



Tourism Commission Agenda

Thursday, September 10, 2026, 6:00 PM
Harrigan Centennial Hall, 330 Harbor Drive

Members: Jeremy Plank, Bethany Lowrance, Carol Bryant-Martin, Devon Calvin,
Vaughn Hazel, Sherri Blankenship
Victoria Wright (ex officio), Judson Rusk (ex officio)

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. ROLL CALL

III. AGENDA CHANGES

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

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. August 13, 2026

VI. REPORTS

- A. Chair:
- B. Commissioners:
- C. City Staff:
- D. Visit Sitka:
- E. Assembly Liaison:
- F. Other:

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

B. None

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

- C. Discussion: Concerns regarding 2027 cruise season and future scheduling practices
- D. Discussion and Decision: Outlining framework of TBMP guideline additions regarding universal orientation information for members

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

X. AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING *(Reminder: These are agenda items to be discussed at the NEXT meeting. Item discussion may not occur at this meeting)*

- A. Discussion and Decision: Amending Title 6 "Business Licenses and Regulations" of the Sitka General Code by repealing Chapter 6.30 "Taxicabs" and replacing with Chapter 6.30 "Commercial Passenger Vehicles" and amending Title 11 "Vehicles and Traffic", Chapter 11.45 "Stopping, Standing, and Parking", Section 11.45.140 "Stopping, Standing and Parking of Buses and Taxicabs"

XI. ADJOURNMENT



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

Meeting Minutes Tourism Commission

Commission Members: Jeremy Plank (Chair), Bethany Lowrance (Vice Chair), Carol Bryant-Martin (Secretary), Sherri Blakenship, Devon Calvin, and Vaughn Hazel.

Ex Officio: Judson Rusk and Victoria Wright.

August 13, 2026

6:00 P.M.

Harrigan Centennial Hall

I. CALL TO ORDER & ROLL CALL

Chair Plank called the Sitka Tourism Commission meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Sherri Blakenship, Devon Calvin, Vaughn Hazel, Bethany Lowrance, Carol Bryant-Martin, and Jeremy Plank.

Absent: Lillian Feldpausch (resigned)

Ex-Officio Present: Judson Rusk and Victoria Wright.

Members of Public Present: Larry Edwards and Rachel Roy.

City Tourism Manager Rusk notified the Commissioners that Lillian Feldpausch resigned by email on 8/12/2026. He stated that the STA seat on the Tourism Commission is now open. Secretary Bryant-Martin confirmed a quorum was present.

II. CONSIDERATION OF AGENDA

M-Plank/S-Blankenship moved to approve changing Item V. Persons to Be Heard to Item IV Reports and Correspondence to Item V. The motion passed by a 6/0 voice vote.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

M-Lowrance/S-Calvin moved to approve the minutes dated July 9, 2026. The motion passed by a 6/0 voice vote.

IV. PERSONS TO BE HEARD

Chair Plank recognized Rachel Roy to speak for 3 minutes. Sitka Chamber Executive Director Roy stated that the taxi ordinance for commercial vehicles reached the CBS Assembly without enough notice or collaboration. She questioned the ordinance's purpose, the new fines and restrictions, and why the tourism stakeholders were not better included in the process. In addition, Roy stated that the open seat for the CBS Planning Commission was not advertised. She noted that CBS should properly notify the community about open seats. Roy invited the Commissioners to attend Summer Fest and mentioned the Chamber continues to work on workforce development, early education initiatives/childcare solutions, and outreach training in the community.

V. REPORTS & CORRESPONDENCE

Update on Airport Wi-Fi Survey

City Tourism Manager Rusk and Visit Sitka Wright reported May, June, and July completion rates of 9%, 10%, and 8%, which are above the expected 4 - 6% rate. The survey will continue through the end of

September and targets independent business and leisure travelers. No formal business action was taken.

Update on Visitor Intercept Survey

Wright reported that visitor surveys in the field were ongoing with 150 current responses and a goal of 400. Staff collected responses in person at Centennial Hall while visitors waited in line for the shuttles. QR codes were placed in hotels and restrooms to learn trends about visitor experiences, spending, challenges, and demographics. No formal business action was taken.

TBMP July Report

Wright stated that within the first month of running the TBMP program, an initial goal of 20 new TBMP members had been reached, with more businesses planning to join. Submissions through the TBMP hotline were general tourism comments, while business-specific concerns were forwarded to the relevant operators when possible. Commissioners discussed whether anonymous complaints and repeat callers should remain visible. In the report. Some favored full transparency while others worried about misuse or competitive harm. Staff responded that repeat callers would be logged individually if identified. Staff also offered to change the website form to require contact information for complaints. The Commission agreed to review the topic further later. No formal business action was taken.

Update on Sales Tax Collection Aboard Cruise Ships

Rusk reported that CBS staff is monitoring a pending legal decision related to sales tax collection on cruise ships in Skagway. The Commissioners agreed not to pursue sales tax on cruise ships while the litigation is pending. Commissioners noted that lack of the CBS city ordinance does not necessarily remove liability under current law. No formal business action was taken.

Update on State Grant Funding

Rusk stated the Assembly heard the Commissioners' recommendations to fund a sea wall restoration project but opted to pursue a State of Alaska \$4.5 million grant to fund downtown street upgrades as its priority for the submission. If awarded, the project will encompass community outreach and input on the design and engineering before street plans are finalized. No formal business action was taken.

Harrigan Centennial Hall Fee Waiver Ordinance

Rusk informed the Commissioners that a fee waiver ordinance for use of Harrigan Centennial Hall is intended to attract off-season events. The ordinance would waive Centennial Hall fees for events that bring 100 or more out-of-town guests from October 1 to March 31. Visitor enhancement funds would cover the waived cost so the venue budget is not reduced. Staff and commissioners discussed ways the fee waiver could help increase off-season tourism and help support local hotels, caterers, and other businesses. No formal business action was taken.

Cruise Port Profile: Sitka, Understanding Cruise Activity & Economic Impacts in Sitka

Commissioners reviewed data that Rusk presented in a "Sitka, Understanding Cruise Activity & Economic Impacts" report, which was included in the meeting packet. CLIA underwrote the cost of the study. The 2024 report estimated that tourism in Sitka resulted in \$105 million in direct spending, \$156 million in total output, \$85 million in GDP, 754 jobs, and \$46 million in wages. No formal business action was taken.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

None.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion: Chair Plank adjourned the meeting at 7:19 p.m.

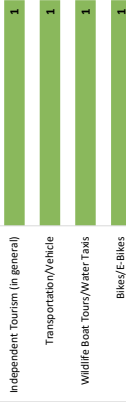
Minutes By: Carol Bryant-Martin, Secretary

TBMP Hotline Log

Start Date: 8/1/2026
End Date: 8/31/2026
Concern Type: All Types

Number of Calls by Category

August 2026



Number of Calls Per Day

August 2026



Date	Source	Concern Type	Area of Town	Repeat Caller	Submission Details	Referred To	Response
8/7/2026	Website	Wildlife Boat Tours/Water Taxis	Sitka Sound	No	It's a big bummer when you are local and you head out to Goddard hot springs hoping to get your hour at least in one of the tubs and it's full of people partying and drinking , alcohol containers lined up in the windows , coolers outside and these people acting like they have paid to be there like it's a private tub not public . We waited on the beach over 2 hours to get in before we gave up and went back to our boat . It would be nice if these charter companies or water taxi folks explained to their passengers that these are public tubs and limit their time to at least one hour so other people have an opportunity to use the tubs ! Below is a summary of the voicemail left: Caller lives out Halibut Point Road and notices e-bikers riding against the flow of traffic heading towards the cruise ship terminal. Caller has an e-bike himself and is concerned about the safety of drivers and bikers alike. Caller has also seen bikers riding on the right side of the road and did not want to generalize, but wanted to make sure that e-Bike rental companies are sharing the rules of the road.	Outer Coast Charters	No response was received by operator. Operator is not currently a TBMP member so response is not required.
8/12/2026	Telephone	Bikes/e-Bikes	Halibut Point Road (HPR)	No		Kings e-Bikes	<i>From Kings e-Bikes:</i> Hi ***** This is Meaghan Way. I am the owner of Kings E-Bikes! We operate at the cruise ship dock and I just received an email from TBMP with your voicemail attached :-) Thanks for reaching out and bringing these concerns to my attention. Rider safety and respectful use of Sitka's roads and shared spaces is something we take very seriously. Before every rental, we provide approximately a 10-15 minute safety orientation covering operation of the e-bikes, safe riding practices, and proper riding etiquette. We also provide every rider with our "Rules of the Road" information and a 2 minute safety video that reiterates this. We always ask them to review the handout before leaving. It specifically covers yielding to pedestrians and traffic, riding with the flow of traffic, following traffic laws and signals, avoiding downtown sidewalks, and being mindful of other road and trail users. Once riders leave our location, we obviously can't supervise their individual behavior, but we do want to make sure we are doing everything reasonably within our control to educate them beforehand. I'm happy to reinforce these points even more during our orientation. I have attached below what rules we have each rider take with them. Thanks again, Meaghan Way [Image of Visit Sitka Biking Guide "Rules of the Road" section was included with response]
8/27/2026	Website	Transportation/Vehicle	Harrison Centennial Hall	No	Tour buses leaking oil throughout town. Specifically at Centennial hall. Do all buses have current DOT inspections	Sitka Sound Cruise Terminal, Alaska Coach Tours, Sitka Tribal Tours, Sitka Tours	<i>From Sitka Sound Cruise Terminal:</i> All of our buses have current DOT inspections and also are inspected daily before they are used. Any vehicles with issues such as oil leaks are pulled until fixed. We have not had any vehicles with noted oil leaks recently. Let me know if there are any further questions. <i>From Alaska Coach Tours:</i> Thank you for submitting your comment and concern with TBMP. All our Alaska Coach Tours coaches are DOT inspected and brought into our shop for maintenance regularly. We will continue to monitor our fleet for any oil leaks. <i>From Sitka Tribal Tours:</i> This is Nathan Kramer with the Sitka Tribe of Alaska. I am reaching out in regard to the oil leak complaint we received from the TBMP email on 8/27. Thank you for notifying us of the concern that was raised. We were operating tours the day mentioned but to my knowledge our buses being used were all in proper working order. We have a full-time mechanic on our staff and he did not mention any noticeable oil leaks this day. We also have our drivers keep a daily log of vehicle inspections and there was nothing recorded for the day. Please let me know if you have any questions or need any follow-up.

8/27/2026	Website	Independent Tourism (in general)	Lincoln Street - SNHP to Lake/Lincoln	No	On August 27, 2026, a Sekie Snorkel tour departed from the Sheldon Jackson beach area while I was actively fishing from shore. My complaint is not about Sekie Snorkel's right to use public waters. It concerns the way this commercial operation interfered with my lawful use of the same public area. As the group approached, I was told that I needed to stop fishing so the tour could utilize the area where I was fishing. The group's subsequent activity disturbed the water and fish, effectively preventing me from continuing to fish. When I objected, and told the operator they can go where I am not fishing, the tour operator stated that the waterway is public and that Sekie Snorkel is permitted to use it. I agree that the waterway is public. However, that principle applies to all members of the public—not only to commercial operators. A commercial tour should not be permitted to displace, interrupt, or effectively prevent residents from using a public fishing area simply because the tour is passing through. This incident raises an important broader concern for the City. If residents are utilizing an area and a commercial tour arrives, are those residents expected to stop whenever the operator conducts a tour? Because these tours are not publicly scheduled, other users have no reasonable way to anticipate them or avoid conflicts. Without clear operating standards, commercial activity can effectively take priority over ordinary public use. I request that the City clarify the rules and expectations governing commercial operators who use shared public areas. Specifically, please clarify whether a commercial operator may require members of the public to stop lawful activities, such as fishing, to accommodate a tour. The City should also consider whether additional guidance, scheduling, operating limits, or other measures are necessary to prevent commercial tours from interfering with public access and use. Commercial access to public waters must coexist with the rights of local residents and other members of the public. It should not take priority over them.	Sekie Snorkels, CBS Staff, Judson Rusk, High Output Tours, Silka Sound Science Center	<u>Note from TBMP Operator:</u> This concern was forwarded to Sekie Snorkels, who confirmed based on the image that their business was incorrectly identified. Concern was then forwarded on to High Output Tours (only other known snorkel operator), and also confirmed to not be their business. After speaking with the Silka Sound Science Center, it was confirmed to be an educational snorkel group and the adjacent beach is leased to the Science Center. <u>From Silka Sound Science Center:</u> Thank you for your concern regarding a snorkeling group using a public waterway last week. I am writing to clarify a few points: The group you encountered was not a commercial tour group operated by Sekie Snorkels. Rather, they were part of a non-commercial, not-for-profit education program run by the Silka Sound Science Center. You were not asked to pause your fishing in the interest of a commercial business enterprise, but to protect the safety of minors who were participating in an educational program in a public space. The students and the Science Center staff members leading them began and ended their snorkel on a beach that is part of a tidelands lease granted to the Silka Sound Science Center. In between, they snorkeled through a public waterway. Snorkelers (including those snorkeling independently of any program of ours), boats, and wildlife regularly pass through that public waterway and can all reasonably be expected to cause temporary disruptions to those fishing from shore. If you would like to know more about snorkeling at the Silka Sound Science Center, you are welcome to sign up for the adult snorkel programs available in the fall and winter. More information will be available at silkasience.org when registration opens.
-----------	---------	----------------------------------	---------------------------------------	----	---	--	--

2026 Sitka Visitor Intercept Survey

Initial Summary Analysis

September 2026

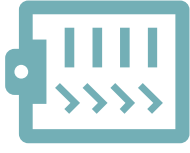


AGNEW
:: BECK

Introduction



The 2026 Sitka Visitor Intercept survey was designed to gather feedback from visitors about their experience in Sitka. The survey collected information around visitor demographics, trip duration, activities participated in, challenges encountered, spending and visitors' overall perception of Sitka as a destination.



