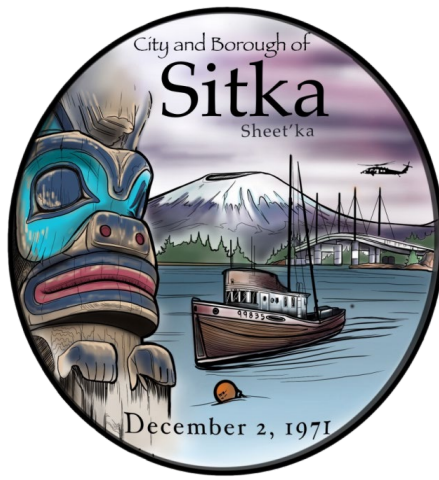




2025 End-of-Season Tourism Survey

SUMMARY RESULTS

PREPARED BY: PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

PRESENTED TO: TOURISM COMMISSION, NOV. 13, 2025

COPY PROVIDED TO: ASSEMBLY, NOV. 25, 2025

Key Information & Takeaways

- 360 Responses
 - Strong response level, but down from 2022 (601)
 - Age Representation: Ages 25-64 proportionally representative, 0-24 under-represented, 65+ over-represented
- Traffic and congestion/crowding continue to be key concerns
 - 60% avoid downtown on cruise ship days, and have difficulty finding parking
 - Jaywalking remains a major concern
- Respondents feel most impacted in terms of phone/internet service, followed by access to business services, recreational/subsistence areas, and getting to school, work, or appointments on time
- For 2026:
 - Leaving Lincoln Street open is slightly favored (50% vs 41%)
 - Closing Maksoutoff Street for temp restroom placement is slightly favored (45% vs 37%)
 - 54% agree the pedestrian monitors on Harbor Drive made a significant difference in managing jaywalking (vs 24% disagree)
- Sentiment on overall industry impact largely unchanged from 2022 End-of-Season Survey results
- 48% agree, 40% disagree CBS is heading in the right direction to better manage tourism. Key areas for significant improvement include:
 - Communicating amounts and uses of tourism-related revenues (56%)
 - Managing traffic-related impacts of tourism (52%)
 - Communicating CBS tourism management efforts and decisions (51%)
 - Managing crowding/congestion in the downtown area (49%)
 - Managing overall visitor numbers (49%)

Survey Access & Advertising

Open 10/6 – 10-21

- Available online
- Paper copies available at Sitka Public Library

Advertising

- Sitka Sentinel display ads & coverage
- KCAW PSA & coverage
- CBS website and social media
- Discussion/review at 9/11 Tourism Commission meeting
- Report at 10/14 Assembly meeting
- Email group (from Short-Term Tourism Plan & Tourism Task Force) notification – approx. 115 recipients

Response Demographics

Questions 1-3 & 6

360

Respondents

335 via online survey
25 via print survey

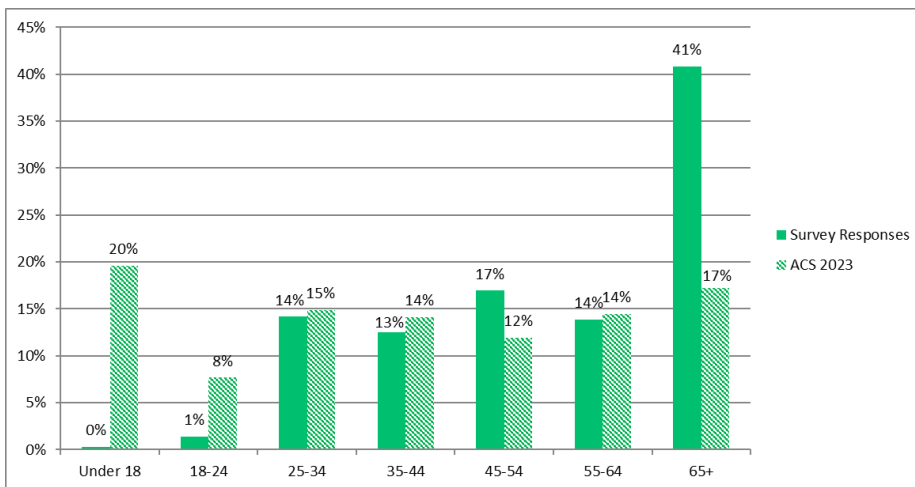
96%

Full-Time Residents

2.5% Seasonal Residents
1.5% Prefer not to answer

Ages

With comparison to 2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates for Sitka Population



Occupations (Top Results)

28% Retired
10% Education & Childcare
10% Tour Operations
9% Government
8% Private/Nonprofit Arts, Sci. & Social Work
7% Downtown Merchants & Businesses
6% Seafood Industry
6% Healthcare

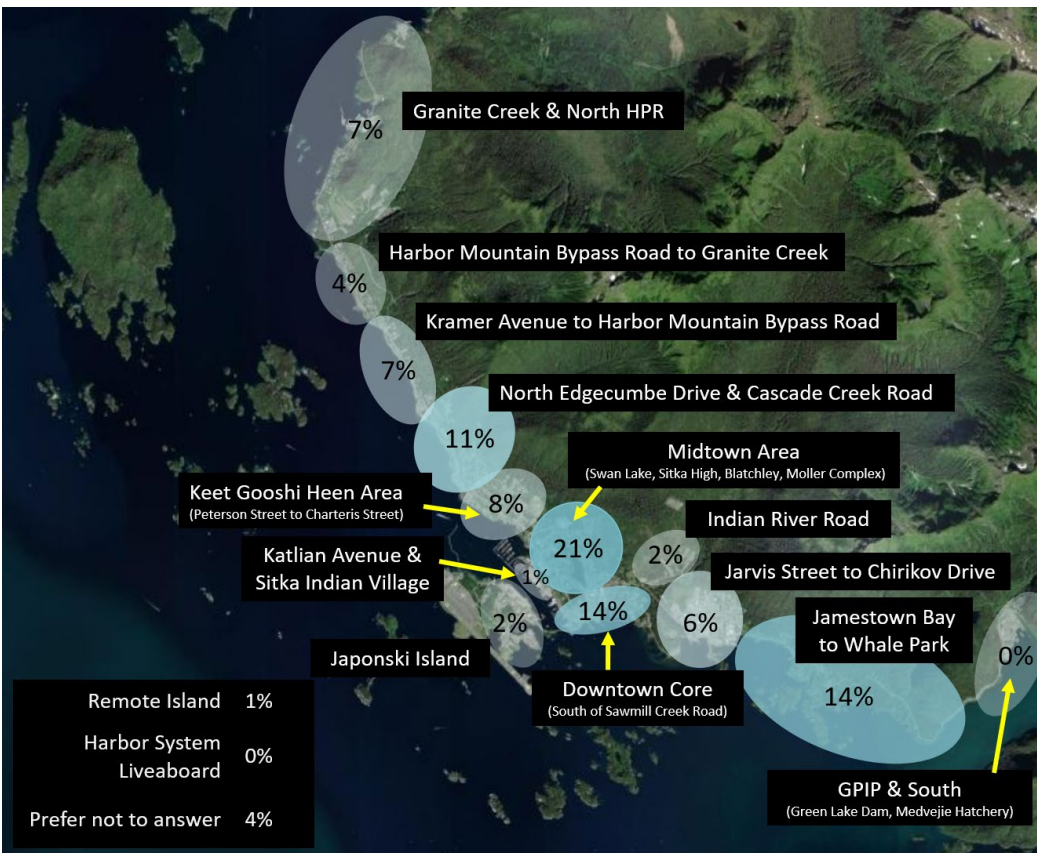
Primary Modes of Transportation

85% Personal Vehicle
9% Walking / Rolling
5% Biking
1% Public Transit
<1% Other Motorized Vehicles

