

402

304

404

442

304

OJA WAY

319

404

LAKE STREET

208 1st Floor
2nd Floor

408

410

308

305

304

303

302

300

411

301

300

MONTESSORI ST

BARBARA
ELEMENARY
SCHOOL

309

BIORKA ST

210

OJA ST

307

BARBAROP ST

307

PACIFIC
HIGH
SCHOOL

591

401

402

401

402

403

404

405

406

407

408

409

410

411

412

413

414

415

416

417

418

419

420

421

422

423

424

425

426

427

428

429

430

431

432

433

434

435

436

437

438

439

440

441

442

443

444

445

446

447

448

449

450

451

452

453

454

455

456

457

458

459

460

461

462

463

464

465

466

467

468

469

470

471

472

473

474

475

476

477

478

479

480

481

482

483

484

485

486

487

488

489

490

491

492

493

494

495

496

497

498

499

500

501

502

503

504

505

506

507

508

509

510

511

512

513

514

515

516

517

518

519

520

521

522

523

524

525

526

527

528

529

530

531

532

533

534

535

536

537

538

539

540

541

542

543

544

545

546

547

548

549

550

551

552

553

554

555

556

557

558

559

560

561

562

563

564

565

566

567

568

569

570

571

572

573

574

575

576

577

578

579

580

581

582

583

584

585

586

587

588

589

590

591

592

593

594

595

596

597

598

599

600

601

602

603

604

605

606

607

608

609

610

611

612

613

614

615

616

617

618

619

620

621

622

623

624

625

626

627

628

629

630

631

632

633

634

635

636

637

638

639

640

641

642

643

644

645

646

647

648

649

650

651

652

653

654

655

656

657

658

659

660

661

662

663

664

665

666

667

668

669

670

671

672

673

674

675

676

677

678

679

680

681

682

683

684

685

686

687

688

689

690

691

692

693

694



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

A COAST GUARD CITY

PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

100 Lincoln Street | Sitka, Alaska 99835

www.cityofsitka.com

planning@cityofsitka.org

907-747-1814

February 4, 2026

Chris McGraw
Sitka Dock Company, LLC
P.O. Box 718
Sitka, AK 99835

Dear Mr. McGraw,

Please find enclosed a corrected Planning Commission Finding of Facts and Decision regarding your conditional use permit request for a public transportation facility (related to bus shuttling operations) at 408 and 410 Oja Way, which was denied by the Planning Commission on December 17, 2025, with an effective date of January 21, 2026.

If you should have any questions, please contact the Planning Office at 907-747-1814.

Sincerely,

Ariadne Will
Planner I

Enclosures: Planning Commission findings

**BEFORE THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE
CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA**

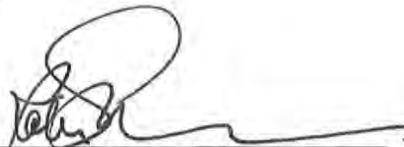
**IN THE MATTER OF THE CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT APPLICATION)
FROM CHRIS McGRAW FOR SITKA DOCK COMPANY, LLC, FOR A)
PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION FACILITY (RELATED TO BUS SHUTTLING)
OPERATIONS) AT TRACT E, U.S. SURVEY 404 AND THE NORTHERN)
PORTION OF LOT FOUR (4), BLOCK TEN (10), U.S. SURVEY 1475)**

FINDINGS OF FACT AND DECISION

The City and Borough of Sitka Planning Commission sat on December 17, 2025 and January 21, 2026, pursuant to Sitka General Code (“SGC”) 22.10.160, regarding a conditional use permit application from Chris McGraw for Sitka Dock Company, LLC for a public transportation facility (related to bus shuttling operations) at Tract E, U.S. Survey 404 and the Northern Portion of Lot Four (4), Block Ten (10), U.S. Survey 1474. After considering the record, hearing testimony, conducting a public hearing, and deliberating in accordance with applicable SGC provisions, the Planning Commission moved to deny the conditional use permit application by a 4-0 vote, and approved and adopted findings of fact associated with the denial. *See Exhibit A – Planning Commission Findings and Conditions of Approval at pg. 2.*

This Findings of Fact and Decision constitutes the final decision of the Planning Commission. Any appeal from this Findings of Fact and Decision must be filed with the municipal clerk within ten days of this final decision, in accordance with SGC 22.10.220.

DATED at Sitka, Alaska, this 21st day of January 2026.



Acting Chair Robin Sherman

ATTEST:



Ariadne Will
Planner I

M/Alderson-S/Frank moved to deny the conditional use permit for a public transportation facility (related to bus shuttling operations) at 408 and 410 Oja Way in the CBD central business district zone as the commission was not able to make the required findings for conditional use permits. The properties were also known as Tract E, U.S. Survey 404, and the Northern Portion of Lot Four (4), Block Ten (10), U.S. Survey 1474. The request was filed by Chris McGraw for Sitka Dock Company, LLC. The owners of record were Matt Lawrie and the Orthodox Church of America, LLC. M/Alderson-S/Frank further moved to postpone adoption of the findings for the decision to the January 21, 2026 Planning Commission meeting which was to constitute the date of final decision. Motion passed 4-0 by voice vote.

M/Alderson-S/Foss moved to adopt the findings as submitted in the January 21, 2026 meeting packet and affirmed that the date of adoption for those findings constituted the date of the Planning Commission’s final decision on CUP 25-17. Motion passed 4-0 by voice vote.

Findings

The Planning Commission hereby makes the following findings, upon a review of the whole record, testimony, and evidence presented to the Planning Commission and the staff report, in relation to its decision to deny a request for a conditional use permit for a public transportation facility in the central business district as considered under case file CUP 25-17 on December 17, 2025:¹

1. a. The commission found that the conditional use permit would be detrimental to the public health, safety, and general welfare. While the applicant proposed to enforce a “strict no idle” policy to reduce emissions and noise, public testimony noted that buses would still be coming and going, and turning their engines on and off, all day during the summer months. Public testimony also described how the odors, noise, and particulate pollution would negatively impact the nearby schools, which also provide summer programs. One public commentor noted that the particulate pollution would negatively impact, and possibly render impossible, the gardening program at Pacific High School. Others noted the negative impacts on fresh air at recess and other outdoor time for students. Neighboring property owners similarly commented that they would no longer be able to grow food for consumption at their property, and would not be able to enjoyably use their outdoor spaces while proposed operations were taking place. Additionally, the Police Department noted for the staff report that the building’s fresh air intake faces Oja Way, which could draw exhaust into the building’s system, and the only operable windows for the Police Department also face Oja Way. Commissioners found that the “strict no idle policy” would not be sufficient to counteract these negative effects. Further, the commission found that the applicant did not provide sufficient evidence to demonstrate that vehicular, pedestrian, and other multimodal transportation safety or efficiency impacts detrimental to the public’s safety and general welfare as raised in the staff report and noted in public comment would not result from the proposal.

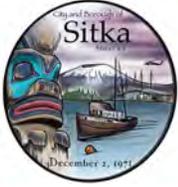
- b. The commission found that the conditional use permit would adversely affect the established character of the surrounding vicinity based on testimony submitted by adjacent property owners describing how anticipated impacts related to pedestrian and vehicular traffic, noise, odor, and pollution generated by the proposal would make existing residential use in the area highly

¹ §22.10.160(C)—Required Findings for Conditional Use Permits

undesirable. This testimony described how residents in the vicinity would respond to these impacts, including discontinuing use of their outdoor and/or gardening spaces, loss of privacy and/or quiet enjoyment inside their homes, and ultimately feeling the need to relocate, sell, or otherwise redevelop their properties for a different use were the conditional use permit to be granted; the commission found that these responses to the proposal could be reasonably expected, thereby adversely affecting the residential components of the established character of the surrounding vicinity. Commissioners further found that the established character of the surrounding vicinity was a year-round, mixed-use neighborhood; the proposal itself which indicated a seasonal rather than year-round use, as well as the sale and/or redevelopment of other properties in the surrounding area as described above, had the probable effect of leading to fewer year-round, mixed uses in the area, and instead having more commercial uses that only operated on a seasonal basis, thereby adversely affecting the existing character of the surrounding vicinity. Commissioners further found that Oja Way, the street upon which the proposal was to take place, was best characterized as a minor or local street, and not a major and/or collector street; the intensity of the proposed use, both in terms of the size of vehicles and the frequency of vehicular trips to the site, was not consistent with the street's classification, and thereby not consistent with the character of the surrounding area.

- c. The commission found that the conditional use permit would be injurious to the uses, property, or improvements adjacent to, and in the vicinity of, the site upon which the proposed use was to be located based on testimony submitted by the public, and in particular, from owners of nearby properties, which detailed that the increased traffic, noise, odor, and pollution that would result from the proposal would significantly and negatively impact the quiet enjoyment of their residences. Immediately adjacent property owners expressed that the proximity of the proposed use to their homes would affect their privacy both in and outside of homes, and would significantly impact the usability of their outdoor spaces.
2. The commission found that the conditional use permit was not consistent with the intent of the goals, objectives, and policies of the comprehensive plan – specifically land use objective two (2) which aims to, “Maintain downtown’s central business district (CBD) compact and walkable charm” and the Future Growth Map for the Central Business District. The commission found that the proposal would create significant open space and/or parking lots which contradicted the comprehensive plan’s goals regarding high-density and infill development in, as well as preserving the charm and historic nature of, the central business district. Further, the commission found that the proposal would directly and indirectly create seasonal patterns of use and disuse of properties in the area, therefore negatively impacting the comprehensive plan’s goals to promote vibrancy in the downtown area.
3. The commission found that conditions necessary to lessen the impacts of the proposed use could not be monitored or enforced, specifically those that would be needed to lessen the impacts of 1) noise generated by buses transiting to or from the site 2) cut through pedestrian traffic scenarios, particularly by clients returning to site from different parts of the downtown area that would utilize residential or substandard streets to access the site, and 3) the shift towards a seasonal rather than year-round use of the area and associated negative impacts on comprehensive plan goals for the central business district.

4. The commission found that the proposed use may introduce hazardous conditions at the site, namely unacceptable levels of particulate pollution from busing operations. This hazard was not identified nor adequately mitigated by the applicant; as such, the commission found that that the public health of adjacent property owners and those in the vicinity were not adequately protected from hazardous conditions introduced in the area by the proposal.
5. The commission found that the site was located on a local or minor street rather than a major or collector street, which was not adequate to support the proposal, and conditions could not be imposed to lessen the adverse impacts on said public infrastructure.
6. The commission found that the applicant did not meet his burden of proof as it pertained to 1) demonstrating that the change in traffic volumes and patterns in the area associated with the proposal would not result in unacceptable public safety impacts, 2) demonstrating that particulate pollution from busing operations would be within acceptable levels for existing residential, horticulture, professional office, and youth education uses in the area, and 3) proposing adequate mitigations for noise and visual impacts to adjacent properties and the surrounding vicinity resulting from the proposal.



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

Minutes - Final

Planning Commission

Wednesday, December 17, 2025

7:00 PM

Harrigan Centennial Hall

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Present: Robin Sherman (Acting Chair), Wendy Alderson, Jacquie Foss, Margaret Frank (via Zoom), Katie Riley (Assembly Liaison)
Excused: Darrell Windsor
Staff: Amy Ainslie, Kim Davis, Ariadne Will (via Zoom)
Public: Lauren Wild, Evan Love, Craig Shoemaker, Chris McGraw, Leah Mason, Gabby Kelly, Quinlyn Holder, Roy Anderson, Jerry Dzugan, Karen Lucas, Devon Calvin, Kristina Cranston, Auriella Hughes, Tory O'Connell Curran, John Murray, Jack Navitsky, Suzan Brawnlyn, Linda Waller, Tommy Joseph, Phil Burdick, Larry Edwards, Klaudia Leccese, Darryl Rehkopf, Connie Kreiss, Bernadette Rasmussen, Steve Fish, Phyllis Mulligan, Ann Walter, Larry Trani, Marg Parsons, Gail Johansen Peterson, Gerry Hope, Vicki D'Amico, Cynthia Gibson, Jere Christner, Karen Christner, Ronda Anderson, Mary Chambers, Floyd Tomkins, Paul Kortemeier, Jay Stelzenmuller, Hank Moore, Barb Bingham, Lenise Hendersen, Katherine Rose (KCAW), Anna Laffrey (Sitka Sentinel)

Acting Chair Sherman called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

II. CONSIDERATION OF THE AGENDA

III. CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES

A [PM 25-20](#) Approve the December 3, 2025 meeting minutes.

**M/Alderson-S/Foss moved to approve the December 3, 2025 meeting minutes.
Motion passed 4-0 by voice vote.**

IV. PERSONS TO BE HEARD

V. PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ainslie said the next Planning Commission meeting was scheduled for January 21, 2026.

VI. REPORTS

VII. THE EVENING BUSINESS

B [VAR 25-08](#) Public hearing and consideration of a request for a major variance to reduce the rear setback from eight feet to two feet at 104 Kuhnle Drive in the R-1 MH

single-family, duplex, and manufactured home district. The property is also known as Lot C-4A, Kuhnle Resubdivision. The request is filed by Lauren Wild and Evan Love. The owner of record is Evan Love.

Sherman said that she was an abutter but felt she could be unbiased. She did not recuse herself following input from the other commissioners.

Davis introduced a request to reduce the rear setback at 104 Kuhnle Drive from eight feet to two feet to accommodate an addition. The applicant was not planning to increase the building footprint, but staff had not found record of a building permit for an enclosed porch at the rear of the existing single-family house. The addition was to have a bathroom and a bedroom. The topography of the lot made building the addition elsewhere on the property difficult.

Applicants Lauren Wild and Evan Love had nothing to add. The commission did not have questions for the applicants. No public comment was received.

The commission asked how wide the eaves and gutter were to be. Davis said the eave was to be one foot and the gutter was to be six inches. The commission clarified that the variance was bringing the existing structure into compliance.

M/Foss-S/Alderson moved to approve the zoning variance for a reduction to the rear setback from eight feet to two feet at 104 Kuhnle Drive in the R-1 MH single-family, duplex, and manufactured home district subject to the attached conditions of approval. The property was also known as Lot C-Four A (C-4A), Kuhnle Re-Subdivision. The request was filed by Evan Love and Lauren Wild. The owner of record was Evan Love. Motion passed 4-0 by voice vote.

M/Foss-S/Alderson moved to adopt and approve the required findings for variances involving major structures or expansions as listed in the staff report. Motion passed 4-0 by voice vote.

C [VAR 25-09](#)

Public hearing and consideration of a request for a major variance to reduce the rear setback from eight feet to five feet and a front setback from fourteen feet to two feet at 211 Seward Street in the R-2 multifamily residential district. The property is also known as Lot One (1), Rigling Way Subdivision. The owner of record is the C&B Shoemaker Alaska Community Property Trust. The request is filed by Craig Shoemaker.

Davis introduced a request for a reduction in the rear setback from eight feet to five feet and a reduction in a front setback from 14 feet to two feet at 211 Seward Street to facilitate construction of a carport. A shed on the property was to be removed for the construction of the carport. The parcel in question had three fronts, which, along with the placement of the existing structure, made construction of a carport difficult.

Applicant Craig Shoemaker said that he wanted to receive the variance before contacting a contractor and that he hoped to build a structure that would fit two vehicles.

No public comment was received. During deliberation, the commission asked whether the proposal would exceed maximum lot coverage for the zone and if Rigling Way, the right-of-way adjacent to the front property line for which the setback was requested, was a public right-of-way. Davis said lot coverage was not to exceed the maximum for the zone and that Rigling Way was a public right-of-way.

M/Alderson-S/Foss moved to approve the zoning variance for a reduction to the rear setback from eight feet to five feet and the front setback from fourteen feet to two feet at 211 Seward Street in the R-2 multifamily residential district subject to the attached conditions of approval. The property was also known as Lot One (1), Rigling Way Subdivision. The request was filed b Craig Shoemaker. The owner of record was C&B Shoemaker Alaska Community Property Trust. Motion passed 4-0 by voice vote.

M/Alderson-S/Foss moved to adopt and approve the required findings for variances involving major structures or expansions as listed in the staff report. Motion passed 4-0 by voice vote.

D [CUP 25-17](#)

Review and adoption of findings of fact related to the Planning Commission's denial of a conditional use permit request at 408 and 410 Oja Way under case file CUP on December 17, 2025.

Ainslie introduced a conditional use permit request for a public transportation facility at 408 and 410 Oja Way. The facility was to serve as a shuttle bus drop-off and pick-up location for cruise ship passengers from the Sitka Sound Cruise Terminal. The applicant was leasing both lots. 408 Oja Way had an office building on its premises that was to be demolished following the receipt of the conditional use permit; 410 Oja Way was a vacant lot. The applicant had also identified pedestrian use of 405 Etolin Way (not owned or leased by the applicant) and 402 Etolin Way (owned by the applicant) to route arriving passengers to the Lake and Lincoln Street intersection, as well as redevelopment plans for 402 Etolin Way, which included a three-story mixed use building (commercial and office space on the first floor, and twenty apartment units total on the second and third floors) and open space for tour vendors and/or food trucks.

Ainslie noted that the zone was a mixed use zone with some residential housing, schools, and police and fire departments nearby. Some residential uses in the vicinity were legal nonconforming uses. Ainslie provided an overview of the proposed traffic and pedestrian paths, which were included in the staff report and packet materials.