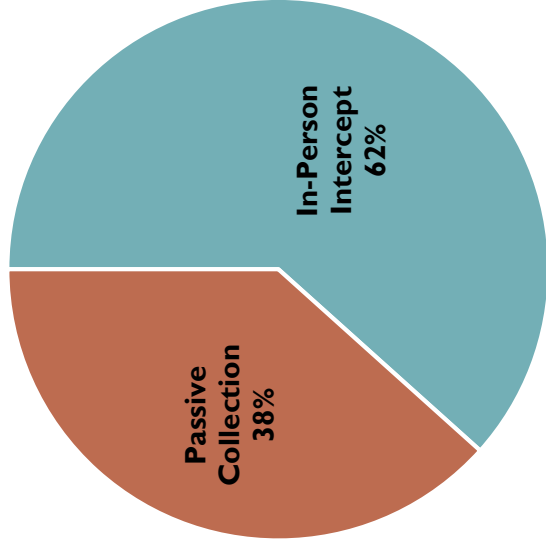
The survey was fielded using passive collection methods (QR codes on posters and flyers) as well as active collection methods (in-person intercept surveys).



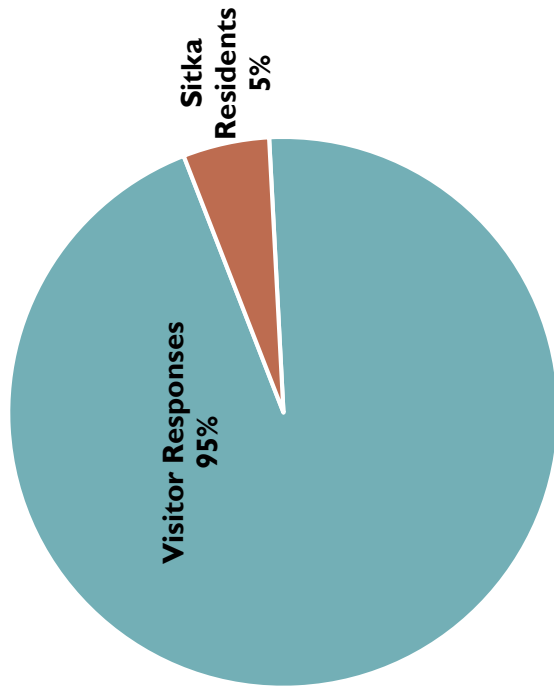
The survey was open from August 7-September 1 (26 total days) with 9 days of in-person intercept surveying during that period.

Response Summary

Total Responses by Collection Type



Visitor and Non-Visitor Responses

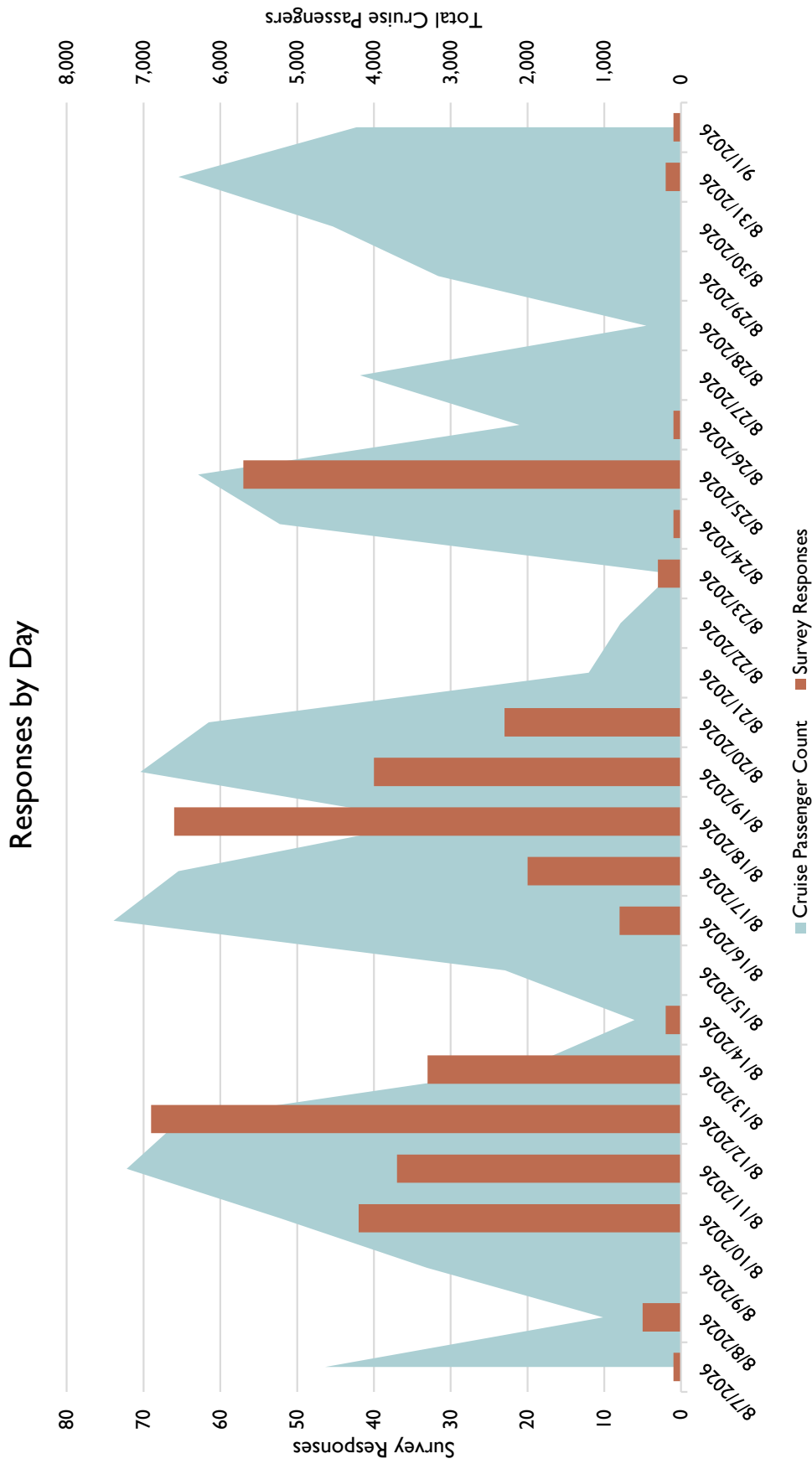


	Number of Responses	Percent of Responses
Total Responses	433	100%
In-Person Intercept	267	62%
Passive Collection	166	38%
Visitor Responses	411	95%
Sitka Residents	22	5%

Response Summary

In-Person intercept collection took place at
Harrigan Centennial Hall on the following dates:

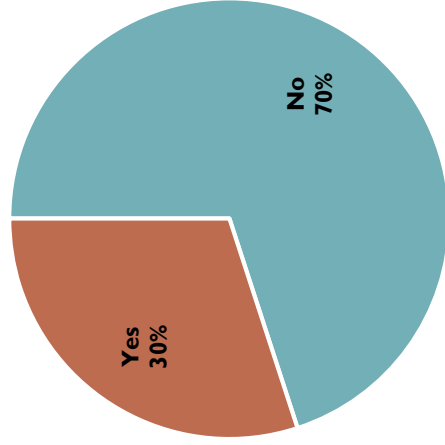
- August 10-13
- August 17-20
- August 25



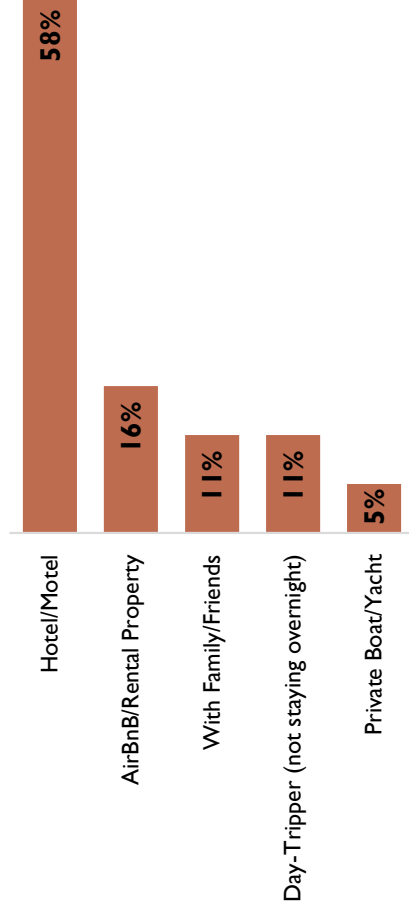
Non-Cruise Visitors

The survey asked non-cruise visitors four additional questions to learn more about their time in Sitka. A total of 20 non-cruise visitors completed the survey

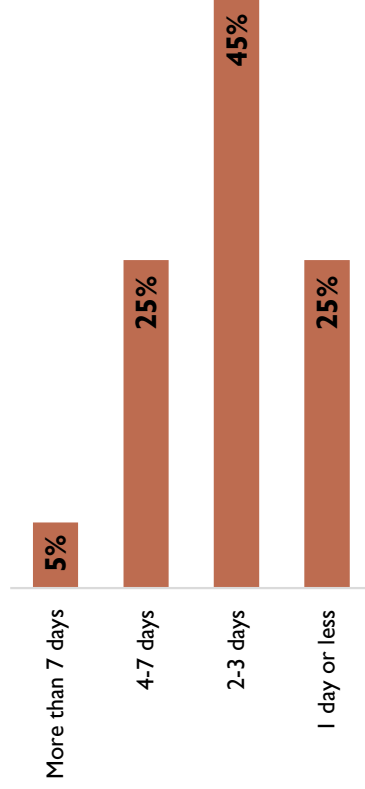
Is this your first visit to Sitka?



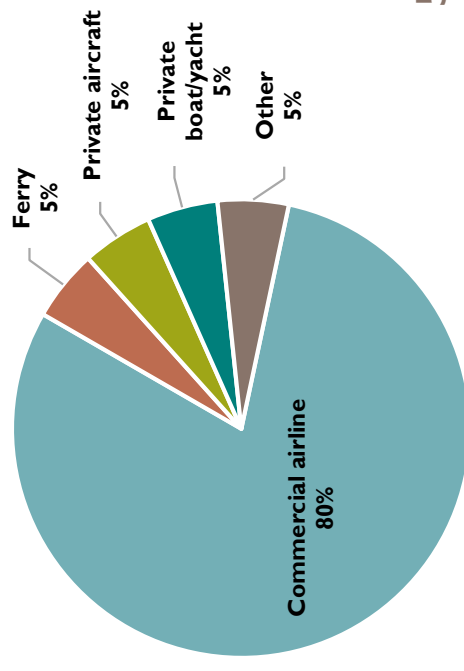
Where are you staying while in Sitka?



How many days are you spending in Sitka during this trip?