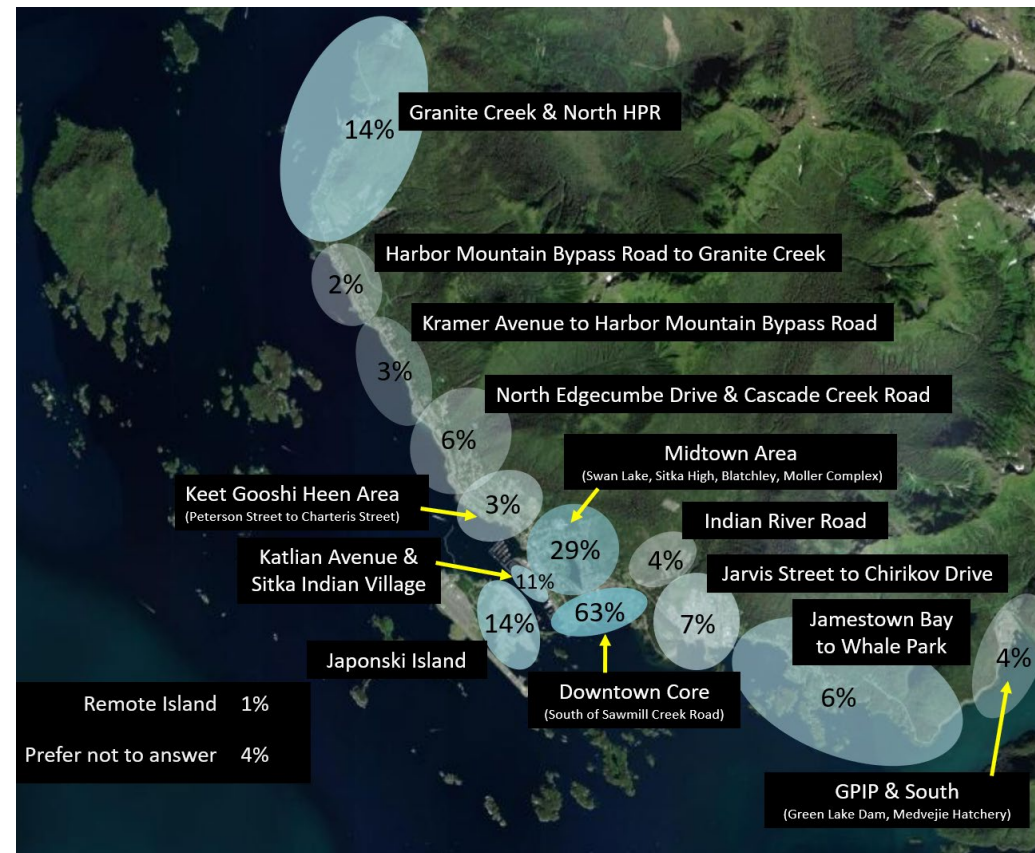
Residential & Frequented Areas

Questions 4 & 5

What area of town do you live in?

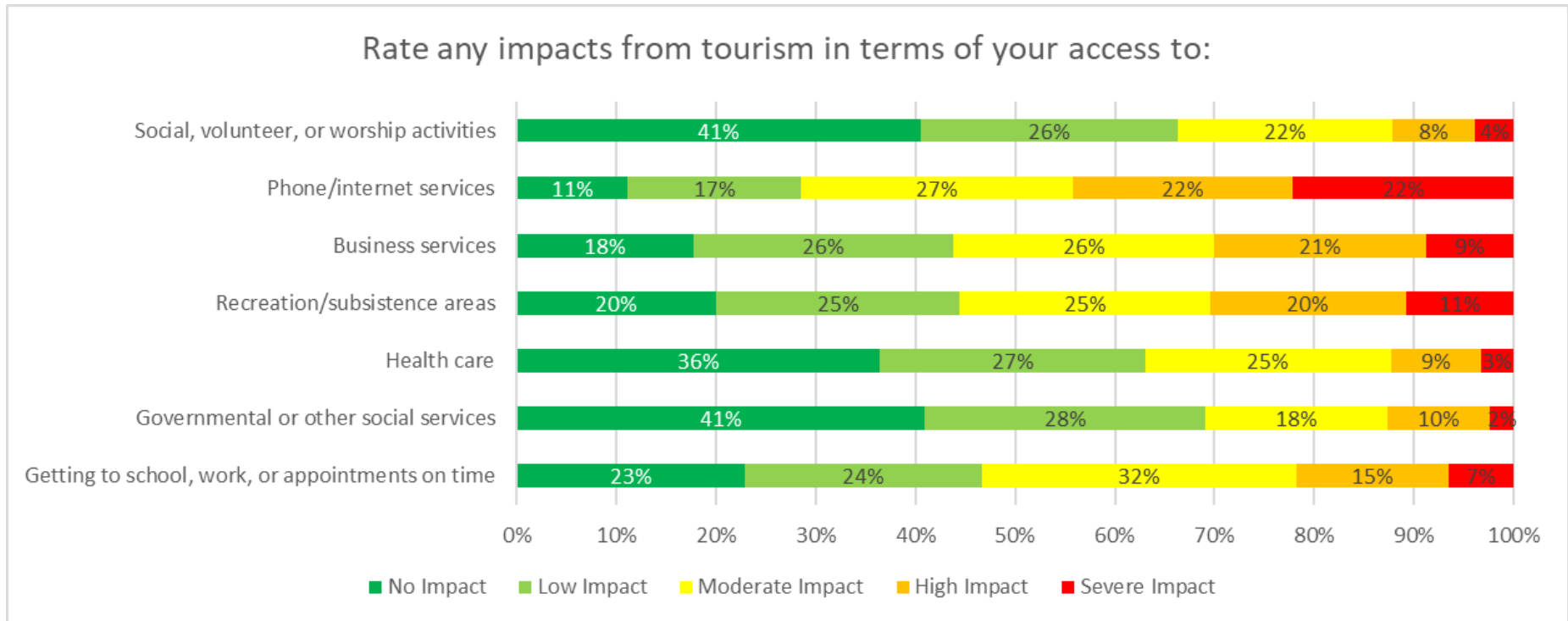


What area of town do you work in or most frequently visit for daily activities? (Top 1-3 areas)



Access Impacts

Question 7



Other Responses:

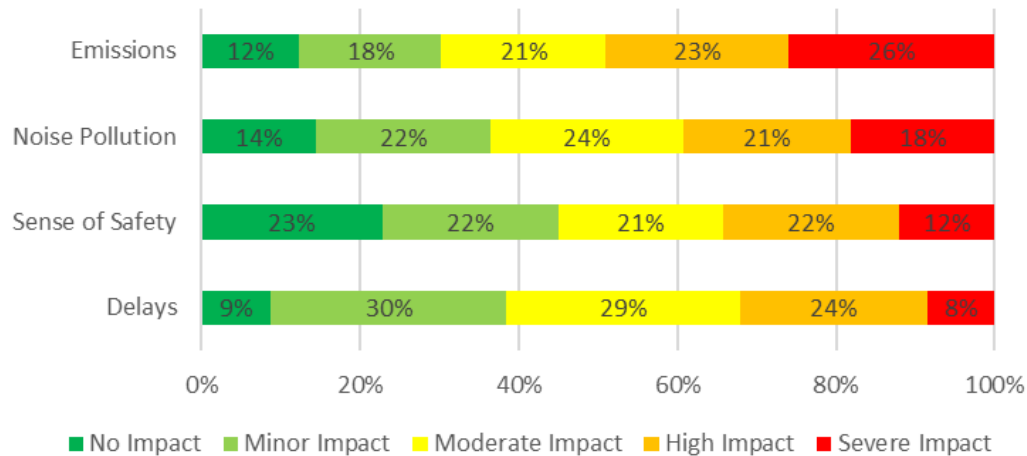
- Downtown Crowding & Traffic, Avoiding Downtown (9) – lack of parking, congestion, traffic/safety concerns, avoiding the downtown area
- Recreation (8) – overcrowding on trails, bikes/e-bikes on trails and SMC multiuse path, playgrounds and student activities
- General Traffic & Crowding (8) – Volume of bus traffic and associated noise/air pollution, general overcrowding and congestion, traffic delays, safety concerns, bike use (biking feels less safe, concerns about tourist bike/e-bike use not being safe)
- HPR (5) – congestion/slow downs, turning movements from Cascade Creek Road/Seamart, safety concerns
- Food (4) – limited access to restaurants, difficulty getting to grocery/food stores and low inventory

Traffic & Transportation

General Traffic & Transportation

Questions 9 & 10

From a transportation perspective, rate the general level of tourism impacts this summer.



What modifications, if any, did you make to your transportation choices due to tourism this summer?