Ainslie provided staff's analysis regarding traffic, parking, noise and odor, impact to emergency services, location along major and collector streets, pedestrian and vehicular safety, emergency access, internal traffic layout, signage, and comprehensive plan guidance. She noted the complexity of the project, which would possibly have negative impacts to noise, odor, parking, and traffic in the area, but could also potentially positively impact some aspects of traffic safety and efficiency in the overall downtown area associated with current cruise passenger busing operations, namely pedestrian safety (jaywalking) and decreased bus traffic. Ainslie cited concerns raised by municipal public safety departments about air intake and noise impacts for the Police Department's building, and regarding right turning movements onto Lake Street from Oja Way given the blind corner at the intersection. Comprehensive plan guidance was provided and noted goals and objectives that both supported and opposed outcomes of the proposal. Ainslie also included guidance from the Sitka General Code regarding conditional uses in residential areas and weighing impacts to residential uses in mixed use zones, which had an effect similar to comprehensive plan guidance regarding its support and opposition to the proposal.

Ainslie also provided information to those who wished to give public comment. The information included criteria used by the commission to evaluate a conditional use permit request and the required findings that the commission had to make.

Following the staff report, applicant Chris McGraw said the proposal was meant to mitigate issues residents had been communicating for several years, including congestion near Harrigan Centennial Hall and jaywalking across Harbor Drive. He answered questions about a shuttle that would bring passengers from the proposed transportation facility to Centennial Hall and said he had met with Sitka School District personnel to discuss impacts to Xoots Elementary School. He provided information to the commission regarding a sound barrier, turning radii, and restroom facility plans.

22 members of the audience spoke under public comment. They were Leah Mason, Gabby Kelly, Quinlyn Holder, Roy Anderson, Jerry Dzugan, Karen Lucas, Devon Calvin, Kristina Cranston, Auriella Hughes, Tory O'Connell Curran, John Murray, Jack Navitsky, Suzan Brawnlyn, Linda Waller, Tommy Joseph, Phil Burdick, Larry Edwards, Klaudia Leccese, Darryl Rehkopf, Connie Kreiss, Bernadette Rasmussen, and Steve Fish. Ainslie read an additional five public comments into the record that had been received by the Planning Department after 5 p.m from Andrea Fraga, Linda Waller, Kaleb Aldred, Mel Beadle, and Nellie Lipscomb. 28 comments had been received and published in packet materials prior to the meeting's start. Those comments were submitted by Linda Behnken, Suzan Brawnlyn, Jeff Budd, Karen and Jere Christner, Kristina Cranston, Tory O'Connell Curran, Linda Danner, Jeff Farvour, Lexi Fish, Tess Heyburn, James Carter Hughes, Gabby Kelly, Nadalie Kennedy, Annemarie LaPalme, Laurinda Marcello, Leah Mason, Nancy Metashvili, Phyllis Mulligan, Jack Navitsky, Chandler O'Connell, Megan Pasternak, Robert Rose, Callie Simmons, Small Town SOUL, Jim Steffen, Carol Voisin, Bruce White, and Caitlin Woolsey.

All public comment heard at the meeting and received in writing was opposed to the request. Comments primarily cited increased air pollution and its impacts on the health of residents; private gardening and the horticulture program at Pacific High School; school uses in the surrounding area; noise disturbances from bus operations and the volume of passengers arriving the site; traffic issues, including increased traffic volumes in the area; safety of pedestrians and bike use on residential streets due to bus traffic and existing traffic pressures in the area related to school activities; increased jaywalking across Lake Street and client use of residential and/or narrow streets to leave and access the site; safety of bus turning movements at intersections; potential loss of on-street parking in the area; negative impacts to the existing character of the surrounding area, including impacts to uses and conditions such as residential uses, educational uses, vacation rentals, historical structures, and isolation from tourism-related impacts in the greater downtown area; impacts to public infrastructure (namely accelerated degradation of paving on Oja Way and increased maintenance needs); impacts to public safety facilities and operations in the surrounding area; and the loss of housing and an office building associated with the proposal. Public comments also noted other potential solutions to jaywalking and traffic issues in the downtown area during the visitor season, and a general sentiment regarding changes to the community that had resulted from recent growth of cruise tourism was expressed.

Immediately adjacent property owners/residents (Roy Anderson, 406 Oja Way; Christina Cranston and Tommy Joseph, 205 Monastery Street) testified that noise and privacy impacts would severely limit the enjoyment of their residences, and particularly outdoor areas. Cranston and Joseph noted that they would no longer be able to grow food for consumption on their property due to particulate pollution from bus operations. Joseph also noted that there was less than one foot between his home and the 410 Oja Way property line; the five windows on this side of his home would not be able to be opened, and the proposed fence would be two feet higher than his kitchen window. All property owners noted that they would no longer be able to live in or rent out their properties due to the impacts of the proposal. Written comment from another

immediately adjacent property owner, Tess Heyburn of 207 Monastery Street, noted that there were four feet between the kitchen windows of the rental cottages on her property and the proposed fence on the shared property line with 410 Oja Way; she was concerned about the health effects from emissions on renters of the cottages, and stated that two of her repeat customers had already said they would not rent the cottages if the proposal went forward.

McGraw spoke again after public comment and said that the housing units at 402 Etolin Way were to be redeveloped regardless of the outcome of the conditional use permit due to the condition of the structures. He questioned the burden of proof to substantiate comments related to levels of harmful particulate pollution resulting from bus traffic.

During deliberation, commissioners said they did not believe the application met the requirements for the issuance of a conditional use permit due to noise, odor, pollution, and traffic safety and efficiency impacts that were either inadequately mitigated, could not be effectively mitigated, and/or lacked evidence by the applicant demonstrating they would not occur; negative impacts on the character of the surrounding area; and incompatibility with the comprehensive plan, particularly as it related to goals in the central business district for high density and infill development, as well as how downtown vibrancy would be negatively impacted in light of the seasonal, rather than year-round, use of the subject properties, as well as redevelopment that was likely to follow in the area. Draft findings were to be presented to the commission in January 2026 for consideration and approval.

The commission recessed at 10:12 p.m. and resumed its meeting at 10:18 p.m.

M/Alderson-S/Frank moved to deny the conditional use permit for a public transportation facility related to bus shuttling operations at 408 and 410 Oja Way in the central business district zone as the commission was not able to make the required findings for conditional use permits. The properties were also known as Tract E, and a northern portion of Block Four (4), Lot Ten (10), U.S. Survey 1474. The request was filed by Chris McGraw for Sitka Dock Company, LLC. The owners of record were Matt Lawrie and Orthodox Church of America, LLC, and further moved to postpone adoption of the findings for the decision to the January 21, 2026 Planning Commission meeting which was to constitute the date of final decision. Motion passed 4-0 by voice vote.

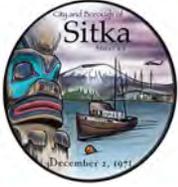
E [MISC 25-19](#)

Sitka Land Suitability and Feasibility Study Phase I Summary and Recommendations.

Acting Chair Sherman postponed the item for hearing at the January 21, 2026 Planning Commission meeting.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Acting Chair Sherman adjourned the meeting at 10:36 p.m.



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

Minutes - Final

Planning Commission

Wednesday, January 21, 2026

7:00 PM

Harrigan Centennial Hall

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Present: Darrell Windsor (Chair), Robin Sherman (Vice Chair), Wendy Alderson, Margaret Frank, Jacquie Foss (via Zoom), Katie Riley (Assembly Liaison)
Staff: Amy Ainslie, Kim Davis, Ariadne Will
Public: Jack Navitsky, Kelly Leonard, Suzan Brawnlyn, Tess Heyburn, Kristina Cranston, Roy Anderson, Ronda Anderson, Bernadette Rasmussen, Darryl Rehkopf, Justin Peeler, Sherri Blankenship, Gail Johansen Peterson, Larry Edwards, Phil Burdick, Pat Swedeen, Shannon Haugland (Sitka Sentinel)

Chair Windsor called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Commissioners nominated Darrell Windsor for Chair and Robin Sherman for Vice Chair.

M/Alderson-S/Sherman moved to elect Darrell Windsor as chair. Motion passed 5-0 by voice vote.

M/Alderson-S/Frank moved to elect Robin Sherman as Vice Chair. Motion passed 5-0 by voice vote.

III. CONSIDERATION OF THE AGENDA

IV. CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES

A [PM 26-01](#) Approve the December 17, 2025 meeting minutes.

M/Alderson-S/Sherman moved to approve the December 17, 2025 meeting minutes. Motion passed 5-0 by voice vote.

V. PERSONS TO BE HEARD

VI. PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ainslie said staff was to work on code change related to telecommunications towers in the new year. She said also that staff was continuing to work on the land study and was to soon begin work on the 2025 Short-Term Rental Report.

VII. REPORTS

Assembly Liaison Riley said a discussion and direction item was scheduled for hearing by the Assembly the following Tuesday regarding a possible code amendment that would change how the city was able to dispose of land. Riley said the aim was to allow for the disposal of land for housing needs to take place more easily. She requested input from the commission and said that, if the Assembly liked the idea and an ordinance was drafted, the draft would appear before the Planning Commission for consideration.

VIII. THE EVENING BUSINESS

B [CUP 25-17](#)

Public hearing and consideration of a request for a conditional use permit for a public transportation facility at 408 and 410 Oja Way in the CBD central business district. The properties are also known as Tract E, U.S. Survey 404 and the northern portion of Lot Four (4), Block Ten (10), U.S. Survey 1474. The owners of record are the Orthodox Church of America and Matt Lawrie. The request id filed by Chris McGraw (Sitka Dock Company).

Chair Windsor recused himself from the review and adoption of the findings, as he had been absent during the consideration of the request on December 17, 2025. Acting Chair Sherman presided.

Ainslie provided an overview of findings staff had drafted pertaining to the Planning Commission's denial of CUP 25-17 for a public transportation facility (related to bus shuttling operations) in December. Staff read aloud the draft findings, which the commission did not amend prior to voting.

Acting Chair Sherman did not hear public comment on the item. The commission said it did not feel the findings left anything out.

Chair Windsor reassumed the position of Chair following the vote to adopt the findings for CUP 25-17.

M/Alderson-S/Foss moved to adopt the findings as submitted in the January 21, 2026 meeting packet and affirmed that the date of adoption for these findings constituted the date of the Planning Commission's final decision on CUP 25-17. Motion passed 4-0 by voice vote.

C [CUP 26-02](#)

Public hearing and consideration of a conditional use permit for a marijuana retail facility at 327 Seward Street in the CBD central business district. The property is also known as Lot Two-B (2-B), Block Two (2), Swan Creek Subdivision. The request is filed by Michelle Jones. The owner of record is the Edward and Joyce Martin Joint Living Trust.

Davis and Ainslie presented a conditional use permit request for a marijuana retail facility at 327 Seward Street. Staff said the request was for a 183-square-foot retail space with a proposed drive-through window. The property also housed three restaurants, two cafes, and an office space, all within the same building. The CUP was a prerequisite for AMCO licensing and endorsements.

Staff overview focused primarily on the use of the facility by cruise passengers and internal traffic patterns. Staff noted the location was likely to be popular among cruise passengers and that its popularity could have an impact to odors in the area given that cruise passengers would not have a private place to consume purchased products. Guidance on how to construct a condition of approval to mitigate odors resulting the use was provided in the staff report. Staff also recommended directional signage and

for the applicant to work with Google Maps to provide the safest walking routes possible for visiting pedestrians. Staff identified this safest route as the sidewalk along the north side of the property.

Further, staff provided extensive information regarding a proposed drive-through. An existing drive-through led from Lake Street to the property and served an existing cafe. Staff noted the existing two-lane driveway was substandard and that use of the driveway by an additional drive-through could present problems related to access and safety. Staff recommended not approving the drive-through or else allowing it subject to approval by the city engineers. Staff said marijuana retail facilities were subject to 500-foot buffers between "sensitive uses," such as churches and correctional facilities. Staff had measured distances to two nearby churches and the city-state building at 304 Lake Street and found all three were outside the 500-foot buffer, but noted also that whether the buffer requirements were met was ultimately to be determined by the state. Following a commission question, staff clarified that the applicant could request an amendment to the permit to include the drive-through if the commission did not approve the drive-through portion of the permit at the hearing.

Applicant Michelle Jones said she had nothing to add and was comfortable with the commission approving the permit without the drive-through element.

Under public comment, Sherri Blankenship, who owned the neighboring Highliner Coffee Company, said she fully supported the permit application without the drive-through. Suzan Brawnlyn and Justin Peeler said they both supported the permit without the drive-through, as well. Brawnlyn mentioned the difficulty emergency vehicles could have in accessing the property if an additional drive-through was added. No further comment was received.

During deliberation, the commission said it had concerns with the drive-through aspect but less so with odor issues. It did not add any conditions of approval associated with odors but did add a condition of approval denying the drive-through and amended a condition of approval regarding signage to include additional signs directing pedestrian traffic.

M/Sherman-S/Alderson moved to approve the conditional use permit for a marijuana retail facility at 327 Seward Street in the CBD central business district subject to the attached conditions of approval. The property was also known as Lot Two-B (2-B), Block Two (2), Swan Creek Subdivision. The request was filed by Michelle Jones. The owner of record was the Edward and Joyce Martin Joint Living Trust. Motion passed 5-0 by voice vote.

M/Sherman-S/Alderson moved to adopt and approve the required findings for conditional use permits as listed in the staff report. Motion passed 5-0 by voice vote.

D [MISC 26-01](#)

Discussion of Annual Short-term Rental Report.

Will requested the commission review questions for the annual short-term rental response survey prior to its submittal to short-term rental conditional use permit holders. She said there were two types of questions in the survey--mandatory questions such as bed tax remitted and nights rented, and optional questions such as what the unit was used for in the off season and who was renting it short-term.

The commission asked about the purpose of two of the questions on the survey, which asked about short-term rental user groups and which appeared very similar. Staff said

it would work to combine the questions. Staff said the purpose of the optional questions was to get a better understanding of how short-term rentals were impacting housing stock. Staff suggested adding a question regarding duration of stays in short-term rentals. The commission also requested staff include further information about short-term rentals that were not subject to reporting requirements or conditional use permits.

No motion made.

E [MISC 25-19](#)

Sitka Land Suitability and Feasibility Study Phase I Summary and Recommendations.

Ainslie presented the findings from Phase I of the Sitka Land Suitability and Feasibility Study. She provided an overview of the nine sites originally considered and the decision criteria that had led to the scorings each site had received at the conclusion of Phase I. She explained the sites fell into three categories, with two sites ranking far above the rest (Osprey Street and Sitka High School), three in the middle (Benchlands, Harbor Mountain Road, and Gavan Hill), and three that were not to be considered further at that time (Upper Edgcumbe Drive, Herring Cove/Green Lake Road, and Indian River). She then reviewed next steps for each of the five sites that were to continue to be studied. Ainslie said there was the possibility to stop and conduct cost estimates for the development of each site before continuing but that more detailed analysis regarding landslide debris flows could drastically skew such estimates.

Foss said she was opposed to consideration of landslide mitigation measures regarding the Benchlands. The commission commended the work in the report and asked how many phases it was to have. Ainslie responded it was to have two, but potentially three, phases. Chair Windsor requested the next presentation regarding the land study be conducted as a work session.

No motion made.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Windsor adjourned the meeting at 9:22 p.m.



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

A COAST GUARD CITY

Planning and Community Development Department

AGENDA ITEM

Case No: CUP 25-17
Proposal: Request for Public Transportation Facility
Applicant: Chris McGraw for Sitka Dock Company, LLC
Owner: Matt Lawrie and Orthodox Church of America, Inc.
Location: 408/410 Oja Way
Legal: Tract E, U.S. Survey 404; Northern Portion of Lot Four (4), Block Ten (10), U.S. Survey 1474
Zone: CBD - Central Business District
Size: 7,280 and 7,563 square feet
Parcel ID: 1-1080-000 and 1-1090-000
Existing Use: Professional Office Building and Vacant Lot
Adjacent Use: Residential, Commercial, Education (Xóots Elementary School and Pacific High School), Sitka Police Department, Alaska Court System
Utilities: Existing Oja Way
Access: Oja Way

KEY POINTS AND CONCERNS

- Proposed use public transportation facility.
- Located in the CBD district on private property.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Aerial
Attachment B: Proposed Facility Layout
Attachment C: Proposed Pedestrian Routing
Attachment D: Photos
Attachment E: DOT Traffic Data
Attachment F: Comprehensive Plan – Future Growth Map, Central Business District (CBD)
Attachment G: Lease Agreements
Attachment H: Applicant Materials
Attachment I: Public Comment

BACKGROUND/PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant is requesting a conditional use permit (CUP) to operate a public transportation facility at 408 and 410 Oja Way (the “subject properties”) in the CBD – central business district. This will serve as a shuttle bus drop-off and pick-up location for cruise ship passengers from the Sitka Sound Cruise Terminal. The site will be seasonally operated from May through September, generally between 7:00 am and 7:00 pm on cruise ship days.

The subject properties are accessible via Oja Way, a municipal right-of-way. Oja Way can be accessed by Monastery Street via either the SMC intersection or Lincoln Street intersection; Monastery Street is one-way from Lincoln Street to the Oja Way intersection. Oja Way can also be accessed via Lake Street. These properties are adjacent to residential housing, commercial uses (hotel, retail, professional offices), public uses including the State of Alaska (Fish and Game, Sitka Job Center, Office of Children’s Services, Alaska Court System) the Sitka Police Department and jail facilities, and the Sitka Fire Department across Lake Street, and educational uses including Xóots Elementary School and Pacific High School.