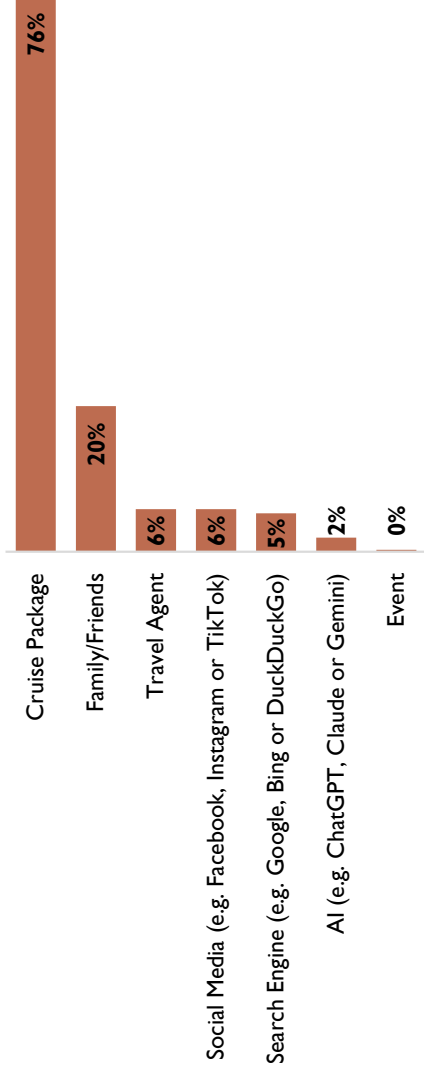


How did you travel to Sitka?

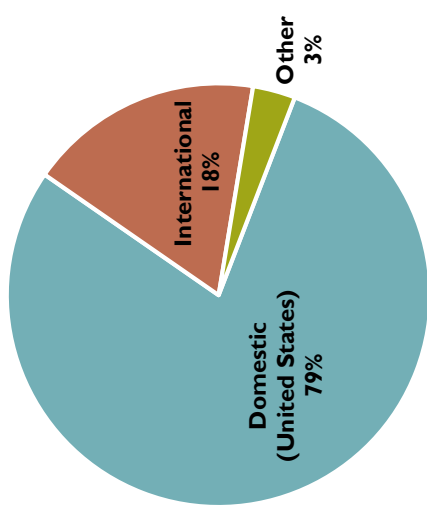


Visitor Profile (all respondents)

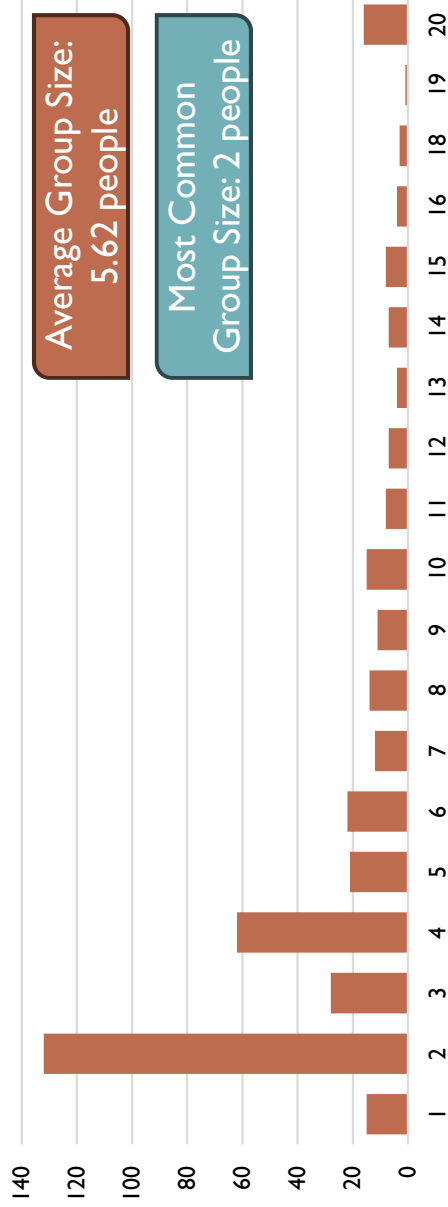
How did you first hear about Sitka as a destination?



What is your zip code or country of origin?



How many people are in your travel group including yourself?



Top States

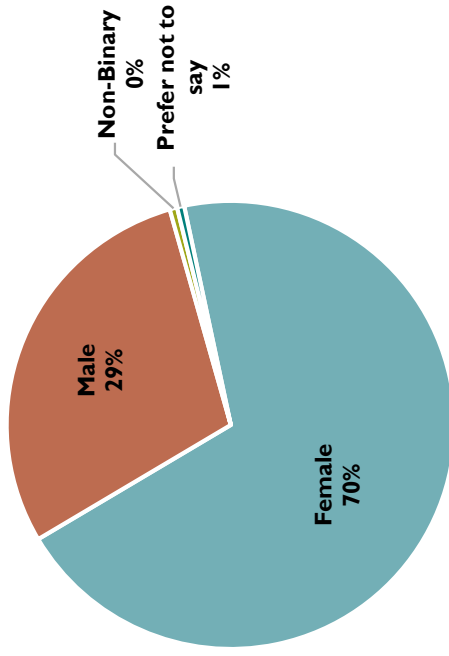
State	Count
Washington	25
California	19
Texas	19
Michigan	16
Colorado	12
Florida	12
Ohio	12
Utah	12
New York	10
Arizona	9

Top Countries

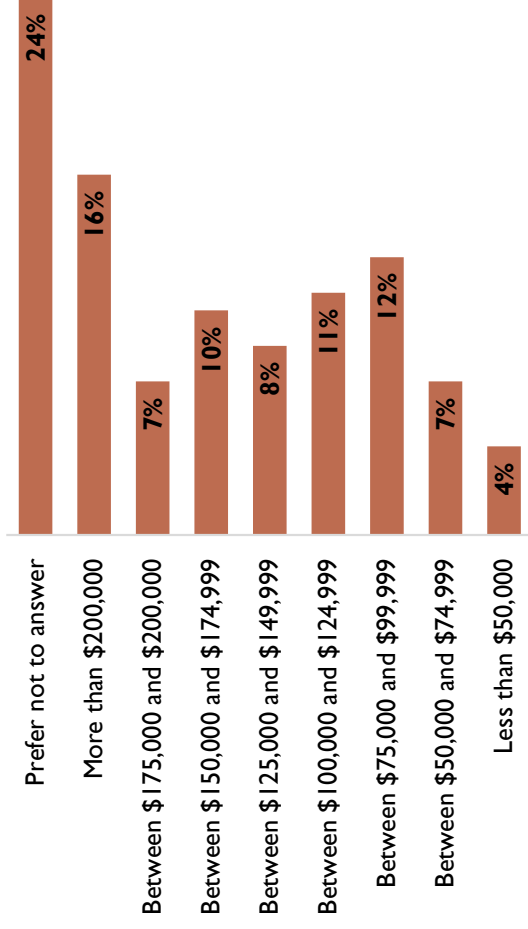
Country	Count
Canada	39
Australia	3
Germany	2
United Kingdom	2

Visitor Profile

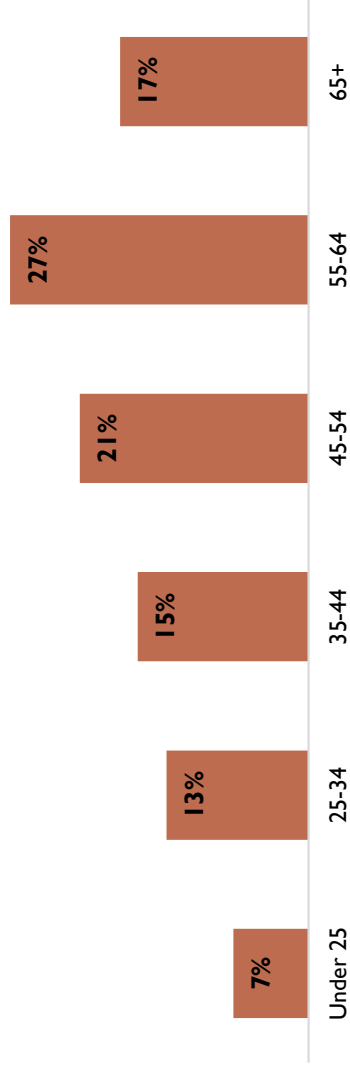
What is your gender?



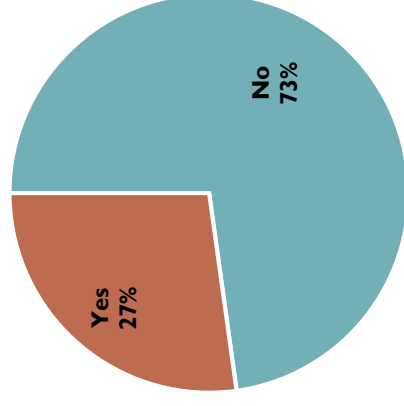
Annual Household Income



What is your age?

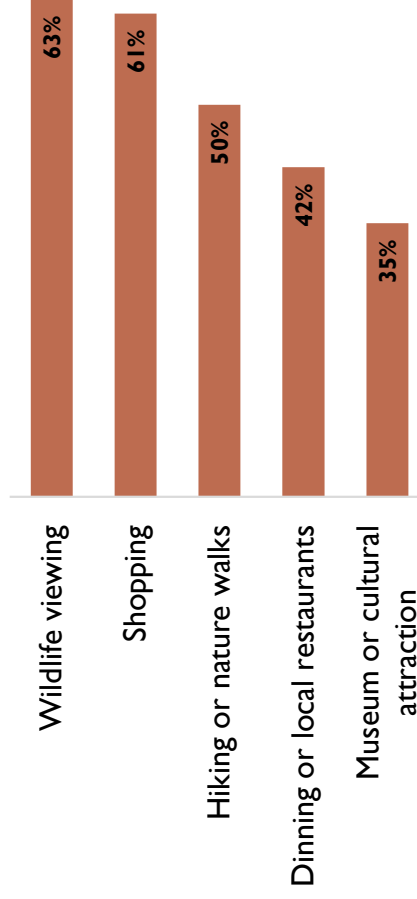


Are you traveling with children?



Visitor Activities and Spending

Which activities did you participate in during your time in Sitka?



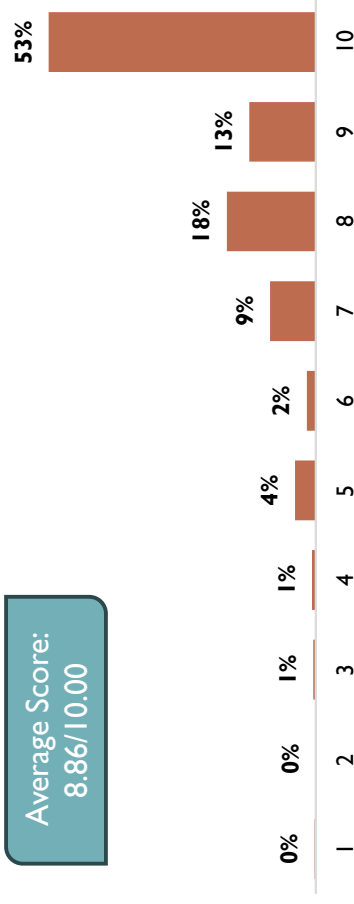
45% of visitors spent between \$100 and \$499 during their time in Sitka

Aproximately how much did your travel group spend during their visit to Sitka?



Visitor Experience

How likely are you to recommend Sitka as a place to visit?



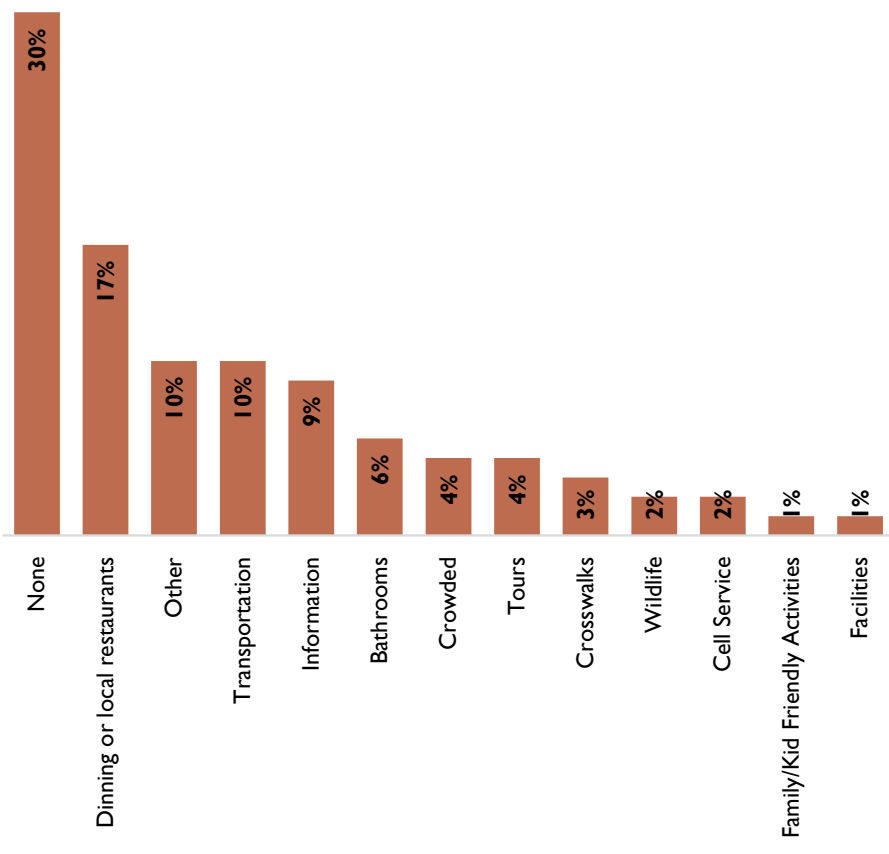
“More taxis to take you places”

“Better cell service, couldn’t find things on Apple Maps very well.”