65% avoided the downtown area on cruise ship days

56% adjusted departure times to account for delays

Detours Used

- 43% Katlian Avenue
- 38% Jeff Davis Street
- 20% Peterson Street/Lake Street

Used a Personal Vehicle

- 6% more often
- 13% less often

Walked, Biked, or Rolled

- 18% more often
- 8% less often

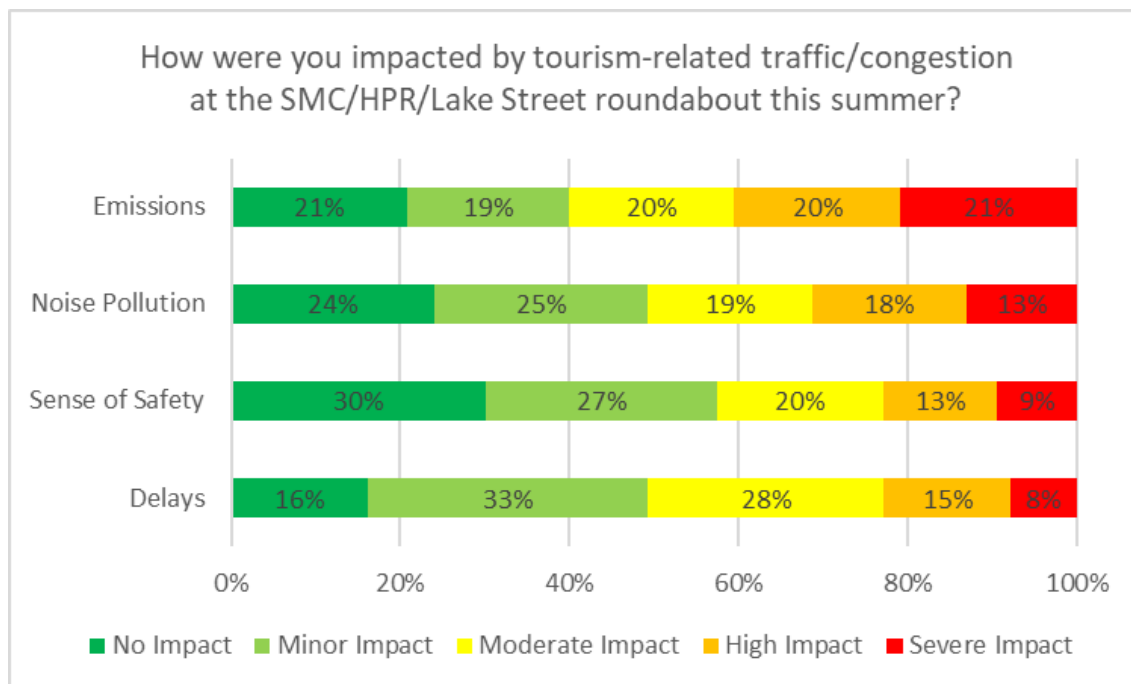
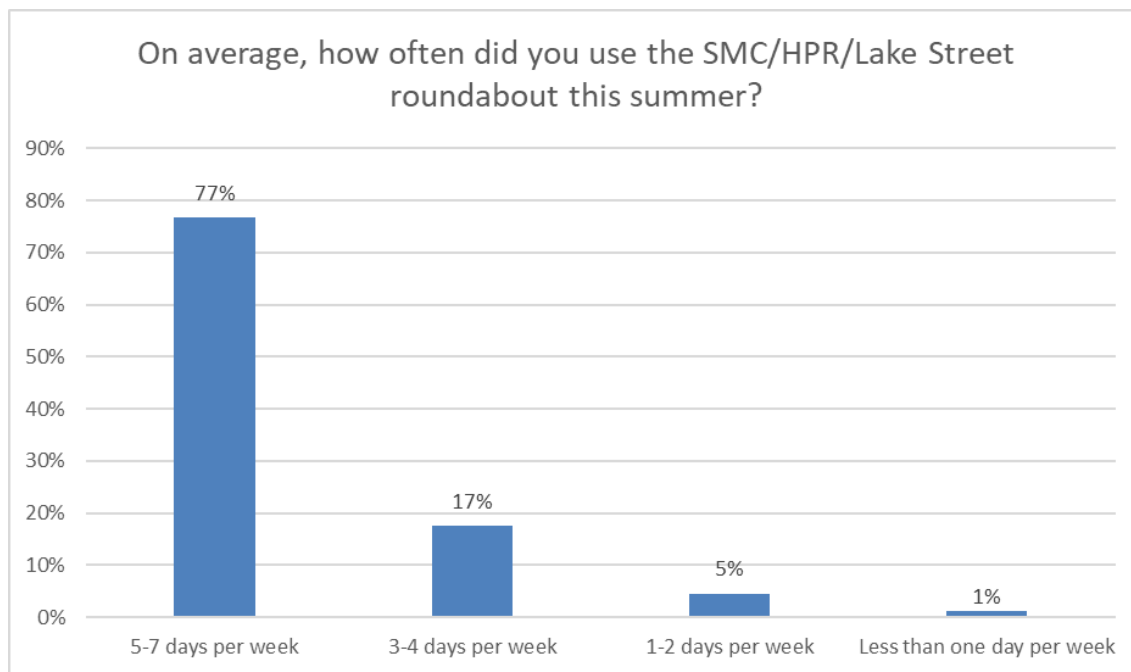
1% or Fewer

- Used public transit more or less often
- Carpooled more or less often
- Used other motorized vehicles (UTV, e-bike, scooter) more or less often

16% reported no modifications

SMC / HPR / Lake Street Roundabout

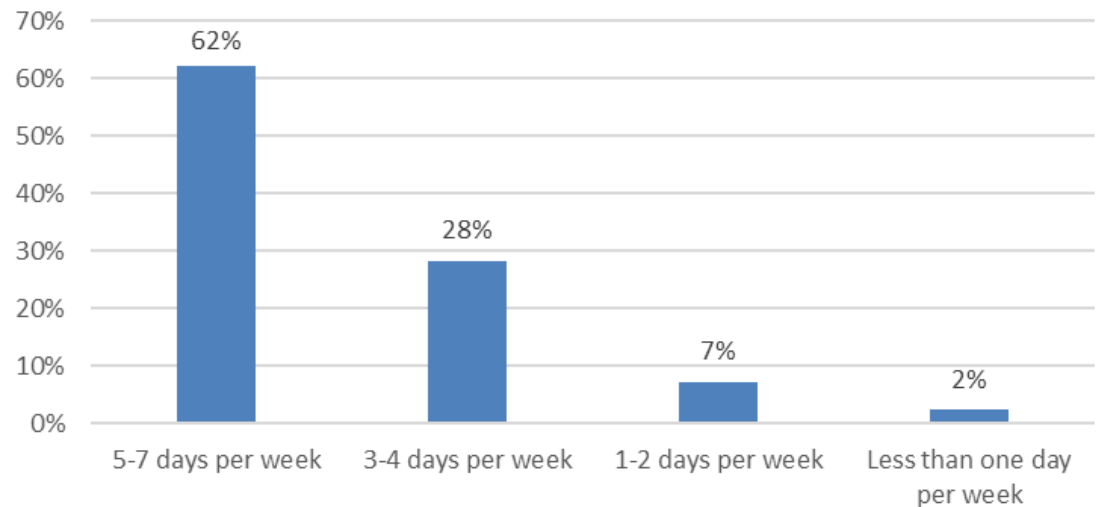
Questions 11 & 12



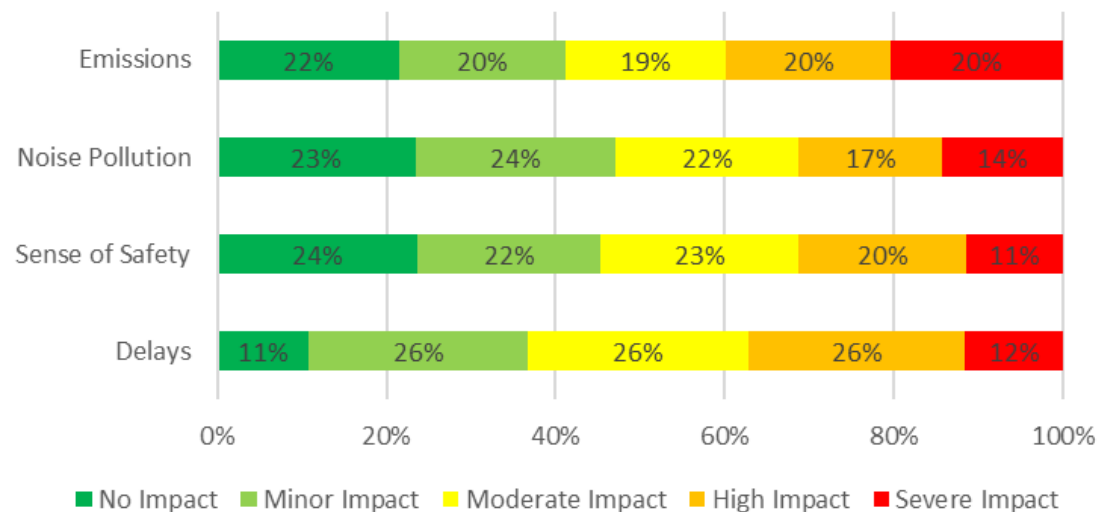
Lake / Lincoln Intersection

Questions 13 & 14

On average, how often did you use the Lake/Lincoln intersection this summer?