408 Oja Way is 7,280 square feet in area and currently has a professional office building on the site. 410 Oja Way is 7,563 square feet in area and is currently vacant; the site has been cleared and graded. Together, the lots are approximately 116’ wide. If the permit is approved, the applicant plans to demolish the building on 408 Oja Way. The two properties will be largely paved, with a U shaped/loop driveway around the perimeter. A passenger queuing area will be in the center of the property, and pedestrians will be routed through the rear of 408 Oja Way.

Proposed Vehicular Routing

In-Bound Traffic Routing

- Buses coming in-bound along Halibut Point Road (HPR) will enter the Lake/HPR/SMC Roundabout taking the Sawmill Creek Road (SMC) exit.
- Travel outbound along SMC, right turn on to Monastery Street
- Travel south along Monastery Street, right turn on to Oja Way
- Turn left on to property driveway



Out-Bound Traffic Routing

- Left turn from property driveway on to Oja Way
- Right turn from Oja Way on to Lake Street
- Travel north on Lake Street to enter Roundabout
- Take HPR exit and travel out-bound along HPR



The applicant has proposed that when the cruise season overlaps with the school-year, shuttles will exclusively use Oja Way to access the subject properties during Xóots Elementary School drop-off (typically 7:30-8:00 a.m.) and pick-up (typically 1:30-2:45 p.m.) times.

Pedestrian Routing

Pedestrians (i.e. cruise passengers arriving via shuttle) will be directed to downtown Sitka via a proposed pedestrian route through the rear of 408 Oja Way, connecting to a path following the west side of 405 Etolin Way (not owned by the applicant), across Etolin Way, through the center of 402 Etolin Way (owned by the applicant), connecting to an alleyway at the rear of 401 Lincoln Street (also known as the Horan building) and 407 Lincoln Street (also known as the Bayview building). This alleyway connects to the sidewalk along Lake Street approaching the Lake/Lincoln intersection which has signalized pedestrian crossings.

ANALYSIS

1. CRITERIA TO BE USED IN DETERMINING THE IMPACT OF CONDITIONAL USES.¹

a. Amount of vehicular traffic to be generated and impacts of the traffic on nearby land uses:

Traffic is expected to increase in this area. The application indicates the level of traffic will fluctuate on a daily basis and is directly tied to the number of cruise ship passengers in Sitka on any given day. On small ship days, with roughly 700 passengers, the site will experience an estimated 25 shuttle bus stops. On large cruise days, around 6,000 passengers, the site will experience approximately 150 shuttle bus trips, with peak activity occurring between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.

Traffic data collected by the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT) has three nearby data collect points. The Lake Street North Oja Way traffic counter is located on Lake Street in front of the Police/State building, Lake Street and Monastery Street traffic counter is located on Oja Way in front of 406 Oja Way, and the Monastery Street North Etolin Way traffic counter is located on Monastery Street in front of 205 Monastery Street. This data is collected during the month of July. The annual average daily traffic (AADT) for Lake Street North Oja Way in 2024 was 8,870, Lake Street and Monastery Street (i.e. Oja Way) was 340, and for the one-way portion

¹ § 22.24.010.E

of Monastery Street (Monastery Street North Etolin Way per DOT) was 150. The applicant has noted that peak traffic as reported by DOT for Oja Way was 612 vehicles in 1992, and 616 vehicles in 2000.

Not quantified at this time is the potential for attraction of other traffic to the area in conjunction with this proposal. While the applicant has proposed to run a separate shuttle bus between the subject properties and Harrigan Centennial Hall for passengers looking for tours and excursions, it is possible (if not probable) that some tour operators, taxis, and other transportation providers will still wish to meet or drop-off passengers at this location, adding to traffic and parking issues in the area. Additionally, plans for redevelopment of 402 and 405 Etolin Way with food trucks, tour vendors, retail, and high-density residential will add pressure to traffic volumes (employees and residents accessing the area) and parking in the area. Also difficult to quantify, but a potential outcome, is general redevelopment pressure on the surrounding area and traffic and parking impacts that could result; with cruise passengers being directed to and through this area, surrounding property owners may be incentivized to redevelop from lower-density residential uses to commercial and/or higher-density uses.

Parking in this area is currently under pressure. On-street parking along Oja Way is frequently used, often by guests of the Aspen Hotel or other businesses/offices in the area. It is unclear at this time whether on-street parking would need to be partially or wholly removed seasonally in order to accommodate turning radii and/or sight line distances for buses entering and exiting the subject properties. Additionally, parking issues at Xóots Elementary School have been routinely noted, with parents often parking at neighboring properties such as the Police Department, Elks Club, and Market Center during pick-up and drop-off times.

The applicant expects a reduction in vehicular congestion in the core of downtown Sitka particularly at the Lake/Lincoln signalized intersection, along Harbor Drive, and at/around Harrigan Centennial Hall by diverting shuttle buses from this area. The application also stated that two fewer shuttle buses will need to be deployed as this route is five minutes shorter than the current route through downtown. Moderate to high traffic is expected in the CBD.

b. Amount of noise to be generated and its impacts on surrounding land use: Noise will be limited primarily to standard shuttle bus operations during daytime hours, including normal engine sounds associated with arrival, loading, and departure. The applicant proposes to enforce a strict no-idling policy for all shuttle buses to limit prolonged engine noise and reduce cumulative sound levels. No mechanical servicing, fueling, or nighttime operations will occur at the site, ensuring that noise remains confined to daytime periods. Operational staff will oversee bus activity all day to enforce noise-reduction measures such as controlled staging, minimizing acceleration, and prohibiting horn use. Pedestrian lines and movement will take place on private property, positioned away from nearby homes to further limit incidental noise. Other noise will include general conversation among, and direction of, arriving passengers. The applicant has also proposed the

installation of an 8' tall fence with sound-block acoustic panels to help reduce noise impacts to surrounding properties.

Concerns from the public have included noise generation from buses transiting Monastery Street and Oja Way; outside of utilizing different buses, this noise generation cannot be mitigated. While high to moderate traffic and noise are expected in the CBD, the proposal undoubtedly represents a significant increase in daytime noise in this area.

c. Odors to be generated by the use and their impacts: The applicant has proposed a no-idling policy for all shuttle buses to reduce emissions. Trash will be regularly removed and managed with on-site receptacles.

Public comments have also pointed to concerns regarding odor generation from bus operations/exhaust, which again, are difficult to mitigate off of the site. The Sitka Police Department noted that their building's fresh-air intake faces Oja Way, which could draw exhaust into the building's ventilation system in the case that vehicles are queued to enter/exit the site, or if queued along Oja Way waiting to turn on to Lake Street. Additionally, the only operable windows for the Police Department face Oja Way.

d. Hours of operation: Seasonal operation from May through September, generally between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. on cruise ship days. The applicant has noted that peak hours are generally 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

e. Location along a major or collector street: Oja Way, though a municipal right-of-way, is not considered a major or collector street. Oja Way can be accessed via Monastery Street which is a collector street, or Lake Street which is an arterial street.

f. Potential for users or clients to access the site through residential areas or substandard street creating a cut-through traffic scenario: The application states shuttle buses will access the site exclusively via Sawmill Creek Road to Monastery Street and Oja Way to Lake Street (except when the cruise season overlaps with the school-year and exclusive use of Oja Way via Lake Street is proposed during Xóots pick-up and drop-off times).

All passenger movement is planned via managed shuttle buses and a controlled pedestrian path that keeps visitors on private property (with the exception of crossing Etolin Way) until they reach the Lake/Lincoln intersection. This routing is intended to prevent pedestrians from dispersing into residential areas and avoid any pedestrian-induced cut-through behavior.

More difficult to monitor/mitigate will be potential cut-through behaviors that result from non-shuttle traffic attracted to the site and area (potentially using Etolin Way or lower Monastery Street), or from pedestrians seeking other businesses/attractions that may be developed nearby in light of this proposal.

g. Effects on vehicular and pedestrian safety: The proposed operations include dedicated pedestrian routing, which greatly reduces pedestrian–vehicle conflicts as compared to the existing location, Harrigan Centennial Hall, and significant jaywalking volumes across Harbor Drive that have resulted. All pedestrians disembarking at the Oja Way shuttle location will be routed through private property behind the shuttle drop-off area toward Etolin Way. Pedestrian traffic will then cross Etolin Way at a designated, supervised crossing, where a trained crossing guard will be employed during operational hours on days when passenger capacities exceed 2,000 guests at the cruise terminal. The purpose of the crossing guard is to ensure that pedestrian flow does not interfere with vehicular movement on Etolin Way and that vehicles are not required to make sudden stops or unsafe maneuvers. After crossing Etolin Way, the pedestrian pathway continues through private property and exits directly onto a CBS owned and maintained alley near the Lake/Lincoln intersection. This alley serves as a fire lane for the surrounding properties, and is also where trash is picked up from for the Horan and Bayview buildings.

However, the Fire Department and Engineering Division have noted that the Lake/Lincoln intersection is already severely pressured due to pedestrian use in the summer; this proposal increases that pressure, as passengers now can disperse in multiple directions from Harrigan rather than all arriving at this intersection. The Fire Department is concerned about delays at this intersection that could back traffic up to the roundabout, making it difficult for emergency vehicles to exit the Fire Hall. Engineering stated that adjustments to timing or phasing for pedestrian flow would almost certainly be required and would need to be coordinated with DOT.

The Police Department noted concerns about the right-turn movement from Oja Way to Lake Street for out-bound shuttles; they stated this intersection has a “blind corner”, as sight distance south (towards Lincoln Street) is limited by street curvature and existing development (primarily the Aspen Hotel). While passenger vehicles routinely make this turn, it will be more difficult for large passenger buses to get up to speed and make this turn with the limited visibility.

As previously stated, the applicant plans to exclusively route shuttle buses on Oja Way via Lake to avoid conflicts with morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up activities at Xóots Elementary School. While this potentially has benefits for particularly pedestrian safety for those walking to and from the school along Monastery, the feedback from Police & Fire has indicated concern about the potential for left-turn movements from Lake Street on to Oja Way to back traffic up to/thru the roundabout which would impede emergency response vehicles from exiting their respective stations.

h. Ability of the police, fire, and EMS personnel to respond to emergency calls on the site: The site is adjacent to the Sitka Police Department and a short distance from the Fire Department; response to the site was not noted as a concern by these departments.

i. Logic of the internal traffic layout: The applicant is proposing using both properties configured to create a large U-shaped circulation loop. Shuttle buses will enter on the east end of the Oja Way

property, proceed onto the adjoining private property, and loop around a centrally located passenger queuing and staging area before exiting on the west end of the site. The applicant states the combined site can accommodate up to seven (7) shuttle buses simultaneously, the current Centennial Hall layout provides space for only four shuttle buses. CBS Engineering observed that there may not be adequate space on the site to accommodate bus turning radii such that 7 buses will fit; the applicant should provide confirmation of dimensions/analysis conducted to support the parking/loading plan.

j. Effects of signage on nearby uses: The signage system is proposed to keep visitors on the designated private-property pedestrian path from the shuttle drop-off area to the Lake & Lincoln Street intersection, and to prevent pedestrians from crossing private properties. All proposed signs must comply with Sitka General Code 22.20.090. Staff recommends that, if approved, signage for the pedestrian path include ground markings such as a color stripe, arrows, footprints, etc., to maximize awareness/attention to the pedestrian route.

k. Presence of existing or proposed buffers on the site or immediately adjacent the site: An 8' tall permanent fence will be installed along the property lines of the Oja Way shuttle drop off and adjacent properties. The fence will be chain link with sound-block acoustical panels to provide visual privacy and acoustic sound block between the shuttle drop off location and adjoining properties. No additional buffers have been identified.

l. Relationship if the proposed conditional use is in a specific location to the goals, policies, and objectives of the comprehensive plan:

Economic Development Objective 2: Support and Grow Existing Business

- ED 6.5: Support growth of Sitka's independent, cruise-related tourism and enterprises, including heritage tourism

Land Use Objective 2: Maintain downtown's CBD compact and walkable charm

- LU 2.1: Promote multi-story development in the CBD with retail and commercial uses on lower floors and residential office uses upstairs
- LU 2.2: Encourage light commercial uses dining, accommodations public open spaces, night life, and other community events in the CBD through place making, private and public partnerships, and financial incentives
- LU 2.3: Use regulatory change, private and public partnerships, and financial incentives to promote housing development in the CBD and greater downtown

Future Growth Map – CBD

- Maintain the compact, walkable, charming character of the downtown's CBD, while promoting infill, higher density redevelopment, and preserving the historical context of the area and key structures. Areas within walking distance are also prime for compact development, infill, and higher density development that would help support a vibrant

downtown. Further specific planning should explore options to promote and incentivize historic preservation, rehabilitation, higher density redevelopment efficient use of area parking, vehicular and pedestrian traffic, use of placemaking along the downtown corridor, signage, visibility, and uses and events that promote a vibrant downtown.

The proposal is supportive of cruise tourism, but meets and misses certain elements of the comprehensive plan as it relates to development in the downtown area. On one hand, one of the subject properties is vacant (410 Oja), and therefore its development is in-line with recommendations. However, its conversion to essentially a parking area – particularly when taken with the need to demolish the existing office building on 408 Oja, does not necessarily meet the call for infill development, and/or higher density redevelopment.

The Etolin Way properties that are involved would be redeveloped; it's unclear what exactly will replace the existing duplex at 405, and one portion of 402 will certainly be higher density though the plan also includes a fair amount of open space on one side for food trucks and tour vendors.

While one could argue that the proposal makes this portion of downtown (and pedestrian flow to town from cruise shuttles generally) more walkable/pedestrian friendly, one could also argue that the proposal detracts from downtown vibrancy as all/significant portions of some properties may not be used during half the year.

m. Other criteria that surface through public comments or planning commission review:
None.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff's conclusion on the evaluation criteria are as follows:

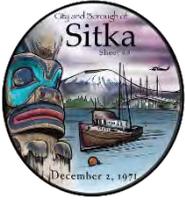
- There are significant traffic-related concerns with the proposal. There are some issues that are foreseeable such as the difficulty making right-turns from Oja Way on to Lake Street due to visibility constraints, pressure on the Lake/Lincoln intersection and need for changes to signal phasing/timing, and attraction of other traffic to the site that is not as easy to monitor and control. However, the full extent of the potential impacts, and their probabilities, are not yet fully studied or understood. Staff's recommendation is that the applicant should be required to conduct a traffic study prepared by an appropriately licensed traffic engineer in relation to the proposal that, at a minimum, includes:
 1. Turning movement geometry for buses at affected intersections and driveways
 2. Site distance safety
 3. Confirmation of feasibility of bus staging plan on subject properties
 4. Adjustments needed for signal timing phasing at the Lake/Lincoln intersection
 5. Modeling and analysis of queuing lengths at intersections
 6. Stress testing (i.e. predictive modeling of non-uniform/unplanned vehicle and pedestrian behaviors/patterns, volumes/probabilities, and impacts), with special attention paid to the potential for delays to the Lake/HPR/SMC roundabout.
- Without this information, it is difficult to weigh the pro's and con's of this site versus existing

use at Harrigan Centennial Hall, though staff does feel there are significant benefits associated with cruise passengers arriving to/dispersing through downtown via a controlled, signalized intersection rather than the jaywalking patterns currently observed on Harbor Drive.

- However, given the time and significant expense of conducting such a traffic study, staff recommends that minimally, the applicant be required to provide a traffic study containing elements 1-3 above – either as an outstanding condition of approval to come back to the Commission for review, or postpone a decision on the permit until that is available. Given the significant time and expense likely related with traffic study elements 4-6 above, staff recommend this only be required of the applicant if traffic is the sole remaining concern after Commission discussion/deliberation (i.e., there are no other substantive concerns with the permit that would otherwise warrant its denial).
- Given that the zoning code provides somewhat mixed guidance on considering impacts (particularly those related to noise and odor associated with traffic), staff does not have a clear basis for prioritizing this heavier commercial use/demand versus existing residential, light commercial uses (primarily offices and accommodations), and educational uses in the area:
 - SGC 22.16.015(C)(11): Many of the permitted and conditional uses in the CBD, C-1, C-2, and WD zones generate traffic, noise, odor, and general impacts to a higher level and greater degree than permitted and conditional uses in residential districts. Owners of residential uses in the CBD, C-1, C-2 and WD districts must be aware of and accepting of all the permitted uses in these districts.
 - SGC 22.25.010(E): In evaluating the inputs of a proposed conditional use permit, the municipality may consider a commercial conditional use to be inappropriate for residential neighbors while the same conditional use may be acceptable when it is located along an arterial or collector street. The additional vehicular traffic generated by conditional uses, such as professional offices, may not be able to be adequately mitigated in residential areas.
- It is notable that outside of using different buses, there are no mitigations available/presented for noise and odor associated with the buses transiting Monastery Street and Oja Way. This is where the Commission’s weighing of these impacts against intent of the CBD, and merit of the proposal particularly in relation to improving pedestrian safety on Harbor Drive, is needed.
- Likewise on the Comprehensive Plan, there are elements of Plan future growth this proposal supports, but some that are potentially contravened. Public input and Commission deliberation are needed to more thoroughly weigh the trade-offs in this regard.