“More fresh seafood options, options for large crowds. Sidewalks are quite narrow for large crowds and wheelchairs”

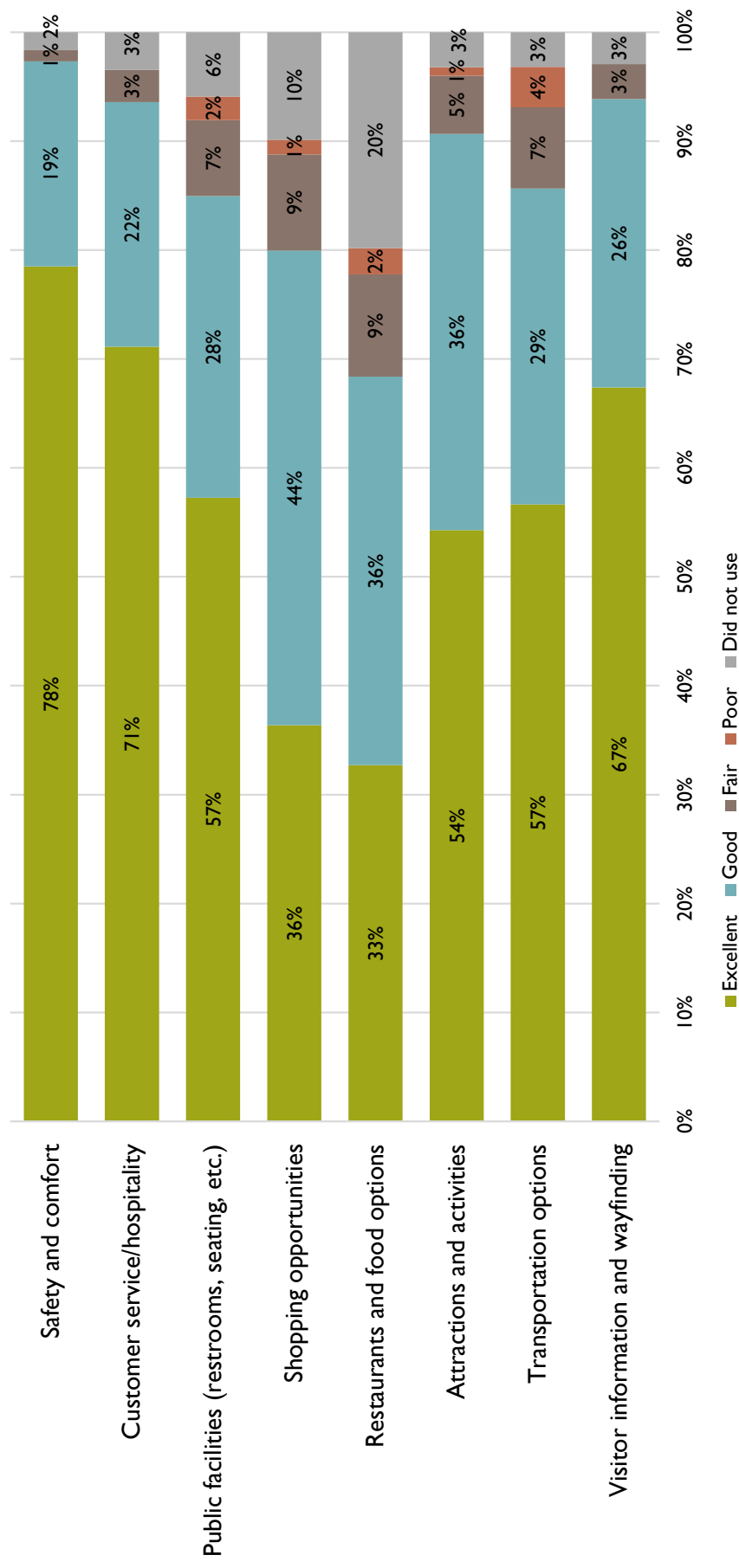
“Better signage to historical buildings and to trails in the national park”

What services, amenities or experiences would have improved your visit to Sitka?



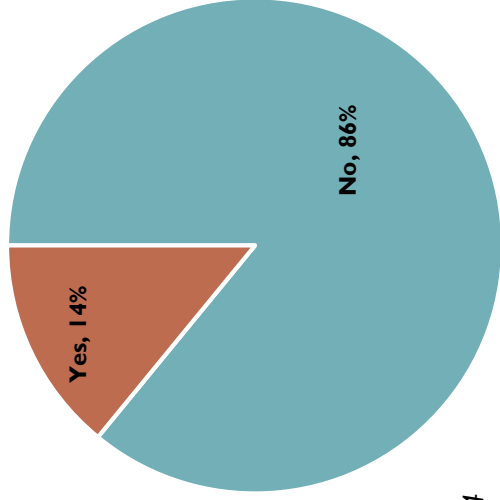
Visitor Experience

Please rate the following aspects of your experience in Sitka



Challenges and Barriers

Did you encounter any challenges, barriers or frustrations during your visit?

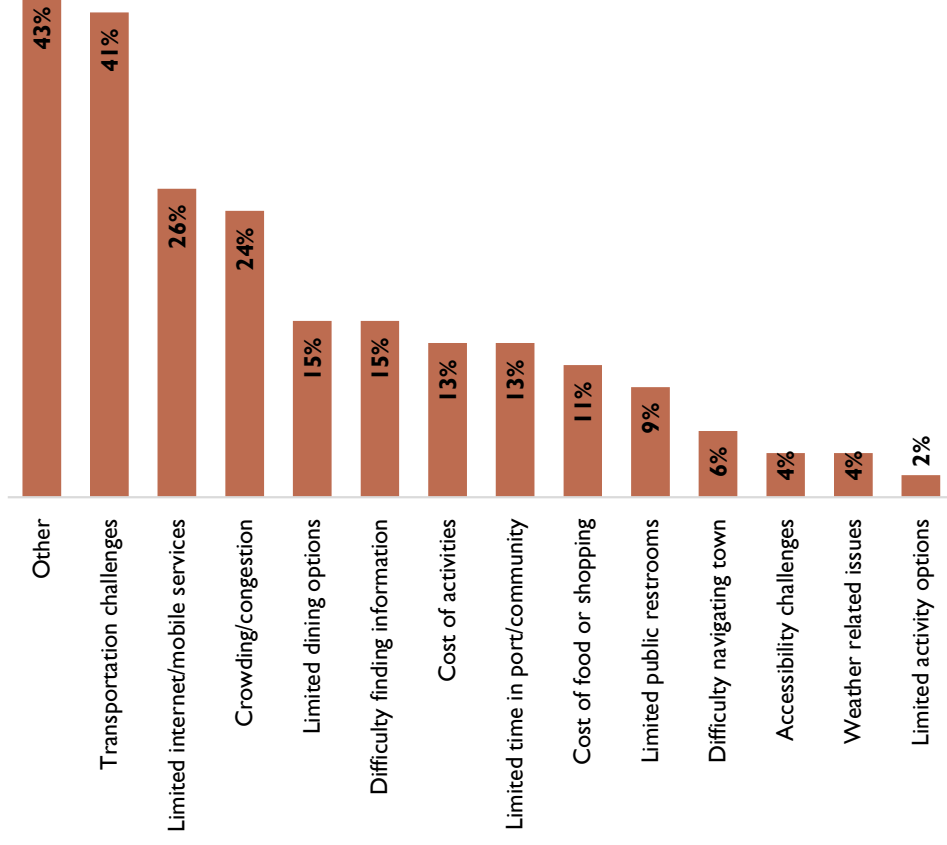


“We did not understand the huge impact that the cruise ships have. One day when there was a 3,000 passenger ship here my 85-year-old mother had trouble getting around in the crowds. There were three ships in town that day, and we found it overwhelming.”

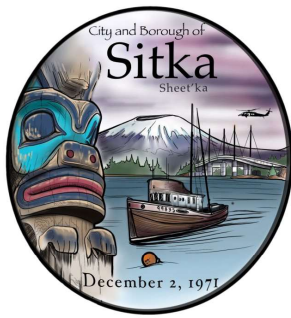
“Portable toilets blocking photo of the church - Crosswalks inconvenient locations, limited taxi, uber, Lyft”

“When we got to town information was not easy to find, it was only at the port.”

Which challenges, barriers or frustrations did you encounter during your visit?



n=54



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

A COAST GUARD CITY

ADMINISTRATION

100 Lincoln Street | Sitka, Alaska 99835

www.cityofsitka.com

administrator@cityofsitka.org

907-747-1812

August 25, 2026

[VIA EMAIL ONLY]

Cruise Lines International Association
Attention: Renee Limoge Reeve
360 K Street, Suite 300
Anchorage, AK 99501
reeve@cruising.org

Sitka Dock Company, LLC
Attention: Chris McGraw, General Manager
P.O. Box 718
Sitka, AK 99835
chris@sitkadock.com

Cruise Line Agencies of Alaska
Attention: Marjy Wood
55 Schoenbar Court, Suite 101
Ketchikan, AK 99901
ketchikan@claalaska.com

Re: Projected 2027 Cruise Calendar for Sitka

Dear Partners,

I am writing on behalf of the City and Borough of Sitka (CBS) to share our concerns with the projected 2027 cruise calendar for Sitka, as currently published by Cruise Line Agencies of Alaska, and to ask that we work together now, while there is still time, to bring that calendar closer to the goals this community understands the MOU was designed to achieve.

In the spring of 2023, the Assembly appointed a Tourism Task Force in direct response to the rapid growth of cruise visitation following the opening of the Sitka Sound Cruise Terminal. After an extensive public process, the Task Force delivered its recommendations on April 30, 2024. The Assembly adopted those recommendations on May 16, 2024, adopted an Action Plan on July 9, 2024, and directed me to negotiate an agreement with the industry that would achieve the Task Force goals. The result was the Memorandum of Understanding between CBS and Sitka Dock Company, approved by the Assembly on November 12, 2024. The Task Force identified a daily range of 5,000 to 7,000 lower berth passengers as the level the community considers palatable, and the

MOU adopted 7,000 as the planning target for each cruise day (Section 1.A). That figure was never presented as a cap. It was presented as a target that should not be regularly exceeded, and certainly not by thousands of passengers. The MOU also establishes Saturday as a quiet day and limits large ship calls at CBS docks in April and October. The MOU was presented to this community as the means by which five of the Task Force recommendations would be implemented: mutual agreements with the industry, flattening the curve, taking out the peak, designated quiet days, and shortening the season.

The MOU was not adopted in a vacuum. Between 2022 and 2024 a citizen group filed four separate initiative applications seeking to cap cruise visitation in Sitka. The first three did not survive legal review. The fourth was certified in December 2024, gathered the required signatures within weeks, and went to the voters on May 28, 2025 in the first special election Sitka had held in 21 years. That initiative would have capped visitation at 4,500 passengers per day and 300,000 per season, limited the season to May 1 through September 30, required a ship free day each week, and imposed a municipal permitting and penalty system. Sitka voters rejected it by roughly 73 percent to 27 percent. The MOU was an important part of the public conversation during that election. The community was told that a cooperative approach was a better answer than a hard cap, that the 7,000 passenger target would be managed jointly, that days above that target would be uncommon, and that 2025 and 2026 should be viewed as adjustment years because those seasons had already been scheduled and placed on sale before the MOU was signed. The community accepted that explanation, and the cooperative approach prevailed in large part because of it.

