



January 22, 2024

City & Borough of Juneau
Public Works and Facilities
Attn: Chair Wade Bryson
155 Heritage Way, Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Chair Bryson, Members of the Committee, and Support Staff,

Many members of the public cannot access CBJ's one and only indoor track, located in the upper level of the Dimond Park Field House (DPFH). Southeast Alaska Independent Living (SAIL) has been advocating for an elevator in the DPFH since 2011. Over the years we have received numerous complaints from the community. A grandmother called SAIL in tears because she could not climb the stairs to watch her granddaughter compete in Girls on Run. A young woman who experiences a physical disability called to voice her frustration as she could not join her friends for socialization and exercise at the DPFH because she could not physically climb the stairs. I've witnessed mothers precariously carrying toddlers up the stairs because there is no elevator for their stroller. Given Juneau's snow, rain, ice and winter darkness, an indoor track that is accessible to everyone is all the more important.

To remedy the problem you are presented with two options: two platform lifts or an elevator. Although likely tempting to recommend the platform lifts because of a smaller initial outlay of funding, a platform lift is a far inferior choice for numerous reasons. I write to you today to urge you to support the recommendation of CBJ Parks and Recreation staff and forward a recommendation for an elevator to the full assembly.

Though more affordable, in our advocacy and experience, platform lifts have some notable downsides:

- Depending on the brand, warranties are not honored when Alaska lacks certified technicians to install &/or work on them;
- Platform lifts are often out of order for months at a time (The Alaska Club is a familiar example), which defeats the purpose of providing accessibility for all. Additionally, there could be unexpected costs for maintaining, servicing, or replacing;
- Platform lifts are usable by a single rider at a time (& maybe one attendant- if it is an extra-large platform);
- Users are not as familiar with platform lifts as they are with elevators. Consequently, if a platform lift is installed, many individuals will simply not go to the upper floors or will use the stairs when it is unsafe for them to do so.

Other than cost, elevators are preferable because:

- There are known types & brands plus service technicians available in Juneau;
- Elevators are a more durable solution;
- Riders are familiar with their operation;
- The building can accommodate an elevator (in other words, installation is technically feasible);
- An elevator will require less physical space than the required two platform lifts;
- The elevator would accommodate more types and combinations of users. This includes users who may be accommodated by attendants, use a wheelchair, be blind, elderly, have a temporary disability (such as from a sports injury), or have a hidden physical disability preventing independent navigation of stairs.

SAIL is happy to commit to assist CBJ in securing additional funding toward an elevator. As a non-profit agency, we do apply for many grants to cover our own programming and we have developed many strong relationships with funders. Given that the DPFH is owned and operated by CBJ, likely any grant application(s) will need to come from CBJ. That said, we are absolutely willing to be partners in supporting CBJ's application to CAPSIS including advocating with legislators, and/or a combination of grants, e.g, Murdock and Rasmuson Foundations.

In closing, yes, two platform lifts will likely meet the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) requirements and are substantially cheaper on the front end. That said, two platform lifts are a grossly inferior option to an elevator—penny wise yet pound foolish in my humble opinion. Consequently, I urge your recommendation to the full assembly, in lock step with your P&R staff, of an elevator in the Dimond Park Fieldhouse.

Sincerely,



Joan O'Keefe
Executive Director