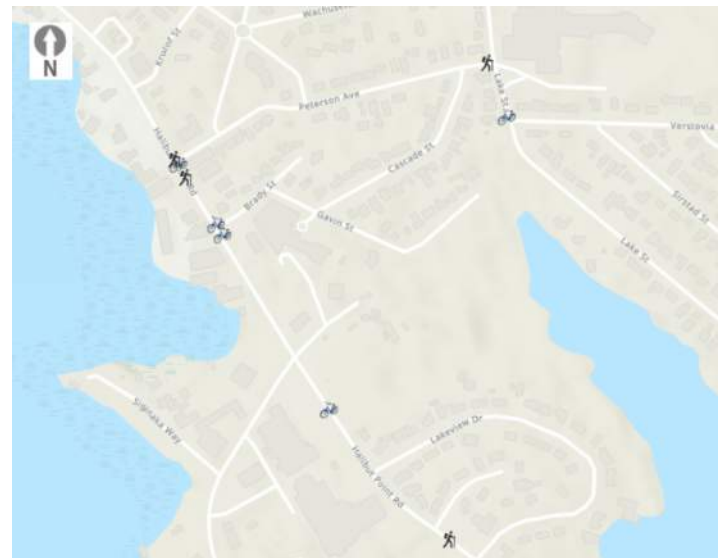


Exhibit 12. Pedestrian and Bicycle Crash Locations in Outer Sitka

All three pedestrian or bicycle crashes at the intersection of Halibut Point Road / Peterson Avenue involved a vehicle making a southbound left turn. There is an existing crosswalk across Peterson Avenue on the east leg of the Halibut Point Road / Peterson Avenue intersection, as well as a sidewalk and bicycle lane on both sides of Halibut Point Road in this area. DOT&PF is planning an intersection improvement project at Halibut Point Road / Peterson Avenue for construction in 2023 which will provide additional illumination at the intersection.

One additional bicycle crash occurred along Halibut Point Road, just north of Kuhnle Drive (not captured in Exhibit 12). This crash involved a vehicle traveling southbound making contact with a bicycle on the roadway and resulted in an injury.

Sawmill Creek Road

Several minor or serious injury crashes were reported along Sawmill Creek Road. One serious injury crash occurred at the intersection of Sawmill Creek Road / Price Street. This was an angle crash involving two vehicles. Otherwise, all other recorded crashes were minor injury or property damage only. The most frequently cited cause of crashes along Sawmill Creek Road involved single-vehicle run-off-the road crashes.

Halibut Point Road

Many crashes were also reported along Halibut Point Road north of the downtown area. Two turning movement crashes were reported at the intersection of Halibut Point Road / Cascade Creek Road. Additionally, Halibut Point Road / Davidoff Street, Halibut Point Road / Nicole Drive, and Halibut Point

Road / Kincroft Way each had one reported angle crash resulting in an injury. Two rear-end injury crashes occurred at Halibut Point Road / Kramer Avenue.

The most frequently cited cause of crashes along Halibut Point Road involved run-off-road-the road vehicles, particularly further to the north along Halibut Point Road. These included two injury run-off-road crashes that were recorded near Halibut Point State Recreation Site, with one resulting in a serious injury.

A fatal bicycle crash occurred in March 2021 at Halibut Point Road / 2600 Block (driveway) involving a bicycle being struck by a vehicle. Additional crash information, including cause of the crash is currently not available.

Summer 2022 Safety Observations

- At the Lake Street / Lincoln Street intersection, prolonged delays experienced by pedestrians not utilizing the push button and vehicle delays due to other left-turning vehicles leads to frustration and some delayed pedestrians and vehicles moving through the intersection out of turn.
- CBS Emergency services staff noted that there has been at least one pedestrian involved collision at the Lake Street / Lincoln Street intersection in Summer 2022.
- Lack of direction or a defined route from Harrigan Centennial Hall to the Lincoln Street corridor leads to a high volume of pedestrians crossing Harbor Drive outside of an existing crosswalk, which frustrates vehicle drivers, and can impact coach bus ingress and egress from Harrigan Centennial Hall – this area is a safety concern for vehicles, bus drivers and pedestrians alike.
- DOT&PF crash data shows a trend of pedestrian and bicycle involved crashes along Halibut Point Road between Peterson Avenue and Brady Street. Pedestrian and bicycle safety in the area will be improved through the DOT&PF planned 2023 intersection improvement project.
- Outside of downtown Sitka, the most frequent type of vehicle crashes on Sawmill Creek Road and Halibut Point Road involved vehicles running off the roadway, with some turning vehicle crashes also resulting in injuries.

PEDESTRIAN CROSSING ANALYSIS

In addition to the key Sitka intersections already discussed, six additional locations were identified for further pedestrian crossing analyses considering:

- Observations of pedestrian and vehicular interactions
- Connectivity considerations and usage of crossing
- Pedestrian volumes
- Crash history

Lake Street at Seward Street

Currently, there is no striped crosswalk or crossing signage provided on Lake Street near Seward Street, though historically, a crosswalk was provided from Seward Street to Etolin Way, across Lake Street, as shown in Exhibit 13. Businesses in the area noted regular pedestrian activity in this area, in part due to it being the most direct route from the Aspen Suites hotel to Lincoln Street. The next closest crosswalks are located approximately 250 feet to the south at the Lincoln Street / Lake Street intersection or 550 feet to the north at the Halibut Point Road - Sawmill Creek Road / Lake Street roundabout.

Exhibit 13. Historical Lake Street Crosswalk at Seward Street (Google Earth, 2011)

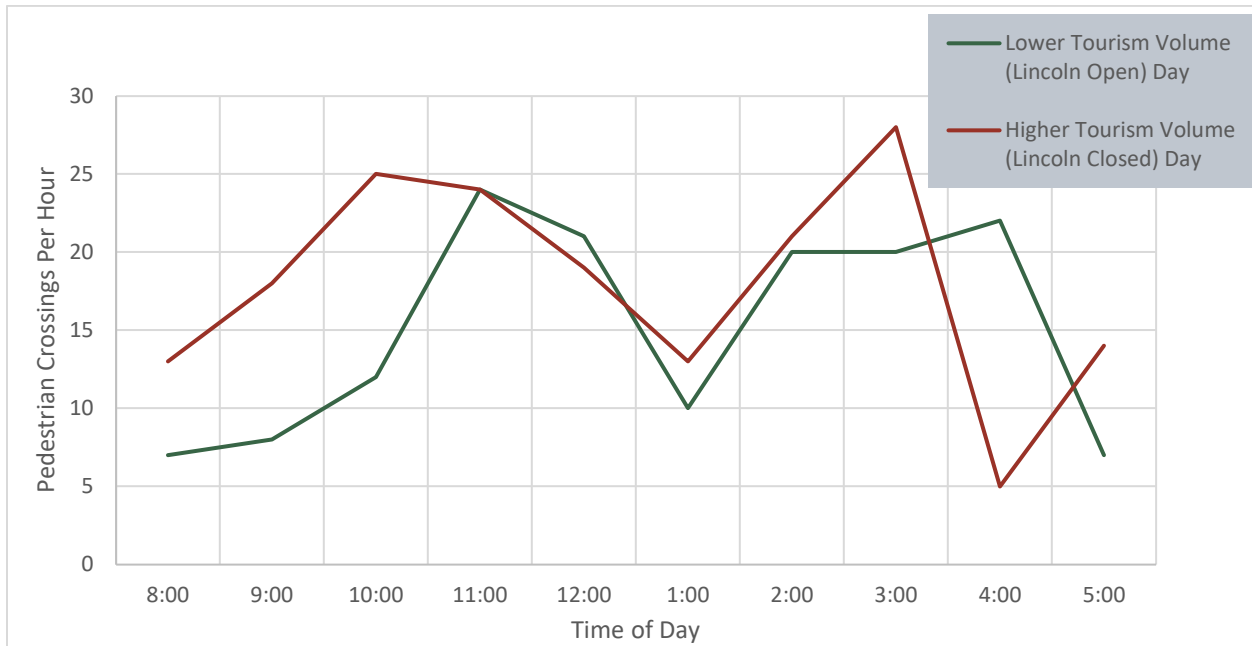


Pedestrian and vehicle volumes were collected at this intersection which showed anywhere from 5 to 28 pedestrians crossing Lake Street an hour from 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM, with pedestrian volumes exceeding 20 pedestrian crossings per hour during at least five hours of the day. As shown in Exhibit 14, hourly pedestrian volumes are somewhat higher on a higher volume tourism day when Lincoln Street is closed. Even on lower volume tourism days, pedestrian crossing volumes exceed 20 per hour five hours of the day.

DOT&PF crash data shows two vehicular crashes have occurred in this area, one involving a parked vehicle and vehicle-to-vehicle head on collision during icy conditions, but no history of pedestrian or bicycle involved crashes.

Due to vehicle queues from the Lincoln Street / Lake Street intersection frequently extending through this location, there are not consistent gaps in traffic for crossing pedestrians.

Exhibit 14. Lake Street Pedestrian Crossings near Seward Street



Midblock Harbor Drive (in front of Harrigan Centennial Hall)

Significant pedestrian crossing activity was observed on Harbor Drive in front of Harrigan Centennial Hall, midblock between the Lake Street / Lincoln Street intersection and the Maksoutoff Street crosswalk. Pedestrian crossing counts were collected, and daily pedestrian crossings are reported on Figure 5.



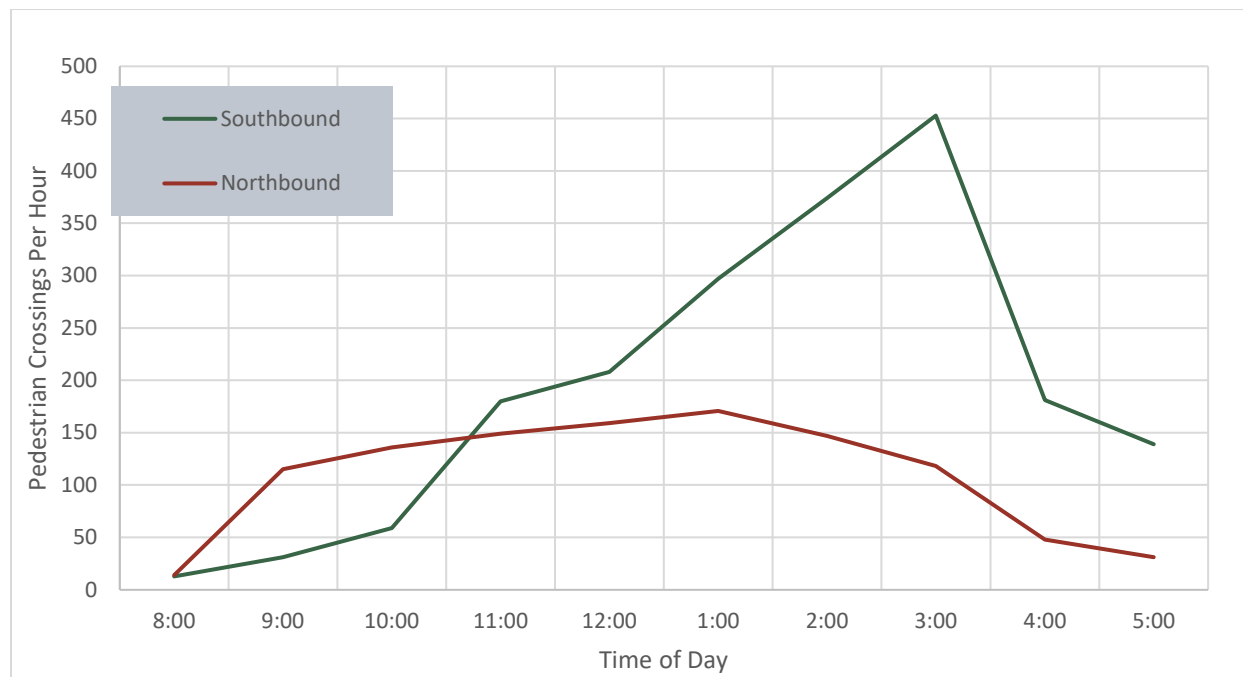
Photo 21 - Pedestrians cross Harbor Drive at the north Harrigan Centennial Hall Driveway

Cumulatively, more than 3,000 pedestrians per day cross Harbor Drive along the approximately 725 feet distance between the crosswalks provided at Lake Street / Lincoln Street and Harbor Drive / Maksoutoff Street. More pedestrians chose to cross Harbor Drive midblock daily than utilize the existing crosswalk at Maksoutoff Street.

As shown in Exhibit 15, more than 200 pedestrians an hour crossed Harbor Drive every hour from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

While the DOT&PF crash data showed no history of pedestrian and vehicle crashes along this segment, only one vehicle crash involving a sideswiped parked vehicle, regular conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles along Harbor Drive was cited by stakeholders and residents as very concerning.

Exhibit 15. Harbor Drive Hourly Pedestrians Crossings in front of Harrigan Centennial Hall



H:\27\27735 - City of Sitka Traffic Study\report\figs\27735_Figures.dwg Dec 22, 2022 - 9:06am - mmammon Layout Tab: Figure 5 - Harbor Exhibit



PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS BY ZONE

	<300		450 - 500
	300 - 350		500 - 550
	350 - 400		>550
	400 - 450		

PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS BY LOCATION

Harbor Drive Pedestrian Crossing Activity
Daily Pedestrian Counts
Sitka, Alaska

Figure 5

Harbor Drive / Maksoutoff Street

The striped crosswalk at Maksoutouff Street is the only existing marked crosswalk on Harbor Drive other than the crossing opportunities provided at the Lake Street / Lincoln Street traffic signal. Vehicles are traveling downhill off the Harbor Bridge (northbound on Harbor Drive), leading to higher rates of speed. Adjacent on-street parking at this location was observed to impact sight lines and driver yielding behavior (photo).

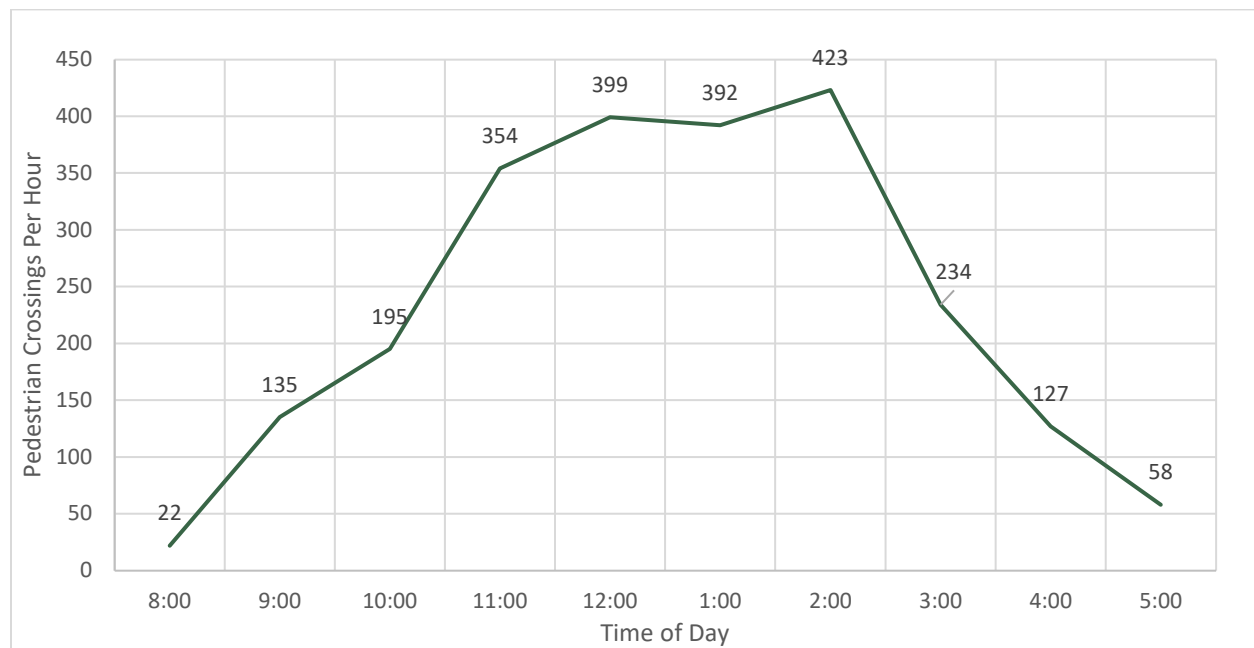
Pedestrian count data at this location shows that just over 2,300 pedestrians a day cross Harbor Drive at Maksoutoff Street, with hourly pedestrian crossing volumes exceeding 100 pedestrian crossings per hour every hour 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM on a high volume cruise ship tourism day.



Photo 22 – Parked vehicle restricts pedestrian and approaching vehicle sight distance

DOT&PF crash data showed one crash at this intersection, which involved a parked vehicle but no pedestrians.

