



# CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

*A COAST GUARD CITY*

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Mayor Eisenbeisz and Assembly Members

**From:** Thor Christianson, Tim Pike Assembly Members

**Date:** February 7, 2024

**Subject:** Commercial Bus ordinance

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### **Background**

Since the cruise ship terminal entered service, the number of buses traveling from the dock to downtown and other destinations has increased dramatically. It has now reached the point where complaints about the buses are the number one complaint from citizens. Complaints about congestion, safety, noise, pollution, and road degradation have been expressed by a number of citizens. These complaints have merit.

### **Analysis**

This ordinance has two components.

First, it addresses complaints about pollution. According to the EPA large diesel vehicles must meet the emissions requirements for the year the vehicle was manufactured. For example, a bus manufactured in 2005 must meet the standards that were in place in 2005, but a bus made in 2015 must meet the standards from 2015. The procedure to check the emissions is quite simple, a computer is plugged into the onboard diagnostic computer, and it can be determined if the vehicle is up to standard in minutes. A side effect is that if the vehicle is not up to standard, it is most likely because of a malfunction and fixing it will not only make it cleaner, but also more efficient. Checking this on a regular basis will ensure that buses on Sitka's roads are as clean as possible. Since electric vehicles do not have emissions, they would not require a permit.

Second, this ordinance limits the number of permits that will be issued. This will address congestion, noise and road degradation. While we will still have these issues, they will be reduced. Sitka's roads were not designed to handle the level of traffic that these buses are generating. Assuming at least 40 passengers, and two trips an hour, ten buses would be able to transport approximately 800 passengers an hour. This is a

reasonable level of traffic for Sitka's roads. This would also spread out the impact of the tourists to downtown.

### **Fiscal Note**

This should have little or no impact on the budget since the permit fee should cover the staff time to issue the permits.

### **Recommendation**

We recommend that a good discussion at the assembly table to determine the number of bus permits available and eventual passage of the ordinance.