Staff will be prepared to assist with motion and findings writings – given the complexity of options and outcomes, outlining these ahead of time was not feasible. While there may be others, staff has a few conditions of approval for consideration:

1. Requirement for a traffic study/analysis as discussed above
2. The pedestrian path through the Etolin Way properties must be memorialized in an easement or other similar, durable use agreement to which CBS is a party (such that it cannot be modified/vacated without our approval for the duration of the permit)
3. A staff review of signage (including type, size, and placement), and a requirement to add ground-markings along the pedestrian path to increase awareness/visibility
4. Requirement for installation of a permanent restroom that must be accessible when the site is in use for shuttling services.
5. Clarification regarding winterization/security/planned use in the off-season.



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
GENERAL APPLICATION

- Applications must be deemed complete at least **TWENTY-ONE (21)** days in advance of next meeting date.
- Review guidelines and procedural information.
- Fill form out **completely**. No request will be considered without a completed form.
- Submit all supporting documents and proof of payment.

APPLICATION FOR:

VARIANCE

CONDITIONAL USE

ZONING AMENDMENT

PLAT/SUBDIVISION

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF REQUEST: _____

PROPERTY INFORMATION:

CURRENT ZONING: _____ PROPOSED ZONING (if applicable): _____

CURRENT LAND USE(S): _____ PROPOSED LAND USES (if changing): _____

APPLICANT INFORMATION:

PROPERTY OWNER: _____

PROPERTY OWNER ADDRESS: _____

STREET ADDRESS OF PROPERTY: _____

APPLICANT'S NAME: _____

MAILING ADDRESS: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____ DAYTIME PHONE: _____

Last Name

Date Submitted

Project Address

REQUIRED SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION:

For All Applications:

- Completed General Application form
- Supplemental Application (Variance, CUP, Plat, Zoning Amendment)
- Site Plan showing all existing and proposed structures with dimensions and location of utilities
- Floor Plan for all structures and showing use of those structures
- Proof of filing fee payment
- Other: _____

For Marijuana Enterprise Conditional Use Permits Only:

- AMCO Application

For Short-Term Rentals and B&Bs:

- Renter Informational Handout (directions to rental, garbage instructions, etc.)
- Documentation establishing property as primary residence (motor vehicle registration, voter registration, etc.)
- Signed Affidavit of Primary Residence for Short-term Rental Conditional Use Permit

CERTIFICATION: I hereby certify that I am the owner of the property described above and that I desire a planning action in conformance with Sitka General Code and hereby state that all of the above statements are true. I certify that this application meets SCG requirements to the best of my knowledge, belief, and professional ability. I acknowledge that payment of the review fee is non-refundable, is to cover costs associated with the processing of this application and does not ensure approval of the request. I understand that public notice will be mailed to neighboring property owners and published in the Daily Sitka Sentinel. I understand that attendance at the Planning Commission meeting is required for the application to be considered for approval. I further authorize municipal staff to access the property to conduct site visits as necessary. I authorize the applicant listed on this application to conduct business on my behalf.

Chris McHale

Owner

Date

Owner

Date

I certify that I desire a planning action in conformance with Sitka General Code and hereby state that all of the above statements are true. I certify that this application meets SCG requirements to the best of my knowledge, belief, and professional ability. I acknowledge that payment of the review fee is non-refundable, is to cover costs associated with the processing of this application and does not ensure approval of the request.

Chris McHale

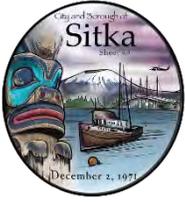
Applicant (If different than owner)

Date

Last Name

Date Submitted

Project Address



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA
PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
SUPPLEMENTAL APPLICATION FORM
CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT

***APPLICATION FOR ALL OTHER CONDITIONAL USE PERMITS
(EXCLUDING SHORT-TERM RENTAL AND BED & BREAKFAST)***

CRITERIA TO DETERMINE IMPACT – SGC 22.24.010(E) *(Please address each item in regard to your proposal)*

- **Hours of operation:** _____

- **Location along a major or collector street:** _____

- **Amount of vehicular traffic to be generated and impacts of the traffic on nearby land uses:**

- **Potential for users or clients to access the site through residential areas or substandard street creating a cut through traffic scenario:** _____

- **Effects on vehicular and pedestrian safety:** _____

- **Ability of the police, fire, and EMS personnel to respond to emergency calls on the site:** _____

- **Describe the parking plan & layout:** _____

- **Proposed signage:** _____

REQUIRED FINDINGS (SGC 22.30.160(C):

1. The city may use design standards and other elements in this code to modify the proposal. A [conditional use](#) permit may be approved only if all of the following findings can be made regarding the proposal and are supported by the record that the granting of the proposed [conditional use](#) permit will not:

Initial

a. Be detrimental to the public health, safety, and general welfare;	
b. Adversely affect the established character of the surrounding vicinity; nor	
c. Be injurious to the uses, property, or improvements adjacent to, and in the vicinity of, the site upon which the proposed use is to be located.	
2. The granting of the proposed conditional use permit is consistent and compatible with the intent of the goals, objectives and policies of the comprehensive plan and any implementing regulation.	
3. All conditions necessary to lessen any impacts of the proposed use are conditions that can be monitored and enforced.	
4. The proposed use will not introduce hazardous conditions at the site that cannot be mitigated to protect adjacent properties, the vicinity, and the public health, safety and welfare of the community from such hazard.	
5. The conditional use will be supported by, and not adversely affect, adequate public facilities and services; or that conditions can be imposed to lessen any adverse impacts on such facilities and services.	
6. Burden of Proof. The applicant has the burden of proving that the proposed conditional use meets all of the criteria in subsection B of this section.	

ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS _____

Chris McHale

Applicant

Date

 Last Name

 Date Submitted

 Project Address

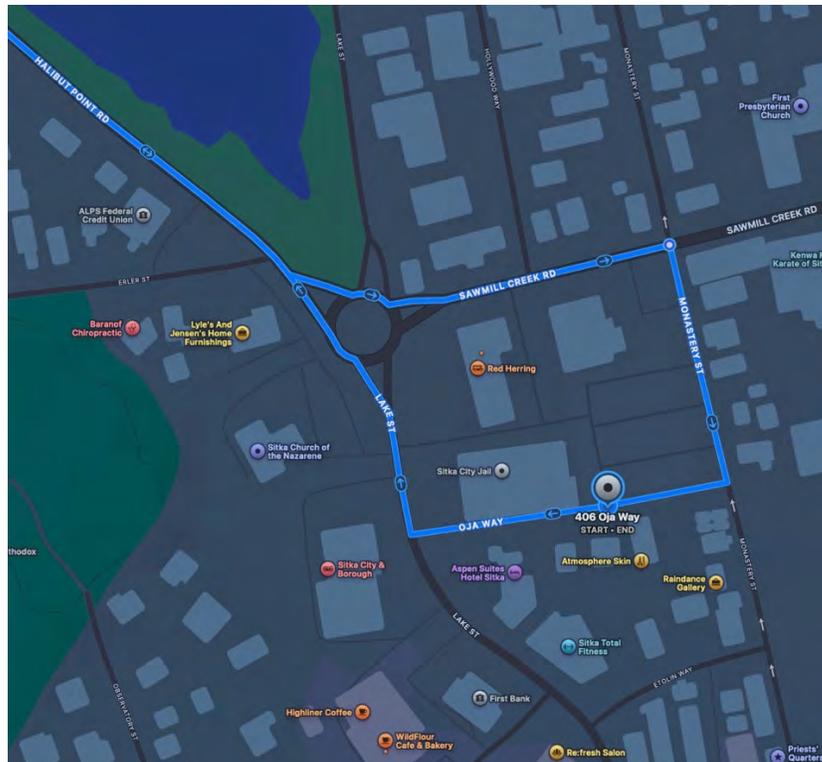
Conditional Use Permit Supplement Application

Hours of Operation

Seasonal operation from May through September, generally between 7:00 AM and 7:00 PM on cruise ship days.

Location along a major collector street

The site is accessed from Monastery Street and Oja Way within the Central Business District, with pedestrian routing toward the Lake and Lincoln Street intersection, a major downtown corridor.



Amount of Vehicular Traffic to be generated and impacts

The level of shuttle activity at this location will fluctuate on a daily basis and is directly tied to the number of cruise ship passengers in Sitka on a given day. This dynamic is important for understanding both the volume of vehicle activity and the overall transportation benefit created by relocating operations to Oja Way.

On small ship days, with approximately 700 passengers, the site will experience an estimated 25 shuttle bus stops. On large cruise days, when Sitka receives approximately 6,000 guests at the Sitka Sound Cruise Terminal, the site will experience approximately 150 shuttle bus stops, with peak activity occurring between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., which is consistent with peak visitor movement to and from downtown.

Although these bus volumes sound significant, the relocation of the shuttle drop-off to Oja Way produces a substantial reduction in vehicular congestion in the core of downtown Sitka, particularly at:

- The Lake Street–Lincoln Street signalized intersection, and
- Harbor Drive and the Centennial Hall entrance, which currently experience high volumes of shuttle traffic.

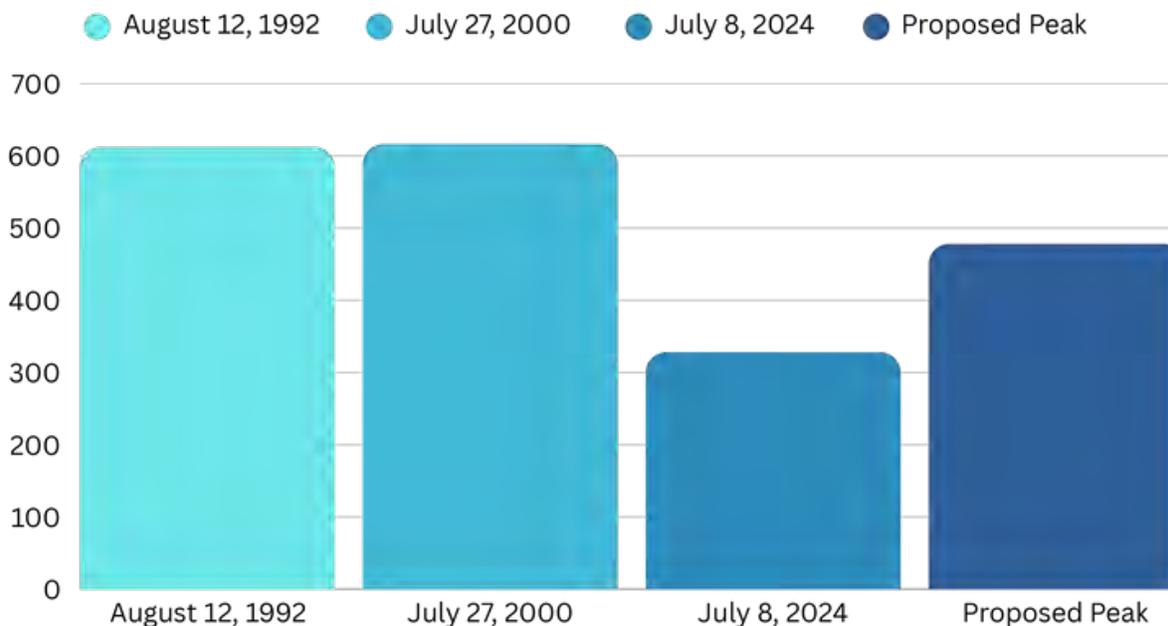
By removing all shuttle buses from this constrained downtown bottleneck, overall congestion, pedestrian conflicts, and delays are reduced city-wide. This relocation directly benefits police, courthouse, and commercial operations in the downtown core and supports public safety and emergency response reliability.

This site also results in substantial operational efficiency improvements. The round-trip driving time between the Sitka Sound Cruise Terminal and Oja Way is approximately five minutes shorter than the current route through downtown. This time savings allows the shuttle system to move the same number of passengers with fewer buses. On high-volume days, the reduced travel distance will allow for two fewer shuttle buses to be

deployed on city streets. This reduction further decreases congestion and lowers vehicle emissions.

In analyzing daily traffic impact on Oja Way, empirical counts show that the street is well within its intended capacity even with the added shuttle traffic. A weekday traffic count in July 2024 recorded 328 vehicles per day on Oja Way. Adding the shuttle activity on the largest cruise days (approximately 150 bus trips), results in a total of 478 vehicles per day. For context:

- In July 2000, a weekday count recorded 616 vehicles on Oja Way.
- In July 1992, Oja Way experienced 612 vehicles per day.

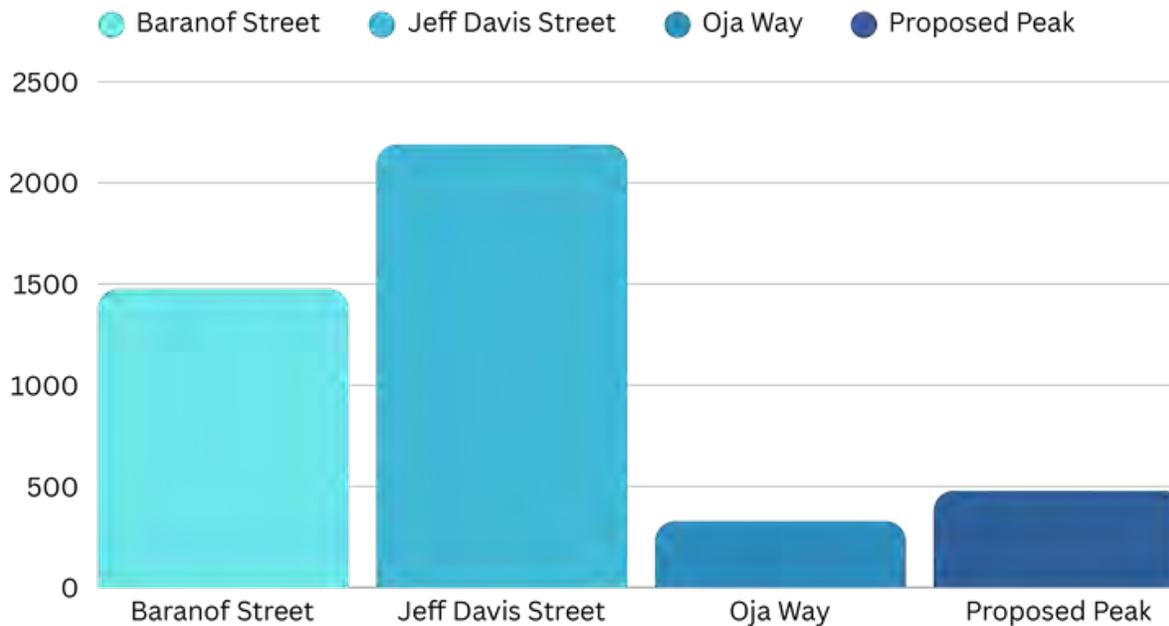


Therefore, even on Sitka's largest cruise passenger days, total traffic on Oja Way will remain lower than historical traffic levels recorded in the 1990s and early 2000s.

Additionally, Oja Way and Monastery Street are located within the Central Business District, where higher-intensity transportation activity is contemplated and appropriate. Comparable streets in the vicinity experience significantly higher traffic volumes, demonstrating that the roadway network is well within capacity:

- Baranof Street: 1,475 vehicles per day

- Jeff Davis Street: 2,189 vehicles per day



In comparison, the projected peak of 478 vehicles per day on Oja Way is substantially lower and does not exceed the functional design or operational expectations for a CBD street.

In summary, while the shuttle operation will add predictable daytime activity to this site, the overall transportation impact is beneficial to the community. The project:

1. Reduces traffic and congestion in the downtown core;
2. Improves pedestrian and vehicle safety at major intersections;
3. Reduces the total number of shuttle buses required on city roads; and
4. Keeps Oja Way traffic levels well within its historical and functional capacity.

Client Access through residential areas or substandard street creating a cut through traffic scenario:

The proposed shuttle drop-off will not create cut-through traffic through residential areas or on substandard streets. Shuttle buses will access the site exclusively via Monastery Street and Oja Way, both of which are located within the Central Business District (CBD) and are intended to accommodate commercial traffic. Monastery Street and Oja Way, while adjacent to some nonconforming residential uses, are commercial connector street that already supports delivery vehicles, school buses, service trucks, and other CBD-related activity. Routing shuttle buses on this corridor is fully consistent with its historic and current function.

Because cruise passengers do not drive personal vehicles to the site, there is no scenario where clients could create cut-through traffic in surrounding neighborhoods. All passenger movement occurs via managed shuttle buses and a controlled pedestrian path that keeps visitors on private property (with the exception of crossing Etoin Way) until they reach the Lake and Lincoln Street intersection. This routing prevents pedestrians from dispersing into residential areas and avoids any pedestrian-induced cut-through behavior.

Additionally, surrounding residential streets do not offer any practical or advantageous shortcuts for shuttle buses or other vehicles. The local street network naturally directs traffic toward Oja Way and Monastery Street, ensuring that the project will not induce rerouting or bypassing through residential areas.

In summary, shuttle operations are confined to CBD-appropriate streets, pedestrians remain on a defined internal route, and no private vehicles access the site. Therefore,

the project will not generate cut-through traffic or negatively affect adjacent residential properties.

Effects on Vehicular and Pedestrian Safety

The proposed shuttle drop-off on Oja Way will significantly improve both vehicular and pedestrian safety in downtown Sitka. Although shuttle buses will add approximately 150 vehicle trips on the busiest cruise days, this increase does not create a meaningful rise in overall traffic volume on Oja Way. Existing traffic counts demonstrate that Oja Way routinely operated with higher volumes in previous decades, and the total projected peak volume under this project (approximately 478 vehicles per day) remains well below historical usage, such as 570 vehicles/day in 2000 and 640 vehicles/day in 1992. Therefore, from a vehicular safety perspective, the roadway is functioning far below its design and historical capacity, and no safety deficits are created by the added shuttle traffic.