Exhibit 16. Harbor Drive at Maksoutoff Street Hourly Pedestrian Crossing Volumes



Harbor Way

Many pedestrians that reach the west end of Lincoln Street then try to navigate back to Harrigan Centennial Hall via Harbor Way, as shown on Exhibit 17. The natural route a pedestrian follows necessitates five road crossings, in part due to lack of sidewalk on the north side Harbor Way near Lincoln Street, and the skew and wide intersection width near the lightering facility under Harbor Drive bridge.

While pedestrian volumes were not explicitly counted in this location, the indirect routing through this area was identified as an opportunity for improving pedestrian experience while in downtown Sitka, as noted on Exhibit 17. DOT&PF crash data showed no history of pedestrian and vehicle crashes along this segment.

Exhibit 17. Harbor Way Pedestrian Routing from Lincoln Street to Harrigan Centennial Hall



The upcoming DOT&PF Seawalk Extension project, shown in Exhibit 18, may be an opportunity to expand walkway options east of Harbor Drive, to provide more direct pedestrian routing between Lincoln Street and Harrigan Centennial Hall. If completed, pedestrians traveling to/from Harrigan Centennial Hall would not need to cross Harbor Drive or Way to reach Lincoln Street.

Exhibit 18. DOT&PF Seawalk Extension Concept Plan (CBS)



Raptor Way / Sawmill Creek Road

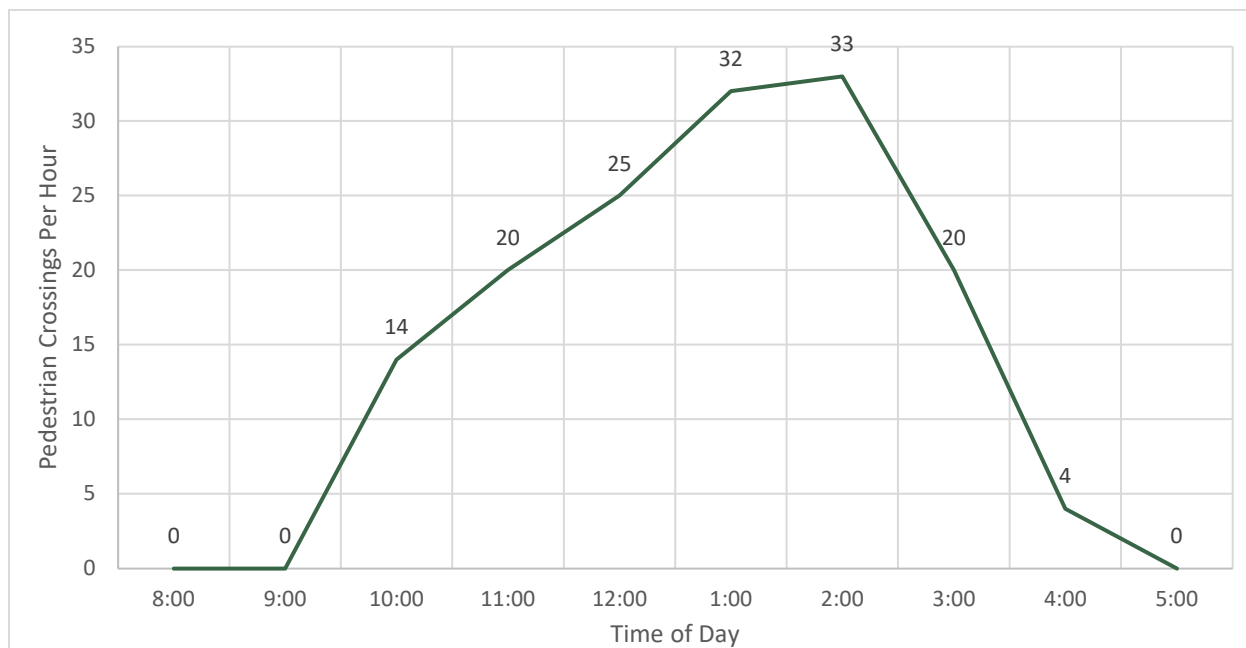
The Raptor Center is located just under a mile east of downtown Sitka and is a primary tourist activity. Many tourists on foot or bicycle were observed to travel along Sawmill Creek Road and through the Sitka National Historical Park trails to reach the Raptor Center via Raptor Way. No crosswalk or pedestrian signing is provided at the Sawmill Creek Road / Raptor Way intersection, though there is a striped crosswalk across Sawmill Creek Road approximately 850 feet to the south at Jarvis Street (where a nature trail connects to the Sitka National Historical Park) and 1500 feet to the west at Indian River Road.

As shown in Exhibit 19, pedestrian crossing volumes across Sawmill Creek Road exceed 20 crossings per hour 5 hours of the day (from 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM).



Photo 23 - Raptor Way at Sawmill Creek Road

Exhibit 19. Sawmill Creek Road at Raptor Way Hourly Pedestrian Crossings



In 2019, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), in coordination with the National Park Service (NPS) and DOT&PF completed a safety audit along Sawmill Creek Road in the vicinity of the Raptor Center. The safety audit also noted evidence of a high volume crossing location for pedestrians and suggested evaluating this location for high-visibility crosswalk markings and signing, advance yielding to pedestrian signage, or further electrical treatments such as rectangular rapid-flashing beacons (RRFB) or Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon (PHB). A 2021 update to the report noted that DOT&PF installed pedestrian warning signs approximately 300 feet in advance of Raptor Way on each direction of Sawmill Creek Road.

DOT&PF crash data showed no history of pedestrian or vehicle crashes at this location.

Fortress of the Bear / Sawmill Creek Road

The Fortress of the Bear facility is located approximately 10 miles south of Sitka downtown and has experienced increased activity with the cruise ship tourism industry growth. Due to increased shuttle van and bus drop off activity in the loop immediately in front of the facility, Fortress moved their primary parking area to a leased gravel lot on the south side of Sawmill Creek Road several years ago, as shown in Exhibit 20. The relocation of the primary parking area has led to an increase in pedestrian activity across Sawmill Creek Road. There is also a nearby The Ride stop on the south side of Sawmill Creek Road.

Pedestrian counts, collected on a low volume tourism day and a higher volume tourism day showed a range of 165 to 362 daily pedestrian crossings between the parking lot and the Fortress facility depending on scale of tourist visitors on a given day. Additionally, as shown on Exhibit 21, hourly pedestrian volumes exceed 20 pedestrian crossings per hour 3 to 6 hours per day.

While field observations indicate relatively low conflicting vehicular and pedestrian crossing volumes, formalizing a pedestrian crossing would help to improve connectivity and circulation between the parking area and Fortress of the Bear facility.

DOT&PF crash data showed no history of pedestrian or vehicle collisions in this area.

Fortress of the Bear desires for the CBS and DOT&PF to coordinate the following transportation improvements:

- A crosswalk between their (leased) parking area and front access.
- A driveway curb cut on the southside of Sawmill Creek aligned with their north side loop in order for shuttles to safely turn around and re-access their property without having to make multiple turning movements.

Exhibit 20. Fortress of the Bear Overview



Exhibit 21. Sawmill Creek Road Pedestrian Crossings at Fortress of the Bear

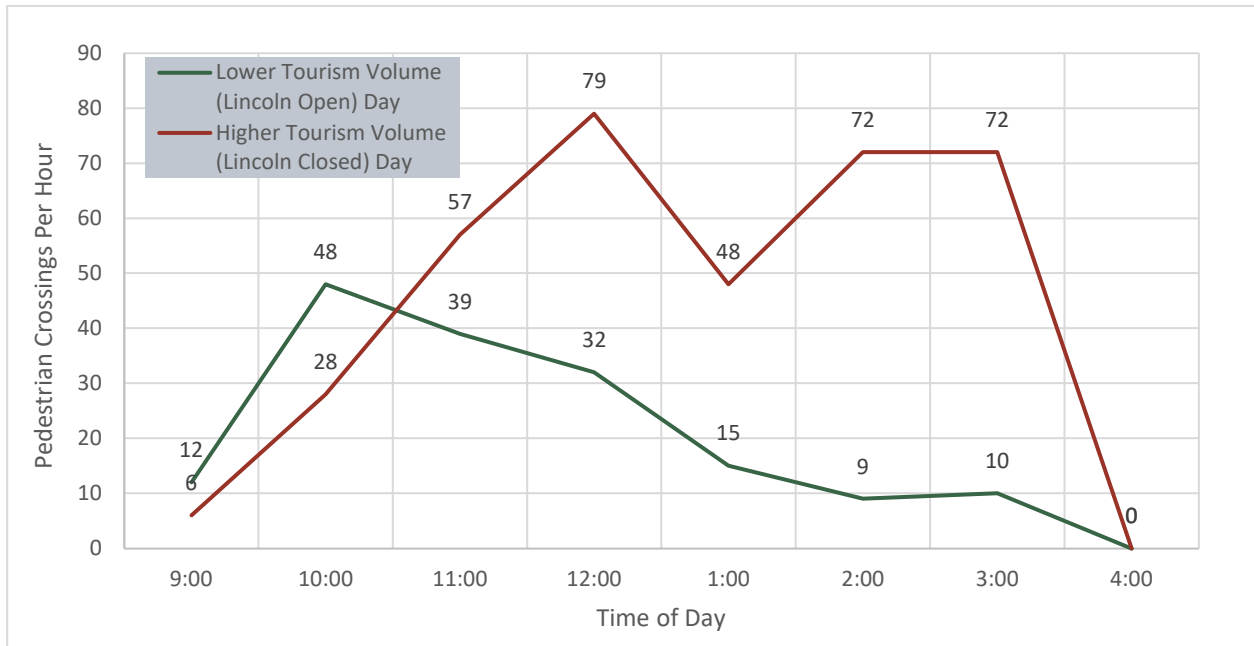


Photo 24 – Pedestrians cross Sawmill Creek Road from the Fortress parking area to the main facility



Photo 25 – The Fortress desires a driveway/curb cut on the south side of Sawmill Creek Road for ease of drop-off vehicles departing the Fortress loop to enter the parking area

ADDITIONAL TRAFFIC RELATED FEEDBACK

- Many local stakeholders noted the lack of a bike path on Halibut Point Road and pointed to the Sawmill Creek Road pathway as a good example to encourage walking and biking.
 - Multiple residents noted that the increased bus traffic on Halibut Point Road feels less safe for biking on the roadway shoulder.
 - Peak hour traffic counts collected on Halibut Point Road at Peterson Avenue and at Cascade Creek Road show 10 to 20 bicyclists an hour utilize Halibut Point Road.
- Additional outdoor seating space and lighting downtown along Lincoln Street was requested as amenities that would further enhance the streetscape.
- Occasional midday public restroom observations were made at facilities near Crescent Harbor and along Lincoln Street – No external queues extending outside the facilities were observed.
- A lack of clarity in City code/enforceability of scooters and E-bikes on sidewalks complicates downtown circulation and enforceability. There are an increasing number of tour operators renting these devices adjacent to downtown.



Photo 26. Electric scooters and pedestrians share the Lake Street sidewalk

CONCLUSION AND POTENTIAL TREATMENTS

The traffic data and observations presented in this memorandum, in combination with community member and planning commission feedback, will be used as the basis for further intersection and pedestrian crossing analysis, cruise ship event management plans, and wayfinding to develop project recommendations that will be documented in a forthcoming Traffic Study Report.

Specific elements that may be further explored include:

- Further analysis and coordination with DOT&PF regarding improvements to the Lake Street / Lincoln Street intersection to address high delays, extensive queueing and to improve pedestrian safety. Potential solutions might include:
 - Addition of left-turn lanes to add turning capacity and remove turn vehicles from through lanes
 - Pedestrian phasing such as recall calls a pedestrian phase without button push by time of day or an exclusive pedestrian phase where all crossings happen at the same time
 - Simplified phasing in combination with Lincoln Street permanent reconfiguration, potentially to one-way vehicle travel
 - Flagger control during peak periods for responsive traffic flow and pedestrian crossings
 - Next steps: screen feasible alternatives and conduct detailed traffic analysis and pedestrian modeling; develop intersection concepts and cost estimates
- Treatment recommendations for addressing extensive pedestrian crossing activity on Harbor Drive in front of Harrigan Centennial Hall and bus loading/unloading operations. Potential solutions might include:
 - More clear active wayfinding directing pedestrians to crossings, perhaps reinforced with crossing guards
 - Addition of a midblock crossing, perhaps with enhanced crossing treatments
 - Enhanced treatments, curb extensions and restriction of adjacent parking to improve sight distance and visibility of existing crossing at Maksoutoff Street
 - Flaggers to facilitate bus ingress/egress
 - Facilitate multiple simultaneous bus loading/unloading and optimized queueing with crowd control staff
 - Next steps: coordinate facility and bus operators; crosswalk evaluation; develop and assess crossing concepts and locations; develop wayfinding implementation plan
- Potential permanent infrastructure improvements on Lincoln Street and in the downtown core in lieu of or in conjunction with temporary closures. Improvements might include:
 - Refining the visitor volume threshold and timing of temporary closures
 - Permanent reconfiguration as a one-way roadway
 - Permanent reconfiguration as shared street² to provide additional space for pedestrians
 - Seasonal traffic control features to reinforce pedestrian oriented areas
 - Next steps: conduct assessment of pedestrian flows based on cruise ship passengers; conduct a study to develop and screen Lincoln Street concepts; develop concept designs and cost estimates
- Further pedestrian crossing analysis and pedestrian treatment recommendations on Sawmill Creek Road at the Raptor Center and Fortress of the Bear.
 - Addition of crossing treatments such as cross walk striping and signage at both locations
 - Next steps: conduct crosswalk evaluations and develop concepts
- Improvements to pedestrian circulation and wayfinding throughout downtown Sitka.
 - Especially to and from Centennial Hall, and along Harbor Drive
 - Reinstitution of a crossing of Harbor Drive at Seward Street potentially with curb extensions, cross walk striping and signing

² <https://nacto.org/publication/urban-street-design-guide/streets/commercial-shared-street/>

- Next steps: develop wayfinding assessment and recommendation plan; crossing evaluation
- Develop and refine cruise ship traffic control plan including both passive and active pedestrian and vehicle guidance and control.
 - Next steps: create interorganizational task force; expand detailed operations plan for varied cruise ship intensities



Appendix A
Stakeholder Outreach Summary

Stakeholder Outreach Summary Memorandum

September 13, 2022

Project# 27735

To: Amy Ainslie, Planning Director
City and Borough of Sitka
100 Lincoln Street
Sitka, AK 99835

From: Holly Spoth-Torres, Andrew Ooms, PE; Claire Dougherty, PE

CC: PTS - Dan Kirsch, PE and Jenny Liljedahl, PE,

RE: City of Sitka Traffic Study

STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH SUMMARY

Stakeholder outreach focused on the 2022 cruise ship season and the Lincoln Street closures was conducted in parallel with traffic data collection in August 2022 to give the team a genuine view into the real experiences of stakeholders. The project team received input and feedback through a variety of methods including:

- Stakeholder Interviews
- Community Feedback Line

Following is a summary of the outreach tools, process, and major takeaway themes.

Stakeholder Interview Summary

Stakeholder interview participants were identified by CBS staff and the project team. Participants were intended to be representative of a variety of individuals, businesses, agencies, and organizations who play a role in tourism, CBS operations and those impacted by traffic.

CBS Maintenance & Operations, Buildings/Grounds/Parks	Cruise Line Agencies of Alaska
Sitka Police Department	Sitka Sound Cruise Terminal
Sitka Fire Department	Alaska Coach Tours
State of Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities	Visit Sitka/Sitka Chamber of Commerce
Harrigan Centennial Hall	CBS Harbors

Interview Methodology

Interviews were conducted by consultant staff. Following a brief overview of the purpose and goals of the Traffic Study, interviewers asked participants for their feedback on a variety of topics and questions, ranging from stakeholders' opinions on traffic and pedestrian circulation at various locations in Sitka, to their opinions on the 2022 Lincoln Street closures. All formal interviews were completed between August 8th and August 18th. In addition to formally identified and scheduled interviews, the project team spent two (2) days observing traffic patterns (August 9th and August 10th) and while doing so, completed dozens of informal interviews with visitors, downtown merchants, and staff of major tourist destinations.

Major Themes

Lincoln Street Closure

Overall, the logistics of the Lincoln Street closure is going very well for the agencies and organizations responsible for implementing the daily closures (CBS operations staff, emergency and safety personnel, and Visit Sitka). There is a communications protocol in place to respond to closure schedule adjustments due to shifts cruise ship schedules and estimated passenger counts, and the various departments and organizations are coordinating successfully. Agencies and organizations indicate that the closure was a little rocky at the beginning, but as residents and businesses become used to the process and know what to expect, things operate much, much more smoothly. Specific ideas from CBS and Visit Sitka staff for future adjustments include:

- More wayfinding and informational signs are needed on barriers to direct pedestrians and vehicles during closures.
- Consider more permanent infrastructure to assist with closures and circulation.