The 2027 calendar is the first season the MOU was expected to shape from the start. The MOU itself contemplates a berthing schedule drafted no later than 18 months in advance of each season (Section 1.B(3)). By that measure, 2027 is the year the agreement was supposed to show results. Instead, the enclosed memorandum from our Tourism Manager documents the following based on the CLAA schedule as of August 21, 2026:

- The projected lower berth capacity for 2027 is 631,290 passengers, which would be the largest season in Sitka history. That is a 6.2 percent increase over 2026 (594,355) and a 9.96 percent increase over 2025 (574,094).
- Twenty-three days in 2027 are scheduled above 7,000 passengers, compared with 14 days in each of 2025 and 2026, an increase of 64 percent. Of those 23 days, nine exceed 7,500 passengers, four exceed 8,000, and two exceed 9,000. The average size of the days above the target has also grown. It is the number of these days, and the margin by which some of them exceed the target, that departs from what the community was led to expect.
- The calendar includes two port calls in April and three in October, the months the MOU and the Task Force identified for shortening the season.

I want to be candid about what this means for CBS. The Assembly, my office, and our staff have stood before the public for two years and asked for patience. We told residents that the numbers they were seeing in 2025 and 2026 reflected bookings made before the MOU existed, and that 2027 would look different. If the 2027 calendar proceeds as

published, it will be very difficult to explain why those statements should still be believed. I also need to share that the residents who are most concerned about cruise volumes were the first to bring the 2027 calendar to our attention. The community is watching closely, it is organized, and it has already shown that it can qualify an initiative for the ballot. My concern is that the 2027 calendar, if unaddressed, will lead to another initiative, and that the next campaign will argue that the cooperative approach was tried and did not work. CBS would have very little to offer in response.

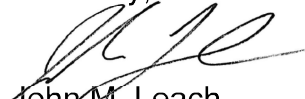
What concerns me most is not the numbers themselves but how we learned of them. CBS received no communication from Cruise Line Agencies of Alaska or the cruise lines while the 2027 calendar was being developed, and no notice before it was made public. Section 1.B of the MOU was written so that schedules would be shared and discussed in advance, and I recognize that Sitka Dock Company is a private facility with its own interests and its own berthing policy, operating within a scheduling process that is largely driven by the lines and their agents. CBS does not control that facility and does not seek to. That is why this letter is addressed to all three of you, and why the MOU was built on communication rather than control. The MOU is expressly non-binding. It works only if the parties talk to one another before decisions are made, and it exists so that this community does not have to rely on caps, permits, and penalties to protect itself. That same trust protects the industry. Every ballot initiative, special election, and contentious Assembly meeting is a cost borne by the cruise lines, by Sitka Dock Company, by local operators and merchants, and by residents. I am not certain how much political capital remains to sustain a partnership approach if the community concludes that the partnership runs in only one direction.

I also want to acknowledge what has gone well. Sitka Dock Company has staggered arrival times, built a shuttle reservation system that spreads departures from the terminal, expanded amenities at the terminal, and supported growth in tour capacity. These measures have noticeably reduced the concentration of visitors downtown on heavy days, and they advance the same objectives the Task Force identified. CBS recognizes that work. But operational improvements do not substitute for the commitments on total volume, peak days, and season length that the community heard and believes it was promised. Both are necessary.

CBS is asking for three things. First, that CLAA and the lines review the published 2027 calendar against Section 1.A of the MOU and let us know which calls above the 7,000 passenger target, and which April and October calls, can still be adjusted or rescheduled. I understand that itineraries are developed well in advance and that some calls are already on sale, but 2027 is far enough out that meaningful changes should still be possible. Second, that we convene the annual review meeting called for in Section 3 of the MOU ahead of the November deadline, with CLAA and CLIA participating, and use it to work through the 2027 schedule together. Third, that we agree on a process going forward in which CBS receives draft schedules from CLAA with enough lead time to raise concerns before itineraries are finalized and published, rather than after. That single change would have prevented most of the difficulty we now face.

I want to close where the Assembly and I have always stood. Cruise tourism is one of the major economic sectors supporting this community. It provides jobs, generates revenue, and sustains local businesses, and CBS wants to see that continue. We are grateful for our partners and for the good faith that produced the MOU in the first place. But Sitka needs to remain Sitka. A collaborative partnership in which both sides can count on the other is the only thing that protects the interests of the industry and the community alike, and it is worth far more to all of us than any single season of growth. I would welcome the opportunity to meet at your earliest convenience, and I would appreciate a response within 30 days so that I can report back to the Assembly and the community on a path forward.

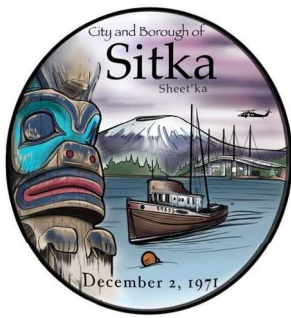
Sincerely,



John M. Leach
Municipal Administrator

Encl: Memorandum of August 21, 2026 from Judson Rusk, Tourism Manager
MOU between CBS and Sitka Dock Company, LLC

Cc: Mayor and Assembly Members, City and Borough of Sitka
Rachel Jones, Municipal Attorney
Judson Rusk, Tourism Manager
Brandon Calhoun, Harbormaster



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

A COAST GUARD CITY

MEMORANDUM

To: John Leach, Municipal Administrator

From: Judson Rusk, Tourism Manager

Date: August 21, 2026

Subject: Concerns Regarding 2027 Cruise Season Calendar

Background

As a direct response to the rapid growth of cruise related tourism in Sitka during the 2023 season and anticipated growth in 2024, the Tourism Task Force put forth their list of final recommendations to the Assembly on April 30, 2024. The Assembly formally adopted those recommendations on May 16, 2024 during a special meeting, and subsequently directed the development of an Action Plan. The resulting Action Plan was adopted on July 9, 2024.

5 individual recommendations from the Task Force were included in Action Plan Item 1A, which directed the Municipal Administrator to “negotiate preliminary terms for an agreement” that achieved the Task Force’s tourism level goals. This direction led to the creation of a MOU negotiated between the City and Borough of Sitka (CBS) and Sitka Dock Company (SDC). The MOU was first presented to the Assembly on October 22, 2024, and formally approved on November 12, 2024 by 4-3 vote.

In the accompanying memo presented with the MOU, it specifically says that the MOU is designed to address recommendations 1-5 from the Tourism Task Force:

- Mutal Agreements with the Industry
- Flattening the Curve
- Reducing Peak Days
- Designated Quiet Days
- Shortening the Season

Since the adoption of the MOU, there has been very little official public communication regarding any direct actions, management, or results coming from the MOU. However, information about the agreement and its anticipated effects has circulated through a variety of public discussion and informal channels. This has created a community expectation that the 2027 cruise season would provide an important opportunity to evaluate whether the MOU was producing measurable results toward the stated goals.

Analysis

The current cruise season schedule for 2027 as reported on the Cruise Line Agencies of Alaska (CLAA) website shows clear and distinct data that is inconsistent with the stated purpose and goals of both the Tourism Task Force and of the MOU.

- **Flattening the Curve**
 - This directive is in place to limit continued growth in cruise passenger volumes.
 - As of this writing, the lower berth capacity projection for the 2027 season is **631,290** passengers. To my knowledge, this would make 2027 the largest cruise season on record for Sitka.
 - This represents a 6.2% increase over the 2026 projected number of **594,355** and a 9.96% increase over 2025's projected number of **574,094**.
- **Reducing Peak Days**
 - This directive is to reduce the number and intensity of the days that have the highest volumes of cruise visitors.
 - As part of the work done by the Tourism Task Force, an informal threshold of 7,000 cruise passengers per day was established as a benchmark for Sitka's capacity in regard to daily operations.
 - As of this writing, the 2027 season has 23 individual days that are currently scheduled to surpass 7,000 passengers per day.
 - 14 days are between 7,000 - 7,500 passengers
 - 5 days are between 7,500 - 8,000 passengers
 - 2 days are between 8,000 - 9,000 passengers
 - 2 days are above 9,000 passengers
 - In contrast, the 2026 season had 14 days that surpassed 7,000 passengers.
 - 11 days between 7,000 - 7,500
 - 2 days between 7,500 - 8,000
 - 1 day above 9,000
 - The 2025 season also only had 14 days above 7,000 passengers.
 - 8 days between 7,000 - 7,500
 - 3 days between 7,500 - 8,000
 - 3 days above 8,000
 - 0 days above 9,000
 - This is a 64% increase of 7,000+ passenger cruise ship days compared to both the 2025 and 2026 seasons. Also, the average number of passengers on those specific days is significantly higher than in the previous two seasons.
- **Shortening the Season**
 - This directive is intended to reduce large ship cruise activity at the beginning and end of the season. This framework is directly beneficial to the community, many business owners and tour operators, local attractions that are dependent on seasonal availability for their work force, and families who work in the visitor industry that also have school aged children.

- The current 2027 cruise calendar has 2 ports of call in April, and 3 in October.
 - Tuesday, April 27
 - Wednesday, April 28
 - Friday, October 1
 - Monday, October 4
 - Monday, October 11

Additional Considerations

It is important to take into consideration that cruise tourism management in Sitka has evolved and continues to evolve with each season. Several operational practices have been implemented during the last two years that have noticeably lessened the impact of high volume cruise passenger days during the season, but do not fall directly into the written parameters of the MOU.

Sitka Dock Company's scheduling efforts to ensure large cruise ships have staggered arrival times has reduced the overall concentration of passengers disembarking and traveling downtown at the same time.

The creation of a reservation system for the Sitka Dock Company shuttle bus service has effectively distributed passenger departures from the terminal over a longer period rather than concentrating demand immediately when a ship arrives.

Expanding the number of amenities located at the Sitka Sound Cruise Terminal has provided guests with more opportunities to spend time at the terminal before or after traveling to downtown.

An increase of tour operators and visitor capacity for various excursions has helped engage more guests in different activities.

These efforts are distinctly different from the MOU's calendar management and overall numbers based metrics, but they advance several of the same underlying objectives identified by the Tourism Task Force including reducing peak congestion and more evenly distributing visitor activity throughout the day and community at large. In order to properly address the impacts of the cruise tourism industry in Sitka holistically, these measures need to be considered despite not measuring in the KPIs set out in the MOU.

Conclusion

The MOU was developed in direct response to community concerns and created a common expectation that future cruise schedules would demonstrate progress toward the goals established by the Tourism Task Force. While operational improvements over the past two seasons have helped distribute visitors and reduce impacts of high volume days, the current 2027 schedule does not show progress toward the MOU's objectives. The operational improvements are meaningful, but they do not replace the expectations of our community regarding overall volume, peak days, and season length.

This discrepancy presents a larger concern regarding public trust. The community

participated in an extensive public process, the Assembly adopted the resulting recommendations, and CBS entered into the MOU as a means of implementing several of them. When the community is then presented with a schedule that is inconsistent with those objectives, it undermines confidence in that process. This leads to frustration toward city officials, cruise line partners, local businesses, and individuals working within the visitor industry. Reasonable and responsible growth in Sitka's visitor industry is possible, but it must occur with the knowledge and trust of the community. CBS's responsibility is not to advance the interests of cruise companies or any individual segment of the industry, but to ensure that tourism remains a net positive for Sitka while maintaining productive relationships with the entities involved.

I believe it is fair and reasonable to expect CBS, Sitka Dock Company, Cruise Line Agencies of Alaska, Cruise Lines International Association, and any other relevant stakeholders to address these concerns openly and transparently. I would also expect all parties to work together in good faith to determine what changes can still reasonably be made to address overall passenger capacity, high-volume days, the length of the 2027 season, and responsible scheduling practices moving forward.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Andy Dool". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R" and a long, sweeping underline.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

between the

CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

and the

SITKA DOCK COMPANY, LLC

This Memorandum of Understanding ("**MOU**") is entered into by and between the City and Borough of Sitka ("**CBS**") and the Sitka Dock Company, LLC, an Alaska limited liability company ("**SDC**"), sometimes referred to individually as a "**Party**" and collectively as the "**Parties**." The purpose of this MOU is to establish and define the agreed upon purposes, intentions, and expectations between the Parties with respect to the operation of their respective facilities to support the sustainability of cruise tourism in Sitka, Alaska.