In addition to remaining within safe traffic capacity thresholds, the project includes dedicated pedestrian routing, which greatly reduces pedestrian–vehicle conflicts. All pedestrians disembarking at the Oja Way shuttle location will be routed through private property behind the shuttle drop-off area toward Etohin Way. Pedestrian traffic will then cross Etohin Way at a designated, supervised crossing, where a trained crossing guard will be employed during operational hours on days when passenger capacities exceed 2000 guests at the cruise terminal. The purpose of the crossing guard is to ensure that pedestrian flow does not interfere with vehicular movement on Etohin Way and that vehicles are not required to make sudden stops or unsafe maneuvers. This controlled crossing system represents a major safety upgrade compared to existing downtown conditions.

After crossing Etohin Way, the pedestrian pathway continues through private property and exits directly at the signalized intersection of Lake Street and Lincoln Street, Sitka's main downtown intersection. By aligning pedestrian outflow with the controlled signal, all pedestrian crossing activity occurs within an established, high-visibility crosswalk supported by existing traffic controls. This reduces unpredictable pedestrian movement

and eliminates any requirement for pedestrians to cross mid-block or in unsignalized areas.



This routing system provides a dramatic improvement over the current Centennial Hall shuttle drop-off, which forces thousands of cruise visitors each day to cross Harbor Drive—often outside the designated crosswalks. The high rate of jaywalking across Harbor Drive, particularly between the shuttle loading zones and downtown commercial areas, has been repeatedly identified as one of the most significant pedestrian and vehicular safety issues in Sitka. Local residents, business owners, and public safety personnel routinely cite this as a major hazard and point of frustration. The current configuration creates substantial conflict between vehicle traffic, tour buses, local drivers, and pedestrians dispersing throughout the downtown corridor.

By moving all shuttle drop-offs to Oja Way and providing a controlled, signal-aligned pedestrian route, the project eliminates nearly all jaywalking conflicts, reduces pressure on Harbor Drive and the Centennial Hall intersection, and funnels pedestrian activity into a safer, more predictable, and more manageable environment. This creates measurable safety benefits for cruise passengers, downtown businesses, local drivers, and emergency services.

During the early and late portion of the cruise season when operations overlap with the school year, shuttle bus routing and traffic management will be adjusted specifically to avoid conflicts with morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up activities at Xóots Elementary School. The applicant will ensure that all shuttle bus entries and exits utilize Oja Way exclusively during school peak traffic periods, thereby avoiding Monastery Street and any areas where school-related pedestrian and vehicle congestion may occur.

By confining shuttle ingress and egress to Oja Way during these sensitive time windows, the project maintains safe and predictable traffic patterns for parents, students, and school staff. Shuttle operations will avoid contributing to congestion during the brief but high-volume school drop-off (typically 7:30–8:00 a.m.) and pick-up times (typically 1:30–2:45 p.m.). Because Oja Way is already well within its design capacity and projected shuttle volumes remain below historical traffic counts, this routing approach ensures that school-related traffic conditions remain safe and unimpeded.

This operational commitment demonstrates the applicant’s intention to fully coordinate with the needs of the school community and to proactively avoid any impacts on child safety, school circulation patterns, or parent pick-up/drop-off operations.

In summary, the proposed shuttle drop-off produces major improvements in pedestrian and vehicular safety, including:

- Traffic volumes on Oja Way remain below historical levels and well within roadway capacity.
- Pedestrians are routed entirely through private property, eliminating uncontrolled street crossings and disruption to neighboring properties.
- Pedestrian flow is directed to the signalized Lake–Lincoln intersection, improving predictability and separation from vehicles.
- The relocation eliminates the significant jaywalking hazard at Harbor Drive, addressing one of Sitka’s most widely recognized public-safety concerns.

Taken together, these measures ensure that the proposed use enhances, rather than diminishes, the safety of both vehicles and pedestrians in downtown Sitka.

Ability of the police, fire, and EMS personnel to respond to emergency calls on the site:

The site is directly adjacent to the Sitka Police Department and a very short distance to the fire department and fully accessible to emergency responders. No access limitations are created by the project.

Parking plan & layout

The shuttle drop-off will operate using a two-property configuration designed to create a large, efficient **U-shaped circulation loop**. Shuttle buses will **enter on the east end** of the Oja Way property, proceed onto the adjoining private property, and **loop around a centrally located passenger queuing and staging area** before **exiting on the west end** of the site. This layout allows continuous forward movement without backing maneuvers, reducing noise, emissions, and potential conflicts.

The combined site can **accommodate up to seven (7) shuttle buses simultaneously**, which is a significant improvement over the current Centennial Hall layout that provides space for only four buses. This expanded capacity reduces bus stacking, improves flow, and prevents queues from extending onto public areas.

Passengers disembarking at Oja Way will be directed immediately toward the dedicated pedestrian pathway leading to Etolin Way and then to the Lake & Lincoln intersection. Returning passengers will follow the same designated route in reverse and queue in the central staging area located on the two properties, ensuring that all pedestrian movement occurs in a controlled, predictable manner separated from bus operations.

This layout maximizes safety, enhances operational efficiency, and supports a smooth, orderly shuttle experience during peak cruise traffic.



Proposed Signage

The signage system is designed to keep all visitors on the designated private-property pedestrian path from the shuttle drop-off area to the Lake & Lincoln Street intersection, and to prevent any movement toward residential or civic properties. Signs will be uniform, professional, and placed at key decision points.

1. Shuttle Drop-Off Area Signage

- “Pedestrian Path →”
 - Directs passengers to the designated walkway immediately after disembarking.
- “Stay on Designated Walkway” (Possible Color Coding of Walkway)
- “Downtown Shops & Attractions → Follow Pathway”
- “Centennial Hall→ Follow Pathway”

2. Signage Along the Private Pedestrian Route (405 Etolin & 402 Etolin)

- “← Shuttle Buses / Cruise Terminal” (facing returning guests)
- “→ Downtown / Lincoln St. Signalized Crossing”
- “Caution, Roadway Crossing, Yield to Traffic”
 - Place at Etolin Way Crossing.
- “Pedestrian Route – Remain on Walkway”

3. At the Transition Point Toward Lake & Lincoln Street

- “Continue to Signalized Crossing →”
- “Use Crosswalk at Light – Do Not Cross Midblock”

4. Signage for Returning Passengers

- “← Shuttle Loading Area”

- “Follow Path to Shuttle Queue”
- “Stay on Walkway – Do Not Enter Adjacent Properties”
- “Shuttle Queue Ahead”

5. General Pedestrian Safety & Behavior Signage

- “No Jaywalking – Use Designated Path and Signalized Crosswalk Only”
- “Please Use Designated Pedestrian Route Only”

Signage Goals

This signage system is designed to:

- Clearly guide guests from the shuttle drop-off to downtown and back
- Keep all pedestrians primary on private property until reaching the Lake/Lincoln signal
- Eliminate jaywalking and prevent pedestrians from entering neighboring properties
- Enhance safety without requiring active personnel or crossing monitors
- Provide consistency, clarity, and strong visual cues for visitors unfamiliar with Sitka

Presence of Existing buffers on the site or immediately adjacent to site:

New 8' tall permanent fencing will be installed along the property lines of the Oja Way shuttle drop off and adjacent property owners. The fencing will be chain link with a Soundblock Acoustical panels that provide a visual privacy and acoustic sound block between the shuttle drop off location and adjoining properties.

Amount of noise to be generated and its impacts on neighbors.

Noise generated by the proposed shuttle drop-off will be minimal and consistent with the types of sounds anticipated within the Central Business District (CBD) as defined in the Sitka General Code. The CBD is intended to accommodate a wide range of commercial, civic, and tourism-related activities, and the Code acknowledges that higher ambient noise levels—including traffic sounds, commercial loading, pedestrian activity, and daytime business operations—are typical and expected in this zoning district.

At the Oja Way site, noise will be limited primarily to standard shuttle bus operations during daytime hours, including normal engine sounds associated with arrival, loading, and departure. The applicant enforces a strict no-idling policy for all shuttle buses, which eliminates prolonged engine noise and reduces cumulative sound levels. No mechanical servicing, fueling, or nighttime operations will occur at the site, ensuring that noise remains confined to typical commercial daytime periods.

To further mitigate impacts on adjacent nonconforming residential uses, the project

includes installation of an 8-foot permanent fence equipped with sound-block acoustic panels along the property boundary. This barrier reduces sound transmission toward neighboring properties and provides both a visual and acoustic buffer between the shuttle activity and nearby land uses.

Operational staff will be present throughout the day to manage bus movements and ensure compliance with noise-limiting policies, including controlled staging, avoiding unnecessary acceleration, and preventing horn use. Pedestrian queuing and movement will occur on private property, away from the closest residential units, further reducing incidental noise impacts.

Overall, the anticipated noise from the operation is fully compatible with the CBD's intended commercial character and will be significantly softened by physical mitigation measures and operational restrictions. The combination of limited hours, no-idling requirements, acoustic fencing, and active on-site supervision ensures that noise impacts to adjacent properties remain low and well within the expectations for a downtown commercial environment.

Mitigation / Management Plan

To prevent pedestrians from dispersing unpredictably into surrounding areas and to protect the quiet enjoyment of neighboring residential and civic properties, all passengers will be routed along a designated pedestrian pathway located entirely on private property (with the exception of the Etohin Way crossing). Wayfinding, fencing, physical barriers, and continuous staff oversight will ensure pedestrians remain within the planned route at all times.

Pedestrian Routing

The pedestrian routing is as follows:

1. After unloading at the shuttle drop-off, all passengers will move to the **rear of the Oja Way** shuttle property.
2. They will enter the controlled pedestrian pathway through **405 Etohin Way**, which includes fencing and landscaping to maintain separation from adjacent properties.
3. Pedestrians will cross Etohin Way only at the designated crossing location and continue directly into 402 Etohin Way, remaining within a defined, pathway.
4. The pathway exits directly at the signalized intersection of Lake Street and Lincoln Street, allowing pedestrians to cross only within an established, controlled crosswalk.

This system eliminates jaywalking, reduces vehicle conflicts, and prevents visitor foot traffic from entering residential areas. Pedestrian flow is orderly, predictable, and managed primarily on private property.

Connector Shuttle Mitigation – Independent Tour Operator Traffic

To eliminate any potential demand for independent tour operators to load or unload passengers near the Oja Way shuttle facility, particularly in proximity to the Sitka Police Department and the State Courthouse, the applicant will operate a connector shuttle between the Oja Way shuttle drop-off and Centennial Hall. Centennial Hall is the established and recognized pickup and drop-off location for independent tour operators in downtown Sitka.

The connector shuttle will operate during cruise ship operating hours and will provide a reliable, clearly marked connection for cruise passengers who have booked independent tours. This ensures that passengers can easily access their tour pickup location without any need for independent tour vehicles to enter, stage, stop, or circulate along Oja Way or near adjacent public facilities.

By maintaining Centennial Hall as the centralized independent tour pickup location and providing direct shuttle access to it, the proposed shuttle drop-off does not create demand for third-party tour vehicle activity along Oja Way.

Mitigation of Impacts to Adjacent Properties

To protect the character, comfort, and function of neighboring uses—including nonconforming residences:

- Visual and noise buffers, including 8-foot fencing with acoustic panels, vegetation, and pedestrian barriers.
- Strict no-idle policy to reduce emissions and noise.
- Limited operating hours corresponding only to cruise traffic (approximately 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.).
- Regular litter removal and managed waste control with on-site receptacles.
- Continuous staff oversight to ensure pedestrian compliance and prevent trespass.

Operational Oversight and Site Management

The site will be staffed during all operational hours. Staff responsibilities include:

- Managing shuttle arrivals and departures to prevent queuing onto public streets.
- Ensuring pedestrian compliance with routing and safety measures.
- Monitoring for noise, litter, or security issues.
- Directing passengers to the designated pedestrian route and connector shuttle as appropriate.
- Responding promptly to concerns from neighboring property owners.
- Ensuring the overall operation functions safely, efficiently, and with minimal neighborhood impact.

Coordination with School Traffic

During periods when cruise operations overlap with the school year, shuttle routing will be adjusted to avoid interaction with school pick-up and drop-off at Xóots Elementary School. During morning and afternoon school peak times, all shuttle entries and exits will utilize Oja Way exclusively, preventing buses from interacting with school circulation zones or Monastery Street. This ensures continued child safety, reduces congestion, and prevents conflicts with parent and staff traffic.

Alignment with the Goals of the Central Business District

The Central Business District (CBD) is designed to support Sitka's commercial core, emphasizing:

- High levels of pedestrian activity,
- Tourism and visitor-serving businesses,
- Walkability,
- Retail vibrancy, and
- Efficient transportation connections.

The proposed shuttle drop-off directly promotes these goals by:

- Delivering visitors safely and efficiently into the heart of the CBD,

- Routing pedestrians directly to the Lake & Lincoln intersection—Sitka’s primary retail and commercial hub,
- Supporting foot traffic to surrounding retail, food and beverage outlets, and cultural attractions,
- Enhancing walkability through controlled, well-designed pedestrian flows,
- Reducing congestion at Harbor Drive and Centennial Hall, and
- Strengthening the visitor experience and downtown economic vitality.

By relocating the shuttle drop-off to Oja Way and creating a structured pedestrian route supplemented by a connector shuttle, the project channels visitor activity into appropriate circulation patterns that support the CBD’s intended purpose.

Summary

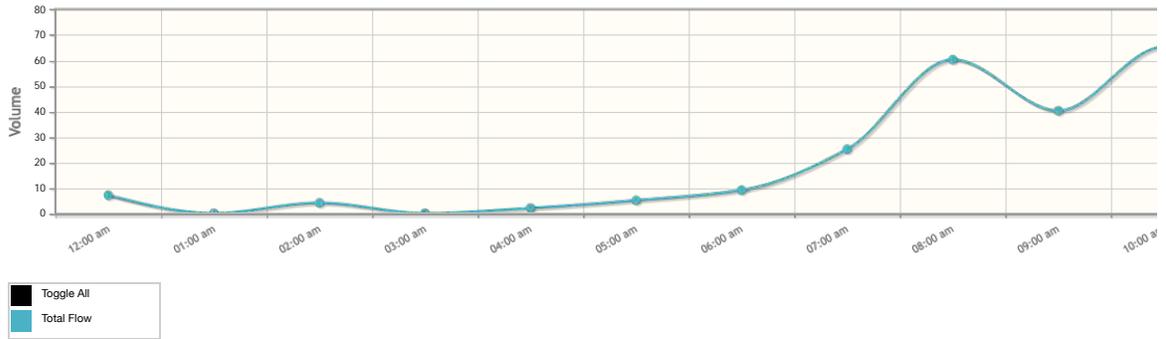
This mitigation and management plan ensures:

- Safe and predictable movement of vehicles and pedestrians,
- Protection of neighboring properties through buffers, controlled routing, and strict operational standards,
- Elimination of independent tour loading pressure near Oja Way through the connector shuttle,
- Alignment with CBD goals for tourism, pedestrian circulation, and economic vitality,
- Reduced congestion and improved safety compared to existing conditions at Centennial Hall, and
- Operation that is compatible with surrounding land uses and beneficial to the broader community.

STATE OF ALASKA DOT TRAFFIC INFORMATION



Daily Volume Report AKDOT_ST 000067650067 Monday, July 31, 2000



Site Name 67650067 **Site ID** 000067650067 **Description** Lake Street and Monastery Street

All Lanes Time Period: 1 hour Exclude data: None

Total Flow	
12:00 am	7
01:00 am	0
02:00 am	4
03:00 am	0
04:00 am	2
05:00 am	5
06:00 am	9
07:00 am	25
08:00 am	60
09:00 am	40
10:00 am	65
11:00 am	53
12:00 pm	52
01:00 pm	46
02:00 pm	36
03:00 pm	53
04:00 pm	53
05:00 pm	46
06:00 pm	10
07:00 pm	7
08:00 pm	17
09:00 pm	16
10:00 pm	9
11:00 pm	1
7am-7pm	539
6am-10pm	588
6am-12am	598
12am-12am	616
am Peak	10:00 am
Peak Volume	65
pm Peak	03:00 pm
Peak Volume	53

Event key: ■ QC Failure ■ QC Outlier ■ QC Atypical ■ Events ■ Special ■ Holiday ■ Offline
■ Weekends and defined holidays ■ Holiday-affected days

Notes on data:
 Averages are calculated as the simple average of values across the period.
 Holidays & Events:
 None

Data prepared by Drakewell US 10 Alaska November 18, 2025 12:07:10 PM.

C2-Cloud Traffic Data ©2003-2025 Drakewell Ltd.