Informal discussions with merchants and locals indicated that at first, many were very skeptical of the Lincoln Street closure. However, after implementation of the closure many say that they have experienced very few negative impacts. Any impacts they do experience are outweighed by the huge benefits of pedestrian safety and an improved atmosphere on Lincoln Street. With few exceptions, businesses that provide services to local Sitkans are not experiencing significant impacts (banks, pharmacy). Businesses who serve locals, who indicated they were experiencing impacts due to the closure, generally didn't have an alternate parking or access point to their business. Additional, specific comments from informal interviews include:

- Most were glad that the threshold to close Lincoln Street was raised to 5,000.
- Some feel that 5,000 passenger count is still too low to close Lincoln Street.
- Many merchants would prefer visitors to be on a sidewalk and closer to their business, than in the middle of the street.
- An 11 AM closure time would significantly help delivery drivers needing access to Lincoln Street businesses.
- There should be more seating provided within the closure space.
- Some loved the restrooms, some did not. There was not an overall indication of consensus either way, however, it appears that the current restroom locations are not ideal for everyone.

Lake Street & Lincoln Street Intersection

Almost every stakeholder interview of Sitkans, both formal and informal, expressed concern and frustration about the Lake Street & Lincoln Street intersection. The intersection is often unavoidable to get to and from services. Motorists traveling southbound on Lake Street who make a left turn from Lake Street onto Lincoln Street cause congestion and delays because the left turn and through lane are a shared lane. Public safety personnel indicate that emergency response times could be impacted with the congestion in the area. Interviewees provided many suggestions to remedy the delays including removing the Harbor Drive street parking in front of Stereo North to provide room for a through lane and a variety of signal timing changes for both vehicles and pedestrians.

Pedestrian Circulation

Almost all interview participants stated that with increased numbers of pedestrians Downtown, more emphasis needs to be placed on wayfinding. Many agree that the new Visit Sitka wayfinding signs are beautiful and an amazing start, but the high flow of tourists who are unfamiliar with Sitka need even more directional assistance and general orientation. Interviewees expressed frustration and concern about the congestion and confusion of pedestrians at Harrigan Centennial Hall because visitor safety and experience is diminished. Visitors often don't know where to go, what to do, or how to find Downtown or their tour excursion. Specific comments heard multiple times include:

- Pedestrian circulation improvements should equitably distribute people throughout downtown
- Pedestrians frequently cross Harbor Drive in locations that do not have a crosswalk. Consideration should be given to add additional safe crossings.
- Pedestrian circulation through the Harrigan Centennial Hall parking lot and across Harbor Drive impacts coach bus ingress/egress



Downtown Parking

Some interviewees, both formal and informal, discussed availability of downtown parking as a concern. However, other interviewees stated that though they had previously thought the Lincoln Street closure would create a lack of downtown parking, that overtime they have not experienced it as an issue. Many indicated that every time they look for parking, they are successful finding a spot. Multiple interview participants indicated that increased parking enforcement has helped to ensure vehicles are following the rules, thus freeing up more parking. Additionally, most indicated that the relocation of RIDE to Lincoln Street is a successful change, freeing up 10 spots in the Crescent Harbor parking lot.

Community Feedback Line

CBS and Visit Sitka have established a Community Feedback line that gives anyone the opportunity to ask questions or provide feedback about the Lincoln Street Closures. The line (both telephone [907-747-4088] and email[sitkatourism@gmail.com]) is monitored by Visit Sitka staff and is reported monthly to the CBS staff.

Between May 13 and August 15 forty-five comments were received.

Related to traffic and the Lincoln Street Closure the comment log indicates very similar comments both positive and negative that the project team heard during the stakeholder interviews including:

- Comments in support of the Lincoln Street closure and commending the CBS for developing a tourism plan to accommodate increased visitation.
- Comments that don't support the Lincoln Street closure because of the impacts to businesses.
- Concerns with traffic congestion and delays at the Lake Street and Lincoln Street intersection.
- Concerns with tour bus noise and pollution.
- Concerns about the location and operating hours of the restrooms.
- Concerns about pedestrians not using crosswalks when crossing Harbor Drive
- Comments suggesting that the timing of the Lincoln Street closure could be reduced during the day.
- Many comments about needing more trash cans on Lincoln Street

A complete comment log can be found in the Appendix.

Appendix A
Community Feedback Line Summaries



2022 Sitka Tourism Feedback Tracking

May 13-July 18, 2022

Date	Source	Concern Type	Submitter Type	Summary
5/13/2022	VS Staff Email	Lincoln St. Closure	Resident	Resident concerned that the street is deserted and needs some vibrancy
5/15/2022	CBS Staff Email	Maksoutoff Restrooms	Resident	Resident concerned that restrooms were going to be located on the Harbor Drive side of Maksoutoff Street.
5/18/2022	VS Staff Phone	Lincoln St. Restrooms	Business Manager	Business concerned with the location of the restrooms on Lincoln St. changing the character of the street and the view in front of their business and would like alternate locations to be considered.
5/21/2022	Sitka Tourism Email	Shore Excursion	Cruise Visitor	Cruise visitor's perception that a tour she went on was not following health safety prodicals
5/23/2022	Feedback Line	Unknown	Unknown	None
5/23/2022	Feedback Line	Lincoln St. Closure	Business Owner	Business Owner concerned with the conjection with traffic at Lake and Lincoln intersection
6/3/2022	VS Email	Traffic Light@ Lincoln & Lake	Resident	Resident concerned with the conjection with traffic at Lake and Lincoln intersection
6/5/2022	Shared with VS Staff	Lincoln St. Closure	Business Owner	Business owner concerned about tar from road patch being tracked in to his store.
6/7/2022	Shared with VS Staff	Lincoln St. Restrooms	Resident	Resident did not understand why the Lincoln St. restrooms were not open for Porch Fest, a community event on 6/4/22

Date	Source	Concern Type	Submitter Type	Summary
6/8/2022	Shared with VS Staff/Rover	Cruise Passenger Support Services/ & Roving Information Staff program	Business Owner	Business owners wanted to commend Visit Sitka and the City for development of the Cruise Passenger Support Services/ & Roving Information Staff program. They stated that this program is so wonderful and has been needed in the community.
6/8/2022	Sitka Tourism Email	Traffic Light@ Lincoln & Lake, restrooms on Lincoln Street	Resident	Resident concerned with the congestion and traffic at Lake and Lincoln intersection & resident thinks potable restrooms shouldn't be on Lincoln Street.
6/8/2022	Sitka Tourism Email	Commending community on tourism plan	Resident	Commending the community on putting together a tourism plan to manage visitors. Commented on that the city should put the decorative flags back up on the street lamps and barricades need covers.
6/8/2022	Sitka Tourism Email	Concerned about the shuttle buses & e-bikes	Resident	Resident doesn't like the shuttle buses on the road or the e-bikes or bikes at all on the cross trail.
6/9/2022	Sitka Tourism Email	Traffic Light@ Lincoln & Lake	Resident	Resident wanted to share a possible solution to the traffic problem at Lake and Lincoln Street intersection. Suggested that a left turn lane be added with a left arrow.
6/9/2022	Feedback Line	Barricades on Lincoln Street	Resident	Resident doesn't think there should be barricades blocking Lincoln Street
6/9/2022	Sitka Tourism Email	Traffic Light@ Lincoln & Lake	Resident	Resident wanted to share a possible solution to the traffic problem at Lake and Lincoln Street intersection. Suggested that a left turn lane be added with a left arrow.
6/9/2022	Sitka Tourism Email	General Tourism	Resident	Resident is negative about tourism, doesn't like change
6/10/2022	Feedback Line	Lincon Street Closure	Resident	Resident gave positive feedback about downtown closure after initially expecting the worst.
6/13/2022	Sitka Tourism Email & Feedback line	Trash receptacles in downtown	Resident	Resident made suggestions about replacement of grey trash receptacles in downtown with brown bear proof cans.

Date	Source	Concern Type	Submitter Type	Summary
6/13/2022	Sitka Tourism Email	Lincoln Street Closure	Business Owner	Business owner is concerned that the street closure is hurting local business because people walking in the closed street are not being encouraged to go into the stores.
6/14/2022	Feedback Line	Lack of enough trash cans in the right places	Business	More trash cans near food booths, especially between The Cellar and City Hall.
6/14/2022	Feedback Line	Lincoln Street Closure	Resident	Resident gave his thoughts on benefits to the City overall on the closure of Lincoln Street. He didn't think it was overall profitable for the city, but didn't mind it. He was not crazy about the portable restrooms either, but had no other useful alternative.
6/15/2022	Feedback Line	Lack of enough trash cans in the right places	Business	More trash cans near food booths, especially between The Cellar and City Hall.
6/21/2022	Feedback Line	Lincoln St. Closure	Resident	He thinks closing off Lincoln Street is not necessary and more attention needs to be focused on the fishing fleet.
6/22/2022	Visit Sitka Phone Line	Visitors not using crosswalks at Harrigan Centennial	Resident	Visitors not using crosswalks at Harrigan Centennial when crossing Harbor Drive.
6/22/2022	VS Staff Email	General Tourism	International Visitor	Visitor loved trail system in Sitka.
6/23/2022	Sitka Tourism Email	Portable restrooms on Lincoln Street	Business Owner	Business owner wanted signage on portable restrooms so that visitors could find them better.
6/26/2022	Sitka Tourism Email	Traffic Light@ Lincoln & Lake and parking @ HCH	Resident	The taxi stand should not be 24-hours, so that parking spaces can be used at other times. Changing the traffic lanes at Lake & Lincoln Streets to a left turn lane and straight ahead with a right turn lane would help traffic congestion.
6/28/2022	Spoke to VS Sandy White	Lincoln Street Closure	Business Owner	Suggested that end times for closures should reflect the times the ships leave.

Date	Source	Concern Type	Submitter Type	Summary
6/29/2022	Spoke to VS Sandy White	No way to get to and from the airport	Visitors	The visitor center regularly receives calls regularly concerning how to get to and from the airport. The staff has received reports of a number of visitors being left stranded, having to walk to and from town with luggage. Locals have witnessed visitors walking to town after the midnight flight using the freight carts to get their luggage to downtown hotels.
7/1/2022	Feedback Line	Lincoln Street Closure	Business Owner	Business owner likes street closure and would like to see more activities in the street during closure.
7/4/2022	Spoke to Visit Service Coordinator	Lincoln Street Closure, Garbage	Business Owner	Business owner said that street was trashy after the July 3rd Cruise Ship traffic. She wondered if on heavy days like that if the street could be swept.
7/8/2022	Spoke to Visit Service Coordinator	Lincoln Street Closure	Business Owner	Business owner asked if there was a planning committee formed for the planning of next years summer closures and activities. She would like to participate and help.
7/11/2022	Sitka Tourism Email & Feedback line	Garbage	Resident	Resident is following up on his request of 6/13/22, where he requested the gray trash cans in downtown be replaced with the brown metal cans.
7/13/2022	Spoke to Visit Service Coordinator	Lincoln Street Closure	Business Owner	Business owner is still concerned that the street closure is hurting local business. He was not happy with the closure on the 13th. He thought it should not have happened.

Date	Source	Concern Type	Submitter Type	Summary
7/14/2022	Sitka Tourism Email	Lincoln Street Closure, Pedestrians @ HCH, Parking	Business	<p>It should be noted that on many street closure days that the street is nearly empty by 3 pm. Opening the street to traffic at that time would benefit businesses needing to load or unload product.</p> <p>Flaggers or signs are needed to keep people from jaywalking in front of the HCH. Also, the 3-hour parking should be increased to give people/business owners and employees more flexibility.</p>
7/14/2022	Feedback line	Lincoln Street Closure, Restrooms, Cell Phone Interruption, Transportation	Resident	<p>Caller had four main issues: Lincoln Street closure times are too long, restrooms should be open for every event, ships cause cell phone interruption, big buses tear up the roads and ships and buses should pay for upkeep.</p>
7/18/2022	Feedback line	Transportation	Resident	<p>Unknown caller from 7/14/22 called back with more concerns. The focus was on transportation, specifically expanding The Ride bus service to the weekends, and to address needs of the small boat cruise business.</p>
7/18/2022	CBS Planning Department	Pedestrians @ HCH	Business Owner	<p>Business owner stated that signage is needed for directions to crosswalks at Lincoln and Maksoutoff coming out of Centennial Hall. Tourists jaywalking like crazy in front of Harrigan.</p>

LINCOLN
STREET

CLOSURES

2022 Sitka Tourism Feedback Tracking

July 19- August 1, 2022

Date	Source	Concern Type	Submitter Type	Summary
7/21/2022	Sitka Chamber Email	Visitor Misinformation	Business Owner	The merchant requested information concerning what food items were allowed back on board ship when passengers returned to their ship. The merchant also stated that they receive numerous questions from visitors concerning misinformation visitors were receiving about Sitka from their tour bus drivers.
7/27/2022	Spoke to Visit Center Staff	ADA Concerns	Visitors	Visiting couple expressed concern with having difficulty entering some stores due to wife's mobility issues.
7/27/2022	Spoke to Visit Service Coordinator	Pedestrians @ HCH	Business Staff	Downtown business staff relayed an incident concerning visitors crossing Harbor Drive in front of Harrigan Hall without using the cross walks.
7/28/2022	Visit Sitka Email	Transportation- Bikes	Resident	Resident is concerned about bike collisions with pedestrians on downtown sidewalks and has included flyers, graphics and PSA's to help mitigate the problem.
8/1/2022	Feedback Line	Traffic Noise	Resident	Resident is concerned about traffic noise. She wants something done about the loud tour buses.

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CLOSURES

2022 Sitka Tourism Feedback Tracking

August 2-15, 2022

Date	Source	Concern Type	Submitter Type	Recipient	Summary
8/11/2022	Spoke to Visit Service Coordinator	Transportation	Business Staff	VS Sandy White	Downtown business staff relayed that he had heard from numerous visitors how difficult it was to get to and from the Airport and there needed to be a shuttle or other forms of transportation.
8/15/2022	Spoke to Visit Service Coordinator	Lincoln Street Closures	Resident	VS Sandy White	Resident on the street positively commented to Visit Services Coordinator that he liked the new barricade covers that were being installed and thought they were attractive and would leave a positive impression on visitors to Sitka.



3-Year Strategic Marketing Plan

2025-2027

This Strategic Marketing Plan is a draft. We are seeking feedback from stakeholders and community members. Please submit comments at bit.ly/visitsitka2025-27 by Monday, March 24th at 4:00 pm.

Prepared by The Greater Sitka Chamber of Commerce as Visit Sitka,
in partnership with Element Agency

Scan the QR code to
submit feedback.

bit.ly/visitsitka2025-27



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Introduction

Tourism is a vital part of Sitka’s economy, supporting local businesses, jobs, and community well-being. Visit Sitka is the Destination Marketing Organization for the City and Borough of Sitka. Since 2015, the Greater Sitka Chamber of Commerce been the contractor, leading efforts to promote Sitka as a travel destination through Visit Sitka, representing over 200 businesses locally and regionally.

The 2025-27 Strategic Marketing Plan builds on past successes and looks ahead to sustaining a strong visitor economy and marketing program. With a focus on independent and year-round travel, cultural tourism, and visitor education, Visit Sitka aims to enhance economic opportunities while ensuring tourism continues to align with community values. By fostering meaningful visitor experiences, strengthening partnerships, and sharing Sitka’s unique story, this plan supports a balanced and thriving tourism industry for years to come.

Guiding Pillars for Growth

This plan is guided by four foundational pillars, shaping the next three years’ strategic priorities and actions:

Meetings & Events: Promoting Sitka as a premier destination for meetings, conventions, and retreats, focusing on year-round events to enhance economic impact and address seasonal imbalances.

Regenerative Tourism & Visitor Education: Establishing Sitka as a leader in regenerative tourism by creating visitor experiences and educational tools that actively benefit the local environment, culture, and community.

Cultural Tourism: Amplifying Tlingit voices and cultural heritage through co-created initiatives that honor Sitka’s identity and offer visitors meaningful, authentic experiences.

Year-Round Independent Travel: Expanding year-round visitation to stabilize Sitka’s economy, relieve summer infrastructure strain, and provide a consistent stream of revenue for local businesses.

Informing the Plan

This plan was developed with input from local stakeholders, industry research, and workshops designed to align Visit Sitka’s vision with community priorities. The planning process included:

Community Workshop (November 13, 2024): Local business owners, leaders, and community members gathered to discuss priorities and challenges for Sitka's visitor economy. Key takeaways from this session included the need for more year-round visitor activity, infrastructure investments, and support for Tlingit-led cultural tourism. Regenerative tourism emerged as a core value, with the community expressing strong support for visitor education, public infrastructure improvements, and sustainable tourism practices.

Visit Sitka Staff Workshop (November 14, 2024): Visit Sitka's internal team came together to brainstorm goals, identify high-reaching aspirations, and build a clear vision for the future of Sitka's independent tourism. This workshop prioritized new ideas like a Sitka Welcome Video, a stronger emphasis on Tlingit storytelling, and deeper alignment around regenerative tourism principles. The team focused on creating tangible goals around accessibility, building on the meeting & conventions market, year-round visitation, and workforce development.

Market Research & Industry Reports: Informed by insights from Southeast Alaska's State of the Economy Report and industry trends from leading tourism authorities like the Alaska Travel Industry Association and Destination International, the plan reflects Sitka's position within a highly competitive market. Research revealed growth opportunities in regenerative tourism, cultural storytelling, and independent travel demand for year-round experiences.