Recitals

- A. The CBS is a home rule municipality, organized and operating under the laws of the State of Alaska; and
- B. The Sitka Sound Cruise Terminal ("**SSCT**") is a cruise ship port facility privately owned by SDC, established in 2020 as the cruise gateway to Sitka, Alaska, with a mission to provide travelers with the opportunity to experience the outdoors, the beauty of nature, and the serenity and charm of an authentic Small Town Alaska Cruise Port; and
- C. In the Spring of 2023, the CBS appointed a Tourism Task Force to guide Assembly policy consideration of issues related to cruise ships, tourists, and tour operators; and
- D. The CBS and SDC desire to begin working towards the implementation of those recommendations as is practicable and desirable; and
- E. The protection of destinations is a vital element of responsible tourism. The Parties recognize the importance of collaboration on initiatives that help preserve the integrity, cultural heritage, and beauty of the most precious visitor destinations in the world; and
- F. Sitka, as an island community, is limited in its resources and must carefully consider how it can transition to a more sustainable future without causing undue harm to the environment or the livelihoods of its residents; and
- G. Tourism is one of the major economic sectors that have consistently contributed to Sitka's financial well-being. It provides jobs, generates revenue, and supports local businesses; and
- H. The CBS and SDC desire to memorialize their agreed upon purposes, intentions, and expectations for the scheduling of cruise ship docking and tendering during the period April 15 through October 15 (the "**cruise season**") of each year so long as this MOU is in effect.

NOW, THEREFORE, highlighting the desire of the Parties to define a framework that will lay the foundations of an even more responsible tourism model to generate prosperity for future

generations, addressing the specific needs of Sitka and responding to the stated demands by members of Sitka's community, the Parties agree as follows:

Section 1. Port Calls and Berthing Guidelines

A. The Parties establish the following criteria for the planning of all cruise calls in Sitka for each day during the cruise season:

- (1) The CBS will not authorize and will take reasonable measures not to permit (such measures do not include filing a lawsuit or engaging law enforcement) any cruise ship with a lower berth capacity of more than 1,000 passengers to dock at or tender to O'Connell Bridge Dock, Crescent Harbor Dock, Marine Service Center Port Wall, Gary Paxton Industrial Park Dock, or any other CBS-owned facility (collectively, "CBS Docks") if doing so would result in the total number of cruise passengers docking at or tendering to CBS Docks and the SSCT exceeding 7,000 (based on lower berth capacity) passengers for the day.
- (2) On days when more than 4,500 passengers (based on lower berth capacity) are scheduled to dock at or tender to CBS Docks, SDC will not allow the docking of or tendering by any ships at the SSCT with a lower berth capacity of more than 1,300 passengers if doing so would result in the total number of cruise passengers docking at or tendering to CBS Docks and the SSCT exceeding 7,000 (based on lower berth capacity) for the day.
- (3) To maintain a "quiet day" for Sitka residents, CBS will not authorize and will take reasonable measures not to permit (such measures do not include filing a lawsuit or engaging law enforcement) any cruise ship with a lower berth capacity of more than 1,000 passengers to dock at or tender to CBS Docks on the SSCT-designated "weekend day reserved for one ship with a capacity under 1,250 guests". The Parties agree that Saturday will be the designated "quiet day" per this MOU. If there is a need to change the designated "quiet day," the Parties agree to hold discussions and come to a mutually acceptable decision.
- (4) During the months of April and October of every calendar year, CBS will not permit any cruise ship with a lower birth capacity of greater than 1,000 passengers to dock at or tender to CBS Docks.
- (5) CBS may approve additional docking at or tendering to CBS Docks for emergencies or unanticipated schedule changes.

B. To provide more readily accessible ship schedules and coordination for purposes of Section A, above, the Parties commit to:

- (1) Sharing quarterly schedules with a written narrative outlining any changes.
- (2) Providing the stated lower berth capacity for each ship scheduled for each day during the cruise season.
- (3) Drafting a berthing schedule no later than 18 months in advance of each cruise season.

- (4) Notify the other Party of impactful schedule changes made within three months prior to or within the cruise season. Changes will be sent to the CBS Municipal Administrator, SSCT, the CBS Harbors Department, and the CBS Tourism Manager.

Section 2. Effective Date

Once executed by the Parties, this MOU shall be effective immediately, with the commencement of the 2025 cruise season. Knowing that the 2025 cruise season has already been scheduled and put on sale by cruise companies, both CBS and SSCT agree to review the schedule and coordinate in good faith to achieve the purposes, intentions, and expectations set forth in this MOU to the greatest extent possible..

Section 3. Term

This MOU will be reviewed every five years to be updated to meet the Parties' goals and the purposes set forth in this MOU while improving their mutual understanding of impacts of this MOU on cruise operations and the community.

The Parties agree to meet annually no later than November of each year to review lessons learned, to review and optimize the subsequent cruise season's operations, and to align on community and industry parameters, goals, expectations, and opportunities.

If the Parties do not mutually agree on an update at the completion of any five-year term, the MOU shall continue until an update is agreed upon and signed, unless either Party notifies the other Party in writing that it will not agree to an update and renewal of this MOU.

Section 4. Dispute Resolution

The Parties agree that if there is a dispute as to any provision of this MOU or the implementation of it by the other Party, the Party may give notice in writing of the dispute. The Parties agree to meet to resolve the dispute within thirty (30) days of receipt of the notice. If the Parties fail to resolve the dispute within sixty (60) days of such notice or longer period, if agreed to in writing by the Parties, the Parties agree to bring in a mediator to resolve the dispute. Alternatively, a Party may terminate this MOU as provided in Section 6.

Section 5. Notice

Any notice or notices required or permitted to be given pursuant to this MOU shall be given by email or certified mail, postage prepaid, and return receipt required, as follows:

To the City and Borough of Sitka:

Municipal Administrator
City and Borough of Sitka
100 Lincoln Street

{01542996}

Sitka, AK 99835
administrator@cityofsitka.org

To Sitka Sound Cruise Terminal:

Chris McGraw
Sitka Dock Company, LLC
P.O. Box 718
Sitka, AK 99835
chris@sitkadock.com

Section 6. Termination

This MOU may be terminated by either Party by (a) delivering written notice of termination to the other Party at least ninety (90) days prior to the effective date of any termination; or (b) if any provision of this MOU is determined to be prohibited by any law, by delivering written notice of termination to the other Party, which shall be effective immediately upon delivery.

Section 7. Governing Law and Compliance with Laws

The laws of the State of Alaska, without giving effect to its conflicts of laws principles, will govern all questions concerning the construction, validity, and interpretation of this MOU. The Parties shall comply with all federal, state and local statutes, ordinances, and regulations now in effect or thereafter adopted, validly enacted in the performance of its obligations set forth herein.

Section 8. Relationship of the Parties

Neither this MOU nor any other documentation or communication between the Parties shall constitute or create a joint venture, partnership, legal entity, or other similar business combination or arrangement between the Parties. Each Party shall act only on an individual and several basis. No Party shall have the right to act as an agent for or a servant or employee of the other Party, to make commitments or assume obligations for and on behalf of the other Party, or to bind the other Party for any purpose whatsoever.

Section 9. Costs and Expenses

Each Party shall be responsible for its costs and expenses in connection with the preparation and implementation of this MOU.

Section 10. Non-Binding MOU; Modification

This MOU is entered into by the Parties to evidence their in-principal, non-binding, purposes, intentions, and expectations. The Parties acknowledge that no legally binding obligations are intended to arise between them as a result of this MOU. This MOU may be modified only by a writing signed by authorized representatives of each Party.

{01542996}

Section 11. No Third-Party Beneficiaries

Nothing in this MOU is intended or shall be construed to confer any interests, rights or remedies upon a person or entity not a Party to this MOU.

Section 12. Counterparts.

This MOU may be executed in counterparts, each of which shall be deemed to be an original and all of which together shall constitute the MOU.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Parties have caused this MOU to be executed on the dates written below.

[SIGNATURE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ON NEXT PAGE]

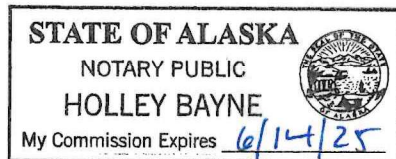
11/21/2024
Date

CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

[Signature]
By: John Leach
Its: Municipal Administrator

STATE OF ALASKA)
) ss.
FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT)

The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me this 21 day of November, 2024, by John Leach, Municipal Administrator of the CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA, ALASKA, an Alaska home rule municipality, on behalf of the municipality.



[Signature]
Notary Public in and for the State of Alaska
My Commission Expires: 6/14/25

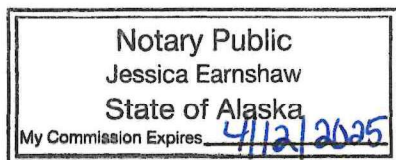
11/20/24
Date

SITKA DOCK COMPANY, LLC

[Signature]
By: Chris McGraw
Its: General Manager

STATE OF ALASKA)
) ss.
FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT)

The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me this 20th day of November, 2024, by Chris McGraw, General Manager for SITKA DOCK COMPANY, LLC, on behalf of the corporation.



[Signature]
Notary Public in and for the State of Alaska
My Commission Expires: 4/12/2025

Judson Rusk

From: John Leach
Sent: Tuesday, August 25, 2026 5:30 PM
To: Renee Limoge Reeve; chris@sitkadock.com; ketchikan@claalaska.com
Cc: Lalanya Downs; Noah Rogers; Joshua Branthoover; Judson Rusk; Brandon Calhoun; Rachel Jones; John Leach
Subject: Re: 2027 Sitka Cruise Calendar

All,

I wanted to follow up on my letter about the projected 2027 cruise calendar with a few points of clarification, since tone can be hard to read in formal correspondence and I want to make sure the intent is clear.

First, I am not suggesting that anyone has violated the MOU. The MOU was followed, and I recognize the good faith work that has gone into it, particularly the operational improvements at the terminal.

Second, nothing in the letter is meant to encourage cancellations or to affect Sitka Dock Company's business. It is likewise not meant to encourage individual cruise lines to refrain from arranging bookings with SDC. SDC is a private business, and CBS has no interest in directing its operations, steering traffic away from its facility, or discouraging calls that are already booked.

The letter is better understood as a notice. The community is watching these numbers closely, and a portion of it never had faith that the MOU would keep passenger counts near the target in the first place. When the 2027 calendar came out looking the way it does, those residents were the first to raise it, and that dynamic is what I need all of you to be aware of.

My ask is simply awareness. Growth at this pace has the potential to reshape the conversation in our community, and not in a direction that benefits any of us. If we stay in front of it together, with earlier communication on future schedules, I am confident we can keep the partnership on solid footing.

I am happy to talk through any of this by phone if that is easier.

Best,
John

From: John Leach <john.leach@cityofsitka.org>
Date: Tuesday, August 25, 2026 at 15:30
To: Renee Limoge Reeve <rreeve@cruising.org>, Chris McGraw <chris@sitkadock.com>, "ketchikan@claalaska.com" <ketchikan@claalaska.com>
Cc: Lalanya Downs <l downs@cruising.org>, Noah Rogers <noahr@claalaska.com>, Joshua Branthoover <joshua.branthoover@cityofsitka.org>, Judson Rusk <judson.rusk@cityofsitka.org>, Brandon Calhoun <brandon.calhoun@cityofsitka.org>, Rachel Jones <rachel.jones@cityofsitka.org>, John Leach <john.leach@cityofsitka.org>
Subject: 2027 Sitka Cruise Calendar

Good afternoon,

Please find attached my correspondence concerning the 2027 Cruise Calendar for Sitka as published by CLAA.

Best,



John M. Leach

Municipal Administrator
City and Borough of Sitka, Alaska
100 Lincoln Street, Sitka, Alaska, 99835
(907) 747-1812
administrator@cityofsitka.org

OUR MISSION: Provide public services for Sitka that support a livable community for all.

Service | Integrity | Teamwork | Kindness | Accountability



Book time to meet with me



August 26, 2026

[VIA EMAIL]

John M. Leach
Municipal Administrator
City and Borough of Sitka
100 Lincoln Street
Sitka, AK 99835
administrator@cityofsitka.org

Re: Sitka Dock Company's Compliance with the CBS-SDC Memorandum of Understanding

John,

I'm writing to respond fully to your August 25 letter, to your August 25 follow-up email, and to a related public statement CBS issued on its Facebook page on June 11, 2026 that bears directly on this exchange. I want to state my position plainly at the outset: Sitka Dock Company is, and has been, in full compliance with the MOU. I don't say that defensively, I say it because it is accurate under the agreement's actual terms, and I think the record deserves to reflect that clearly, for the community's benefit as much as ours.

How the August 25 letter reads

I understand the letter was not intended as an allegation of a violation, your August 25th email says so directly, and I appreciate that. But intent and effect are different things. Any member of the Sitka public reading the August 25 letter encounters twenty-three days above a "7,000 passenger target," references to April and October calls in the months the MOU was meant to restrict, and repeated language about the MOU's purpose "not being achieved" in a letter addressed to CLIA, CLAA, and SDC as the parties responsible for that outcome. That reads as an allegation of non-compliance, whatever either of us understands privately. I'd ask that CBS's public communications on this subject, going forward, match the position in your email rather than the implication in the letter.