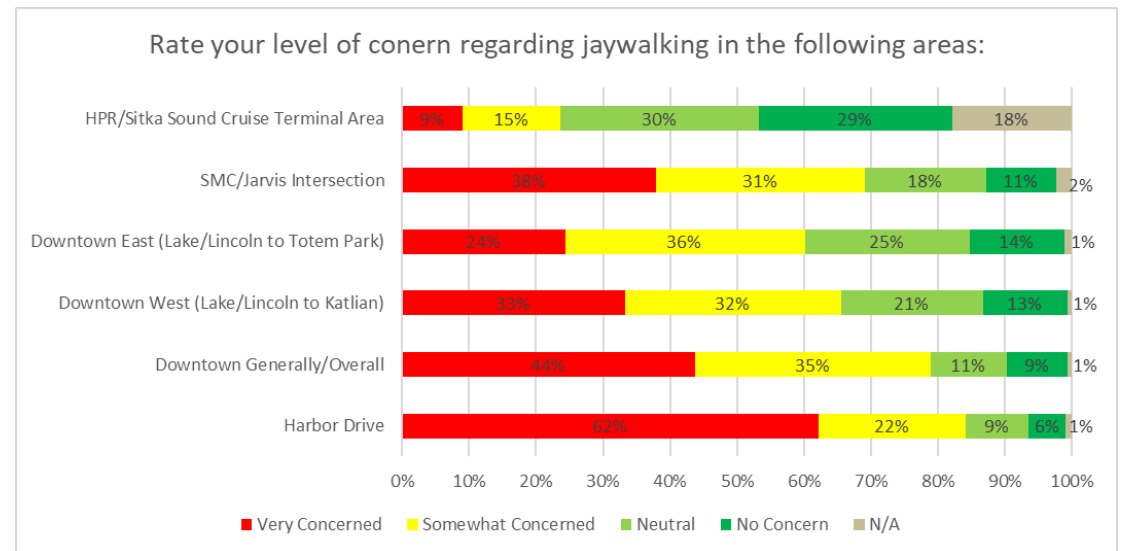


How were you impacted by tourism-related traffic/congestion at the Lake/Lincoln intersection this summer?



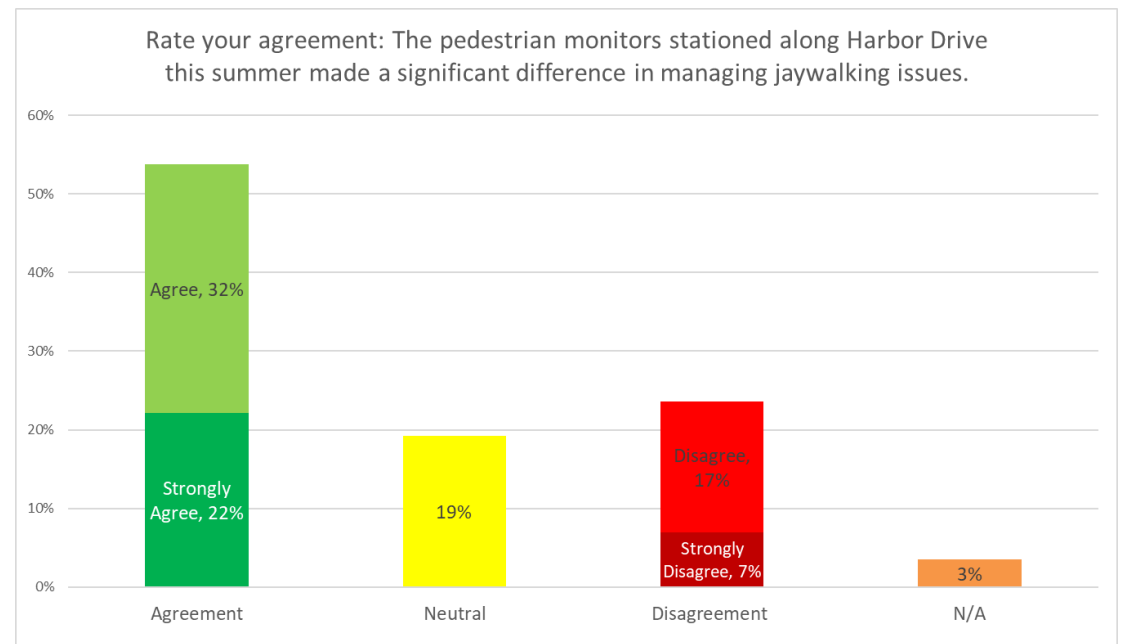
Jaywalking

Questions 15 & 16



Additional Areas Identified:

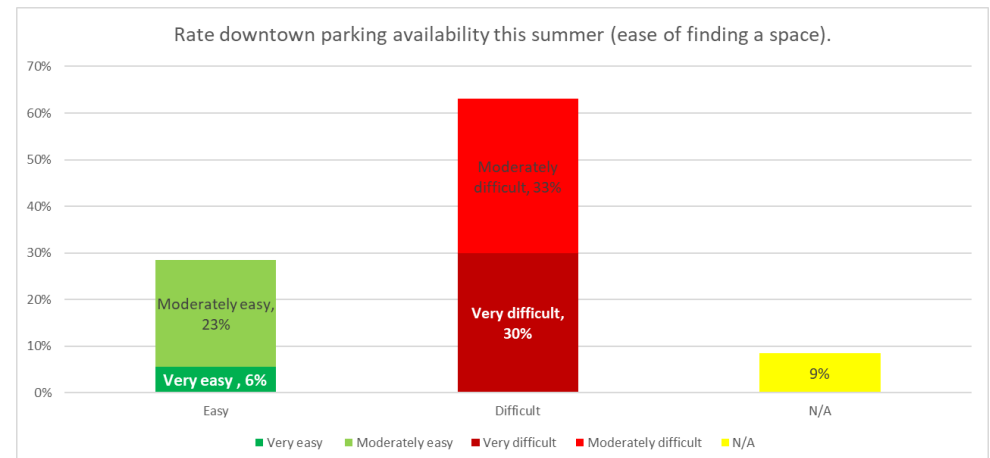
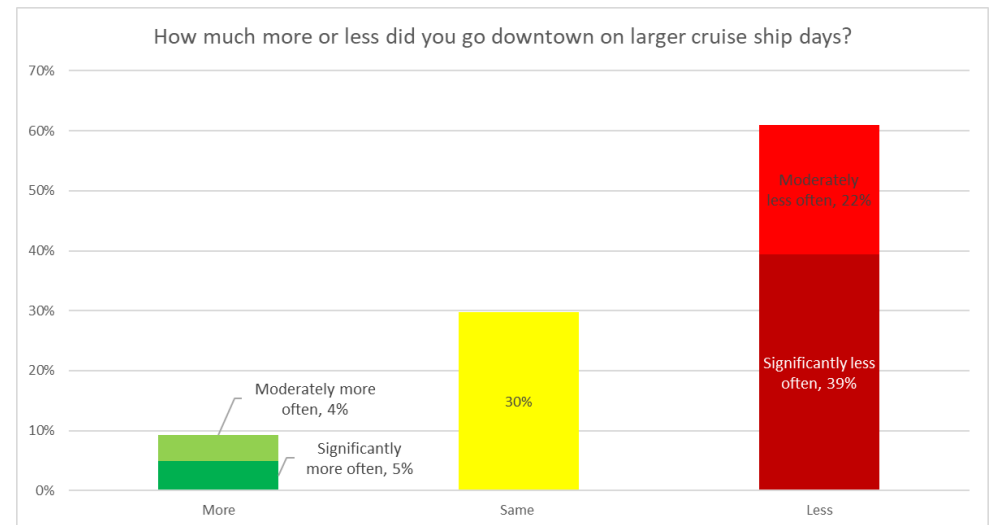
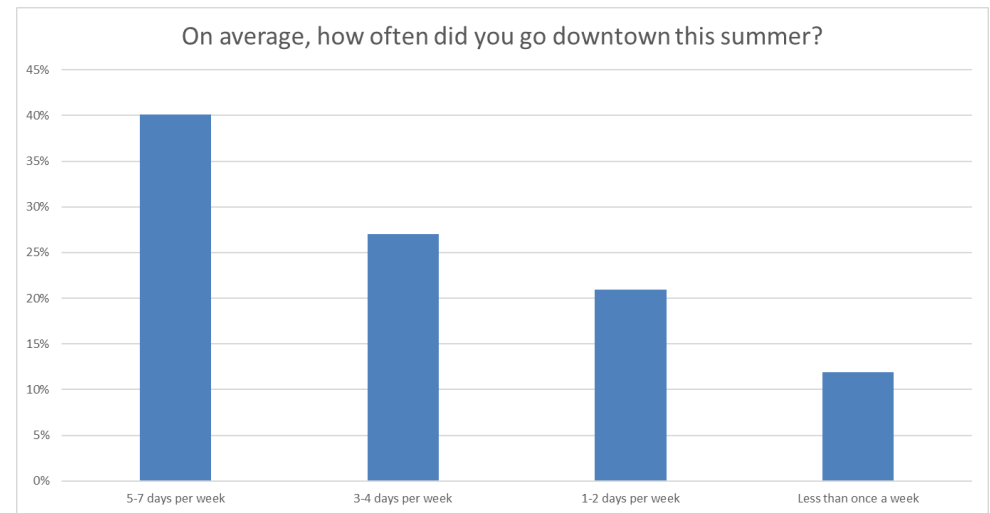
- Raptor Center crossings (24)
- Lake/Seward Street (10)
- Lincoln St near St. Michaels, Lincoln St. near SJ campus, Roundabout, Cascade Creek Croad/HPR, HPR/Peterson Street, Harbor Drive/Harbor Way (1 each)