Economic Impact Data: With tourism representing one of Sitka's top economic sectors generating \$42M annually in wages and supporting 898 local jobs there is a clear economic imperative to sustain and grow this industry. By balancing the visitor economy to include year-round visitation and community-led initiatives, Visit Sitka aims to help stabilize the industry and reduce its dependence on peak summer travel.

Approach

This 3-year plan takes a solution-first approach to address critical challenges impacting Sitka's tourism industry, our community, and long-term growth. Each year of the plan builds on the success of the previous year, from laying the groundwork for new initiatives (Year 1: Build), to scaling visibility and impact (Year 2: Share), to solidifying Sitka's role as a leader in regenerative tourism (Year 3: Sustain). The key points this plan addresses are the following:

Community Alignment: Through community workshops, public presentations on regenerative tourism, and ongoing feedback channels like the Tourism Best Management Practices (TBMP) initiative, Visit Sitka will ensure that residents, businesses, and visitors are working toward shared goals.

Promoting Year-round Travel: This plan places heavy emphasis on promoting fall, winter, and spring travel through seasonal campaigns, partner-driven promotions, and

the development of new planning tools (e.g., an interactive itinerary builder, transportation guide, and event calendar). This strategy directly supports local businesses by increasing year-round revenue opportunities.

Strengthening Infrastructure & Accessibility: The plan highlights specific initiatives to improve visitor navigation, enhance accessibility, and make Sitka more pedestrian-friendly.

Leading with Regenerative Tourism: Sitka has the opportunity to become a leader in regenerative tourism. This model extends beyond sustainability, asking visitors to actively contribute to Sitka’s natural and cultural environment. Tools like the Visitor Pledge, Learn Before You Land campaign, and the new Wayfinding and Transportation Enhancements project will educate visitors on their role as stewards of the land.

Our Vision for 2027

By 2027, Sitka will be a steady, year-round tourism destination, not just a summer surge, supporting local jobs, businesses, and community well-being. Visitors will arrive ready to connect, not just consume. They’ll experience Sitka’s culture, land, and way of life with open minds and leave with deeper respect for it. Cultural voices will guide the stories we tell, and local partnerships will drive every effort. With stronger infrastructure, expanded year-round events, and a clear commitment to regenerative tourism. This isn’t just about welcoming travelers, it’s about celebrating, sharing and protecting what makes Sitka, Sitka.

This vision was co-created by input from both the community and staff workshops

Visit Sitka’s Definition of Regenerative Tourism

The words “*regenerative tourism*” are used frequently throughout this plan and that’s intentional. Regenerative tourism principles are the guiding compass for everything Visit Sitka will be building over the next three years. Simply put, this term means tourism that gives back not just to the economy, but to the people, land, and culture that make Sitka unlike anywhere else. It is an opportunity to raise the status quo for travel in Southeast Alaska hub ports. In 2024, we established our definition of regenerative tourism which will guide us through the next three years:

“Regenerative tourism celebrates the unique cultures and traditions of the places visited.

Travelers are encouraged to engage with the local community, participate in community culture, and learn about Indigenous Knowledge systems. What are the differences between sustainable and regenerative tourism? Sustainability does not challenge business as usual; it sustains it by trying not to do further damage. Regeneration, conversely, wants to move away from the logic of doing less harm and embrace that of positive impact.

It’s not net zero, it’s net positive.”

Strategic Foundations

Situational Analysis

This SWOT analysis evaluates the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats shaping Visit Sitka’s ability to achieve its goals. It offers a snapshot of the organization’s position within the visitor industry and provides actionable insights to align this marketing plan with community priorities.

As both a destination marketing organization and a community advocate, Visit Sitka works to balance the benefits of independent travel with the needs of its residents and local businesses. This analysis highlights how tourism supports Sitka’s year-round economy and bolsters local businesses while addressing areas for improvement such as infrastructure, workforce challenges, and accessibility.

By identifying opportunities to expand regenerative tourism, attract year-round visitors, and strengthen community collaboration, this analysis ensures that independent travel continues to benefit Sitka in a regenerative and meaningful way.

I. Strengths

Independent Travel and Year-Round Visitation

- Visit Sitka’s focus on attracting independent travelers, who spend more and stay longer, aligns with national travel trends and supports local businesses.
- Further developing interactive tools like the Driftscape app, enhancing visitor planning and experiences.
- A growing meetings and conventions market is helping stabilize Sitka’s visitor economy during the year-round, with efforts to target Alaska-based corporations and regional organizations.
- Thriving year-round arts community with visitor-friendly events happening throughout the year.

Year-Round Economic Contribution

- Visitors to Sitka contribute to a resilient local economy, with the visitor industry generating \$42 million in annual wages and supporting 898 jobs, making it Sitka’s third-largest employment sector.*
- 79% of meetings and convention attendees come during non-peak seasons, providing significant year-round economic benefits.**

Support for Local Businesses

- Visit Sitka serves as a key partner for local businesses, providing robust collateral, including digital tools, print publications, and on-the-ground visitor information that directly drives traffic to partner businesses.

Leadership and Statewide Partners

- Visit Sitka has hosted major gatherings like the Southeast Conference Annual Meeting and the Alaska Travel Industry Association (ATIA) Annual Conference, bringing statewide industry leaders to Sitka and strengthening its role as a hub for impactful collaboration.
- By hosting the Heritage & Cultural Tourism Conference, Visit Sitka has positioned itself as a collaborator with cultural organizations. These events emphasize the importance of culture-driven tourism as a cornerstone of the community's future visitor economy.

High Business Climate Confidence

- Local businesses express strong optimism about Sitka's business climate, with 80% citing positive views of tourism's role in their growth.*

Existing Momentum in Regenerative Tourism

- Visit Sitka has begun laying a foundation for regenerative tourism through initiatives like visitor education, messaging on appropriate trail usage and respecting nature, and incorporating cultural elements throughout our collateral.

**SEDA's State of Sitka's Economy 2024*

***Visit Sitka's FY25 Work Plan Metrics*

II. Weaknesses

Infrastructure Strain

- Strained public infrastructure during peak seasons, including transportation, housing, and public restrooms, limits capacity for both residents and visitors.
- Housing shortages negatively impact workforce recruitment and retention, and create challenges for seasonal workers essential to visitor operations.

Workforce Gaps

- Declining population and a lack of affordable childcare limit workforce retention and recruitment, impacting visitor-facing services and business operations.
- Significant segment of our employable population has aged out of the workforce.
- Difficulty attracting workforce-aged residents hinders the industry's ability to meet growing demands, particularly during the peak visitor season.

Public Perception and Community Tensions

- Misunderstandings that Visit Sitka’s primary goal is to develop Sitka’s in developing independent travel market creates public tension and hinder community alignment.
- Resistance to perceived over-tourism and its impact on infrastructure threatens to overshadow industry efforts to balance growth and sustain a strong economy.

Limited Meetings and Conventions Infrastructure

- While Sitka is growing as a destination for conventions and events, facilities, such as hotels, and logistical support, such as technical services, remain underdeveloped compared to competitors like Anchorage, Juneau, and Ketchikan.
- Limited transportation options and a lack of bundled packages for corporate events reduce the community’s competitiveness in the conventions market.

Transportation and Accessibility

- Limited transportation and taxi options within Sitka make it difficult for visitors to navigate easily, impacting overall satisfaction.
- Accessibility issues, including inadequate crosswalks and pedestrian safety concerns, present challenges for visitors and residents alike, requiring investment and coordination between city, state, and federal entities.

Seasonal Economic Imbalance

- Despite progress in building year-round visitation, the heavy reliance on summer tourism creates seasonal economic fluctuations.
- Businesses with seasonal schedules leave gaps in a cohesive downtown shopping experience for year-round visitors.

III. Opportunities

Amplifying Tlingít Voices

- Lead with Tlingít voices through cultural messaging in collateral, welcome letters and videos(e.g., bilingual Tlingít and English videos), and partnerships with Indigenous organizations.
- Integrate Tlingít-led initiatives into visitor experiences, promoting cultural respect and authenticity as key to Sitka’s identity.

Regenerative Tourism Initiatives

- Launch a visitor pledge program and produce a cultural welcome video to embed sustainability and cultural respect into visitor experiences.

- Expand educational tools to guide visitors in protecting Sitka’s natural environment and respecting its community values.

Support for Local Businesses

- Expand collaborative efforts with partner businesses to co-create itineraries, bundled packages, and event promotions tailored to independent travelers and corporate retreats.
- Host regular roundtables for local business owners to discuss challenges, share solutions, and foster partnerships that strengthen Sitka’s visitor economy.
- Continued community partnerships, such as the Sitka Chamber’s Emerging Leaders Program to promote young entrepreneurship, supporting the next generation of business owners and innovators in Sitka.

Year-Round Visitors

- Market year-round activities such as community events, guided hunting trips, wellness retreats, and outdoor recreation to attract independent travelers, including in-state visitors.
- Promote conventions and meetings during the fall and spring seasons, showcasing Sitka’s milder weather and unique setting as an ideal escape when much of the state experiences colder conditions.
- Expand digital marketing efforts, SEO strategies, and partnerships with statewide DMOs, like Travel Alaska, to enhance visibility for year-round visitors and strengthen Sitka’s competitive position.

Meetings and Conventions Growth

- Target Alaska-based trade organizations and regional groups for small-to-medium-sized meetings and retreats, expanding year-round visitation opportunities.
- Attract in-state trade associations, government meetings, and C-suite retreats.

Community Engagement and Advocacy

- Leverage Visit Sitka’s position as a community mouthpiece to advocate for housing, childcare, and transportation investments, supporting both the local economy and workforce development.

IV. Threats

Community Concerns About Tourism

- Ongoing public concerns about tourism’s strain on infrastructure, particularly cruise-related impacts, could lead to restrictive policies,

limiting industry opportunities and undermining efforts to balance community and visitor needs.

- Lack of understanding of direct community benefits from tourism could reduce industry buy-in and create friction between residents and industry stakeholders.

Economic Uncertainty

- Rising travel costs, global inflation, and economic instability may reduce visitation, particularly among budget-conscious travelers, impacting local businesses that rely on consistent visitor spending.
- The high cost of visiting Sitka, including limited and expensive flight options, can make the destination less competitive, especially for in-state travelers and independent tourists.

Infrastructure and Accessibility Challenges

- Insufficient housing availability for visitors, particularly in peak-season months, may discourage extended stays or result in reduced bookings.
- Limited flights, ferry instability, and transportation bottlenecks during peak periods deter visitors and limit growth in independent travel and conventions.
- Seasonal closures of businesses, restaurants, attractions, and transportation options during October–April reduce Sitka’s appeal to year-round travelers and event planners.

Market Competition

- Competing destinations like Juneau and Ketchikan continue to invest in infrastructure and marketing, and well-established winter destinations such as Anchorage and Fairbanks make it harder for Sitka to stand out.
- International tourism destinations are rapidly recovering and growing, requiring Sitka to differentiate itself.

Environmental Risks and Natural Disruptions

- Erratic weather patterns, including heavy rains or unpredictable storms, can limit access to outdoor activities and disrupt planned events.
- Global natural disasters and environmental challenges in other regions may impact broader travel patterns and reduce discretionary spending on long-haul trips to Sitka.

Workforce and Business Sustainability

- Workforce shortages, driven by the declining population, lack of housing, and insufficient childcare, could lead to reduced visitor services and negative guest experiences, impacting Sitka’s reputation as a welcoming destination.

- Limited availability of local services, such as transportation, mechanics, and event staffing, may hinder Sitka’s ability to expand year-round offerings and host larger conventions or events.

While Sitka has significant strengths, such as its appeal to independent travelers and growing year-round visitation, challenges like infrastructure limitations, high travel costs, and seasonal business fluctuations are opportunities for improvement.

Competitive Analysis

This analysis evaluates Sitka's position within Alaska's tourism landscape, comparing its strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities against key competitors like Juneau, Ketchikan, and Skagway. It also draws inspiration from global leaders like New Zealand and Iceland, who are leading the way in sustainable and regenerative tourism models. This analysis highlights how Sitka can carve out a leadership role in regenerative travel, expand cultural tourism promotion, and position itself as a year-round, community-driven destination.

Visit Sitka positions its marketing as a destination where natural beauty, cultural heritage, and outdoor adventure blend together. While other Alaska destinations like Juneau, Ketchikan, and Skagway emphasize sustainable tourism practices through programs like the Tourism Best Management Practices (TBMP), Sitka has the opportunity to lead with regenerative tourism principles. This approach prioritizes not just responsible tourism but tourism that actively benefits the local environment, culture, and community.

Alaska DMO Competitive Landscape

Juneau

Positioning: Alaska’s capital and one of the most-visited cruise destinations in the state.

- **Strengths:** The State Capitol, glacier access (Mendenhall Glacier), and political travel make Juneau a highly visible destination.
- **Weaknesses:** High cruise tourism during peak season leads to crowding, making it hard for visitors to feel a sense of discovery or personal connection.
- **Opportunities for Sitka:** Highlight Sitka’s shoulder season experience as an alternative to visiting Juneau’s crowded cruise environment during the summer.
- **Sustainability Efforts:** Juneau's TBMP program addresses community concerns about tourism, setting the stage for best practices in sustainable tourism management.

- **Regenerative Tourism Efforts:** While Juneau emphasizes responsible tourism, explicit regenerative tourism initiatives are less prominent, giving Sitka an opportunity to lead in this space.

Ketchikan

Positioning: Known as the "Salmon Capital of the World" with strong ties to its Indigenous arts.

- **Strengths:** Totem Heritage Center, strong salmon fishing tourism, and a vibrant art scene.
- **Weaknesses:** Heavy cruise ship reliance creates a transient experience, with many visitors staying for only a few hours.
- **Opportunities for Sitka:** Position Sitka as a more immersive destination where visitors stay longer and connect more deeply with local culture and community.
- **Sustainability Efforts:** Ketchikan participates in the TBMP program, promoting responsible tourism and supporting community well-being.
- **Regenerative Tourism Efforts:** Ketchikan is currently developing a Destination Stewardship Roadmap, signaling a shift toward year-round tourism and sustainable practices. Sitka can position itself as more advanced by moving beyond sustainability and into regenerative tourism.

Skagway

Positioning: Iconic Gold Rush town known for its historic charm.

- **Strengths:** Home to the Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park, which draws large numbers of visitors focused on Gold Rush history.
- **Weaknesses:** Relies heavily on cruise ships, limiting its ability to drive independent travelers or year-round tourism and has little to no infrastructure during shoulder season.
- **Opportunities for Sitka:** Highlight Sitka's diversity of adventure offerings, from kayaking to wildlife tours, as a broader, year-round alternative to Skagway's seasonal appeal.
- **Sustainability Efforts:** Skagway follows the TBMP model to manage visitor impact and align with community needs.
- **Regenerative Tourism Efforts:** Initiatives like the "Made in Skagway" program promote local artisans and small business growth, offering Sitka a model for developing local economies through regenerative tourism.

Global Inspiration

New Zealand

Positioning: "100% Pure New Zealand" is one of the world's most iconic destination brands, linking nature, Māori culture, and adventure.

- **Core Message:** New Zealand invites visitors to experience its pristine landscapes and deep-rooted Indigenous Māori culture.
- **Sustainability Initiatives:** New Zealand's Tourism Sustainability Commitment encourages every tourism business to be carbon neutral by 2025.
- **Regenerative Tourism Efforts:** Beyond sustainability, New Zealand is redefining its tourism model to leave places better than visitors found them. From reforestation efforts to conservation-focused itineraries, regenerative tourism is a core part of their strategy.
- **Lessons for Sitka:** Build a brand that centers around environmental stewardship and Indigenous storytelling. Promote hands-on visitor participation in regenerative activities, like habitat restoration and trail preservation.

Iceland

Positioning: Famous for geothermal landscapes, waterfalls, and adventure travel.

- **Core Message:** Iceland's "Inspired by Iceland" campaign uses humor and stunning visuals to set the destination apart.
- **Sustainability Initiatives:** Iceland manages over-tourism by limiting access to sensitive sites and encouraging year-round travel.
- **Regenerative Tourism Efforts:** Iceland promotes responsible tourism through visitor pledges and sustainable site management. They encourage visitors to engage in low-impact activities and practice "leave no trace" principles.
- **Lessons for Sitka:** Implement a Visitor Pledge like Iceland, promoting Sitka as a mindful, respectful travel destination. Use humor or storytelling to make the pledge relatable and memorable. Highlight how visiting Sitka during off-peak times benefits the community, wildlife, and visitor experience.

Key Differentiators for Sitka

- **Regenerative Tourism Leadership**
Unlike other Alaska destinations focused on sustainable tourism, Sitka can lead in regenerative tourism. This approach means leaving Sitka better than visitors found it from trail restoration opportunities to community-led initiatives. Visitors can be part of the solution, contributing to projects that improve community well-being and environmental health.
- **Authentic Cultural Storytelling**
While destinations like Ketchikan and Juneau have strong Indigenous narratives,

Sitka can stand out by ensuring Tlingít voices are at the heart of the visitor experience. Initiative opportunities include Tlingít-led tours, a Tlingít Heritage Information Hub, and the Tlingít/English Driftscape tour position Sitka as a leader in Indigenous tourism storytelling.