The 2027 calendar was built the way the MOU requires

Section 1.B(3) of the MOU calls for a berthing schedule to be created eighteen months in advance of each cruise season. CLAA's 2027 calendar was developed and published consistent

with that timeline. The MOU is between CBS and SDC. Neither CLAA or CLIA is party to the MOU and there was no obligation for CLAA to coordinate schedule creation with CBS. If CBS's expectation was to restrict passenger counts below 7,000 by limiting the ships that tender to CBS's facility, this needed to be either communicated to CLAA before the 2027 calendar was built, or included in the original MOU which CLAA used as a reference in drafting the 2027 schedule. It isn't something that can be resolved easily 9 months out from the start of the 2027 season by sending a letter to three parties implying the agreed process broke down. It didn't. CLAA scheduled 2027 per the guidelines in the MOU.

CBS's own public statements have mischaracterized what the MOU requires

I want to raise something CBS posted to the public before this exchange even began. On June 11, 2026, CBS's Facebook page addressed that day's cruise schedule and stated, in relevant part:

"As a result, there are 14 days during the 2026 season that exceed the passenger thresholds outlined in the MOU. This is the same number of exception days that occurred in 2025 ... Overall, the MOU is producing measurable changes and reducing the number of high-volume visitation days."

This framing is inaccurate in a way that matters, and it predates and likely shaped the expectations behind the August 25 letter. The MOU does not set a flat 7,000-passenger threshold for the community as a whole, and no single day above that figure is, by itself, an "exception" to the agreement. Section 1.A's operative provisions restrict the capacity of vessels that CBS itself will authorize at CBS-owned docks when community passenger counts exceed 7,000. Treating every day above 7,000 port-wide as an MOU exception is not what the agreement says.

The fact is that only two days in the 2026 season actually exceeded the MOU threshold: August 16 and September 9. Both involved the Riviera (1,250 passengers, above the MOU's 1,000-passenger threshold) docking or tendering at a CBS-owned dock on a day when the combined CBS Docks and SSCT total exceeded 7,000. These days were brought to the attention of CBS by Norwegian Cruise Line Holding, and CBS agreed to allow the Riviera to dock on these days.

I'm asking CBS to withdraw the request regarding the April and October calls

Your August 26 letter asks "which calls above the 7,000 passenger target, and which April and October calls, can still be adjusted or rescheduled." Every day the letter identifies for potential rescheduling has ships booked at the SSCT, a privately owned facility. The MOU's passenger thresholds and the April and October restriction apply, by their own terms, to CBS Docks; they do not restrict SSCT. Asking CLIA and CLAA to identify which of those calls "can still be adjusted or rescheduled" is, regardless of intent, a request that cruise lines and their agents alter or cancel bookings at my business because of a "threshold" implied by CBS, not because of anything the MOU obligates SDC to do.

I'd ask CBS to withdraw that specific request. Beyond the operational concerns already raised, a municipal government asking an industry association and cruise lines to relocate or cancel confirmed bookings at a private facility raises questions in the general area of law addressing interference with business and contractual relationships. I understand your follow-up email noted that you were "not meant to encourage individual cruise lines to refrain from arranging bookings with SDC." However, the statements in the letter contradict this, and I would appreciate written confirmation of that going forward.

The record needs to be reconciled

Taken together, the June 11 Facebook post, the August 25 letter, and your August 25 email do not tell a consistent story. The Facebook post told the public that fourteen 2026 days were MOU exceptions and credited the MOU with "producing measurable changes." The August 25 letter, addressed to CLIA, CLAA, and SDC, implied SDC's 2027 schedule was inconsistent with the MOU's purpose. Your August 25 email then stated plainly that the MOU was followed and no one had violated it. I don't think these three statements can all be accurate at once, and I'd ask that CBS clarify, if the position outlined in your August 25th follow up email is the official CBS position and that this be the position used in any future public communication.

The Task Force's actual goals

I served on the Tourism Task Force in the Sitka Sound Cruise Terminal seat, from its formation in 2023 through the final recommendations adopted by the Assembly on May 16, 2024, so I understand what the Task Force was actually trying to achieve. "Flatten the curve" was defined narrowly, as avoiding a repeat of the exponential growth Sitka saw in 2022 and 2023. "Take out the peak" was aimed specifically at reducing the number of high-volume days, with the Task Force itself noting that the 5,000–7,000 range "lacked a clear majority consensus."

The characterization that the 2027 schedule represents a significant increase in high-volume days over 2026 needs a closer look against what the MOU and the Tourism Task Force actually set out to achieve. To be clear, this is a separate question from MOU compliance, which I've addressed above. This goes to whether the Task Force's underlying goal is still being met. Based on the CLAA calendar, which I have attached with passenger counts, there are 21 days exceeding 7,000 lower berths in 2027 compared to 14 in 2026. What matters for the Task Force's actual goal isn't just the count of days above 7,000, but where those days fall.

If you review the 2027 passenger counts, you'll notice a recurring pattern on Wednesdays: a Quantum-class Royal Caribbean ship and a Holland America ship calling at the SSCT, a combination that has appeared on the schedule as early as 2023 and has become a regular Wednesday fixture in recent seasons. On a number of these Wednesdays, a Viking ship with a capacity of 930 is also tendering to a CBS dock. Together, these three ships total 7,216 passengers, a figure that recurs repeatedly on the schedule in 2027.

Using that figure as a reference point, of the 21 days in 2027 that exceed 7,000, 13 fall at or under 7,216. That leaves 8 days meaningfully above it, compared to 7 such days above this 7,216 level in 2026. The growth in days above 7000 between 2026 and 2027 is concentrated almost entirely at the low end of the range: days marginally over 7,000, rather than a proliferation of new, more extreme days as is characterized by your letter. In my experience operating the terminal, there is no noticeable difference in community impact, or in the "feel" of Sitka, between a 7,000-passenger day and a 7,216-passenger day. On that basis, I don't think the 2027 calendar represents a major shift from the Task Force's "take out the peak" goal that the MOU was meant to address.

Where this leaves us

I am happy to participate in the Section 3 annual review meeting ahead of the November deadline, and I am happy to discuss lessons learned and ways to optimize future cruise season operations, and align on community and industry goals and expectations. But I'm not willing to let a public narrative stand that treats SDC as the source of a compliance problem that, on the MOU's own terms, does not exist. I'd ask for a written response addressing the June 11 post, the withdrawal of the April/October request, and confirmation that CBS's public position going forward will match what your August 25 email already states.

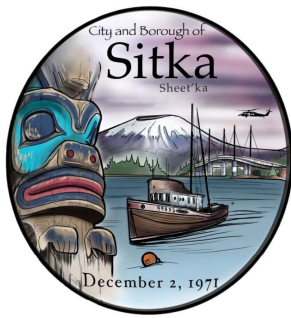
Sincerely,



Chris McGraw

General Manager, Sitka Dock Company, LLC

cc: Rachel Jones, Municipal Attorney, City and Borough of Sitka
Judson Rusk, Tourism Manager, City and Borough of Sitka
Brandon Calhoun, Harbormaster, City and Borough of Sitka
Renee Limoge Reeve, Cruise Lines International Association
Rick Erickson, Cruise Line Agencies of Alaska



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

A COAST GUARD CITY

ADMINISTRATION

100 Lincoln Street | Sitka, Alaska 99835

www.cityofsitka.com

administrator@cityofsitka.org

907-747-1812

August 31, 2026

[VIA EMAIL ONLY]

Chris McGraw
General Manager
Sitka Dock Company, LLC
4513 Halibut Point Road, Suite B-201
Sitka, AK 99835

Re: Your August 26, 2026 Letter Regarding the 2027 Cruise Calendar and the CBS-SDC MOU

Dear Chris,

Thank you for your August 26 letter, and thank you as well for the productive meeting today with you and the representatives from Cruise Line Agencies of Alaska. The conversation was candid and constructive, and it gave my office a much clearer understanding of how season schedules are built. This letter responds to your correspondence and memorializes what I believe we accomplished together.

The starting point remains our shared understanding that no party has violated the MOU. My August 25 email confirmed that the agreement was followed, and my letter of the same date was not an allegation of non-compliance and should not be read as one. Today's discussion reinforced that view for everyone at the table.

The confirmation you asked for in writing is one my office is glad to provide, and today's meeting makes it easy to state plainly. CBS is not advocating for the cancellation of any itinerary, is not asking cruise lines to refrain from arranging bookings with SDC, and is not asking CLAA or CLIA to move calls away from a private facility that CBS does not control. CBS will continue to abide by the MOU as written and will not interfere with the scheduling decisions that are properly SDC's to make. Anything that might change how ships are scheduled could come only from the Assembly and, even then, would govern only the use of CBS-owned facilities and never SDC's, as I explain below.

The most valuable outcome of today's meeting was a much better understanding of the scheduling process itself. We now understand that a season's schedule is generally finalized approximately eighteen months ahead of that season, and that the 2028 calendar is being wrapped up now. More important, we reached a consensus that CBS will be able to review a draft of the schedule in September or October, before it goes through finalization, so that CBS can provide input while changes are still practical. That

single step gives CBS the advance visibility the MOU always contemplated, and I am grateful to CLAA and to you for agreeing to it.

I also want to recognize that CLAA builds these schedules with our MOU in hand and works to honor it. That point deserves emphasis, because it carries an obligation for CBS in return. CLAA is following the MOU as it is written, and the MOU does not direct any party to turn a ship away simply because a day is projected above 7,000 passengers. If CBS ever expects ships to be declined on that basis at its own docks, CBS must first give clearer and more solid guidance than the agreement currently contains. To be clear, any such decision would reach only vessels seeking to use CBS-owned facilities and would never extend to the SSCT, which CBS has no authority to schedule. Developing that guidance is CBS's responsibility, not CLAA's or SDC's, and the new review process gives us the right venue to work on it.

Consistent with that, CBS will adjust how it speaks to the public about the 7,000 figure. Going forward we will reiterate that 7,000 is not a cap. It is a metric CBS uses to gauge the demand that a given day places on community infrastructure and capacity, and its effect on residents' quality of life, and to guide the input CBS provides on upcoming schedules. Framing the number that way is both more accurate and more useful to residents than treating every day above it as an exception.

I appreciated the analysis you presented showing that, while the number of days above 7,000 has grown since 2025, the passenger counts on those days have not climbed as sharply as a raw day count suggests, so that a day which once landed near 6,800 may now land near 7,200. That nuance matters, and the community deserves to understand it. I would welcome your attendance at an upcoming Tourism Commission meeting to walk through this analysis so that residents can be better informed, and I appreciate your willingness to do so. It is also encouraging to hear that the draft 2028 calendar is likely to include fewer days above 7,000 than the 2026 calendar, which suggests the collaborative approach is working.

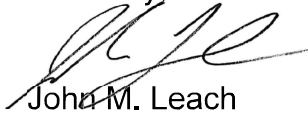
None of this changes the fact that community attention on cruise volume is real and active. Residents opposed to the current scale of tourism have come to my office asking CBS to act, and some have indicated they will raise the matter with the Assembly. This group appears to be watching developments in Juneau, where Assembly members have introduced an ordinance to convert that community's voluntary five-ship daily limit into mandatory code. CBS is not taking a position on whether any similar measure belongs in Sitka. I raise it so that our partners understand the environment we share, and so that the value of the process we agreed to today is clear to everyone. A credible, cooperative process is the best answer I can offer residents who are asking what CBS is doing.

That brings me to the one point I want to state with particular clarity. If the community's interest in the 7,000 figure is ever to translate into ships actually being declined at CBS-owned facilities, that is a policy decision that rests with the Assembly, either by amending the MOU or by directing clearer restrictions on the use of those facilities. Any such measure would apply solely to CBS docks. It would not direct which vessels SDC accepts

at the SSCT, and CBS will neither pursue such restrictions unilaterally nor reach into SDC's operations to achieve them. Unless and until the Assembly acts, CBS will operate within the agreement exactly as it stands. Should the Assembly choose to revisit the MOU, I would want that work done with you and with CLAA at the table, in the same spirit as today.

I look forward to continuing these discussions at the Section 3 annual review meeting ahead of the November deadline, and my office will circulate proposed dates shortly with CLAA and CLIA included. The partnership between CBS and SDC has produced real results, and today's meeting is good evidence of it. I intend to keep it on that footing.