Version 25.10.30.073333

Figure 1- OJA WAY July 31, 2020

Daily Volume Report AKDOT_ST 000067650067 Monday, August 17, 1992



Toggle All
 Total Flow

Site Name 67650067 **Site ID** 000067650067 **Description** Lake Street and Monastery Street

All Lanes Time Period: 1 hour Exclude data: None

Total Flow	
12:00 am	2
01:00 am	0
02:00 am	0
03:00 am	2
04:00 am	3
05:00 am	1
06:00 am	9
07:00 am	32
08:00 am	50
09:00 am	39
10:00 am	38
11:00 am	58
12:00 pm	66
01:00 pm	74
02:00 pm	58
03:00 pm	49
04:00 pm	45
05:00 pm	26
06:00 pm	13
07:00 pm	13
08:00 pm	12
09:00 pm	9
10:00 pm	11
11:00 pm	2
7am-7pm	548
6am-10pm	591
6am-12am	604
12am-12am	612
am Peak	11:00 am
Peak Volume	58
pm Peak	01:00 pm
Peak Volume	74

Event key: ■ QC Failure ■ QC Outlier ■ QC Atypical ■ Events ■ Special ■ Holiday ■ Offline
■ Weekends and defined holidays ■ Holiday-affected days

Notes on data:
 Averages are calculated as the simple average of values across the period.
 Holidays & Events:
 None

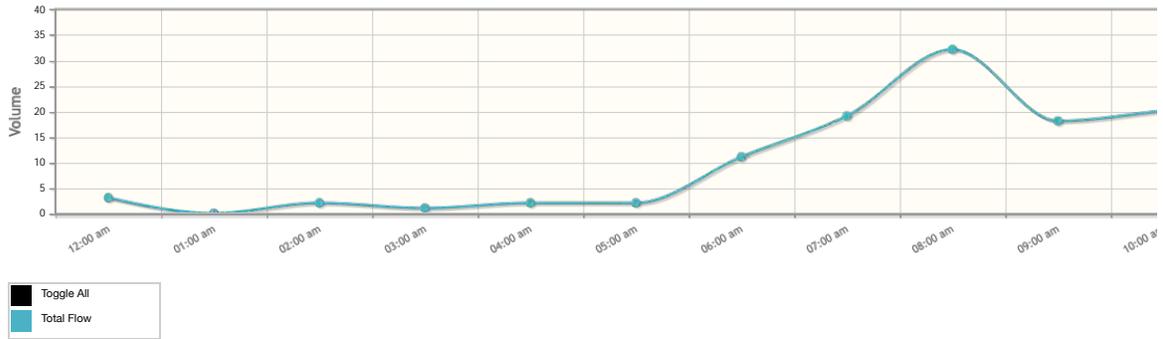
Data prepared by Drakewell US 10 Alaska November 18, 2025 12:06:11 PM.

C2-Cloud Traffic Data ©2003-2025 Drakewell Ltd.

Version 25.10.30.073333

Figure 2 - Oja Way August 17, 1992

Daily Volume Report AKDOT_ST 000067650067 Monday, July 8, 2024



Toggle All
 Total Flow

Site Name 67650067 **Site ID** 000067650067 **Description** Lake Street and Monastery Street

All Lanes Time Period: 1 hour Exclude data: None

Total Flow	
12:00 am	3
01:00 am	0
02:00 am	2
03:00 am	1
04:00 am	2
05:00 am	2
06:00 am	11
07:00 am	19
08:00 am	32
09:00 am	18
10:00 am	20
11:00 am	22
12:00 pm	22
01:00 pm	32
02:00 pm	26
03:00 pm	29
04:00 pm	28
05:00 pm	23
06:00 pm	13
07:00 pm	6
08:00 pm	10
09:00 pm	2
10:00 pm	4
11:00 pm	1
7am-7pm	284
6am-10pm	313
6am-12am	318
12am-12am	328
am Peak	08:00 am
Peak Volume	32
pm Peak	01:00 pm
Peak Volume	32

Event key: ■ QC Failure ■ QC Outlier ■ QC Atypical ■ Events ■ Special ■ Holiday ■ Offline
■ Weekends and defined holidays ■ Holiday-affected days

Notes on data:
Averages are calculated as the simple average of values across the period.

Holidays & Events:
None

Data prepared by Drakewell US 10 Alaska November 18, 2025 12:13:09 PM.

C2-Cloud Traffic Data ©2003-2025 Drakewell Ltd.

Version 25.10.30.073333

Figure 3 - Oja Way July 8, 2024

Daily Volume Report AKDOT_ST 000061650065 Monday, July 15, 2024

Site Name	61650065	Site ID	000061650065	Description	Baranof St North Biorka St(Sitka)
All Lanes Time Period: 1 hour Bins: Total Exclude data: None					
Total Flow					
12:00 am	1				
01:00 am	1				
02:00 am	2				
03:00 am	1				
04:00 am	8				
05:00 am	8				
06:00 am	31				
07:00 am	68				
08:00 am	98				
09:00 am	87				
10:00 am	90				
11:00 am	134				
12:00 pm	146				
01:00 pm	111				
02:00 pm	107				
03:00 pm	107				
04:00 pm	117				
05:00 pm	97				
06:00 pm	93				
07:00 pm	46				
08:00 pm	41				
09:00 pm	42				
10:00 pm	27				
11:00 pm	12				
7am-7pm	1255				
6am-10pm	1415				
6am-12am	1454				
12am-12am	1475				
am Peak	11:00 am				
Peak Volume	134				
pm Peak	12:00 pm				
Peak Volume	146				

Event key: ■ OC Failure ■ OC Outlier ■ OC Atypical ■ Events ■ Special ■ Holiday ■ Offline
■ Weekends and defined holidays ■ Holiday-affected days

Notes on data:
 Averages are calculated as the simple average of values across the period.
 Holidays & Events:
 None

Data prepared by Drakewell US 10 Alaska November 18, 2025 12:13:46 PM.

C2-Cloud Traffic Data ©2003-2025 Drakewell Ltd.

Version 25.10.30.073333

Figure 4 - Baranof Street - July 15, 2024

Daily Volume Report AKDOT_ST 000061650062 Monday, July 15, 2024

Site Name	61650062	Site ID	000061650062	Description	Jeff Davis Street South Etolin St(Sitka)
All Lanes Time Period: 1 hour Exclude data: None					
Total Flow					
12:00 am	3				
01:00 am	5				
02:00 am	1				
03:00 am	0				
04:00 am	17				
05:00 am	27				
06:00 am	40				
07:00 am	69				
08:00 am	133				
09:00 am	145				
10:00 am	120				
11:00 am	159				
12:00 pm	176				
01:00 pm	203				
02:00 pm	178				
03:00 pm	218				
04:00 pm	198				
05:00 pm	175				
06:00 pm	106				
07:00 pm	98				
08:00 pm	60				
09:00 pm	22				
10:00 pm	24				
11:00 pm	12				
7am-7pm	1880				
6am-10pm	2100				
6am-12am	2136				
12am-12am	2189				
am Peak	11:00 am				
Peak Volume	159				
pm Peak	03:00 pm				
Peak Volume	218				

Event key: ■ OC Failure ■ OC Outlier ■ OC Atypical ■ Events ■ Special ■ Holiday ■ Offline
■ Weekends and defined holidays ■ Holiday-affected days

Notes on data:
 Averages are calculated as the simple average of values across the period.
 Holidays & Events:
 None

Data prepared by Drakewell US 10 Alaska November 18, 2025 12:12:31 PM.

C2-Cloud Traffic Data ©2003-2025 Drakewell Ltd.

Version 25.10.30.073333

Figure 5 - Jeff Davis Street – July 15, 2024

Applicant Response to Planning Staff Report

Conditional Use Permit – Oja Way Shuttle Drop-Off Facility

Applicant: Sitka Dock Company LLC - Chris McGraw

Date: December 16, 2025

Purpose of This Response

This response is submitted to clarify, correct, and respond to specific statements and conclusions contained in the Planning Staff Report regarding traffic impacts, emergency access, and the need for traffic studies. The intent of this response is to ensure that the Planning Commission's deliberations are based on accurate descriptions of existing conditions, the actual operational plan proposed, and the applicable legal standards under the Sitka General Code.

Where statements in the staff report rely on assumptions, speculative outcomes, or conditions that already exist independent of the proposed use, those points are addressed below and respectfully contested for the record.

Pedestrian Activity at the Lake and Lincoln Intersection

The staff report suggests that pedestrian activity at the Lake and Lincoln Street intersection could be increased by the proposed use and may create safety or emergency access concerns.

This characterization does not accurately reflect existing conditions. Cruise passengers dropped off at Harrigan Centennial Hall already walk to the Lake/Lincoln signalized intersection in substantial numbers during the cruise season. In addition, a significant portion of pedestrians currently jaywalk across Harbor Drive, resulting in uncontrolled and unpredictable pedestrian movements.

The proposed use does not create a new pedestrian destination and does not introduce a new crossing location. Rather, it consolidates pedestrian movement at a controlled, signalized intersection and eliminates mid-block crossings. Any pedestrian activity observed at Lake and Lincoln under the proposal represents existing behavior redirected into a safer and more predictable form.

The staff report further suggests that the proposed use may necessitate changes to signal timing. This conclusion is not supported by evidence. The intersection already accommodates heavy pedestrian volumes under existing operations, and pedestrian movement is governed by standard walk/don't walk indications. No data has been presented demonstrating that current signal timing is inadequate or that emergency response has been hindered under existing or prior conditions, including periods in the past when lane configurations created traffic backups at this intersection.

Fire Department Comments and Emergency Access

The staff report references Fire Department concerns regarding potential traffic backup at the Lake/Lincoln intersection and possible impacts to emergency vehicle movements. These concerns are speculative and not supported by existing operational evidence.

Emergency vehicles already operate through the Lake/Lincoln intersection during peak summer pedestrian conditions, including during periods when shuttle buses serve Harrigan Centennial Hall. The intersection is fully signalized, and emergency vehicles are not constrained by pedestrian signal phases.

In addition, the proposal removes shuttle buses from Harbor Drive and the Lake/Lincoln intersection area—both of which are critical emergency corridors used for access across the bridge and to Sitka’s only hospital. By shortening the shuttle route and reducing the number of buses required on peak days, the proposal reduces congestion in areas most important to emergency response.

The fire station is located approximately 100 feet west of the Oja Way intersection, and emergency vehicles already operate safely in this environment alongside commercial trucks, and increased summer local traffic. Under the proposal, shuttle buses are right-turn-only away from the fire hall entrance and are operated by trained drivers who yield immediately to emergency vehicles. Compared to existing Centennial Hall operations, the proposal represents a net reduction in congestion and conflict.

Sight Distance and Turning Movements

The staff report includes statements characterizing the Oja Way to Lake Street intersection as having limited sight distance and suggesting potential difficulty for large vehicles.

These statements do not reflect existing, documented use. School buses of the same size as the proposed shuttle buses already exit Oja Way onto Lake Street at this intersection every school day. This existing operation demonstrates that the intersection geometry and available sight distance safely accommodate large vehicles.

Additionally, the proposed shuttle operation is explicitly right-turn-only, which under AASHTO standards represents the least restrictive and lowest-risk turning movement. The proposal does not introduce a new or unusual vehicle movement pattern.

Traffic Study Scope and Relevance

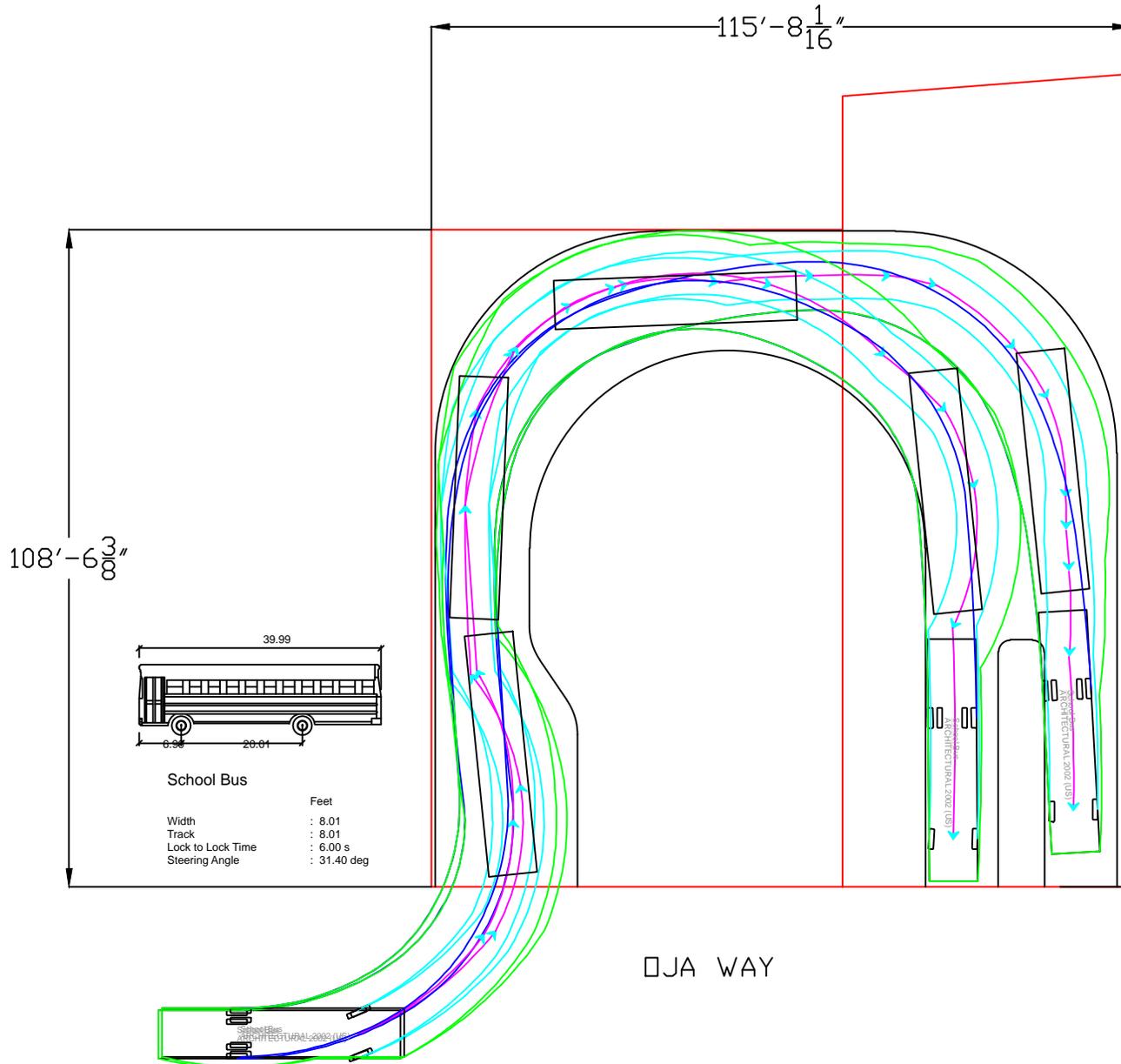
The staff report recommends extensive traffic analysis, including predictive modeling and stress testing of downstream conditions. While I am willing to provide a scoped traffic analysis addressing site-specific elements such as turning geometry, and feasibility of bus staging, broader modeling of citywide traffic behavior is not necessary to evaluate the proposed use against the Conditional Use Permit criteria.

Under the Sitka General Code, a Conditional Use Permit may not be denied based on generalized transportation concerns, speculative outcomes, or impacts that already exist independent of the proposed use. Studies intended to address system-wide conditions or hypothetical future scenarios fall outside the reasonable scope of a site-specific land-use permit review.

Conclusion

This response is submitted to ensure the record accurately reflects existing conditions, the operational characteristics of the proposed use, and the limits of impact attribution under the Sitka General Code. The proposed Oja Way shuttle drop-off improves pedestrian safety, reduces congestion in critical emergency corridors, maintains emergency access, and aligns with the intent of the Central Business District.

I respectfully request that this response be included in the official record and considered by the Planning Commission during deliberations.



CUP 25-17

Request for a public transportation facility at
408 and 410 Oja Way

Staff Report by Planning & Community Development Department

Presented to: Planning Commission

Presented on: December 17, 2025

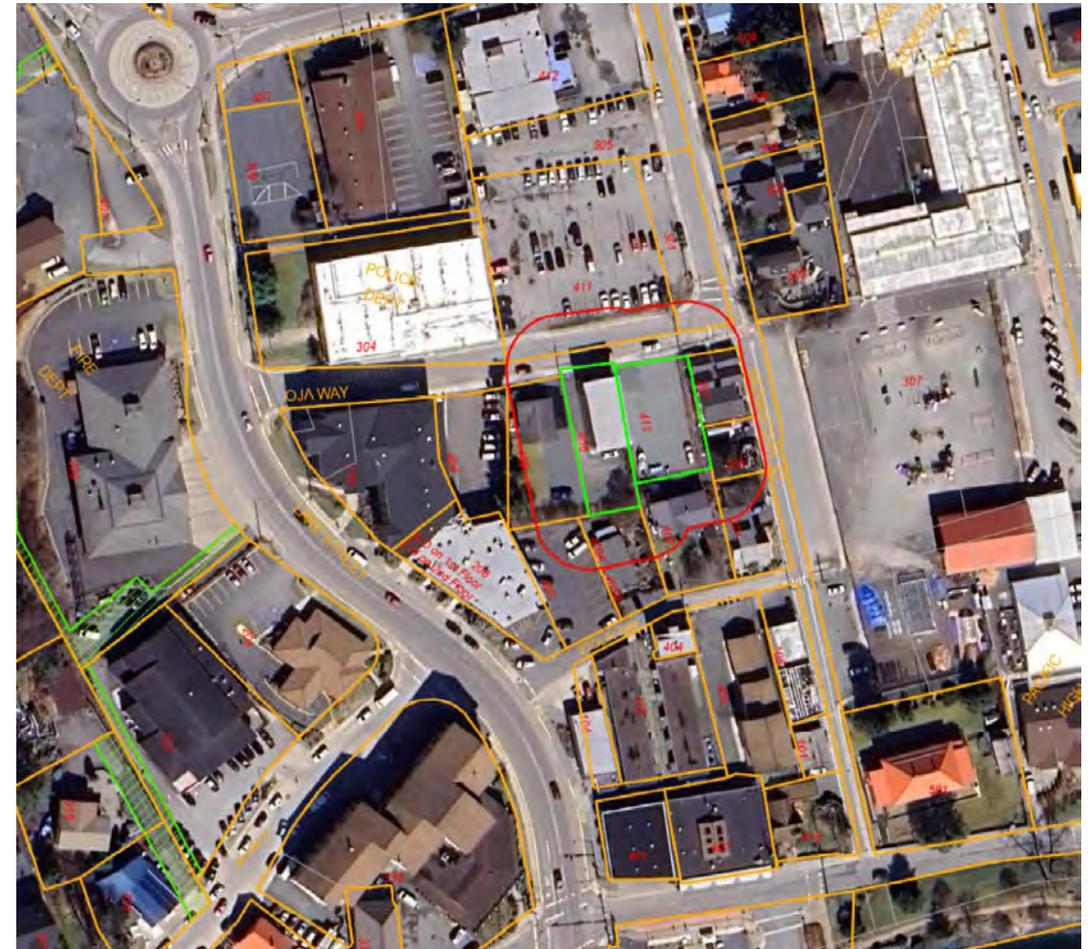
Overview

- Background
- Analysis
- Recommendation
- Guidance for Public Comment

Background

Subject Properties: 408 & 410 Oja Way

- Proposed Use: Cruise shuttle operations
- Hours of Operation:
 - 7:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.
 - Annually May - September
- Zoned Central Business District (CBD)
- Dimensions (approx. together):
 - 14,843 square feet
 - 116' wide
- Existing Uses
 - 408 Oja – Office Building
 - 410 Oja – Vacant
- Adjacent Uses
 - Residential housing
 - Commercial uses: Hotel, offices, retail
 - Public uses: City/State building containing State of Alaska (Fish and Game, Sitka Job Center, Office of Children's Services, Alaska Court system) and the Sitka Police Department and jail facilities, Sitka Fire Department, Xóots Elementary School, and Pacific High School.