Lincoln Street & Downtown Area

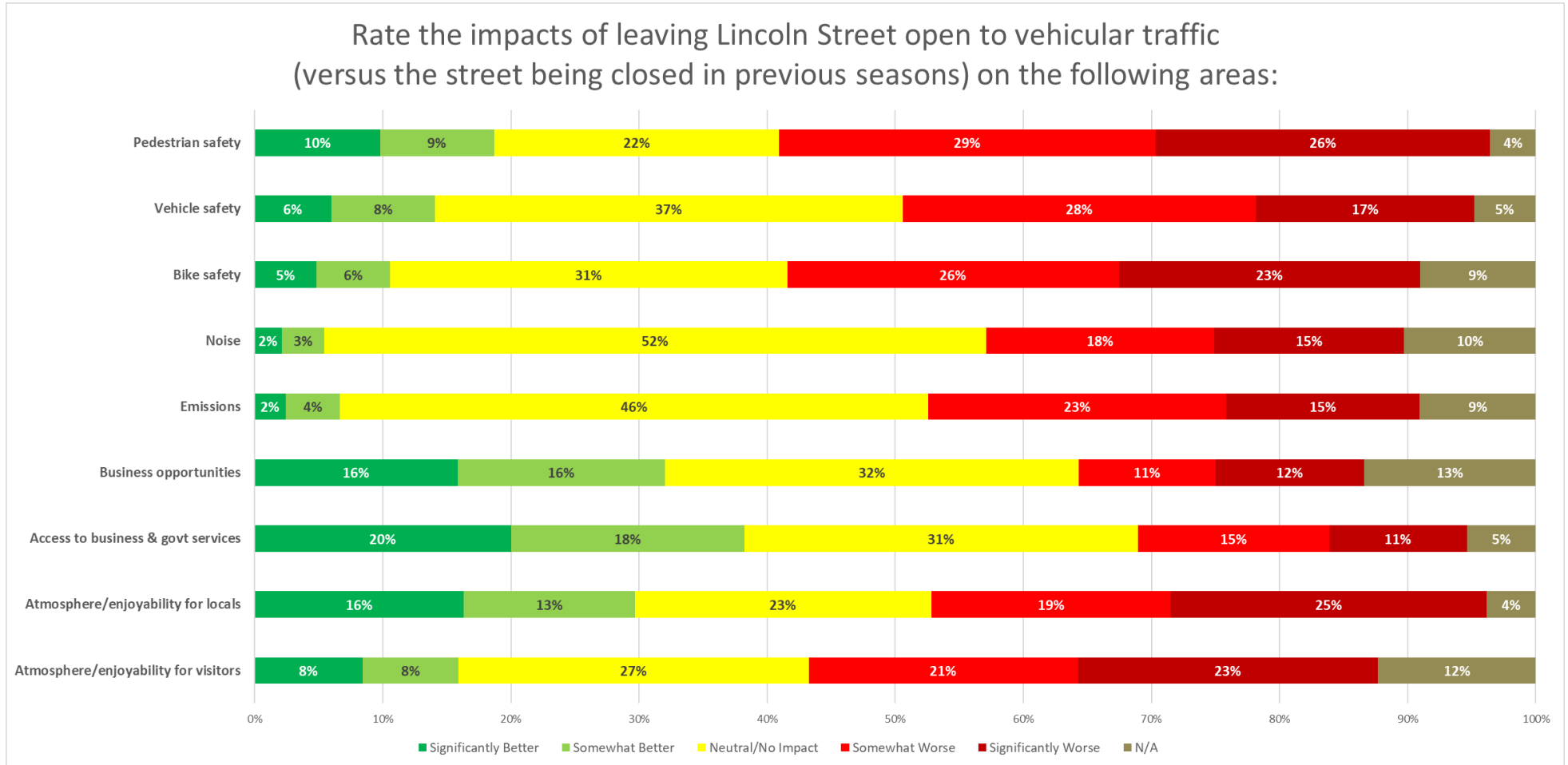
Going Downtown

Questions 17, 18, & 19



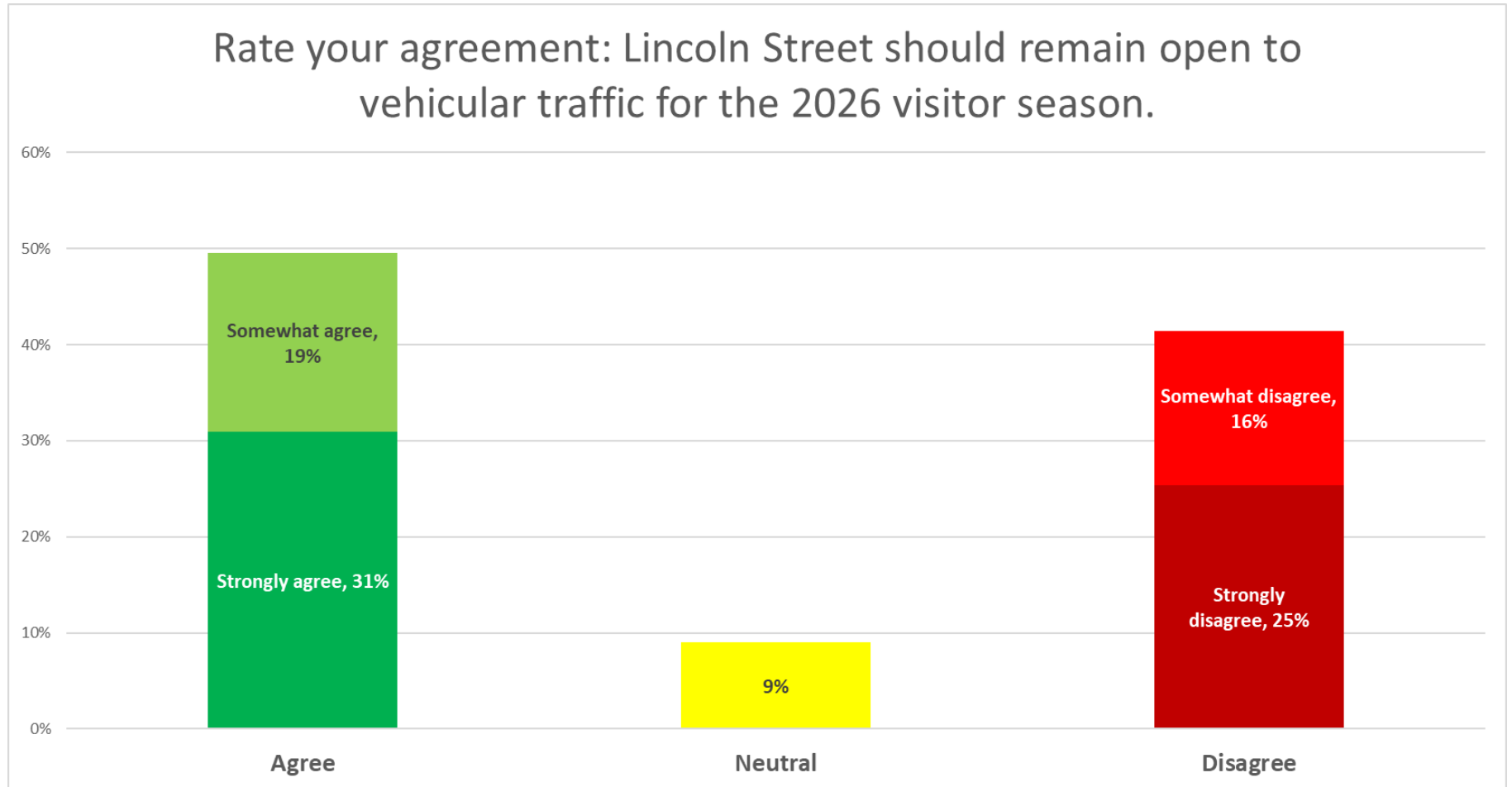
Lincoln Street Open vs. Closed

Question 20



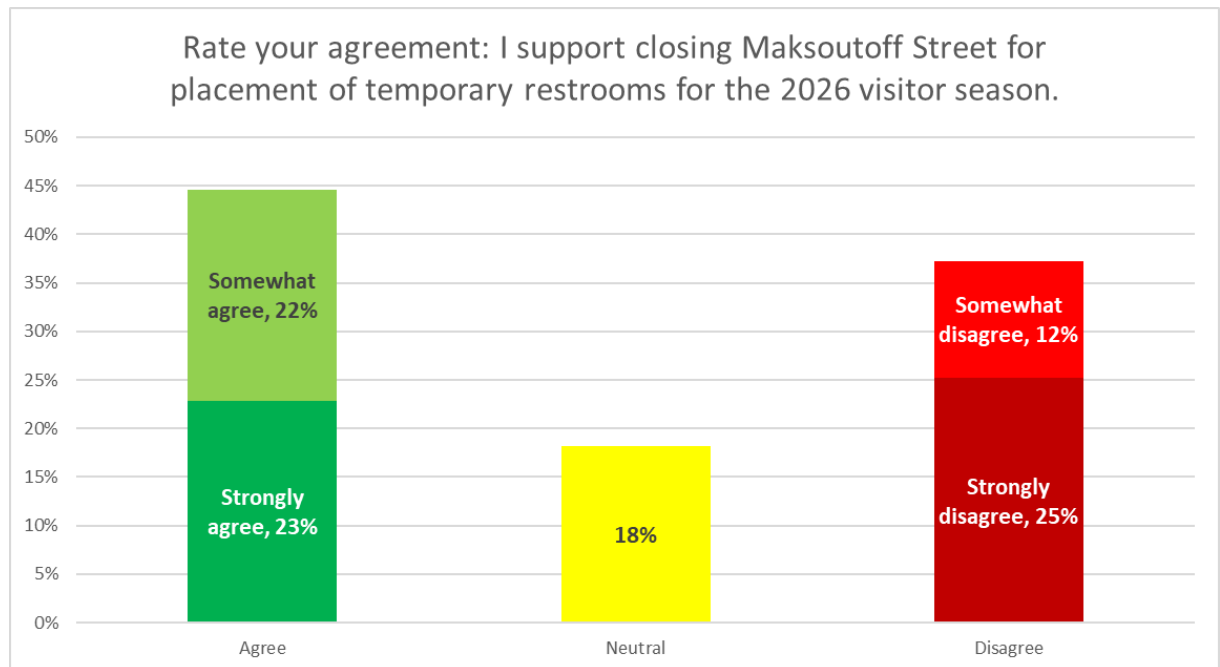
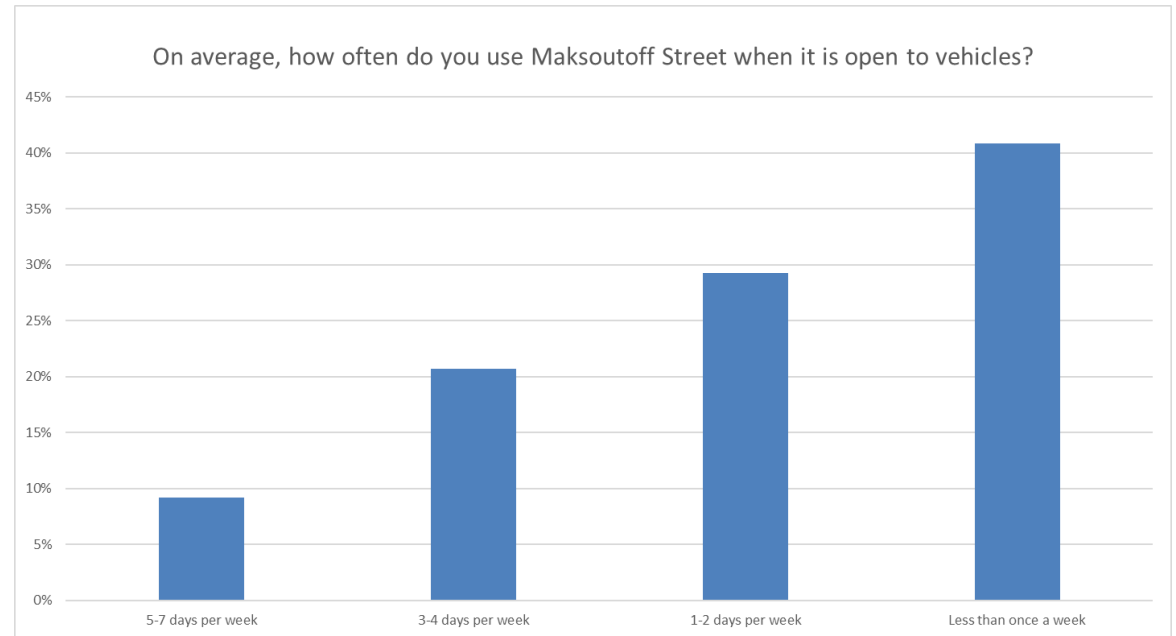
Lincoln Street Open vs. Closed

Question 21



Maksoutoff Street

Questions 22 & 23



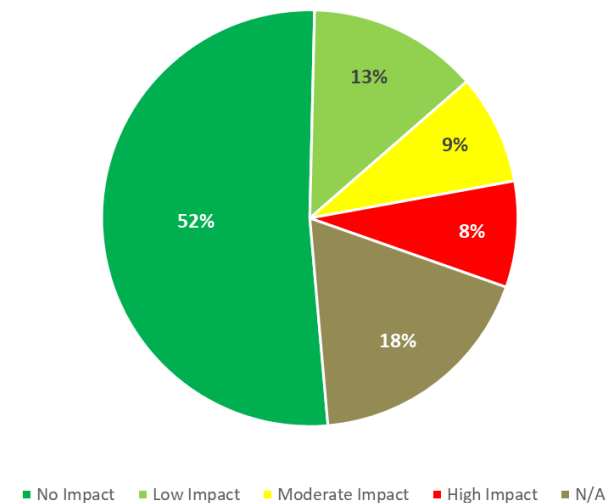
CBS Downtown Facilities

Questions 24 & 25

Rate your satisfaction with litter/trash management at city-owned facilities in the downtown area during the summer months.



