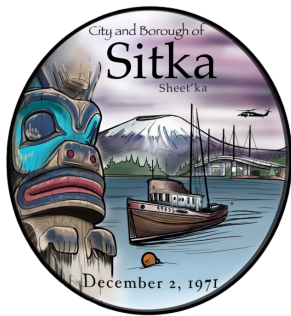


Discussion / Direction

on Lincoln Street closures for the remainder of the visitor season.



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

A COAST GUARD CITY

MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor Eisenbeisz and Assembly Members

Thru: John Leach, Municipal Administrator

From: Amy Ainslie, Planning & Community Development Director

Date: May 21, 2025

Subject: Downtown Street Closures & Operations for 2025

For the last three summers, CBS has closed Lincoln Street between Lake Street and Katlian Street during larger cruise ship days in accordance with the Short-Term Tourism Plan (STTP). For the majority of this time, the closures were triggered when there were 5,000 or more passengers scheduled to be in town, and the street was closed from 10AM – 4PM.

As was reported to the Assembly at their April 8th meeting, CBS did not do any cruise-related street closures or place temporary restrooms on Lincoln Street for the month of May on a trial-basis. As of the drafting of this memo, Sitka has experienced 8 days with over 5,000 cruise passengers this season.

The Planning Department has received about a dozen public comments regarding the street closures thus far. With the exception of one, all others voiced support for the street closures. Most comments included multiple topics; almost all touched on pedestrian/traffic safety issues (overcrowding leading people to walk in street, jaywalking, visibility issues, accessibility), three comments requested the temporary restrooms to be placed, and half included a preference for the aesthetic/atmosphere created by the street closures.

Considerations for Street Closures

Planning staff have observed Lincoln Street and the downtown area over the last three weeks and found the following:

- Concerns regarding visibility, congestion, and jaywalking were observed/noted. The area around St. Michael's cathedral including the roundabout is of most concern due to the narrow streets/sidewalk and visitors wishing to take photos of the church.
- It does appear that some of the mitigation measures including staggering of ship arrivals and more steady flow of cruise terminal shuttles coming into town are

helping to curb the “surge” of visitors into the downtown area as observed in previous years.

- The alteration of the intersection at Lake/Lincoln/Harbor Drive (having a dedicated left-turn lane from Lake Street onto Lincoln and a single lane for thru and right turn movements) is more efficient when Lincoln Street is closed.
- Parking along Lincoln Street is being utilized, with a rough estimate of 50-80% utilization during larger cruise days.
- Positions for crossing guards/pedestrian safety attendants have been open – recruiting for these positions has been challenging but may improve as the school-year ends.

Potential options moving forward include:

- Reinstating the street closures beginning in early-mid June (Public Works staff are working to finalize the AK DOT/PF street closure application materials needed if street closures are reinstated). Approximate threshold analysis assuming closures begin the second week of June:
 - 5,000: 44 closures for the season, averaging 3 per week
 - 6,000: 35 closures for the season, averaging 2.3 per week
 - 6,500: 15 closures for the season, averaging 1 per week
 - 7,000: 9 closures for the season, averaging 0.6 per week
- Continue to trial not closing Lincoln Street for the month of June, or for the remainder of the season (with a reassessment at the end of the season to determine options for 2026) and:
 - See if recruitment on crossing guards/pedestrian safety attendants picks up as the school-year ends
 - Assess striping on Lincoln Street to potentially reduce parking and increase visibility particularly near crosswalks and intersections
 - Trial temporary speed bumps particularly around the St. Michaels roundabout

Considerations for Temporary Restrooms

In 2023 and 2024, a temporary restroom facility was placed on Lincoln Street in the parking lane near the **Barracks Street** intersection. This location is ideal because there is power available for the unit here, and CBS service vehicles can utilize the closed portion of Barracks Street to park and get personnel and cleaning equipment to the unit quickly. However, this location only works (and the unit can only be open) when the street is closed because the access stairs impede slightly into the driving lane.

The only other viable location is the top of **Maksoutoff Street**. This location is ideal because it is wide and level enough to place two units side-by-side; in the summer of 2022, CBS did this and placed a standard sized unit as well as the smaller unit that is ADA accessible and has a family/unisex restroom as well. Placement of the smaller unit downtown is particularly challenging due to the extent of the access ramp. This location also allows the restrooms to be open/used on non Lincoln Street closure days. However, this placement requires that Maksoutoff Street be closed – vehicles cannot turn off of Lincoln Street on to Maksoutoff Street nor turn from Harbor Drive on to

Maksoutoff Street to access Lincoln Street. But, the exit driveway from the Wells Fargo parking on to Maksoutoff Street is able to remain open and vehicles can turn left on to Maksoutoff Street to access Harbor Drive. Community feedback in the End of Season survey in 2022 was split evenly for and against this location. The Tourism Commission at their April 10th meeting recommended use of the Maksoutoff Street location for temporary restrooms.