- **Tranquility and Personal Connection**

In the off-season, Sitka can offer an escape from the crowds. It's a more intimate, slower-paced experience where visitors can immerse themselves in the landscape and local way of life. This appeals to travelers looking for space to reflect and explore.

- **Immersive Visitor Experiences**

Sitka's focus on interactive, immersive experiences (like the Airport Cultural Installation) introduces visitors to Tlingít culture from the moment they arrive. This model of cultural immersion from arrival to departure is a differentiator, as visitors leave Sitka with a sense of connection and understanding.

- **Seasonal Tourism Diversification**

By promoting seasonal adventure sweepstakes, wellness retreats, and off-season travel incentives, Sitka can drive tourism from October to April, a significant opportunity for revenue growth.

Opportunities for Visit Sitka

- **Position Regenerative Tourism as Core to the Brand**

While Juneau, Ketchikan, and Skagway focus on tourism management, Sitka lead communities in Alaska to embrace and define regenerative tourism. Highlight visitor participation in stewardship activities and the impact of responsible tourism choices.

- **Year-Round Marketing and Events**

Drive in-state travel by promoting fishing derbies, sporting events, and wildlife-related tours during shoulder season. Create dedicated trip-planning tools for Alaska residents seeking quick, local getaways.

- **Lean Into Small-Group, Intimate Experiences**

Highlight small-group eco-tours, private, locally-enhanced tours, and immersive experiences that cater to travelers seeking a deeper connection with nature and culture.

- **Embed Tlingít Voices in Marketing**

Develop a stronger connection between Visit Sitka's storytelling and the voices of local Indigenous artists, and guides. Social media content, newsletters, and PR campaigns should prioritize their perspectives.

- **Differentiate Through Wellness & Retreats**

Build on the wellness travel trend by positioning Sitka as a place for mindfulness retreats, adventure therapy, and wellness-driven group events.

Target Audiences & Personas

Visit Sitka's marketing efforts target **independent travelers**. These are visitors who plan their own trips, seek meaningful experiences, and often stay longer and spend more locally. Many of them want more than just beautiful views; they want stories, connection, and purpose woven into their trips. To meet this demand, Visit Sitka's marketing is focused on engaging seven key traveler types. Each type is driven by unique motivations, preferences, and challenges, which this strategy addresses to inspire deeper engagement, year-round visitation, and longer stays.

I. Adventure Seekers

These are visitors who are motivated by outdoor experiences. When choosing a destination they look for activities like kayaking, hiking, snorkeling, and exploring remote trails. Adventure Seekers tend to be couples, solo travelers, or groups of friends looking to plan an annual trip.

- Why they come to Sitka: To experience nature, away from crowds and to challenge themselves.
- What they need from Visit Sitka: Itineraries, booking tools, and trusted guides to make adventure feel accessible, safe, and spontaneous.

Engagement Tactics

- Storytelling Campaigns: Share "Day in the Life" content with local guides, showing the wild side of Sitka's adventure landscape.
- Insider Access: Showcase "hidden gem" locations encouraging longer stays.
- Exclusive Micro-Adventures: Partner with local guides to create small-group experiences like remote hikes or private kayak excursions.

Example Persona: Chris and Laura

A couple in their early 30s from Sedona who like to escape the heat and find a change of scenery once or twice a year. They enjoy physical challenges outside and always share their adventures on social media. With limited time to plan detailed itineraries, they can become overwhelmed by choices. They rely on social media and blog posts when planning their trip.

II. Eco-Conscious Travelers

These are sustainability-minded visitors who make their travel decisions based on a location's nature, wellness, and responsible tourism practices. This group includes solo travelers, couples, and families who value destinations that reflect their environmental and ethical values.

- Why they come to Sitka: To immerse themselves in pristine natural environments while supporting destinations that align with their travel values.
- What they need from Visit Sitka: Transparency on sustainability initiatives, guides for responsible travel, and insight into how they can support the local community while visiting.

Engagement Tactics

- Regenerative Travel Messaging: Highlight Sitka's Visitor Pledge, which encourages eco-conscious travel choices.
- Wildlife Stewardship Campaigns: Emphasize responsible wildlife viewing tips and Tlingít values of respect for the land.
- Family-friendly Itineraries: Share family-friendly itineraries with clear age recommendations and safety tips for activities.

Example Persona: The Thompson Family

Parents in their early 40s with two kids aged 8 and 12 from Vancouver, they plan their vacations around the school year, selecting locations that encourage curiosity and hands-on learning. They prefer staying at locally owned accommodations, looking for cultural experiences, and are willing to pay more for experiences that leave a positive impact on the community like partaking in ocean clean up cruises or going to local events. They look for opportunities to balance educational activities with meaningful experiences in nature, relying on Google searches, word of mouth recommendations, and social media when planning their trip.

III. Cultural Enthusiasts

Passionate travelers who crave depth and discovery, with a desire to engage with art, history, and the living culture of a place. They want to connect with local stories, learn about Tlingít heritage, and explore Sitka's creative and historical sites.

- Why they come to Sitka: To experience culture, art, and history through guided tours, hands-on workshops, and independent activities.
- What they need from Visit Sitka: Personal access to cultural experiences, artist-led workshops, and curated itineraries that center local stories.

Engagement Tactics

- Host a Year of Indigenous Travel Writers: Partner with cultural travel writers who will spotlight Sitka's rich heritage in blogs, media features, and travel guides.
- Interactive Storytelling: Promote the Tlingít/English Driftscape Tour through the Sitka National Historic Park.
- Artist Showcase: Promote opportunities at Sheldon Jackson Museum and other locations to meet local artists and attend art markets or workshops.

Example Persona: Joan

Joan is a 68-year-old retired teacher from the Midwest who travels to learn about the history, art, and culture of each destination. She spends her evenings researching tours and loves museum exhibits, cultural performances, and guided historical tours. She loves traveling solo and looks for destinations with accessible walking paths, easy-grade hikes and prefers to stay at a centrally located hotel. Joan loves destinations where culture is central to the visitor experience and prefers trips that are immersive and educational. She relies on visitor guides and brochures, travel review sites, email newsletters and destination websites to plan her trips.

IV. Wildlife Lovers

Nature lovers and wildlife enthusiasts plan trips where they can spot wildlife. They usually come fully prepared, making the most of each day on tours, sightseeing independently, and connecting with locals where they might spot birds, whales, otters or any other of Sitka's wide array of wildlife.

- Why they come to Sitka: To witness wildlife in its natural habitat and take home photos.
- What they need from Visit Sitka: Access to wildlife tours, ethical viewing guidelines, and information on the best times to visit for peak animal activity.

Engagement Tactics

- Wildlife Viewing Resources: Create guides for responsible wildlife viewing, supported by local tour operators.
- Story-driven Itineraries: Promote trip plans that align with peak wildlife viewing windows.
- Wildlife Content Campaigns: Use video content to showcase real-time wildlife sightings to inspire last-minute bookings.

Example Persona: Leo and Burt

Leo and Burt are a 50-year-old couple and recent empty-nesters. Leo, a wildlife photographer, plans at least one of their annual trips around peak wildlife viewing windows. He and Burt books tours with guides who understand animal behavior and environmental ethics. They go all out when researching a location and will spend more to have a more immersive experience. They love staying at remote lodges where they can experience a bit of luxury between wildlife viewing. Leo shares his photography on social media, tagging destinations and operators, which increases exposure for local tourism businesses. They rely on wildlife forums, travel review sites, destination websites, social media, and travel blogs when planning their trip.

V. Convention & Meeting Planners

Event planners, business leaders, and association executives looking for a unique location for conferences, retreats, and workshops.

- Why they come to Sitka: For fresh inspiration, natural surroundings, and the appeal of "off-the-beaten-path" meeting destinations.
- What they need from Visit Sitka: Planning resources, flexible packages, and an easy way to book venues, activities, and accommodations.

Engagement Tactics

- Event Packages: Develop ready-to-book packages for corporate retreats, wellness summits, and board meetings.
- FAM Week for Planners: Invite planners to experience Sitka firsthand, building relationships that drive future bookings.
- Online Booking Tools: Refresh the Meetings & Conventions Planner and add easy-to-use event planning guides on the website.

Example Persona: Sarah

Sarah is a 36-year-old corporate event planner from Seattle whose business contracts with numerous Alaska organizations. She has a well established client roster and has fallen into a pattern of booking the same locations year after year. To shake things up, she's looking for unique destinations with reliable event infrastructure, modern meeting spaces, and memorable experiences. She prefers destinations with pre-built packages and easy booking options. She relies on industry relationships and word-of-mouth when selecting a new location.

VI. Wellness & Retreat Planners

Event organizers, wellness leaders, and instructors looking for serene, nature-inspired destinations to host wellness retreats and workshops. These planners seek peaceful environments that offer access to natural beauty, mindful experiences, and wellness-focused amenities.

- Why they come to Sitka: The ability to market Sitka as a peaceful, off-the-grid escape with opportunities to blend luxury, relaxation and natural-immersive experiences.
- What they need from Visit Sitka: Direct connections to local service providers, ready-to-use retreat packages, wellness guides, and itineraries that inspire wellness-focused visits.

Engagement Tactics

- Customizable Retreat Packages: Offer flexible retreat packages that combine lodging, meeting spaces, wellness activities, and transportation.
- Visual Storytelling: Create video content and promotional materials showcasing wellness experiences like yoga on the beach, meditation in the forest, and ocean-inspired mindfulness activities.
- Local Partner Network: Build a directory of local wellness providers who can offer unique add-ons like forest bathing, guided meditation, and cold dipping
- Planning Tools: Develop a "Host Your Retreat in Sitka" page on the website with itineraries, planning guides, and testimonial stories from previous wellness retreat organizers.
- Showcase Venues: Highlight lodging options that support wellness retreats, such as boutique lodges, inns, and unique accommodations that offer seclusion and serenity.

Example Persona: Chloe

Chloe is a 30-year-old yoga instructor with a major social media following and loyal community of yoga students. They are looking to host their third annual nature and yoga retreat. Chloe wants a destination that feels remote, peaceful, and naturally beautiful, a place their students will view as a “bucket list experience.” When planning this retreat Chloe looks for destinations with accommodations for 10-20 people, wellness-focused dining options, and natural environments that foster relaxation and reflection. They need planning tools like customizable retreat packages, venue recommendations, and assistance from local wellness providers for additional activities. Chloe relies on social media, destination websites, travel blogs and word-of-mouth recommendations when planning this event.

VII. Year-round, In-State Travelers

Independent travelers from Alaska seeking weekend getaways, extended stays, or seasonal trips for activities like hunting, fishing, community events, and family visits.

- Why They Come to Sitka: To visit family, participate in seasonal hunting and fishing opportunities, attend community or sporting events, or enjoy a quick weekend escape without leaving the state.
- What They Need from Visit Sitka: Up-to-date information on permits, and regulations, transportation planning tools for ferries, flights, and gear transport, access to lodging deals and year-round promotions, and a public events calendar.

Engagement Tactics

- **Seasonal Promotions & Package Deals:** Launch year-round deals for Alaskan residents, like "Alaska Resident Rates" on lodging, discounted ferry or flight packages, or bundled travel packages for hunting and fishing trips.
- **Community Event Marketing:** Promote major local events (like fishing derbies, sporting events, or cultural festivals) as reasons to visit Sitka.
- **Local Influencer Partnerships:** Partner with well-known Alaska hunters, fishers, and outdoor enthusiasts to share their Sitka travel experiences and promote off-season trips to their followers.
- **Community Storytelling Content:** Highlight locals sharing their favorite reasons to visit Sitka during the year-round. Use blog content, video testimonials, and photo features to inspire in-state travelers.

Example Persona: Kevin

Kevin is a 29-year-old commercial fisherman from Juneau who visits Sitka every late fall or early winter for an annual deer hunting trip. He travels with friends, books last-minute lodging, and relies on ferry schedules to bring his car over. Kevin will stay in Sitka for up to two weeks depending. Kevin likes to "keep it simple," although his group will eat out most nights they are in town. He prioritizes destinations where he can hunt, fish, and enjoy time with his friends. He relies on his local friends for information but frequently checks social media for information.

Marketing Plan

Objectives

Visit Sitka's three-year marketing objectives are rooted in strengthening community collaboration, balancing the independent traveler season, and building a model of regenerative tourism in Sitka. This plan follows a phased approach: Year 1 (Build) focusing on creating foundational assets and community alignment; Year 2 (Share) scaling visibility and launching campaigns across marketing channels; and Year 3 (Sustain) positioning Sitka as a leader in cultural tourism, regenerative travel, and event planning. Each year builds on the success of the prior year, making each effort more impactful. The final year will culminate in a Three-Year Impact & Insights Report, which will be used to inform future strategies and communicate successes to stakeholders and community partners.

Year 1: Build (2025)

Establish the foundations for campaigns and initiatives by creating new marketing tools, resources, and community partnerships that will drive future campaigns. This includes developing new visitor experiences, creating internal alignment on marketing pillars, and enhancing resources for visitor planning.

- **Cultural Tourism:** Establish key cultural storytelling tools that amplify Tlingit voices, including the launch of a Welcome Video, Cultural Heritage Hub, and a refreshed Visitor Guide that reflects local voices and year-round travel.
- **Regenerative Tourism & Visitor Education:** Introduce tools that promote responsible visitor behavior, including the Visitor Pledge and a Learn Before You Land Campaign.
- **Meetings & Events:** Rebrand and reposition Harrigan Centennial Hall as a premier venue for meetings and retreats. Introduce flexible event packages and update the Meetings & Conventions Planner Toolkit to simplify event planning.
- **Year-Round Travel:** Launch visitor-facing resources, such as the Insider Scoop page, a Quarterly Visitor Newsletter, and a new Transportation Guide to streamline travel planning for independent travelers.

Why It Matters: Year 1 builds the foundation for growth, setting up the tools, marketing assets, and alignment needed for broader storytelling, visitor education, and meeting promotion in Years 2 and 3.

Year 2: Share (2026)

Leverage the tools and resources built in Year 1 to increase engagement, grow brand awareness, and drive deeper visitor connections. By launching immersive experiences and promotional campaigns, Sitka will increase visibility and work to generate more year-round travel.

- **Cultural Tourism:** Launch interactive and immersive cultural experiences, including the Tlingit/English Driftscape Tour and the Airport Cultural Installation, ensuring visitors engage with Sitka's cultural identity the moment they arrive.
- **Regenerative Tourism & Visitor Education:** Scale visitor education and community collaboration by launching the Tourism Best Practices Management (TBMP) system and expanding wayfinding to include interpretive signage.
- **Meetings & Events:** Convert interest into bookings by hosting a FAM (Familiarization) Week for event planners and promoting updated planning tools, including an enhanced Meetings & Conventions Planner and a redesigned Meetings & Events website page.

- **Year-Round Travel:** Launch campaigns that inspire year-round travel, such as the Seasonal Adventure Sweepstakes, Itinerary Builder, and enhanced distribution of the Transportation Guide. These efforts make trip planning more seamless and compelling.

Why It Matters: Year 2 is about momentum and visibility. With the core tools in place, the focus shifts to sharing, showcasing, and scaling.

Year 3: Sustain (2027)

Expand and sustain growth by amplifying success stories, scaling engagement, and solidifying Sitka’s position as a leader in cultural, regenerative, and event-driven tourism. With two years of learning and execution complete, Year 3 is an opportunity to analyze progress and define what comes next.

- **Cultural Tourism:** Scale storytelling and public relations efforts with a "Year of Indigenous Travel Writers" campaign. Embed cultural voices in all marketing content and elevate Sitka's visibility in travel media prompting cultural tourism.
- **Regenerative Tourism & Visitor Education:** Measure and report on the outcomes of the Visitor Pledge, Tourism Best Practices Management (TBMP), and the success of the Crossing Guard Program. Launch a Community Events Calendar to support local celebrations and inspire extended stays.
- **Meetings & Events:** Promote Sitka as a wellness retreat destination, supporting bookings for year-round wellness retreats. Leverage Sitka’s natural assets and wellness offerings to attract new event types.
- **Year-Round Travel:** Support downtown beautification efforts with public art, benches, and community spaces that improve visitors’ experience. Launch a Community Events Calendar that inspires independent travelers to visit during unique festivals, celebrations, and seasonal events.

Why It Matters: Year 3 is about industry sustainability. By the end of 2027, Sitka will have aimed to increase year-round travel, created more regenerative visitor experiences, and positioned itself as a culturally rich destination. The year will close with a Three-Year Impact & Insights Report, which will measure the impact of marketing initiatives and inform the next strategic plan.