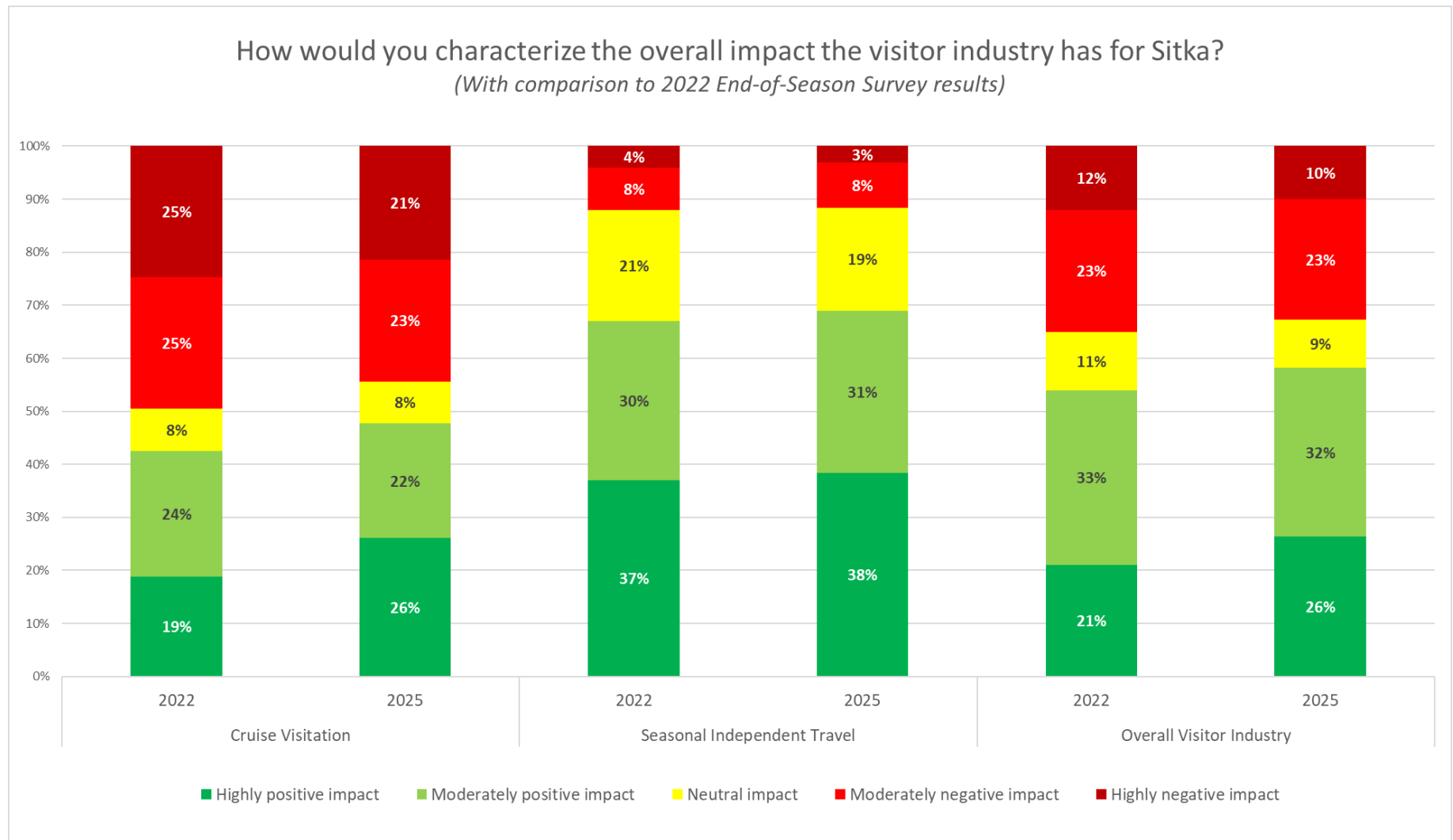
Describe how you were impacted by limited access to the Crescent Harbor boat launch.



Tourism & Management Overall

Overall Industry Impact

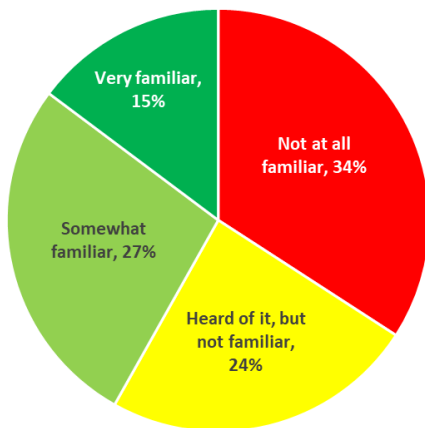
Question 8



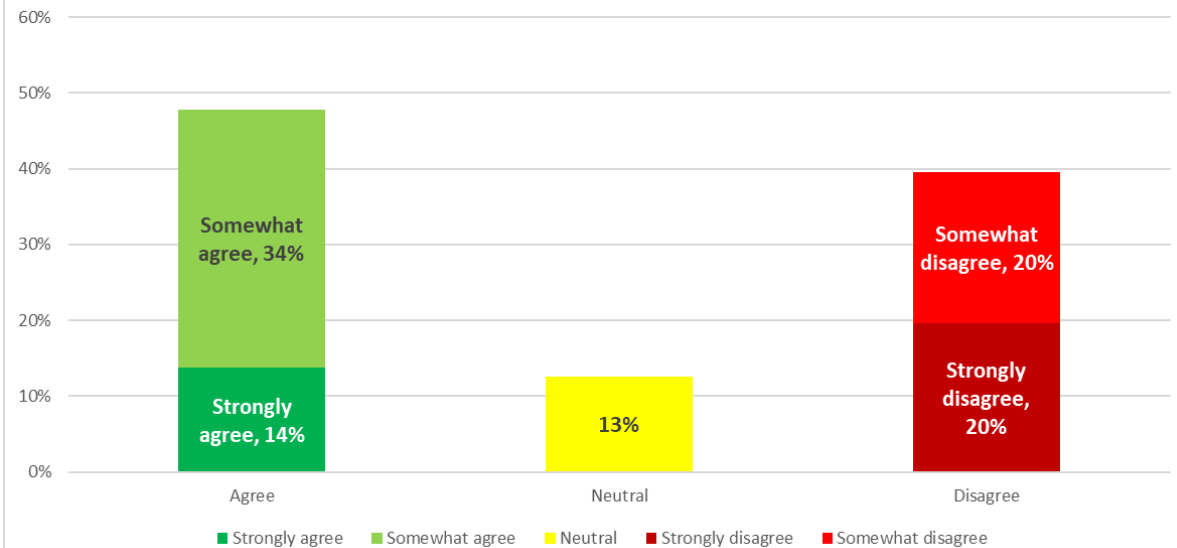
CBS Management

Questions 26, 27, 28

How familiar are you with Sitka's TBMP initiative?



Rate your agreement: Overall, I feel CBS is heading in the right direction to better manage tourism.



Rate areas of improvement for CBS when it comes to tourism:

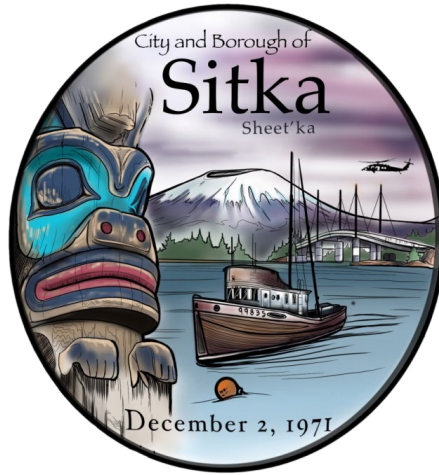


Keep, Stop, & Consider

Questions 30, 31, & 32

There were 590 long-form responses about what CBS should KEEP, STOP, and CONSIDER doing in terms of managing tourism.

- Opening/Closing Lincoln Street
- Managing traffic-related impacts including jaywalking and pedestrian safety, traffic delays, bike & e-bike use, infrastructure improvements
- Cruise passenger numbers
 - Decreasing overall numbers
 - Maintaining / growing tourism
 - Keeping daily numbers limited / arrival to town staggered
 - Appreciation/emphasis of quiet weekend days
 - Appreciation/emphasis of limiting season duration (esp. April & October)
 - Finding balance
 - Focusing on independent travelers
- CBS Revenues
 - More transparency about types, amounts, and uses of tourism-related revenues needed
 - Desire for revenues to be used to offset cost of living
 - Desire for revenues to have more flexible use (local head-tax fund)
- Quality of Life
 - Concern about loss of small-town feel, Sitka's authenticity
 - Limited access to downtown, parks, library
 - Crowding at recreational/subsistence areas
 - Frustration about telecommunications impacts
 - Need for finding and promoting balance / community cohesion
 - Concerns about housing and childcare – impacts to and from tourism
- Environment
 - Addressing air pollution / emissions from buses and dock electrification
 - Concerns about marine pollution and use of scrubbers
- CBS Processes
 - Support for Tourism Commission & Tourism Manager
 - TBMP implementation / amplification
 - Continuation of surveys and opportunities for public input



2025 End-of-Season Tourism Survey

Appendix A: Open Comment Analysis

PREPARED BY: PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
PRESENTED TO: TOURISM COMMISSION, DEC. 11, 2025

TRAFFIC

1. Lincoln Street Open versus Closed
 - a. 24 comments noted wanted to keep Lincoln Street open. Comments included observations that traffic seemed to flow better, locals had better access to businesses and services, and that it felt like one less sacrifice/accommodation for tourism.
 - b. 50 comments noted wanting to resume Lincoln Street closures. Comments included observations regarding pedestrian safety such as over-crowding on sidewalks, impacts to locals trying to navigate streets and sidewalks, and that the experience was better (for both locals and visitors) with the street closed.
2. Concerns about crossings over SMC Rd. to Raptor Center, some with desire for more permanent options such as a crosswalk or overpass.
3. Advocacy for alternate/permanent improvements on Harbor Drive to reduce jaywalking such as a crosswalk, sidewalk barricades, or an overpass. As in previous survey questions, split feedback on effectiveness of crossing guards/monitors though more noted support for in open comments rather than opposition. Some comments noted the need to eliminate some parking near intersection and directly in front of Harrigan to increase visibility.
4. At the Lake/Lincoln intersection, some felt the change in lanes was working well. Additional improvements including investigating an “all-cross” signal for better managing pedestrians and reducing turning-movement delays, having crossing guards or traffic directors here, and re-installing a crosswalk at Lake & Seward Street.
5. Safety concerns along HPR particularly for those trying to bike into town due to bus and general traffic – advocacy for a dedicated/separated walking and biking path (like SMC). Wish to see more speed enforcement.
6. General comments received about biking particularly feeling less safe in the summertime due to bus traffic and congestion, especially downtown in addition to along HPR.
7. Rules for SMC multi-use path need to be clarified/posted
8. Concerns for visitor e-bike use; suggestions included prohibition/restrictions (some specifically tied to until there’s a dedicated path on HPR), more education from rental companies, increased regulation and/or enforcement particularly for use on sidewalks and trails.
9. Jaywalking overwhelmingly came up; comments included push to have bus drivers/tour guides provide more information to visitors to encourage crosswalk use, increased signage, increased deployment of crossing guards, increased enforcement, and installation of more crosswalks.
10. A few comments came up about parking (10), with a desire to see more parking opened at Harrigan/Crescent Harbor and downtown generally – some specifically noted the need for more parking enforcement. 3 were specific to food trucks, noting frustration about use of on- and off-street parking for this use.
11. 2 comments received regarding concerns about protests and advertising signs at the Roundabout.