Background Subject Properties

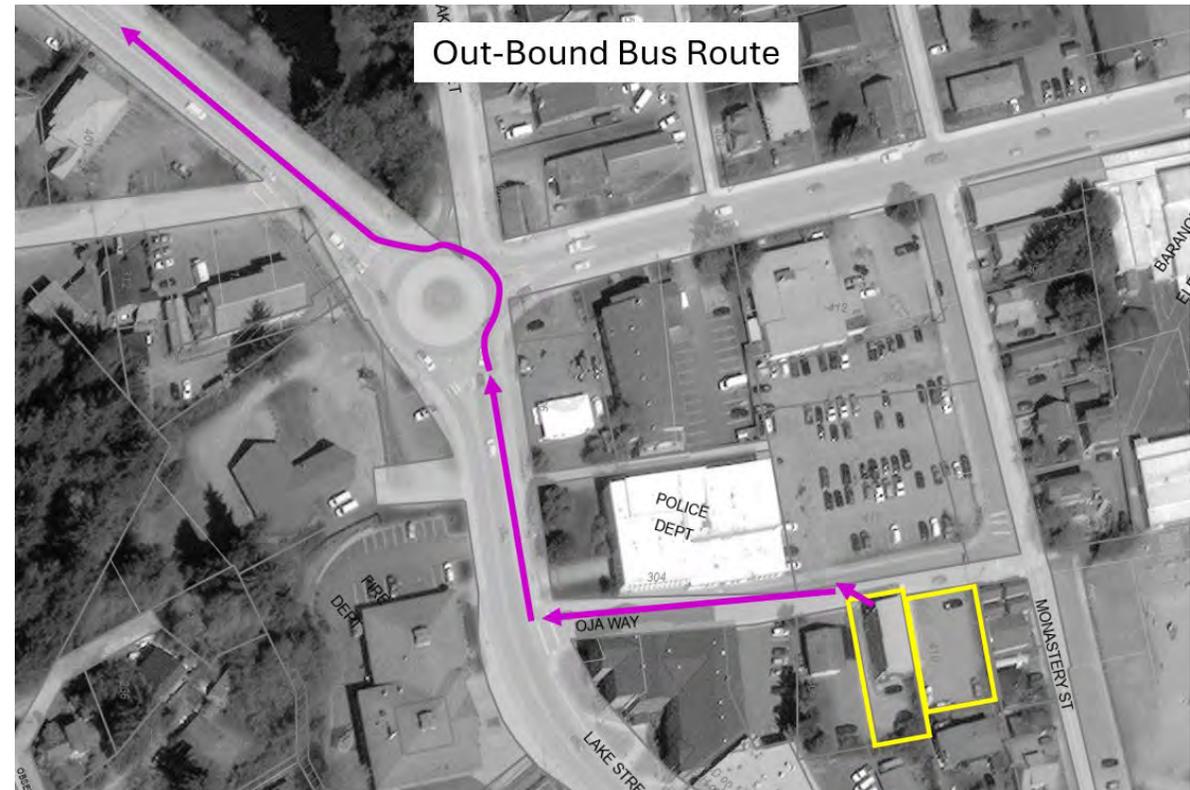
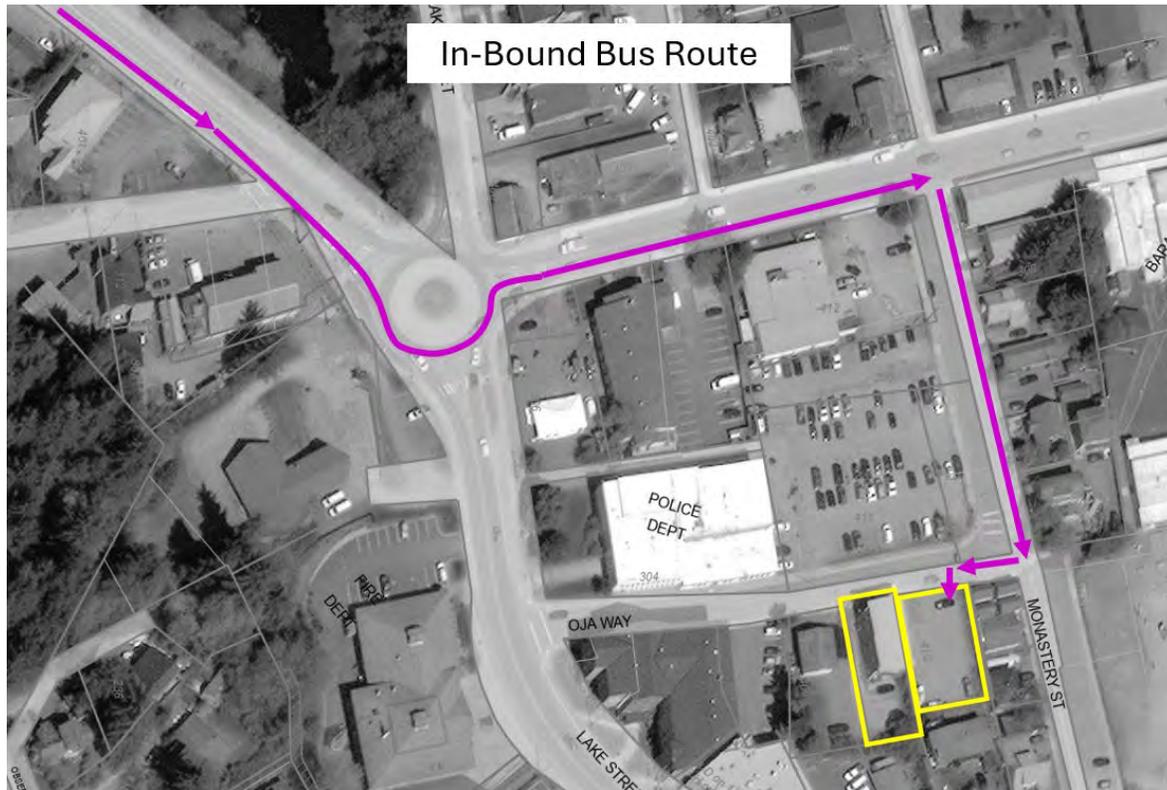


Rear of 408 Oja Way



Background

Bus Routing



Background

*Site Plan on
Subject Properties*



Site Plan

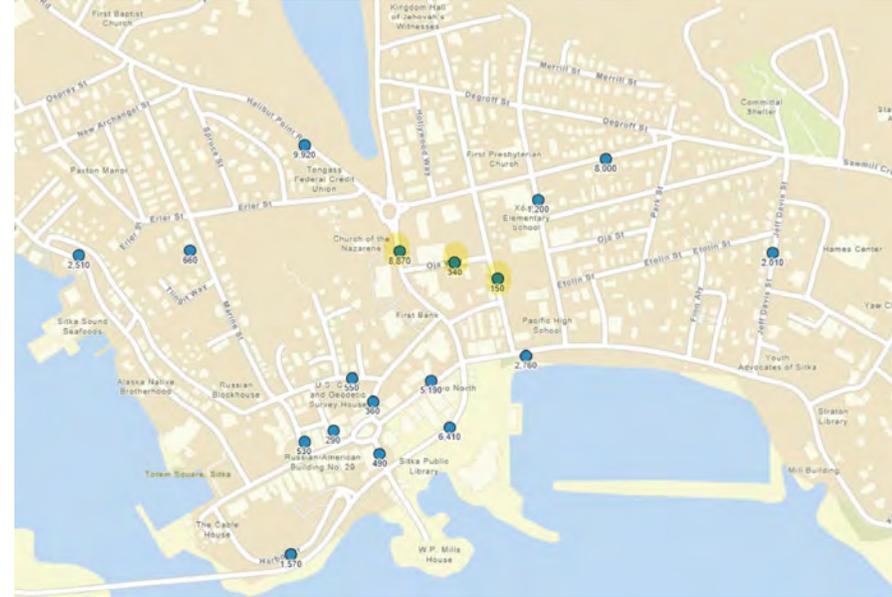
*Pedestrian Routing
and Extended Site Plan*



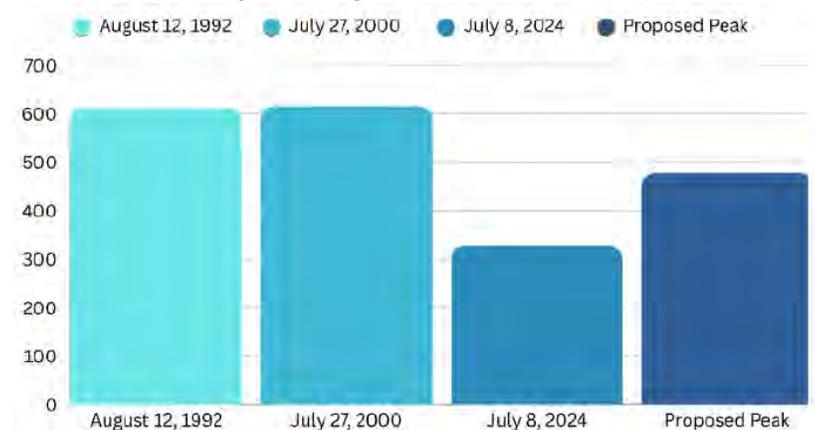
Analysis

Amount of vehicular traffic to be generated and impacts of the traffic on nearby land uses

- Traffic to increase in this area
- Anticipated traffic generations
 - Small cruise ship days (~700): 25 shuttle trips
 - Large cruise ship days (6,000+): 150 shuttle trips
- Peak use 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- Applicant expects reduction in vehicular congestion downtown
 - Lake/Lincoln Intersection
 - Harrigan Centennial Hall
 - Harbor Drive
 - Reduction of buses (2)
- Shuttle to Harrigan



Oja Way Traffic Counts



Analysis

Amount of vehicular traffic to be generated and impacts of the traffic on nearby land uses

- Other Potential Traffic Generation

- Attraction of other traffic to area (tour operators, taxis, other transportation providers) – mitigated to some extent with shuttle to Harrigan proposal
- Redevelopment of 402 and 405 Etolin Way
 - Food trucks, tour vendors, retail, high-density residential
 - Employee and resident traffic and parking
- Redevelopment of the area
 - Shifts from lower-density residential to commercial and/or higher-density residential

- Parking

- On-street parking – analysis needed
- Parking issues at Xóots Elementary & existing parking pressures

Analysis

Amount of noise to be generated and its impacts on surrounding land use

- Primarily daytime hours
 - Peak 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
 - Application hours of operation 7:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m.
- Noise generation
 - Engine sounds associated with arrival, loading, departure
 - Conversation among arriving passengers, staff
 - Buses transiting Monastery Street & Oja Way & lack of mitigation
- Noise mitigations
 - Strict no-idling policy
 - No mechanical servicing, fueling, or nighttime operations
 - Staff oversight – controlled staging, minimizing acceleration, prohibiting horn use
 - 8' fencing with sound-block acoustic panels

Analysis

Odors to be generated by the use and their impacts

- Applicant mitigations/management
 - No idling policy
 - Trash management
- Public comment
 - Odor from bus operations/exhaust, difficult to mitigate off subject properties
 - Police Department: Fresh-air intake & operable windows



Analysis

Location along a major or collector street

- Definitions
 - SGC 22.05.320: Collector street – street designed to carry traffic from residential street systems to arterial street systems or state highways
 - SGC 22.05.160: Arterial street – street designed and intended to carry traffic from residential and collector streets systems to state highways and other arterial streets
 - SGC 21.05.250(6) Minor street – also called “local access streets,” those which are used primarily for access to abutting properties
- Classifications
 - Oja Way – Minor street
 - Monastery Street – Collector street
 - Lake Street – Arterial street
 - HPR/SMC – State highway



Analysis

Potential for users or clients to access the site through residential areas or substandard streets creating a cut-through traffic scenario

- Application provisions
 - Specified route for shuttle buses
 - Planned pedestrian routing
- Potential scenarios
 - Non-shuttle traffic – use of Etohin Way or lower Monastery Street
 - Pedestrians seeking other businesses/attractions developed nearby

Analysis

Effects on vehicular and pedestrian safety

- Pedestrian safety
 - Improvements
 - Reduction in jaywalking across Harbor Drive from Harrigan
 - Crossing guard at Etolin Way (days with 2,000+ passengers)
 - Pedestrian routing to controlled, signalized intersection (Lake/Lincoln)
 - Concerns
 - Increased pressure at Lake/Lincoln intersection – traffic delays/back-ups, adjustments to timing/phasing
 - Attraction to other businesses/attractions if developed in area
- Vehicular safety
 - Improvements
 - Reduction of bus traffic at Lake/Lincoln, Harbor Drive, Harrigan
 - Reduction of buses (2) due to increased route efficiency
 - Concerns
 - Sight distance for out-bound buses (Oja Way to Lake Street)
 - Re-routing plan for school pick-up/drop-off and impact on roundabout traffic

Analysis

Effects on vehicular and pedestrian safety

Sight distance from Oja Way (inner) boundary of crosswalk



Analysis

Effects on vehicular and pedestrian safety

Sight distance from Lake Street (outer) boundary of crosswalk



Analysis

Ability of the police, fire, and EMS personnel to respond to emergency calls on the site

- Subject properties in close proximity to Police & Fire stations, access to site not noted as concern
- As relates to traffic generation:
 - Police Department routing
 - Fire Department egress



Analysis

Logic of the internal traffic layout

- U-shape or “looped” driveway
- Ingress/egress
- Accommodation for 7 shuttles
- Turning radii



Analysis

Effects of signage on nearby uses

1. Shuttle Drop-Off Area Signage

- “Pedestrian Path →”
- Directs passengers to the designated walkway immediately after disembarking.
- “Stay on Designated Walkway” (Possible Color Coding of Walkway)
- “Downtown Shops & Attractions → Follow Pathway”
- “Centennial Hall → Follow Pathway”

2. Signage Along the Private Pedestrian Route (405 Etolin & 402

Etolin)

- “← Shuttle Buses / Cruise Terminal” (facing returning guests)
- “→ Downtown / Lincoln St. Signalized Crossing”
- “Caution, Roadway Crossing, Yield to Traffic”
- Place at Etolin Way Crossing.
- “Pedestrian Route – Remain on Walkway”

3. At the Transition Point Toward Lake & Lincoln Street

- “Continue to Signalized Crossing →”
- “Use Crosswalk at Light – Do Not Cross Midblock”

4. Signage for Returning Passengers

- “← Shuttle Loading Area”
- “Follow Path to Shuttle Queue”
- “Stay on Walkway – Do Not Enter Adjacent Properties”
- “Shuttle Queue Ahead”

5. General Pedestrian Safety & Behavior Signage

- “No Jaywalking – Use Designated Path and Signalized Crosswalk Only”
- “Please Use Designated Pedestrian Route Only”



Analysis

Presence of existing or proposed buffers on the site or immediately adjacent the site

- 8' fencing along subject properties, and 402 & 405 Etolin Way
- Sound-block acoustic panels – sound and visual buffer

Analysis

Relationship if the proposed conditional use is in a specific location to the goals, policies, and objectives of the comprehensive plan

- Economic Development Objective 2: Support and Grow Existing Business
 - ED 6.5: Support growth of Sitka’s independent, cruise-related tourism and enterprises, including heritage tourism
- Land Use Objective 2: Maintain downtown’s CBD compact and walkable charm
 - LU 2.1: Promote multi-story development in the CBD with retail and commercial uses on lower floors and residential office uses upstairs
 - LU 2.2: Encourage light commercial uses dining, accommodations public open spaces, night life, and other community events in the CBD through place making, private and public partnerships, and financial incentives
 - LU 2.3: Use regulatory change, private and public partnerships, and financial incentives to promote housing development in the CBD and greater downtown
- Future Growth Map – CBD

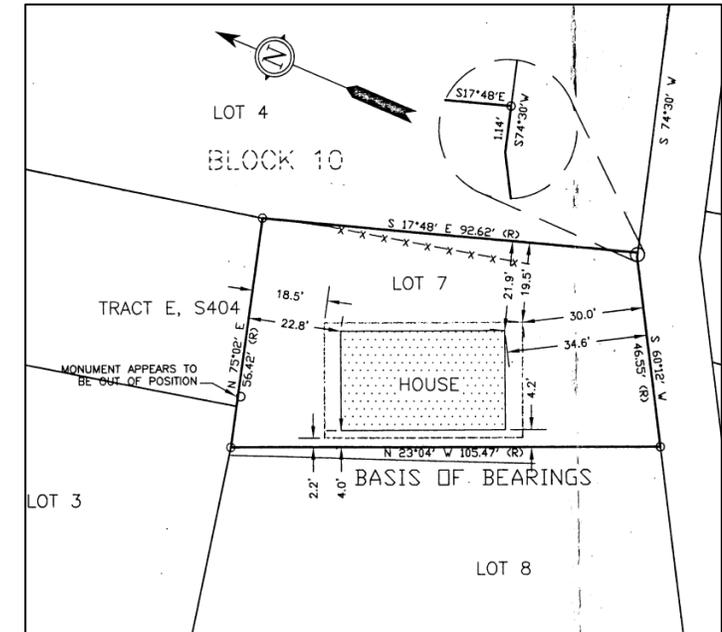
Maintain the compact, walkable, charming character of the downtown’s CBD, while promoting infill, higher density redevelopment, and preserving the historical context of the area and key structures. Areas within walking distance are also prime for compact development, infill, and higher density development that would help support a vibrant downtown. Further specific planning should explore options to promote and incentivize historic preservation, rehabilitation, higher density redevelopment efficient use of area parking, vehicular and pedestrian traffic, use of placemaking along the downtown corridor, signage, visibility, and uses and events that promote a vibrant downtown.