Strategies by Pillar

Regenerative Tourism & Visitor Education

Regenerative tourism isn’t just about doing less harm, it’s about actively creating positive change. For Sitka, this means centering cultural experiences, supporting local well-being, and stewarding our natural environment. Visit Sitka’s strategy is to educate visitors before they arrive, inspire them to travel responsibly while they’re here, and

leave them with a deeper connection to the community. By embedding regenerative principles into every touchpoint from pre-arrival campaigns to in-destination initiatives and expanded wayfinding, Sitka positions itself as a leader in thoughtful tourism. Each initiative builds on the belief that when visitors know better, they do better. The result is a stronger connection between visitors, the community, and the land they're experiencing.

I. Learn Before You Land Campaign: Ongoing Year 1 - Year 3 (2025-27)

The Learn Before You Land campaign is a pre-arrival educational effort designed to encourage responsible tourism and prepare visitors for a meaningful experience in Sitka. By utilizing email, social media, and website content, Visit Sitka will educate travelers on Sitka's culture, regenerative tourism principles, and the community's expectations for respectful visits. This campaign will also promote the Visitor Pledge, inviting visitors to commit to regenerative practices before arrival.

Action Items:

- **Content Development:** Develop key messaging and content for marketing channels.
- **Email Marketing:** Launch a pre-arrival email series for travelers who book through partner operators or request visitor guides.
- **Social Media Campaign:** Schedule biweekly or weekly posts with pre-arrival tips, emphasizing respect, sustainability, and environmental stewardship.
- **QR Code Integration:** Add QR codes to signage or collateral, linking to the Visit Sitka regenerative tourism page on the website. Encourage partner businesses to share resources with their clients before their visit.

KPIs:

- **Page Views:** Track page views for the regenerative tourism web page.
- **Email Engagement:** Monitor open rates, click-through rates (CTR), and email sign-ups.
- **Social Media Engagement:** Measure likes, shares, comments, and link clicks on social content promoting responsible tourism.
- **Pledge Completions:** Track how many visitors sign the Visitor Pledge.

II. Visitor Pledge: Year 1 (2025)

The Visitor Pledge invites visitors to make a formal commitment to travel responsibly in Sitka. The pledge will be interactive, allowing visitors to sign digitally or in person at arrival points like the Visitor Information Center, Harrigan Centennial Hall, and at the Sitka Airport.

Action Items:

- **Interactive Pledge Creation:** Design an online, interactive pledge form hosted on the Visit Sitka website, engaging with local partners to determine pledge's content.
- **Signage at Entry Points:** Place pledge signage at the Visitor Information Center, Harrigan Hall, and Sitka Airport with QR codes for immediate access.
- **Digital Campaign:** Promote the pledge in social media posts, newsletters, and pre-arrival emails as part of the Learn Before You Land campaign.
- **Pledge Visibility:** Include the pledge somewhere in the airport cultural installation, ensuring visibility upon arrival.

KPIs:

- **Pledge Completions:** Track the number of pledges signed online and at key visitor locations.
- **Engagement:** Monitor click-through rates (CTR) for pledge links shared via email and social media.
- **Pledge Impact:** Survey residents and businesses to assess the perceived impact of the Visitor Pledge on visitor behavior.

III. Tourism Best Practice Management (TBMP) Initiative: Year 2 (2026)

The Tourism Best Practice Management (TBMP) initiative will create a feedback system for residents and businesses to address tourism-related concerns. Modeled after Juneau's TBMP, this initiative establishes a mechanism for gathering and addressing community input, tracking visitor impacts, and promoting proactive responses to community concerns.

Action Items:

- **Feedback System Development:** Design a system for residents and businesses to submit tourism-related concerns online.
- **Data Dashboard:** Create an internal dashboard to track, analyze, and categorize community feedback.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Schedule an annual public meeting to review feedback, suggest best practice updates, and gain community buy-in.
- **Education & Training:** Conduct workshops to educate partner businesses on TBMP guidelines. These can be paired with future regenerative tourism community presentations or workshops.

KPIs:

- **Feedback Submissions:** Measure the total number of submissions from community members and businesses.
- **Resolution Rate:** Track the percentage of issues resolved.

- **Community Sentiment:** Measure changes in resident satisfaction and trust regarding tourism impacts.

IV. Workforce Recruitment Campaign: Ongoing Year 1 - Year 3 (2025-2027)

The Workforce Recruitment Campaign will position Sitka as a desirable place to work by promoting employment opportunities in the community. Visit Sitka will highlight the community's lifestyle benefits while also educating potential workers on the realities of moving to Sitka.

Action Items:

- **Campaign Development:** Develop key messages, content, and resources.
- **Advertising:** Launch the campaign across all digital marketing channels including social media, newsletter, and blog.
- **Job Portal Creation:** Add a "Work in Sitka" page to the Visit Sitka website with job listings, company profiles, and lifestyle content.
- **Partner Promotions:** Partner with partner businesses to promote available job opportunities and amplify hiring messages.

KPIs:

- **Content Engagement:** Measure video views, social shares, and click-through rates (CTR) from job ads.
- **Job Portal Traffic:** Monitor page views and job clicks on the "Work in Sitka" website page.

V. Emerging Leaders Program Support: Year 1 (2025)

Partner with the Sitka Chamber's Emerging Leaders Program to inspire and support the next generation of tourism entrepreneurs. Visit Sitka will take part in the annual summit hosting a roundtable or workshop where 10 new business ideas will be generated by the participants. This could also include establishing a mentorship program where young entrepreneurs are paired with current tourism business owners to receive real-life information and advice for creating a successful business.

Action Items:

- **New Business Workshop:** Host a 2-3 hour workshop with Emerging Leader participants to generate 10 new business ideas for Sitka.
- **Mentor Program:** Match aspiring entrepreneurs with seasoned tourism business owners for one-on-one mentorship

KPIs:

- **Participant Engagement:** Measure attendance and participation at the workshop and mentor program.

- **New Business Launches:** Count the number of new businesses launched as a result of this program.

VI. Wayfinding & Transportation Enhancements: Year 1 - Year 2 (2025-26)

Expand Phase II of the Wayfinding and Transportation Enhancements project. This initiative improves visitor navigation through Sitka with better signage, pedestrian-friendly design, and enhanced transportation information. An emphasis will be placed on crosswalk accessibility and pedestrian safety through advocacy to city, state, and federal entities.

Action Items:

- **Signage Design & Installation:** Replace generic directional signs with beautifully designed wayfinding icons and interpretive signs to grab visitors' attention and display key information.
- **Pedestrian Accessibility:** Partner with the City & Borough of Sitka to work on installing crosswalk improvements and safety upgrades for safe street crossings.

KPIs:

- **Signage Installations:** Number of signs installed, including interpretive signs and wayfinding signs.
- **Pedestrian Safety:** Reduction in pedestrian safety incidents and positive feedback from visitors and residents through the TBMP feedback line.

VII. Community Presentation & Workshop on Regenerative Tourism: Year 1 (2025)

Host a Community Presentation and Workshop on Regenerative Tourism to educate Sitka's residents, businesses, and tourism operators on regenerative tourism principles. Opportunity to partner with groups like Spruce Root and the Southeast Sustainable Southeast Partnership to develop workshop content and collaborate on future regenerative tourism initiatives in Sitka and across Southeast.

Action Items:

- **Plan Community Presentation:** Develop content, deck and handout with resources for the presentation. Send out invitations and present in a comfortable, beautiful space to ensure engagement and impact.
- **Workshop Design:** Work with partners to design workshop content and training materials.
- **Event Promotion:** Use email, social media, and partner outreach to encourage attendance at the workshop and community presentation.
- **Content Development:** Record and edit the workshop into an online video for ongoing reference. Include workshop content on Visit Sitka's website.

KPIs:

- Attendance: Number of community members, partners, and partner businesses in attendance for both the presentation and workshops.
- Video Views: Total video views after online distribution.
- Resident Perception: Measure changes in community perceptions of tourism's impact post-workshop.

VIII. Local Influencer Campaign: Year 1 - Year 2 (2025-26)

A Local Influencer Campaign will harness the creativity and unique perspectives of Sitka's community photographers, videographers, and storytellers to create authentic visual content for Visit Sitka. This initiative builds a deeper connection with the local community by incentivizing participation through tiered rewards from local businesses. By tapping into the talents of local creators, Visit Sitka can generate a diverse range of high-quality, user-generated content that showcases Sitka's year-round appeal while supporting local businesses.

The campaign could be structured in the following format:**Participation Guidelines**

- Open to all Sitka residents, including amateur and professional photographers, videographers, and content creators.
- Participants submit content in exchange for tiered rewards, based on the quality, quantity, and format of their contributions.
- Content should align with Visit Sitka's strategic pillars, such as cultural tourism, regenerative travel, meetings and events, and year-round visitation.

Tiered Rewards Program

- Entry Tier: Submit 5 high-res photos to earn small rewards, such as free coffee at a local café.
- Mid-Tier: Submit 10 high-res photos or a 30-second Instagram reel to earn medium rewards, like a free lunch or dinner at a participating restaurant.
- Premium Tier: Submit 20 high-res photos or a 1-minute professional video to earn higher-value rewards, such as gift cards for local experiences (e.g., guided tours, wellness services).

Content Specifications

- Images: High resolution, royalty-free usage, showcasing specific themes (e.g., wildlife, cultural landmarks, seasonal landscapes).
- Videos: Instagram-ready reels or longer format footage for website use, featuring storytelling elements or action shots of local activities.

Collaboration with Local Businesses

- Partner with local cafes, restaurants, and tour operators to provide tiered

rewards in exchange for increased visibility through campaign promotions.

- Spotlight participating businesses in campaign materials to encourage cross-promotion and drive engagement.

Action Items:

- Campaign Launch: Announce the campaign via Visit Sitka’s website, newsletters, and social media.
- Submission Process: Create an easy-to-use submission portal on the Visit Sitka Website where participants can upload their photo/video and select their preferred reward tier.
- Content Review and Distribution: Review submissions for quality and alignment with Visit Sitka’s brand and messaging, and feature selected content on Visit Sitka’s social media, blog, and collateral materials, crediting creators as appropriate.
- Reward Distribution: Coordinate with participating businesses to deliver rewards promptly.

KPIs:

- Content Creation: Number of photos, videos, and reels submitted.
- Local Engagement: Number of participants and repeat submissions.
- Social Media Impact: Increased follower engagement through the use of locally created content (likes, shares, comments).
- Business Collaboration: Number of local businesses participating as reward partners.
- Campaign Reach: Total impressions and shares of campaign announcements and featured content.
- Visitor Perception: Positive feedback from visitors who engage with locally sourced content on Visit Sitka’s channels.

IX. Partnership Program (Local Campaign): Year 3 (2027)

Continue efforts to increase Visit Sitka’s Partnership Program. In addition to what Visit Sitka is already doing, more (or different) incentives could be offered to entice new businesses to join.

Action Items:

- Evaluate existing Program: Conduct two surveys, one from existing partners to get feedback on what partnership perks they enjoy and what they think is missing, and one from non-partner local businesses to see what perks would make them want to sign up. Use email, social media,

partner outreach, and partner outreach to spread the word about the surveys to garner as much information as possible.

- Partnership Reworking: Use the survey feedback to inform Partnership Program (fees, perks, events, etc.) and redesign the Program as needed.

KPIs:

- Completed Surveys: Number of surveys submitted
- Partnerships: Number of renewed partnerships and number of new partners

Cultural Tourism

Sitka’s cultural tourism strategy is rooted in the celebration and amplification of Tlingít voices, stories, and experiences. As a community-driven destination, Sitka offers visitors an opportunity to engage with living culture in meaningful ways. By leading with Tlingít perspectives, Visit Sitka aims to establish a sense of place to foster respect, and curiosity, and deepen visitor engagement. This approach is a commitment to cultural visibility, collaboration with local partners, and shared storytelling. By co-creating experiences with artists, tour operators, and organizations, supporting the local economy while strengthening community ties.

I. Welcome Video: Year 1 - Year 2 (2025-26)

Create a bilingual (Tlingít and English) Welcome Video that introduces and educates visitors about Sitka’s cultural values, regenerative tourism principles, and community ethos. This video will highlight the importance of respect for Tlingít heritage, as well as the role of responsible tourism in preserving Sitka’s cultural and natural beauty. Visit Sitka will partner with the Sheet’ká Kwaán Sitka Tribe of Alaska (STA) to co-develop the script, identify speakers who will appear in the video, and ensure cultural authenticity. The video will be displayed at key visitor entry points like the Sitka Airport, Harrigan Centennial Hall, and Visitor Information Center, and on the website and social media. It can also be used as an introduction for industry conventions and meetings held in Sitka, helping to position Visit Sitka as a leader in cultural tourism and regenerative tourism education.

Actions Items:

- Script Development: Collaborate with STA to develop a culturally authentic script, select speakers, and align on key messaging.
- Video Production: Film interviews, scenic Sitka landscapes, and cultural sites, incorporating bilingual narration and subtitles.

- **Launch & Promotion:** Showcase the video at Sitka Airport, Harrigan Centennial Hall, and Visitor Center. Share shorter versions on social media, websites, and at industry conventions.

KPIs:

- **Viewership:** Approximate physical exposure using foot traffic counts at the airport, Visitor Center, and Harrigan Hall.
- **Digital Views:** Track social media video views and website plays
- **Event Impact:** Track post-event attendee feedback to measure cultural understanding and impressions.
- **QR Code Interactions:** Use QR codes on collateral or printed displays and track scan rates.

II. Airport Installation: Year 1 - Year 2 (2025-26)

Collaborate with the City & Borough of Sitka’s airport design contractor to design a cultural installation at the Sitka Rocky Gutierrez Airport Terminal. This installation will complement the Welcome Video by providing a physical, immersive experience that educates visitors and reinforces Tlingít visibility at a key entry point to Sitka. The project will be co-created with a local Tlingít artist.

Potential Installations

- **Wall Mural:** A large mural designed to serve as a focal point at the airport’s entrance or a prominent wall within the terminal.
- **Interpretive Signage and Wayfinding:** Replace standard airport directional signs with Tlingít-inspired wayfinding art. Incorporating bilingual captions on signage in both Tlingít and English.
- **Rotating Art Display & Artist Showcase:** A gallery-style art display located within the airport to showcase the works of local Indigenous artists.

Action Items:

- **Installation Selection & Ideation:** Select an installation concept(s) and begin planning with airport officials to confirm site placement, compliance, and safety requirements.
- **Design:** Select an artist to commission or partner with to conceptualize design and schedule installation.
- **Production & Installation:** Installing the piece, testing any interactive features, and hosting a celebratory luncheon or local feature on the completion of the installation.

KPIs:

- **Project Completion:** Installation fully completed and operational by Summer of 2026.

- Artist Engagement: 1-2 local Tlingít artists commissioned to design and contribute to the installation.
- Visitor Interaction: Number of QR code scans or interactions with any digital elements.
- Art Display Rotation: 1-2 rotating art exhibits annually showcasing works from local Indigenous artists.
- Media Mentions & PR: Earned media coverage through at least 1-2 local, regional, or national press mentions following the installation's launch.
- Launch Event Attendance: Minimum of 15 attendees (community members, Elders, artists, and media) at the unveiling celebration event.
- Social Media Engagement: Social shares, mentions, and tags from visitors interacting with the installation.
- Community Buy-in: Positive community feedback collected via word of mouth or in-person feedback.

II. Launch Tlingít/English Driftscape Tour: Year 1 (2025)

Launch a self-guided Tlingít/English cultural tour on the Driftscape app. Ensure visitors can access the tour via QR codes, app downloads, or direct links from Visit Sitka's website and social channels. To ensure accessibility, physical signs with QR codes will be installed at key visitor entry points, including Harrigan Centennial Hall, the Visitor Information Center, and the Cruise Ship Terminal.

Actions Items:

- Signage & Installation: Design signs to be displayed at key entry points with messaging and information about the tour. Visit Sitka staff to work with locations to install signage.
- Digital Promotion: Add links to the Driftscape tour on the Visit Sitka website, social media platforms, and email newsletters.

KPIs:

- Tour Participation: Track the number of app downloads and completed tours on Driftscape.
- User Feedback: Collect visitor feedback via in-app surveys to measure tour satisfaction and gather suggestions for improvement.
- QR Code Interactions: Monitor scans of QR codes placed at Harrigan Centennial Hall, Visitor Information Center, and the Cruise Terminal.
- Website Traffic: Track links on the website.

IV. Host a Year of Indigenous Travel Writers: Year 2 - Year 3 (2026-27)

Host a year of Indigenous travel writers, journalists, and cultural bloggers to experience and report on Sitka's cultural tourism. Writers will participate in Tlingít-led tours, meet with local artists, and engage in hands-on cultural experiences. These

stories would aim to inspire visitors to seek out deeper, more authentic experiences and generate positive press, creating opportunities for Sitka's cultural tourism sector to grow.

Action Items:

- **Writer Outreach:** Identify and recruit 3-5 Indigenous writers, journalists, or bloggers.
- **Itinerary Curation:** Design 2-day custom itineraries that include Tlingít-led tours, visits to local art studios, and exclusive cultural experiences. Work with Visit Sitka partners to develop these.
- **Media Amplification:** Amplify published stories through Visit Sitka's blog, social media, newsletters, and PR channels. Cross-promote coverage with media partners.

