



Juneau Commission on Sustainability

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Subject: Draft JUNEAU VISITOR CIRCULATOR STUDY Review of Report-JCOS Comments and Recommendations

The City and Borough's Commission on Sustainability (JCOS), which recommends sustainability policy to Juneau's elected officials, has strongly supported a shift toward electric vehicles for the CBJ transit system and continues to do so for the circulator concept. The whole goal of cruise ship shore power is to remove emissions and improve air quality. An electric circulator system complements this effort to reduce air emissions issues in downtown Juneau and not compound the existing problem.

In 2010-2011, JCOS helped develop the *Juneau Climate Action & Implementation Plan* (JCAP), resulting in the CBJ Assembly adoption of the plan in 2011 (Resolution 2593). The JCAP set a goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 25% by 2032. The JCAP includes several goals and recommendations relating to electric vehicle adoption for the CBJ transit system:

Goal T-1: Reduce municipal fleet-related emissions.

Strategy TI-A. "Purchase low or zero-emission vehicles or renewable fuel vehicles to test for fleet use."

Goal T-2: Increase Capital Transit ridership

Strategy T-2. "Purchase only alternative/renewable fuel or hybrid transit vehicles." This developed from the recommendation in the 2008 (15 years ago) CBJ Transit Development Plan that the CBJ consider future fleet purchases of alternative fuel vehicles such as hybrid-electric.

Goal T-3: Reduce emissions per vehicle mile driven.

Strategy T3-B. "Consider the feasibility and economic viability of replacing the existing fleet with electric buses."

In 2018, the Assembly adopted the *Juneau Renewable Energy Strategy* (Resolution 2808) developed and drafted by the JCOS. Building on actions in the earlier JCAIP, the 2018 JRES supports increased use of renewable energy in the community. The JRES strengthens our community's long-term commitment to the similar goals expressed in the 2011 JCAIP and repeatedly identified under the CBJ Assembly's annual sustainability goals. Reduced reliance on fossil fuels for transportation is one of the four key strategy areas

the JRES identified. **Incorporating electric circulator buses would be of great value to the CBJ in taking the next steps to make these community aspirations a reality while simultaneously marketing Juneau as a clean port destination.**

Juneau Commission on Sustainability's key areas of comments and recommendation on the JUNEAU VISITOR CIRCULATOR STUDY:

Federal Funding Opportunities and Assistance

JCOS requests a thorough identification of federal funding opportunities to help pay for the circulator expansion of CBJ Transit since it is apparent that there are several DOT, EPA, and perhaps other programs available to assist the CBJ in instituting a circulator without all costs being borne by the Juneau taxpayers or ridership fares. JCOS helping CBJ has been extremely successful in securing millions of federal dollars through the Section 5339(C) LOW OR NO EMISSION GRANT PROGRAM in acquiring replacement and for new improved service buses. Another CBJ success to build on is the 5339 (B) BUS FACILITIES GRANT PROGRAM that is appropriately managed would pay for downtown bus charging facilities and safe, well-lit and perhaps heated bus pick up/drop off stations along the circulator route to provide safe and dry facilities for our residents and visitors alike. While JCOS is experienced with these two programs, independent discussions with our Congressional delegation staff and review of the Inflation Reduction Act and the Bipartisan Infrastructure bill championed by Senator Lisa Murkowski would provide economic opportunities to timely make a clean circulator system in downtown Juneau a reality without paying for it entirely on the backs of Juneau taxpayers. In the final report, we would like to see a detailed discussion on all federal and state funding opportunities and mechanisms to help pay for the circulator system.

Juneau Resident Value Added Benefits

JCOS requests additional work and discussion on providing "value" to our Juneau residents. The report does a fine job at visitor benefits but is missing a section on value-adding the Juneau circulator system to Juneau residents and taxpayers.

