

**CITY OF WHITTIER, ALASKA
RESOLUTION 2025-028**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WHITTIER, ALASKA,
AFFIRMING SUPPORT FOR ONGOING CITY EFFORTS WITH STATE AND
REGIONAL PARTNERS TO PLAN AND IMPLEMENT INFRASTRUCTURE
IMPROVEMENTS TO ADDRESS INCREASED CRUISE SHIP TRAFFIC AND
COMMUNITY NEEDS**

WHEREAS, Whittier anticipates a significant increase in daily cruise ship calls over the coming years, requiring proactive, coordinated planning to ensure public safety, maintain operational efficiency, and provide an exceptional experience for visitors and residents alike; and

WHEREAS, Whittier is already the busiest Alaska Marine Highway terminal in Southcentral Alaska, and relocation of the ferry terminal to Emerald Bay has long been identified in City planning documents as a means to reduce congestion at the confluence of the ferry terminal, launch ramps, Princess terminal, and recreational boating traffic; and

WHEREAS, realignment of the Whittier tunnel staging area to avoid the railroad WYE and limit vehicle crossings to a single track would improve operational efficiency and safety for residents, visitors, and freight; and

WHEREAS, upgrades to the Anton Anderson Memorial Tunnel, including increasing allowable bus capacity per operational cycle to double the number of buses allowed in the tunnel, would enhance tunnel operational efficiency and reduce congestion during peak traffic time frames; and

WHEREAS, the City's limited developable land base requires strategic coordination with the Alaska Department of Transportation (DOT), Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC), and Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to identify and secure lands not otherwise programmed for state use to support economic development, housing, and public amenities; and

WHEREAS, pedestrian tunnels would enhance pedestrian and bicycle safety by avoiding anticipated high-traffic areas at the Glacier Creek terminal (Head of the Bay) and Princess terminal, while unifying Whittier's trail system; and

WHEREAS, the City seeks DOT long-range phased infrastructure plans in the 5- to 15-year range that provide clear milestones for transportation improvements, including eventual two-way tunnel access, to guide municipal capital planning and investment strategies; and

WHEREAS, a well-planned, safe, and welcoming Whittier benefits both residents and Alaska's tourism economy, with each cruise ship passenger contributing substantially to the local and regional economy; and

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48 **WHEREAS**, the average cruise ship passenger spends between \$600 and \$1,200, and a
49 well-planned urban Whittier that provides a welcoming, safe experience is vital to the Alaska
50 tourism industry and in line with the Governor's desire to leverage state lands to foster economic
51 growth; and
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53 **WHEREAS**, collaboration with ARRC and Alaska DNR to secure land for commercial
54 and mixed-use development will help create the accommodations, dining, and retail options
55 needed to serve growing numbers of visitors annually while supporting the local economy and
56 culture; and
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58 **WHEREAS**, a safe, family-friendly environment for the community of Whittier is
59 essential, and planning housing opportunities as well as opportunities for locals to benefit from
60 economic opportunities by providing local cuisine and crafts will highlight the area's diverse
61 culture; and
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63 **WHEREAS**, the Alaska Railroad should work with the City of Whittier to present to
64 Alaska DNR that Whittier has limited land access with which to attract the commercial
65 development necessary to provide hotels, restaurants, and other amenities to improve the
66 experience of the many cruise ship passengers destined to visit Whittier annually;
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69 **NOW, THEREFORE, THE WHITTIER CITY COUNCIL HEREBY RESOLVES:**
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71 **Section 1.** The Whittier City Council reaffirms its support for the City Administration's
72 ongoing efforts, in the public interest, to engage on behalf of the City in discussions with the
73 Alaska Department of Transportation, Alaska Railroad Corporation, and Alaska Department of
74 Natural Resources for the purpose of planning future design improvements that will support
75 Whittier's long-term transition from a rural city with limited infrastructure to a modern, well-
76 planned community designed to safely serve our residents, recreational boaters, commercial
77 fishing industry, and visiting cruise ship passengers.
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79 **Section 2.** The City Manager is authorized to continue discussions and negotiations on
80 behalf of the City and will keep the Council informed of progress and opportunities to advance
81 Whittier's strategic goals through timely updates, including regular reports in Council meeting
82 packets, and by presenting strategies to be used in negotiations with DOT, ARRC, and Alaska
83 DNR for Council input and guidance.
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85 **Section 3.** This resolution replaces Resolution 2023-015.
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87 **Section 4.** This resolution shall be effective immediately upon adoption.
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90 **PASSED AND APPROVED** by a duly constituted quorum of the Whittier City Council
91 on this 19th day of August, 2025.
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98 AYES:

99 NOES:

100 ABSENT:

101 ABSTAIN:

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104 **ATTEST:**

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108 **Shelby Carlson**

109 City Clerk

Daniel Blair

Mayor

(City Seal)