



MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 18, 2023
TO: Assembly Lands Housing and Economic Development Committee
FROM: Alexandra Pierce, Tourism Manager
SUBJECT: Commercial Recreation Use Study and VITF Implementation

This memo provides a description of the Commercial Recreation Use Study project as well as an update on VITF implementation and the current projects that the CBJ tourism office is working on. The attached matrix shows the status of the Task Force recommendations.

Commercial Use:

The Assembly has expressed interest in reviewing the scope of this project before staff puts it out to RFP. This project will be overseen by Parks & Rec and Tourism staff with engagement with Lands and Docks and Harbors. Staff has developed the following high-level scope of work:

- Inventory and assessment
 - All lands (CBJ and USFS) currently used by commercial tours.
 - CBJ code analysis – where commercial use is explicitly allowed and prohibited.
 - Permits issued and visitor levels – heat map showing high use areas.
 - Potential lands for commercial use – public lands where use is permitted by code but not currently used by commercial tours (includes Pioneer Road)
- Evaluate CBJ lands identified in inventory for appropriate level of commercial use based on criteria (examples below)
 - Infrastructure
 - Impact
 - Function of property
 - Intent (i.e., lands set aside for preservation vs. high use recreation area)
 - Size
- Evaluate existing tour types and level of intensity.
- Commercial use of trails
 - Update trails designated for commercial use.
 - Set use criteria for different trail types (group size, type, frequency)
- Develop preliminary maps and descriptions of sites and possible uses.
- Conduct public process based on assessment.
 - Start with small neighborhood group workshops.
 - Refine based on neighborhood feedback.

- Conduct larger public meetings based on second draft.
 - Refine draft.
 - Submit final draft for public review.
- Final product:
 - Maps of different areas available for commercial use sorted by type and intensity.
 - Summary document containing a set of recommendations.

VITF/Tourism Update:

- **MOAs:** Staff has not received official direction from the Assembly to further limit cruise visitation but is working with industry and neighboring communities to evaluate the feasibility and efficacy of potential options for further limits. Options include ship size, quieter weekends, “ship free” days or a combination of these items.
- **Circulator Study:** We have received the final Technical Memo with recommendations from our consultants, LSC Transportation, and it will be presented to either PWFC or LHED on September 18. The final draft is coming soon.
- **Mendenhall Glacier Permits:** USFS, CBJ, and TBMP are co-hosting a meeting with operators to strategize glacier permit administration for next year. There will not be more permits available, but the management system can be improved, and the parties have agreed to collaborate on a solution. We have also received updated data from Capital Transit on the number of riders left behind: approximately 43 in May, 83 in June, 235 in July, and 96 so far in August. Parks & Rec has issued additional park use permits to allow operators to pivot and offer new tours.
- **Visitor Survey:** CBJ is currently conducting a visitor satisfaction survey plus visitor and crew spending and economic impact analysis. Results are expected this fall.
- **Regional engagement:** The Port Communities of Alaska are meeting in person after Southeast Conference to start scoping a regional strategy and discuss immediate goals and needs for collective industry engagement.
- **Seawalk:** The Franklin to AJ seawalk project is in process with geotechnical work and relevant property appraisals currently being conducted.
- **Green Corridor:** The “first movers” group has engaged the Maersk McKinney Moeller Center to conduct the feasibility study. This will identify what the region will need to do to decarbonize cruise shipping by 2050. The review includes fuel types, port infrastructure, and supply chains.
- **TBMP:** The transition to Travel Juneau was successful and Elizabeth Arnett is doing a great job. Hotline calls are up for July with many residents expressing pressures from increased visitation.
- **Survey:** McKinley Research has been retained for the 2023 community survey. Results are expected at the end of November.
- **Whale watching:** The whale watch focus group is meeting weekly and is planning to present its outcomes to the COW in September.

- **Marine Park Master Plan:** Working on finalizing design. Public process included a survey with over 1000 responses, workshop meetings in the park, and more traditional public meetings held at the Baranof and Assembly Chambers.

Attachment – VITF Implementation Spreadsheet