JCOS would like to request a discussion on a downtown park and ride section. Downtown parking is an actual or perceived problem for residents. However, parking and visitor congestion is a problem that the circulator concept attempts to alleviate. Therefore, extending the value of the circulator concept to serve the needs of Juneau residents should be articulated in the final report. The circulator study should consider a CBJ-designated downtown "park and ride" parking lot(s). If the report and CBJ supported incorporating park-and-ride lots into the circulator concept, it would provide a valuable service to Juneau workers and visitors (requiring more than a 2-hour parking limit) to park their vehicles and then ride to and from the downtown corridor.

Juneau also hosts several significant events in Juneau, including the Juneau Folk Festival, Gold Medal Basketball Tournament, and the Sealaska Heritage Celebration events. A circulator that operates outside the tourist season that can assist in Juneau hosting these and more events not only helps visitors but it will increase restaurant and shopping traffic to our downtown corridor for these events.

Another salient discussion point is that these circulators can provide "beyond tourism season" on-call transportation from local downtown hotels and designated downtown pick-up stations to Eaglecrest for

our growing winter tourism. Residents can use this system to reduce congestion and parking requirements at Eaglecrest. The final report could also explore and discuss other opportunities that increase the circulator concept's value proposition to improve and optimize Juneau resident's services and more fully utilize transportation investments outside the traditional tourism season.

Avoid Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center Issues with the Downtown Circulator

The whole discussion of the Mendenhall Glacier, its permitting, its impacts, its potential disruption, and displacement of private businesses and local operations is a distraction to implementing here-and-now solutions for the downtown circulator. The CBJ does not control the access to the visitor center and while the CBJ is encouraged to negotiate and consult, the CBJ does not control the permitting and access to the Glacier. JCOS is not recommending a protracted discussion with the US Forest Service and its management of the Mendenhall visitor center that serves to stall solutions and implementation time for a downtown circulator. This important topic can be dealt with in another study or effort separate from the immediate issues concerning a downtown circulator.

Profit/Loss/ Cost Sensitivity Analysis and Public-Private Partnerships

JCOS recommends a more robust exploration and discussion in this crucial area of the report. Circulators can make money and, if properly managed with efficiency and competency, contribute to Capital Transit's bottom line in capital and operations, improving economics as well as perceived value to Juneau residents. JCOS would recommend that the report conduct a sensitivity analysis on fee structures with beneficial scenarios that support local ridership.

For example, could CBJ Capital Transit monthly passes be incorporated to provide free additional circulator service?

Could monthly park-and-ride fare service that included access to off-downtown-corridor parking be integrated so that Juneau residents did not have to pay a high daily rate? The daily circulator rate could be raised and the monthly rate reduced so that the Capital Transit could afford "several," meaning three (3) or more buses to provide optimal service and keep locals and tourists from waiting in the rain. An effective circulator must be safe and reliable. Therefore, a more robust downtown circulator may be required based on ridership, especially if CBJ management effectively used and parlayed federal funding to help initially pay for the capital investment.

JCOS understands, based on past reports and anecdotal information, that our visitors are willing to pay for a proven, safe, effective, and timely service. However, no surveys or cost sensitivity analysis based on other competitive correlations appear in the report and should be considered.

Also, more information would be required to optimize services with a public/private partnership in that the CBJ could offer the service to a private operator but receive a "cut" to pay for capital infrastructure, replacement, and managerial operations. These options and costs need more exploration to maximize service at the lowest price for Juneau residents while optimizing revenue from visitors alike with appropriate fee structures of daily versus more extended duration fees.

In summary, the JCOS appreciates the invitation to comment. JCOS requests that our comments and other public comments be placed in a report appendix and made an integral component of the final report. We

also ask that in case a written and documentable invite has not already occurred, both Juneau tribal entities, the Douglas Indian Association and the Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, be directly and cordially invited to make comments for CBJ to maximize any future Justice 40 and environmental justice points for any future federal funding grant and programmatic funding.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gretchen Keiser". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid, with a large initial 'G' and a stylized 'K'.

Gretchen Keiser, JCOS Chair