KPIs:

- **Media Placements:** Track the number of earned media placements in statewide, national, and travel outlets.
- **Content Reach:** Measure total impressions and engagement on articles and social media content.

V. Tlingít Heritage Information Hub on Website: Year 1 (2025)

The Tlingít Heritage Information Hub will serve as a centralized digital resource on the Visit Sitka website, showcasing Tlingít culture, traditions, and community-led experiences. Launched in Year 1, the hub will provide visitors with accessible and authentic educational content, reinforcing Sitka's commitment to amplifying Indigenous voices. By highlighting Tlingít-led tours, workshops, and cultural events, the hub will set the tone for cultural respect and education throughout the visitor journey. Designed to work within the existing website infrastructure, it will align with regenerative tourism principles while connecting travelers with Tlingít history, language, and traditions.

Key Features could include:

- **Tlingít-Led Experience:** Highlight guided tours, workshops, and cultural events led by Tlingít Elders, artists, and organizations like the Sheet'ká Kwaán Sitka Tribe of Alaska (STA), Shee Atiká, and Sealaska.
- **Educational Resources:** Include articles, videos, and FAQs on Tlingít history, clan systems, totem pole meanings, and traditional practices. Offer a glossary of Tlingít words and phrases with audio clips for correct pronunciation.
- **Cultural Etiquette Guidance:** Provide downloadable guides and practical tips for visitors to engage respectfully with Tlingít culture and community.

Action Items:

- Content Development: Partner with Tlingít cultural leaders to co-create authentic and accurate content.
- Web Design: Develop the website page with SEO-optimized content.
- Promotion: Launch a 3-4 month campaign to promote the Hub through Visit Sitka's social media, newsletter, and paid ads.

KPIs:

- Website Engagement: Monitor page views, time spent on the hub, and clicks to Tlingít-led experiences.
- Content Interactions: Track downloads of cultural etiquette guides and glossary usage (e.g., audio clips played).
- Event Participation: Measure visitor attendance at events or workshops promoted through the hub.
- Community Feedback: Gather feedback from Tlingít leaders and partners on the hub's effectiveness and representation.
- Newsletter Sign-Ups: Track email subscriptions generated from hub promotions.
- Visitor Sentiment: Use surveys and visitor feedback to assess the hub's impact on cultural understanding and engagement.

VI. Cultural Voices in Marketing Content: Ongoing Year 2 - Year 3 (2026-2027)

Embed cultural voices across all of Visit Sitka's marketing channels, including social media, website, blogs, newsletters, and PR. By prioritizing cultural storytelling, Visit Sitka will establish a strong sense of place and reinforce Sitka's identity as a community-driven, culturally rich destination.

Action Items:

- Content Strategy & Messaging: Develop a strategy that positions Tlingít voices as a key pillar of Visit Sitka's brand.
- Content Calendar Integration: Build a content calendar that features cultural tourism opportunities, partner spotlights, artist features, and partner content.
- Partnership Development: Collaborate with partners, and local artists to co-create content. Creating opportunities for cross-promotion and shared storytelling.

KPIs:

- Social Media Engagement: Track likes, shares, comments, and post saves for all cultural storytelling content.
- Blog Traffic: Track total visits to cultural storytelling blog posts and key landing pages.

- **Newsletter Performance:** Monitor open rates, click-through rates (CTR), and subscriber growth for newsletters featuring Tlingit storytelling.
- **PR Coverage:** Track the number of media placements, press mentions, and earned media related to cultural tourism.
- **Collaborative Content:** Track the number of co-branded features and cross-promotional content pieces with partners.
- **Visitor Feedback:** Monitor sentiment from visitor reviews and social media comments.

Meetings & Events

Sitka has the opportunity to position itself as a top destination for meetings, events, retreats, and conventions. By branding Harrigan Centennial Hall, offering curated event packages, and hosting familiarization (FAM) weeks for planners, Visit Sitka will showcase the community as an ideal year-round event destination. This strategy prioritizes collaboration with local businesses to create all-inclusive experiences that set Sitka apart from competitors like Juneau and Anchorage. By driving year-round visitation and securing new event bookings, these efforts support local businesses, and generate revenue.

I. Harrigan Centennial Hall Branding & Marketing: Year 1 (2025)

Branding Harrigan Centennial Hall to position it as a premier venue for trade events, conventions, and meetings. This effort includes new messaging, marketing collateral, a promotional video, and venue rental packages that highlight its capacity, and location. The brand will position Sitka as a competitive option for small-to-medium-sized meetings and events.

Action Items:

- **Brand Development:** Refresh branding, visual identity, and messaging for Harrigan Centennial Hall. This includes developing a website for information to be featured on.
- **Content Creation:** Produce a promotional video, updated photography, and digital assets for use on the new website, social media, and resource materials
- **Venue Packages:** Help create flexible rental packages tailored to corporate retreats, wellness retreats, and small-to-medium-sized conventions.
- **Digital Launch:** Announce the rebrand via social media, email newsletters, and local media.

KPIs:

- **Booking Inquiries:** Track the number of venue inquiries received.

- **Booking Conversions:** Count new event bookings and deposits secured.
- **Website Engagement:** Measure visits and click-throughs to the new website.
- **Brand Awareness:** Track mentions and impressions from PR, earned media, and partner referrals.

II. Themed Packages for Meetings & Events: Year 1 (2025)

Develop multi-day, all-inclusive retreat packages for corporate, executive, and wellness retreats with partner businesses. Packages will feature activities like cultural tours, wellness experiences, local dining, and guided outdoor recreation. These packages will simplify event planning for decision-makers and event organizers, offering a "one-stop shop" for booking retreats in Sitka.

Action Items:

- **Package Development:** Collaborate with local businesses, wellness providers, and tour operators to create themed packages (e.g., Wellness Retreats, Adventure Retreats, Corporate Retreats).
- **Pricing Strategy:** Develop tiered pricing options to meet the budgets of small, medium, and large groups.
- **Marketing Launch:** Promote packages through Visit Sitka's website, email marketing, and paid media targeting event planners and corporate HR departments.
- **Content Integration:** Add package offerings to the Harrigan Centennial Hall website and promote through their marketing channels.

KPIs:

- **Package Bookings:** Count the number of packages booked annually.
- **Lead Conversions:** Measure how many leads from Visit Sitka or Harrigan Centennial Hall inquiries convert to bookings.
- **Revenue Impact:** Track revenue increases for partner businesses and partners included in packages.
- **Digital Engagement:** Monitor website clicks and downloads of package details or itineraries.

III. Update Meetings & Conventions Planner and Website: Year 2 (2026)

Refresh and modernize Visit Sitka's Meetings & Conventions Planner and website page to reflect Harrigan Centennial Hall's packages and local event planner offerings from partner businesses. The updated tools will highlight the benefits of choosing Sitka, offer visually compelling content, and provide downloadable, ready-to-use planning resources.

Action Items:

- **Content & Design Refresh:** Redesign the Meetings & Conventions Planner with updated content and new photography.
- **Website Update:** Revamp the Meetings & Events landing page to be more visually engaging, accessible, and conversion focused. Include clearer calls-to-action (CTAs) for booking inquiries and downloadable resources.
- **SEO Optimization:** Optimize website content with target keywords like "corporate retreats Alaska" and "Alaska meeting venues" to increase visibility on search engines.
- **Promotional Rollout:** Launch a promotional campaign to announce the updated Meetings & Conventions Planner and website, utilizing social media, email marketing, and partner channels.

KPIs:

- **Website Traffic:** Track page visits to the Meetings & Conventions page and clicks to the planner download link.
- **Planner Downloads:** Count the number of digital planner downloads from the website.
- **Partner Engagement:** Measure the number of local partners who contribute to new planning resources or provide updates for the planner.

IV. Host a FAM Week for Planners: Year 2 (2026)

Host a Familiarization (FAM) Week for key event planners and decision-makers from Alaska and the Pacific Northwest. This event will showcase Harrigan Centennial Hall and showcase newly developed themed packages for meetings & events created with Visit Sitka partner businesses. The goal is to develop relationships with meeting planners and drive future bookings for retreats, events, conventions, and meetings.

Action Items:

- **Planner Outreach:** Identify and invite meeting planners from key markets (corporate, nonprofit, and association planners).
- **Experience Design:** Curate an itinerary that includes tours of Harrigan Centennial Hall, accommodations, local dining experiences, and cultural tours.
- **Content Creation:** Capture photos and video content during the FAM trip to use in future marketing materials.
- **Post-Event Follow-Up:** Conduct follow-up calls with attendees to convert interest into bookings.

KPIs:

- **Attendance:** Number of event planners and decision-makers who attend the FAM Week.

- **Post-FAM Inquiries:** Track new booking inquiries that result from FAM participation.
- **Content Performance:** Measure performance of FAM-related social media and PR coverage.
- **Lead Conversion:** Number of meetings or events booked as a direct result of FAM participation.

V. Targeted Meetings & Conventions Marketing: Year 2 - Year 3 (2026-27)

Launch a targeted marketing campaign that positions Sitka as an ideal location for regional meetings, trade shows, and corporate retreats. The campaign will emphasize Sitka's natural beauty, cultural experiences, and unique offerings for year-round events. Key messaging will highlight Harrigan Centennial Hall, planning packages, and toolkit.

Action Items:

- **Campaign Development:** Create ad copy, creative assets, and videos promoting Sitka as a meeting and retreat destination.
- **Digital Advertising:** Launch paid digital advertising campaigns on platforms like Google Ads, LinkedIn, and industry event websites.
- **SEO Optimization:** Optimize website content to rank for key phrases like "corporate retreats in Alaska" and "meetings in Southeast Alaska."
- **Trade Shows & Partnerships:** Attend trade shows and regional business conferences to promote Sitka as a destination for small-to-medium-sized meetings.

KPIs:

- **Lead Generation:** Track the number of new booking inquiries for meetings and events on the Harrigan Centennial Hall website.
- **Website Traffic:** Measure visits to the "Meetings & Conventions" landing page on the Visit Sitka website.
- **Lead Conversion:** Count the number of event inquiries converted into confirmed bookings.
- **Impressions & Clicks:** Monitor ad performance (impressions, clicks, and conversions) on social media and e-newsletters.

VI. Promote Wellness & Retreats: Year 3 (2027)

Under the Meetings & Events pillar, wellness retreats represent a unique opportunity to attract mid-sized groups and corporate teams seeking restorative, nature-driven experiences. By leveraging both local influencers and regional/national wellness creators, Visit Sitka can showcase Sitka as an ideal setting for group wellness retreats,

combining the tranquility of nature, immersive cultural experiences, and modern meeting spaces.

Local influencers: Including photographers, yoga instructors, and wellness advocates can capture content over time, ensuring a variety of seasonal imagery and overcoming challenges like inconsistent weather. Their familiarity with Sitka allows for authentic storytelling and behind-the-scenes looks at wellness offerings.

Non-local influencers: Bring a broader reach and can position Sitka as a hidden gem for wellness retreats. Hosted experiences with curated itineraries will showcase Sitka's stunning natural landscapes, modern meeting venues, and team-building activities like kayaking or mindfulness hikes. Utilize the overarching influencer strategy, but pay special attention to engage with influencers that fall within the wellness industry, and work with partners that do the same.

Action Items:

- **Wellness Package Development:** Collaborate with wellness-oriented businesses to develop retreat packages for small to mid-sized groups.
- **Content Development:** Produce video, blog content, and itineraries highlighting Sitka as a wellness retreat destination.
- **Digital Campaign Launch:** Launch a social media campaign targeting the wellness travel segment.
- **Event Support:** Support local wellness retreat organizers by promoting their events via Visit Sitka's blog, email newsletters, and social media.

KPIs:

- **Booking Conversions:** Number of retreat bookings directly linked to Visit Sitka promotions.
- **Content Engagement:** Track total video views, blog visits, and clicks on wellness retreat itineraries.
- **SEO Rankings:** Measure SEO improvements for keywords like "Alaska wellness retreat" and "Sitka wellness retreat."

Year-Round Travel

By promoting year-round travel, supporting local beautification efforts, and enhancing planning resources, this strategy aims to attract independent travelers during Sitka's quieter months. Initiatives like interactive planning tools, sweepstakes, and curated local insights will highlight the unique experiences available in the fall, winter, and spring. These efforts will support local businesses, increase overnight stays, and reduce infrastructure strain during the summer peak.

I. Visit Sitka Participation in National Campaigns: Year 1 (2025)

Participate in high-visibility national campaigns like America 250, leveraging these opportunities to elevate Sitka's presence on a national stage. These campaigns will amplify Sitka's message, increase brand visibility, and generate national media coverage.

Action Items:

- Campaign Participation: Align Visit Sitka's messaging with America 250 and other national tourism initiatives.
- PR Strategy: Pitch Sitka-specific angles to media partners and pitch story ideas to travel journalists.
- Content Creation: Develop visuals, blog content, and social media posts promoting Sitka's participation in the campaign.

KPIs:

- Media Mentions: Track the number of mentions or features of Sitka linked to national campaigns.
- Visitor Engagement: Measure website traffic and referral traffic linked to national campaign mentions.
- PR Value: Measure the earned media value (EMV) of national press mentions.

II. Quarterly Visitor Newsletter: Ongoing Year 1 - Year 3 (2025-27)

Launch a quarterly visitor-facing newsletter to keep potential travelers engaged year-round. This email newsletter will feature travel planning tips, partner promotions, and seasonal updates to drive interest in year-round travel.

Action Items:

- Content Development: Develop a quarterly content plan featuring seasonal travel tips, upcoming events, and partner promotions.
- Newsletter Design: Create a visually appealing email template optimized for desktop and mobile devices.
- Email List Growth: Promote newsletter sign-ups via website pop-ups, social media, and partner businesses.

KPIs:

- Open Rates: Measure the percentage of subscribers opening each newsletter.
- Click-Through Rates (CTR): Track the number of clicks to featured promotions or blog posts.
- List Growth: Monitor email list growth over time.

III. Insider Scoop Website Page: Year 1 - Year 2 (2025-26)

Launch an "Insider Scoop" page on the Visit Sitka website that features local recommendations for restaurants, activities, and "hidden gems." This page will be populated with input from Sitka residents, local business owners, and partner businesses, offering a trusted, local perspective for visitors.

Action Items:

- Content Curation: Collect and organize recommendations from local businesses, residents, and partners.
- Web Design: Create a visually engaging, SEO-friendly landing page for the Insider Scoop.
- Promotion: Drive traffic to the page through social media and email newsletters.

KPIs:

- Page Views: Track visits to the Insider Scoop page on the website.
- Engagement: Measure time spent on the page and click-throughs to partner listings.
- User Contributions: Track the number of local submissions and recommendations featured on the page.

IV. Year-Round Visitor Guide Strategy: Year 1 (2025)

The Visit Sitka Official Visitors' Guide has been a vital resource for travelers, but as the destination evolves, so should the guide. Over the next three years, the Visitor Guide will be reimagined to better reflect Visit Sitka's strategic marketing pillars. This evolution will ensure the guide showcases Sitka as a destination for independent travelers seeking meaningful, year-round experiences, as well as corporate retreats and wellness travelers, and event or convention planners. Year 1 (2025) will focus on rethinking the narrative and design approach, spotlighting local voices, and emphasizing regenerative tourism themes.

Action Items:

- Visioning Workshop: Host an internal content visioning workshop to identify the core themes, stories, and layout for the reimagined guide.
- Content Development: Craft new copy and design visually engaging layouts that emphasize winter, fall, and spring experiences, independent travel, and cultural tourism.
- Print & Distribution: Print and distribute physical guides for use at key entry points (airports, visitor centers) and send them to partner businesses and industry events.

KPIs:

- Digital Downloads: Track total downloads and views of the online Visitor Guide.
- Print Distribution: Measure the number of guides distributed at airports, visitor centers, partner businesses, and industry events.
- Guide Requests: Track total Visitor Guide requests annually.
- Story Impact: Monitor feedback from partners and travelers on the quality and relevance of storytelling content.

V. Transportation Guide: Year 1 - Year 2 (2025-26)

Create a Transportation Guide for Sitka to educate visitors on all available transportation options, from motorized services like rental cars and driving tours to non-motorized options like bike rentals and pedestrian-friendly routes. This guide will support Visit Sitka's goal to enhance accessibility, reduce visitor confusion, and promote sustainable travel behaviors. By providing clear, visually appealing information, this guide will make it easier for visitors to navigate Sitka while supporting regenerative tourism principles. The guide will be available as a physical handout at key entry points (like the Sitka Airport and Visitor Center) and as a downloadable, mobile-friendly digital version on the Visit Sitka website.

Action Items:

- Content Development: Develop comprehensive transportation content, including car rental services, shuttle options, e-bike rentals, public transit, crosswalk safety tips, and pedestrian-friendly routes.
- Design & Production: Create a visually appealing and easy-to-read transportation guide that aligns with Visit Sitka's brand aesthetic and messaging.
- Digital Integration: Launch a downloadable, mobile-friendly version of the guide on the Visit Sitka website. Add QR codes at key entry points, like the Visitor Center and Airport, for easy access.
- Print & Distribution: Print signs to direct visitors to the digital guide and post at key entry points, partner businesses, and major transportation hubs like the Sitka Airport, Visitor Information Center, and cruise ship terminal.