Sincerely,



John M. Leach
Municipal Administrator

Cc: Mayor and Assembly Members, City and Borough of Sitka
Rachel Jones, Municipal Attorney
Judson Rusk, Tourism Manager
Brandon Calhoun, Harbormaster
Renee Limoge Reeve, Cruise Lines International Association
Rick Erickson, Cruise Line Agencies of Alaska

Memo

Sitka's Cruise Visitor MOU – The Daily Cruise Passenger Limit

To: Sitka Tourism Commission and Tourism Director
From: Small Town Soul, on September 4, 2026

Dear Commission members and Tourism Director;

The final Tourism Task Force report to the Sitka Assembly in May 2024 highlights on page 8 the results of two important community survey questions:

“For those who felt there should be a maximum number of daily cruise passengers [81% of respondents], the average reported (less statistical outliers) was 5,484, and the median was 5,000.

“When asked to narrow their choice of maximum number of daily cruise passengers to the options of 3,000 – 7,000, the largest response was for 7,000 passengers (34%), followed by 3,000 (23%), 5,000 (18%), 4,000 (16%), 6,000 (9%), and 6% skipped the question.”

Small Town SOUL believes the Task Force assessment which follows that was erroneous: “Based on the results of the community survey it appears that a daily limit between 5000 – 7000 cruise passengers is most agreeable; that comes with a significant caveat that the range of responses was vast and lacked clear majority consensus.”

To the contrary, when viewed as cumulative steps of daily numbers, the majority opinion is very clear:

Survey: Daily Level	Survey Result	Cumulative Result	Cumulative meaning
3,000	23 %	-	3,000 or less
4,000	16 %	39%	4,000 or less
5,000	18 %	57%	5,000 or less
6,000	9 %	66%	6,000 or less
7,000	34%	100%	7,000 or less

- a substantial majority (57%) wants a limit of 5,000 or less daily cruise visitors;
- a supermajority (66%) wants a limit of 6,000 or less; and
- a median (5,000) and average (5,484) of the responses point to setting a limit well below 6,000.

Further, we believe the municipality misinterpreted the Task Force’s report in setting a target of 7,000 daily passengers. First, the Task Force erred in suggesting that 7,000 passengers is within the “most agreeable” range: it isn’t, 66% want a lower limit than that. Second, the administration could have assessed the page 8 data more closely, and pursued a much lower and firm limit. 57% want 5,000 or less. Third, the Tourism Task Force did recommend a 5,000 to 7,000 daily limit, but that is not what went into the MOU.

Recommendations:

Small Town SOUL believes that the Tourism Commission could recommend to the Assembly that a daily limit of 5,000 to 7000 be set by ordinance. We believe this is best implemented through regulatory means, and should be a matter of both Commission and Assembly deliberation. The other option is to do an MOA, which has clear guidelines, and limits. The idea that Sitka could revisit the MOU was a topic of Assembly discussion around the time it was voted on by the Assembly, given it only passed on a 4/3 split vote. The citizens of Sitka were led to believe the MOU placed meaningful daily limits on cruise visitors, yet looking ahead to 2027, we see that ‘limit’ is not what is being sold by the cruise lines. It seemed that a good faith effort was underway to keep Sitka’s numbers below 7000 per day. We now need to look at how to do better. Citizens’ will feel disenfranchised when they learn of the huge increase of passengers being booked to come to Sitka in 2027.

Important Note: Juneau’s municipal attorney has determined, based on litigation outcomes in the Bar Harbor litigation, that as a home rule municipality Juneau has constitutional clearance to set limiting regulations. She revealed this in an agenda item on the topic at the July 30 meeting of Juneau’s Visitor Industry Task Force — see the attached transcript.

Comparison of Sitka's ongoing 2026 cruise season and scheduled 2027 season

Small Town SOUL | 14 Aug 2026 — updated 7 Sep 2026 based on LBC changes

This comparison is based on the currently posted schedules at Cruise Line Agencies Alaska: dated July 7, 2026 for the 2026 season and April 9, 2026 for the 2027 season.

Sitka's Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Sitka Sound Cruise Terminal **is proving to be ineffective**. The season's cruise intensity is increasing by 5.7%, based on lower berth capacity between this year and 2027. Increasing intensity is also apparent for daily level comparisons in the table.

Outcome: Overall growth is intensifying impacts. Combined with more light days (bottom of table) the scale of intense days is worsening within & beyond the Tourism Task Force's recommended 5-7,000.

	2026 (current season)	2027 (next season)	Increase of:
Lower Berth Capacity (season total)	593,528	627,689	5.7 %
Port Calls (number)	325	330	2 %
Ships (number)	42	39	-7 %
Daily Intensity (Days at level)	Days	Days	
Over 9,000	1	2	400 %
8,000 to 9,000	0	3	
7,000 to 8,000	12	17	42 %
6,000 to 7,000	33	28	-15 %
5,000 to 6,000	16	18	13 %
Cumulative Intensity	Cumulative Days	Cumulative Days	
Over 9,000	1	2	100 %
Over 8,000	1	5	400 %
Over 7,000	13	22	69 %
Over 6,000	46	50	9 %
Over 5,000	62	68	10 %
Over 4,500	66	76	15 %
Date span above Intensity level	First & Last Dates	First & Last Dates	
Over 7,000	2 Jun to Sep 9	10 May to Sep 27	
Over 6,000	11 May to Sep 22	3 May to Sep 27	
Over 5,000	11 May to Sep 22	3 May to Sep 27	
Biggest Day	9,108	9,182	1 %
Ship days less than 1,000 visitors	15	26	73 %
No ship days	11	18	64 %

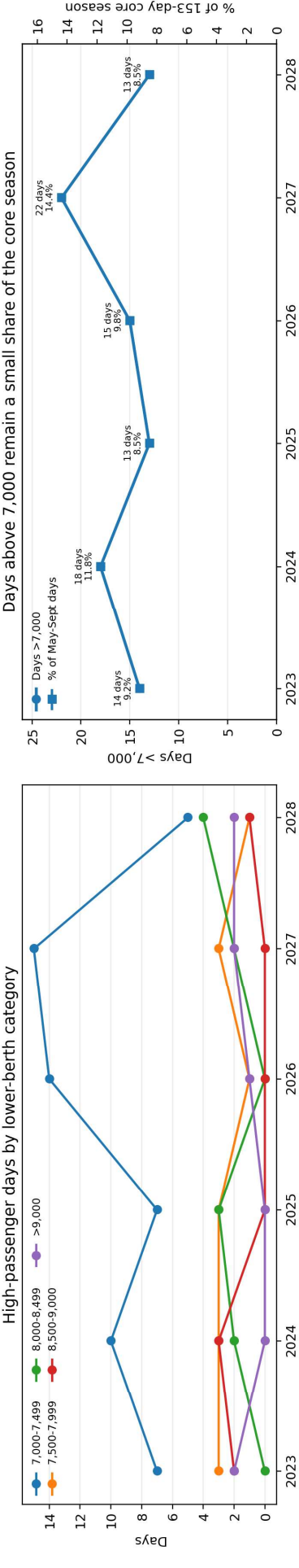
Sitka Cruise Visitation: Is the Growth Curve Still Flat?

2019-2028 scheduled lower-berth / Arrival Pax Est analysis

0.5%/yr 2023-28 capacity CAGR	2.6% Total Passenger Increase 2023-2028	13 days 2028 days >7,000	-4.0% 2028 capacity vs. 2027
----------------------------------	--	-----------------------------	---------------------------------

What the data shows. Sitka experienced a sharp step-up in cruise volume before 2023: total season passengers increased from 220,000 in 2019 to 383,000 in 2022 and then to 585,520 in 2023. Since that step-up, the curve has flattened. From 2023 through 2028, scheduled lower-berth capacity increases only 2.6% in total, from 585,520 to 601,027 (about 0.5% annualized), with annual totals moving within a relatively narrow band rather than continuing the earlier growth trajectory.

Metric	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Days >7,000	14	18	13	14	22	13
% of May-Sept core season	9.2%	11.8%	8.5%	9.8%	14.4%	8.5%
Scheduled lower berths	585,520	594,080	568,903	592,948	625,962	601,027



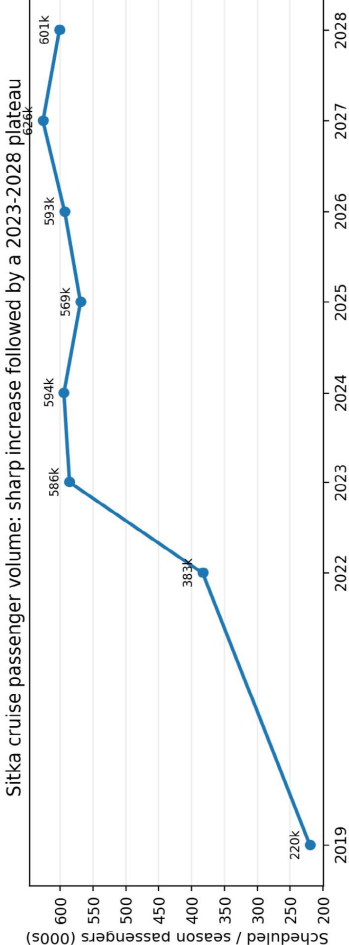
Tourism Task Force Outcome and the Existing Management Framework

Long-term context matters. Passenger volume increased 74% from 2019 to 2022 and another 53% from 2022 to 2023. By contrast, the entire 2023-2028 period increases only 2.6% (0.5% per year). This separates the earlier rapid expansion from the post-2023 period the Tourism Task Force recommendations and negotiated management measures were intended to address.

The 2024 Tourism Task Force did not recommend a single statutory passenger cap. It found the community input highly polarized and specifically concluded that it was not prepared to recommend one singular number defining the 'right' level of tourism. Instead, its Directive One recommendations were to pursue mutual agreements, flatten the growth curve, reduce peak days, establish quiet days, shorten shoulder-season activity, and continue collecting data. The Assembly adopted the Task Force recommendations in May 2024.

How far above 7,000 are the high-volume days?

Counting days above 7,000 alone can overstate the scale of the increase because many of those days are only slightly above the threshold. In 2027, 13 of the 22 days above 7,000 (59%) are within 250 passengers.



Sitka Has Added Capacity to Manage and Disperse Cruise Visitors

Passenger volume flattened after 2023 while local tours, attractions and transportation continued to expand

500+ Adventure Sitka guests on many 7,000-pax days	+160/day 2027 capacity from one new 42-passenger boat	800+ Alaska Odyssey Dome guests on busy 2026 days	~19% of a 7,000-pax day served by Adventure Sitka + Dome alone*
---	--	--	--

The important change since 2023 is not just the number of visitors - it is Sitka's ability to accommodate them. As cruise volume stabilized, local businesses invested in boats, vehicles, attractions and organized experiences. That additional capacity gives more visitors a destination and activity away from the terminal and downtown core, reducing the concentration created by any given passenger count.

MARINE TOUR CAPACITY		NEW ATTRACTION CAPACITY	COMMUNITY-WIDE RESPONSE
Adventure Sitka • Added 3 boats since 2023 • Often carries 500+ guests on a 7,000-passenger day • Adding another 42-passenger boat for 2027 • New vessel adds about 160 guest slots per busy day		Alaska Odyssey Dome • Did not exist in 2023 or 2024 • 20-meter immersive theater at the cruise terminal • Hosted 800+ guests on busy days in 2026 • Creates a high-capacity activity before guests enter the downtown circulation system	Local operators • Other Sitka operators have added boats and passenger vans • The City's 2026 commercial recreation system reflects a broad local operator base • More organized experiences distribute visitors among marine, road-system and recreation destinations

Transportation impacts have also changed.

Smaller, less-obtrusive buses Halibut Point Marine and Alaska Coach Tours have replaced larger portions of their fleets with smaller school-bus-style passenger buses. Compared with the older large coaches they replaced, these vehicles have a smaller physical presence in town and are quieter in operation.	Newer vehicle technology The newer fleets incorporate more modern emissions-control technology. The result is that passenger transportation capacity can be maintained while reducing the visual, noise and emissions impacts associated with older full-size coaches.
--	---

A 7,000-passenger day in 2026-27 is not operationally the same as a 7,000-passenger day in 2023.

2023		2026-27
Higher cruise volume had arrived, but much of today's incremental tour, attraction and transportation capacity had not yet been built.	More marine seats, more vans and organized tours, an 800+ guest/day dome attraction, and modernized bus fleets provide substantially more ways to absorb and distribute the same number of visitors.	

FLATTER CRUISE VOLUME + GREATER LOCAL CAPACITY = BETTER VISITOR DISTRIBUTION

Sitka is not managing today's cruise volume with 2023 infrastructure. The community and private sector have continued investing in capacity and lower-impact transportation even as scheduled passenger volume has remained relatively flat.