BUSES & SHUTTLING

1. General frustration about the number of buses on roads, and desire to see fewer with options including reduced visitor numbers, augmenting shuttling with alternative means such as rail or lightering options, or looking into alternative/additional shuttle-drop off locations. Comments noted that current location at Harrigan contributes to jaywalking, loss of Harrigan as a community asset in the summertime, and general downtown congestion.
2. Noise and air pollution were flagged as particular concerns with buses, with calls to encourage/require bus electrification or transition to new/cleaner options, as well as a ban on J brakes.
3. There were a handful of comments (6) expressing concern or support (1) about a proposal to relocate shuttling to a location on Oja Way/near Xóots Elementary.

CRUISE VOLUME & VISITATION

1. There were ~150 comments regarding levels of cruise visitation.
2. Over half of these comments spoke to the desire to limit or manage cruise tourism in some way/to some extent, but not necessarily in specific areas such as daily or season total numbers. Particular goals/priorities included:
 - a. Prioritizing resident quality of life, and ensuring that the community can have a voice in limiting/managing the industry
 - b. Protecting Sitka's authenticity and small-town feel, including concerns about shifting to a seasonal economy/community and downtown vacancy
 - c. Environmental protection – as its own priority, as it protects fisheries, and as it protects future of tourism economy. Additionally, comments here noted limited nature of cruise industry due to fossil fuel reliance, and need to prepare community for transitioning economic dependence
 - d. Curbing additional cruise visitation to Sitka, whether thru MOU, a cap, and/or preventing construction of an additional cruise ship dock
 - e. Discouraging visitation from large ships
 - f. Promoting high-quality visitor experience for those who come to Sitka
 - g. Limiting the season length, eliminating “shoulder” seasons
 - h. Recognizing limitations to additional growth – infrastructure, workforce, housing. Additional emphasis placed on not “overbuilding” infrastructure for tourism if it cannot be sustained
 - i. Promoting independent tourism, including year-round visitation, ecotourism, and cultural/heritage/arts/science related visitation
3. ~1/3 spoke to the need to limit numbers on a daily basis, and working to spread out the number of visitors coming into town at one given time.
 - a. While few noted specific numbers to target, some referenced 3.5k-4k (4), 5k (2), 6k (1), and 10k (1) as ideal targets.
 - b. There was a strong emphasis on retaining 1-2 ship-free or “quiet” days
4. ~20 comments expressed a desire to see overall or season total numbers reduced.
 - a. While few noted specific numbers to target, some referenced 450k-500k (3) or 100k (1) as ideal targets.
 - b. Several comments spoke specifically to limiting larger/neopanamax ships, whether due to sheer volume, lack of economic benefit, and/or environmental impacts.
5. A handful of comments (6) wished to see CBS stop trying to impose limits on tourism, and called for increased visitation/advertising.

ENVIRONMENT

1. Over 50 comments expressed concerns regarding environmental impacts related to tourism.
2. Over half of these comments spoke to concerns about overall environmental impacts including water and air pollution, GHG emissions/climate impacts, trash and recycling, and sensitive areas/habitats (shorelines, muskegs). Comments included calls to monitor air, water, and noise pollution. Comments made here also made reference to lack of sustainability of the industry as a whole given its reliance on fossil fuels, and the need to transition economic dependence away from cruise tourism.
3. 1/4 of comments spoke to specific marine-related impacts. The majority noted concern about the use of high-sulfur diesel (“bunker fuel”), and how chemical discharge related to scrubbers as well as off-shore dumping of sewage poses risks the fishing industry, access to subsistence foods, and overall health.
4. 1/3 of comments were specific to tour buses, and wished to see alternatives that reduced air pollution, noise, and emissions.

CBS REVENUES

1. Over 50 comments made reference to revenue-related concerns and suggestions.
2. Comments included calls for more transparency from CBS to better communicate types and amounts of tourism-related revenues and their uses. Several comments indicate that portions of the community are not aware that CPV is used to offset cruise-tourism expenses such as crossing guards and other seasonal staffing, temporary restrooms, etc.
3. Many wished to see revenues used to offset cost of living for locals (with housing, childcare, and utilities most noted), addressing infrastructure (roads, utilities, recreation, telecommunication), school funding, and/or downtown beautification.
 - a. Numerous comments recognized that certain revenue sources such as CPV have use restrictions – comments called for a local boundary tax or other replacement/supplement to CPV that would allow for expanded use.

DOWNTOWN MAINTENANCE & BEAUTIFICATION

1. Approx. 70 comments regarding downtown amenities, maintenance, and beautification.
2. A significant number of comments spoke to the need for improvements and beautification on Lincoln Street, including prioritizing the Lincoln Street project, and other temporary measures such as attractive signage, flowers/landscaping, and benches/covered seating areas.
3. The need for additional trash cans/receptacles on Lincoln Street was noted.
4. Support for the work of our grounds maintenance team was noted, as well as for additional resources to be allocated in this area.
5. 44 comments referenced bathrooms, including a preference for permanent restrooms rather than temporary ones, displeasure regarding the use of Maksoutoff for the temporary units, and the need for a restroom near the Crescent Harbor Playground.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

1. Food trucks/carts (8) – increase areas or opportunities generally, allow on Lincoln Street if closed and near drop-off areas
2. Wishing to receive more information about conventions/events/conferences (2)
3. Generally supporting/encouraging business opportunities, particularly those that help disperse passengers, and/or easing regulations/fees for businesses (13)
4. Increasing access to, and condition of, historic sites such as the Causeway, Blockhouse, Castle Hill (2)

CBS MANAGEMENT EFFORTS

1. Maintain current management and collaboration efforts, focusing on steady, incremental improvements/adjustments as necessary (13)
2. Increasing communication and/or opportunities for public input (41)
3. Seek updated studies/data collection, reference past plans (2007 Visitor Industry Plan), and learn from other communities (5)
4. Support for management efforts including the tourism commission and need for both a Tourism Manager and Visit Sitka to continue working through issues (10)
5. Implementation of the TBMP program (6)
6. Develop proactive plans and enforceable regulations (2)
7. General satisfaction (8)
8. General dissatisfaction (10)

ADDITIONAL QUALITY OF LIFE CONSIDERATIONS

1. As evident through previous sections, concerns about protecting resident quality of life ran throughout the comments:
 - a. General sense of being deprioritized over visitors and economic benefits of tourism
 - b. Loss of Sitka's authenticity/small-town feel
 - c. Emphasis was added regarding traffic noting impacts to walking and biking, access to recreational areas, general sense of safety and congestion/busyness. Several commentors wished to see an alleviation of pressure on trails, and designating some as local-use only and/or restricting e-bike use.
 - d. Concerns about transitioning to a seasonal economy/community, and younger people/families being priced out of Sitka (cost of living including housing, childcare, utilities, food prices)
 - e. Decreased access to downtown businesses and services
 - f. Environmental impacts
 - g. Telecommunication impacts
 - h. Over-dependence on the industry and potential vulnerability (economic stability)
2. Finding balance when it comes to tourism continues to be a key goal.
 - a. Some commentors noted a sense of bias or outsize-influence the tourism industry has on CBS decisions, encouraged input from residents and local businesses to be prioritized, and felt care should be taken when making appointments to boards/commissions to avoid conflicts of interest (whether real or the appearance of).
 - b. A smaller number of commentors wished CBS would take firmer stance to support tourism as it does with other sectors such as fishing, welcoming visitors/promoting visitation, and working with the industry more to manage growth/impacts.