KPIs:

- Digital Downloads: Track total downloads of the digital Transportation Guide from the Visit Sitka website.
- User Engagement: Monitor feedback from visitors on guide usefulness via website feedback, visitor reviews, and post-visit surveys.
- Website Traffic: Track website visits and time spent on the

- Transportation Guide landing page.
- Community Feedback: Measure support from local businesses and community partners for the guide's content and usefulness.

VI. Seasonal Adventure Sweepstakes: Year 2 (2026)

Visit Sitka will launch a Seasonal Adventure Sweepstakes to drive interest and visitation during Sitka's quieter shoulder seasons—fall, spring, and winter. These seasons offer unique opportunities to experience Sitka's stunning landscapes, seasonal wildlife activity, and rich cultural offerings without the summer crowds. The campaign will spotlight immersive year-round experiences, such as wildlife viewing during the spring herring spawn or fall eagle migrations, guided cultural tours, and wellness-focused retreats. By partnering with local businesses to offer accommodations, dining, and tours as part of the prize, the sweepstakes will inspire travel during these key periods, generate leads, and deepen engagement with Visit Sitka's platforms.

Suggested Prize Package could be similar to:

- A 3-night stay at a local lodge or inn.
- Guided wildlife experiences such as spring herring spawn viewing or fall eagle migrations.
- Access to cultural tours or shows, art workshops, or other hands-on experiences tailored to the season.
- Dining vouchers for partner restaurants.

Suggested Entry Qualifications could be:

- Signing up for Visit Sitka's Quarterly Newsletter (primary entry).
- Engaging with Visit Sitka's social media posts (e.g., liking, commenting, sharing, or tagging friends).
- Downloading the Driftscape App to explore Sitka's self-guided tours and experiences.
- Creating a custom itinerary using the new Interactive Itinerary Builder (bonus entry).
- Completing the Visitor Pledge for responsible travel, encouraging regenerative tourism principles (bonus entry).

Action Items:

- Campaign Development: Design a landing page for sweepstakes entry and capture visitor data for future email marketing.
- Content Creation: Produce campaign visuals and promotional content for social media, email, and paid ads.
- Promotion: Launch the campaign across Visit Sitka's website, social media platforms, and email newsletters. Run paid ads targeting independent travelers and shoulder-season explorers. Partner with

influencers or travel bloggers to share their experiences of Sitka during these quieter seasons.

- **Partner Involvement:** Partner with local businesses to offer accommodations, tours, and dining experiences as part of the prize package. Offer a paid plan where partner businesses could pay X amount of dollars to be included in an entry method. E.g. Follow "X" partner business for an extra sweepstakes entry.

KPIs:

- **Lead Generation:** Number of new newsletter sign-ups and referral-based entries.
- **Website Engagement:** Landing page visits, click-through rates to linked tools, and time spent on the page.
- **Social Media Metrics:** Campaign engagement (likes, shares, comments, and tags) and total reach.
- **Itinerary Builder Usage:** Number of custom itineraries created during the campaign.
- **Visitor Pledge Participation:** Number of Visitor Pledges completed as part of entry.
- **Overall Participation:** Total entries, including bonus entries from all channels.

VII. Interactive Itinerary Builder Tool: Year 2 (2026)

Enhance the Visit Sitka website with a dynamic and user-friendly itinerary builder that allows travelers to customize their trip based on specific interests, such as adventure, wellness, eco-conscious travel, or cultural tourism. This tool will offer curated recommendations for local businesses, tours, events, and accommodations, encouraging longer stays and deeper engagement with Sitka's offerings, while helping to promote Visit Sitka's partners.

Action Items:

Tool Development:

- Visit Sitka should collaborate with a web developer to create an intuitive, quiz-based tool with AI-driven recommendations for itineraries tailored to user preferences.
- Integrate an interactive map feature where users can visualize their itinerary by location (e.g., trails, cultural spots, restaurants, and lodging).
- Include options for 1-day, 3-day, or week-long visits to accommodate travelers with different lengths of stay.

Business and Experience Integration:

- Work with partner businesses to showcase local tours, restaurants,

- cultural activities, and accommodations. Allow these businesses to submit customizable experiences or packages directly into the tool.
- Highlight seasonal offerings (e.g., Spring herring spawn viewing, winter wellness retreats, or summer kayaking adventures) to align with marketing goals.
 - Include “insider tips” from local guides, artisans, and residents to personalize the recommendations further.

Promotion and Launch Strategy:

- Develop a "Plan Your Sitka Adventure" campaign to promote the tool across multiple channels:
 - Social Media: Short videos, user testimonials, and sneak peeks of the tool in action.
 - Email Newsletters: Target past visitors and interested travelers with personalized invites to try the itinerary builder.
 - Influencer Partnerships: Work with travel influencers to test and showcase the tool, sharing their custom itineraries and experiences.
 - Visit Sitka Website: Feature the itinerary builder prominently on the homepage with a call-to-action for trip planning.

User Experience Enhancement:

- Add a "Save and Share" feature, allowing visitors to email their itinerary, share it with their group, or print a clean, easy-to-follow version for offline use.
- Offer a follow-up email with links to book tours, accommodations, and local experiences directly.

Community Involvement:

- Host workshops for local businesses to ensure their listings are up-to-date, accurate, and compelling. Encourage bundled packages or limited-time offers exclusive to itinerary users.

KPIs:

- User Engagement Metrics: Number of visitors who access and complete the itinerary builder. Average time spent on the itinerary page and overall website engagement.
- Business Engagement Metrics: Number of partner businesses listed in the tool and packages submitted. Click-through rates to business pages and partner booking platforms.
- Conversion Metrics: Track the percentage of users who proceed to bookings for tours, accommodations, or event tickets after completing the itinerary. Monitor direct feedback through a post-itinerary survey or

- review prompt to evaluate user satisfaction and potential improvements.
- **Social Engagement Metrics:** Monitor social media engagement from campaign launches (e.g., shares of personalized itineraries or campaign videos).

VIII. Downtown Beautification Support: Year 3 (2027)

Support downtown beautification efforts in collaboration with the City & Borough of Sitka. Efforts may include adding planters, public art, benches, and wayfinding signage to create a more welcoming experience for visitors, and supporting infrastructure development such as the Lincoln Street Project. These initiatives encourage foot traffic, drive exploration of local businesses, and enhance Sitka's sense of place.

Action Items:

- **Project Planning:** Work with city officials to identify priority areas for beautification.
- **Partner Engagement:** Collaborate with partner businesses and the newly-formed Downtown Business Association to co-sponsor planters, benches, and art installations.
- **Public Art Installation:** Partner with local artists to install new public art as part of the beautification effort.

KPIs:

- **Community Participation:** Track the number of local businesses and partners involved.
- **Installations Completed:** Measure the number of new planters, benches, and public art pieces installed.

IX. Community Events Calendar: Year 3 (2027)

Launch a public-facing events calendar to feature community events, seasonal celebrations, and cultural festivals year-round. This initiative will increase visitor engagement, inspire trip planning, and drive traffic to local events.

Action Items:

- **Content Collection:** Work with partner businesses and local event organizers to collect event details.
- **Website Integration:** Add an interactive events calendar to the Visit Sitka website.
- **Promotion:** Promote events via social media and newsletters to drive attendance and encourage year-round travel.

KPIs:

- **Event Listings:** Number of events added to the calendar each year.

- Page Views: Measure visits to the events calendar page.
- Event Attendance: Track attendance at featured events to assess Visit Sitka's impact.

Channel Enhancements

Social media and the website are Visit Sitka's most influential marketing channels, playing a central role in shaping the visitor experience. They are the two key platforms for inspiration, trip planning, and brand storytelling.

Given their impact, these platforms require focused attention and ongoing improvement. The recommendations in this section aim to enhance engagement, streamline visitor planning, and increase independent bookings. From boosting ads to launching an interactive itinerary builder, these enhancements will ensure Sitka's most visible marketing assets remain effective, user-friendly, and aligned with the strategic goals of balanced, year-round visitation and deeper community connection.

Social Media

Visit Sitka's social media channels (Facebook and Instagram) have been successful with hardly any ad spend or additional promotional budget. The large organic reach and engagements seen on both platforms is a testament to the brand and its content resonating with the right target audience. However, large DMO accounts have budgets for Meta ads and boosting, content creation, specific campaigns, and influencer marketing to stand out and maximize their city's reach to the general public. Visit Sitka should be doing this as well, as it is one of Alaska's premier destinations.

With over 70,000 followers on Facebook and nearly 18,000 on Instagram, Visit Sitka's social media presence is significant. Coincidentally, many people (especially those that are independent travelers) use Facebook and Instagram as a planning tool for their trips and vacations- something that Visit Sitka can take advantage of with opportunities for social media enhancements listed below:

- **Meta Ads and Boosting:** Ideally, every Facebook and Instagram post is boosted, for either engagements or page visits/likes. Even a small budget of \$15 per post can reach an additional 130-370 accounts, while boosting already higher performing posts by \$50 can reach an additional 460-1,300 accounts (the organic metrics on these posts are already performing above average, so an extra boost of budget can take these posts into viral-territory). In addition to boosting, Visit Sitka should run ads for Profile Likes and Visits, to grow the following on both Facebook and Instagram. These ads should be run weekly or bi-weekly. When Visit Sitka has specific campaigns that are running (read more in the subsection below), ads should be run to promote these to whichever audience the campaign is targeting. These ads will be placed in more than just the newsfeed, as they can show up in Messenger, Marketplace, Instagram, and Meta Audience Network to reach as many users as possible.

**Implement in Phase 1, with adjustments made in Phases 2 and 3 depending on results*

- **Content Creation:** Photoshoots where images and video are captured should be conducted bi-annually, if not quarterly. Separate from the Visitor Guide photoshoot, these photoshoots are to create content specifically for social media and the blog (since Visit Sitka sometimes cross-posts content). Reels should be planned and scripted to avoid missing content once photoshoots have ended. Assets should be captured around Sitka and places the DMO would like to feature, like seasons (i.e. Spring = Herring, Fall = Colors on Harbor Mountain), Partner businesses to highlight, different activities available depending on the time of year, wildlife, photos to match pre-planned blog posts, etc.
 - *Phase 1: plan one additional photoshoot besides the Visitor Guide shoot to highlight at least 1x activity and 2x partner businesses.
 - Phase 2: increase planning to 2-3 photoshoots beyond Visitor Guide shoot
 - Phase 3: evaluate if photoshoots should be bi-annual or quarterly, depending on how much content is needed

- **Specific Campaigns Suggestions:** These are based on the major campaigns outlined in the Strategies section of this document:
 - Partnership program (local campaign): Share a Partnership survey so local businesses (active partners and non-partners both) can provide Visit Sitka feedback on improving the Program in hopes of getting more Partners. The survey links can be shared in Facebook posts and Stories.
 - Cultural Voices: Highlight cultural storytelling and Tlingit voices on Facebook and Instagram to showcase Sitka as a unique community-driven and culturally-rich travel destination. These highlights can be reels, carousel posts, static posts, and stories sharing Indigenous-owned Partner businesses, Native artists features, cultural tourism opportunities, and local partners who represent or are active in the Sitka Native community.
 - Learn Before you Land: Educate social media users on responsible tourism and how to have a meaningful experience before they visit Sitka. This pre-arrival educational effort will utilize Reels, carousel posts, static posts, and Stories to highlight Sitka's culture, regenerative tourism principles, and the community's expectations for respectful visits. To ensure content doesn't come across as "preachy," messaging on social media should be shared in a fun and engaging way (stickers, polls, etc. on Stories; past visitor testimonials on how they enjoyed their trip to Sitka; humorous "Do's and Don't's" graphics) to ensure high engagement and information retention.

- **TikTok:** While Visit Sitka has a TikTok account, it has not been active in recent years. A decent percentage of TikTok users plan trips based on recommendations on the app, so this is another tool in Visit Sitka’s social media efforts that should be utilized. Due to the uncertain future of TikTok in the US, too much time and energy should not be focused here. However, it’s still important to be active enough to increase the reach of the Visit Sitka brand, so it is recommended to post bi-weekly or weekly on this platform.

Website

The following are a list of website recommendations that Visit Sitka should consider implementing to better align the existing website with the goals of this marketing plan.

- **Interactive Itinerary Builder:** Visit Sitka will introduce a quiz-based Interactive Itinerary Builder that allows visitors to personalize their trips based on specific interests such as adventure, wellness, cultural tourism, or eco-conscious travel. The tool will feature customizable itineraries for 1-day, 3-day, and week-long visits, complete with integrated maps showing attractions, accommodations, and local dining. Partner businesses will be highlighted, with options for bundled experiences and seasonal offerings. Travelers will also be able to save, print, and share their itineraries, creating a seamless planning process that encourages longer stays and deeper engagement.
- **Cultural Heritage Hub:** Develop a Tlingít Cultural Heritage Hub to serve as a central resource for Sitka’s cultural experiences. This dedicated page will feature Tlingít-led tours, immersive storytelling workshops, cultural itineraries, and profiles of local Indigenous artists and artisans. Visitors will have access to educational resources, such as the Welcome Video and links to the Tlingít/English Driftscape Tour, reinforcing cultural visibility and respect.
- **Regenerative Tourism Page:** Continue to develop the Regenerative Tourism page with comprehensive information that educates visitors on sustainable and responsible travel practices. This page will include the Visitor Pledge, “Learn Before You Land” campaign content, and actionable tips on minimizing environmental impact. Blog posts, videos, and visuals will share real-life examples of Sitka’s regenerative efforts, such as forest preservation projects and responsible fishing initiatives.
- **Enhanced Meetings & Events section:** Update the Meetings & Events section to highlight Sitka’s diverse range of venues and flexible options for corporate retreats, wellness events, and mid-sized conventions. This expanded resource will feature all available meeting spaces, including Harrigan Centennial Hall, lodges, cultural centers, and unique outdoor venues, ensuring planners can find the right fit for their event. A downloadable Meetings Toolkit with venue

details, sample itineraries, and planning tips will simplify the process for organizers, while success stories and testimonials from past events will showcase Sitka as a seamless and inspiring destination for gatherings.

- **Insider Scoop Page & Newsletter Integration:** Launch an “Insider Scoop” page featuring curated local tips, hidden gems, and seasonal recommendations shared by Sitka residents, business owners, and guides. To create exclusivity and encourage newsletter sign-ups, highlight that full access to Insider Scoops—including “locals-only” tips and early updates on seasonal experiences—will be available exclusively in Visit Sitka’s Quarterly Visitor Newsletter. This approach ensures the most unique insights remain special while building an engaged audience and inspiring deeper trip planning.
- **Personalized Visitor Dashboard:** Introduce a Personalized Visitor Dashboard where users can save itineraries, event plans, and travel resources. Travelers will be able to create accounts to access their saved guides, view signed Visitor Pledges, and receive itinerary reminders or seasonal event updates.
- **User-Generated Content Integration:** Incorporate photos from the Visit Sitka annual photo contest into a “Share Your Sitka” gallery where visitors can submit their photos, itineraries, and personal stories. Featuring user-generated content will build community engagement and provide authentic inspiration for future travelers. Submissions can also be integrated into Visit Sitka’s social media and blog content.
- **Live Events Calendar Integration:** Enhance the Community Events Calendar with interactive filters for event types (e.g., cultural, wellness, outdoor). Users will have the option to add events to their personal calendars or sign up for email reminders, ensuring visitors can plan their trips around seasonal festivals and celebrations. Create a form where community members can submit their own events for approval to be added to the calendar.

Blog

See full blog strategy in the [2023 Digital Communications Roadmap](#).

- **Content Strategy:** Develop articles aligned with the four strategic marketing pillars, focusing on unique local experiences and cultural insights to attract independent travelers.
- **Visual Enhancement:** Update the blog template to be more visually engaging, incorporating high-quality images and videos to captivate readers.

Newsletter

- **Quarterly Visitor Newsletter:** Establish a quarterly newsletter under the Visit Sitka brand, featuring seasonal travel tips, upcoming events, and partner promotions to maintain engagement with potential visitors year-round. See year-round strategy section for further detail.

Collateral

- **Visitor Guide Evolution:** Over the next three years, reimagine the Visitor Guide to reflect Visit Sitka's strategic marketing pillars, emphasizing year-round independent travel, wellness retreats, and cultural tourism. See year-round strategy section for further detail.
- **Transportation Guide:** Develop a collateral piece educating visitors on rental and bus services, road rules, and non-motorized transportation options to enhance visitor mobility and safety. See year-round strategy section for further details.
- **Existing Collateral Continued Renewal:** Continue updating and publishing Pocket Guide, Attractions Map, Hiking Guide, Biking Map, and the Alaska's Inside Passage Map.

Public Relations (PR)

- **Media Relationships:** Maintain and strengthen relationships with media outlets, focusing on cultural tourism to position Sitka as a premier destination for authentic experiences.
- **Press Trips:** Organize familiarization trips for journalists and influencers specializing in cultural tourism to showcase Sitka's unique offerings.