Analysis

Other criteria that surface through public comments or planning commission review

- Relation to other properties involved in proposal
 - Current/existing uses
 - 405 Etolin Way – duplex, short-term rental
 - 402 Etolin Way – multi-family housing (12 units), believed long-term rental
 - Easements and/or use agreements
 - Housing impact
- Impacts to residential use/character
- Site Visit
 - Other two properties in relation to CUP
 - Existing uses of surrounding properties
 - 405 Etolin Way and construction of pedestrian path
 - Any permits issued for proposed development on 402 Etolin Way and current number of dwelling units
 - What is the Alley used for
 - How many pedestrians will be utilizing the walkway
 - Location of proposed signage
 - Shuttle bus route
 - On street parking for Oja Way and Monastery Street
 - Police traffic routes
 - School bus routes
 - Street classifications
 - Development timeline regarding demo
 - Number of days with over 6,000 cruise passengers during season

As-built survey for 405 Etolin Way



Summary Data of 2025 Cruise Calendar

COLOR CODE	PAX RANGE	# OF DAYS	% OF SEASON
	0	47	26%
	1 - 1999	33	18%
	2000 - 4999	41	22%
	5000 - 6999	48	26%
	7000+	14	8%

Recommendations – Staff Conclusions

- Traffic related concerns
 - Existing studies/observations
 - Need for additional traffic/civil engineering study and analysis
- Code guidance on Noise & Odor
 - SGC 22.16.015(C)(11): Many of the permitted and conditional uses in the CBD, C-1, C-2, and WD zones generate traffic, noise, odor, and general impacts to a higher level and greater degree than permitted and conditional uses in residential districts. Owners of residential uses in the CBD, C-1, C-2 and WD districts must be aware of and accepting of all the permitted uses in these districts.
 - SGC 22.25.010(E): In evaluating the inputs of a proposed conditional use permit, the municipality may consider a commercial conditional use to be inappropriate for residential neighbors while the same conditional use may be acceptable when it is located along an arterial or collector street. The additional vehicular traffic generated by conditional uses, such as professional offices, may not be able to be adequately mitigated in residential areas.
 - SGC 22.10.160(C)(1)(b): ...Granting of the permit will not...Adversely affect the character of the surrounding vicinity
- Comprehensive Plan
 - Support growth of tourism
 - Encourages development/redevelopment
 - Some element of high-density development
 - Use of land for parking/open space & demolition of office building at 408 Oja
 - Housing impact
 - Walkability/pedestrian friendliness
 - Vibrancy versus seasonality

Recommendation – Additional Considerations

- Signage
- Restrooms
- Winterization/security and/or planned use in off-season

Recommendation – Actions

- Decision in relation to known impacts and/or decision regarding weighing of appropriate use-intensity in CBD/surrounding area and/or Comprehensive Plan
- Seeking additional information and/or studies
- Postponement for additional input
- Conditions of approval & findings to come back to Commission

Guidance for Public Comment

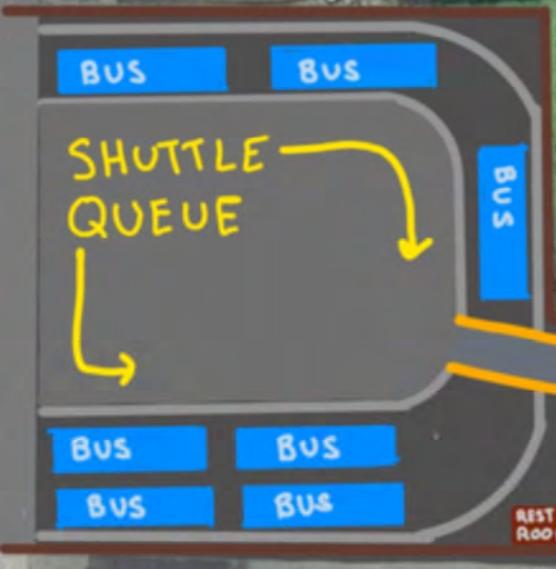
Criteria

- Traffic generation & impacts
- Noise generation & impacts
- Odor generation & impacts
- Hours of operation
- Location along major or collector street
- Cut-thru traffic scenarios
- Effects on pedestrian & vehicular safety
- Emergency services access to site
- Logic of internal traffic layout
- Effects of signage
- Existing/proposed buffers
- Relationship to comprehensive plan
- Other criteria that surface

Findings

1. Granting of conditional use permit will not:
 - a. Be detrimental to public health, safety, and welfare
 - b. Adversely affect the character of surrounding vicinity
 - c. Be injurious to uses, property, or improvements adjacent to/in vicinity of proposed site location
2. Granting of permit is consistent & compatible with intent of goals, objectives, and policies of comprehensive plan
3. All conditions necessary to lessen impacts of proposed use can be monitored & enforced
4. Proposed use will not introduce hazardous conditions to the site that cannot be mitigated to protect adjacent properties, the vicinity, and the public health, safety, and welfare of the community from such hazard
5. The conditional use will be supported by, and not adversely affect, adequate public facilities and services; or conditions can be imposed to lessen adverse impacts on such facilities/services
6. The applicant has the burden of proving that the proposed conditional use meets criteria





YAM
WITOLIN
LAKE STREET

Sawmill Creek & Monastery Intersection



Monastery & Oja Way Intersection



Subject Properties



Rear of 408 Oja Way



Oja Way (facing west towards Lake Street)



Oja Way & Lake Street Intersection

Site line
approx. 45'
from crosswalk



Site line towards
Roundabout
from intersection



Oja Way & Lake Street Intersection

Sight distance from Oja Way (inner) boundary of crosswalk



Oja Way & Lake Street Intersection

Sight distance from Lake Street (outer) boundary of crosswalk



Etolin Way

From Lake Street intersection



Oja Way & Monastery Street intersection



Xóots Elementary Monastery Parking & Bus Staging



Etolin Way Properties

Side of 405
Etolin Way – first
segment of
private property
pedestrian
pathway



Front of
402 Etolin
Way –
second
segment of
pedestrian
pathway



Alleyway & Lake/Lincoln Intersection



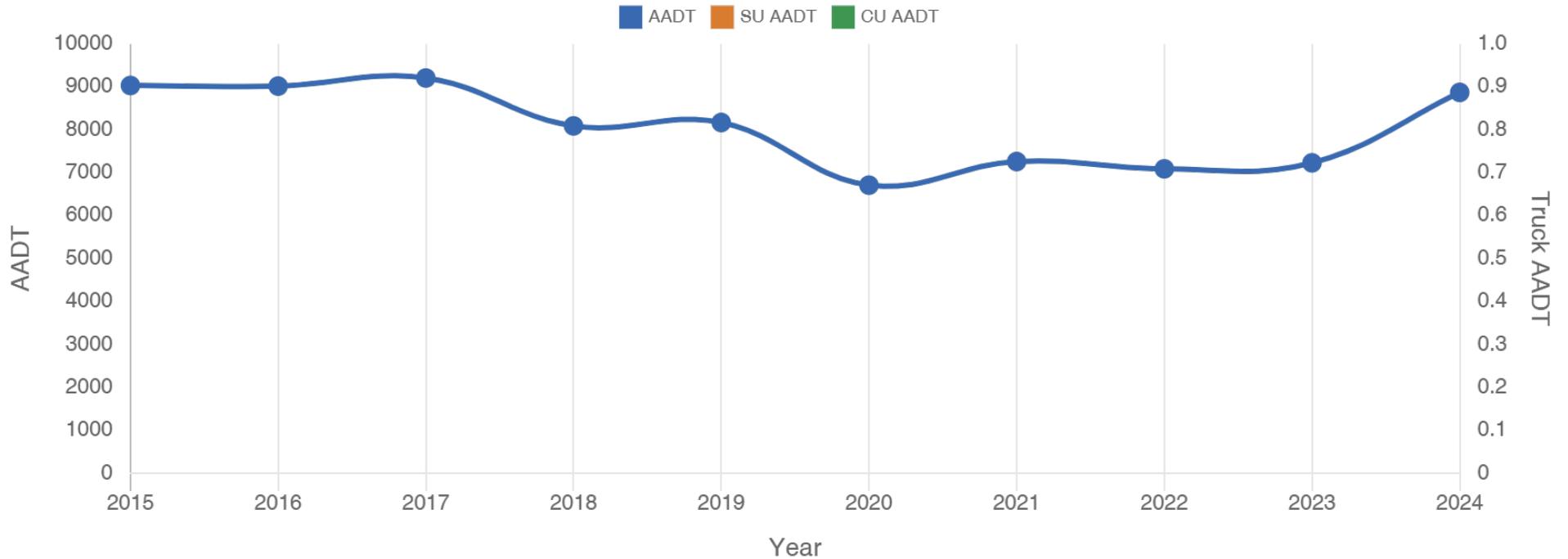


Single Station Annualized Statistics - AKDOT_ST 000061650069

Site Name 61650069 Site ID 000061650069 Description Lake St North Oja Way(Sitka)

Data Item	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Statistics Type	Actual	User-supplied	User-supplied	Actual	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated	Actual
AAADT	9031	9017	9205	8090	8169	6710	7260	7090	7230	8870
SU AADT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
CU AADT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
K-Factor	0.1163	-	-	0.111	-	0.111	0.111	0.111	0.111	0.1107
D-Factor	0.5	1	1	0.5	-	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.63

Single Station Annualized Statistics - AKDOT_ST 000061650069

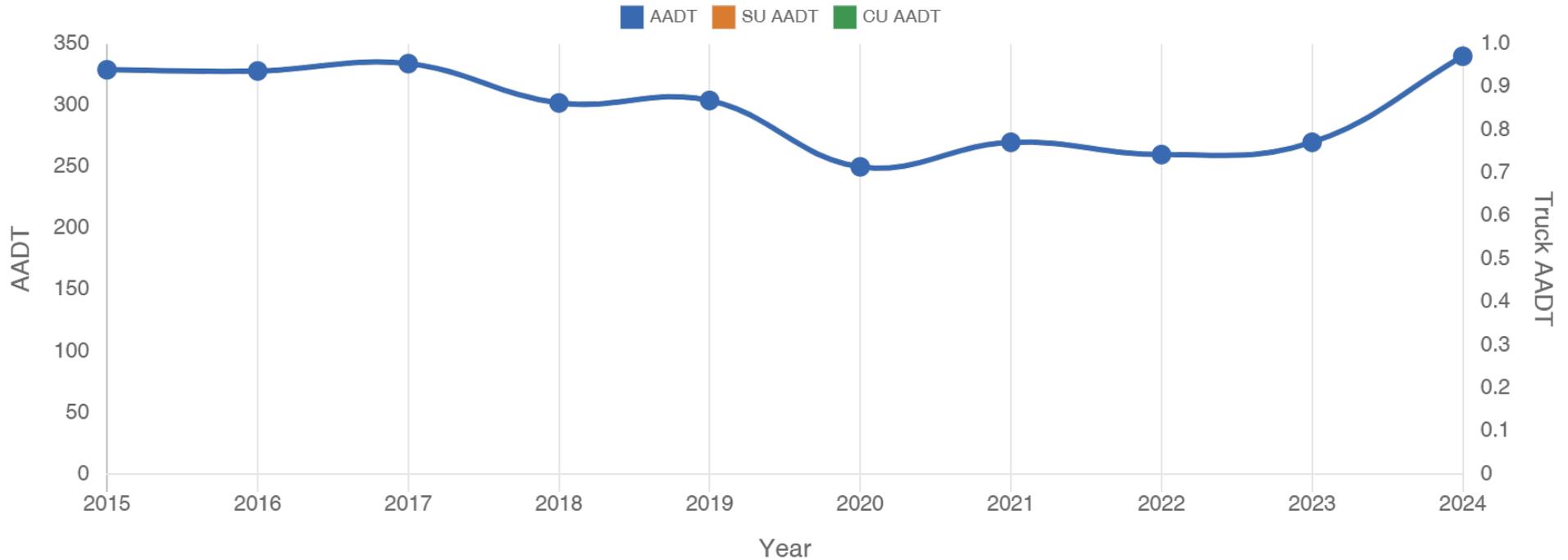


Single Station Annualized Statistics - AKDOT_ST 000067650067

Site Name 67650067 Site ID 000067650067 Description Lake Street and Monastery Street

Data Item	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Statistics Type	Actual	User-supplied	User-supplied	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated	Actual
AAADT	329	328	334	302	304	250	270	260	270	340
SU AADT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
CU AADT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
K-Factor	0.1521	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.1853
D-Factor	0.5	1	1	-	-	1	1	1	1	0.5

Single Station Annualized Statistics - AKDOT_ST 000067650067

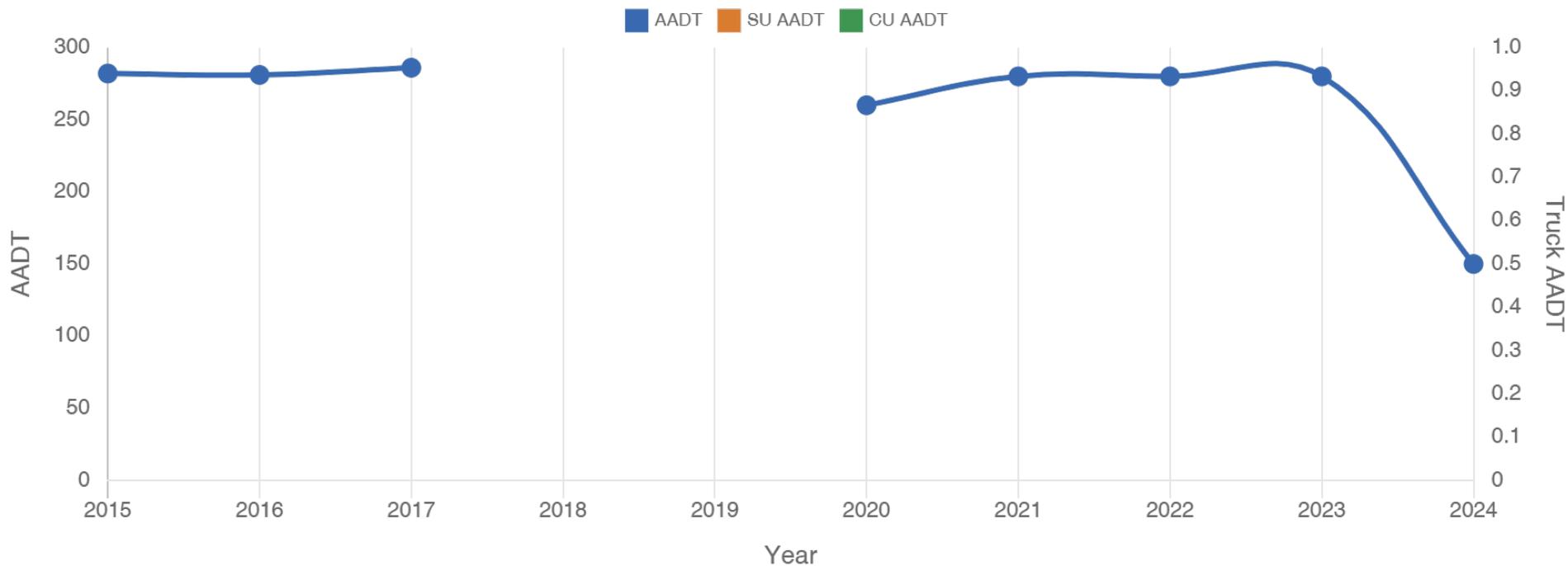


Single Station Annualized Statistics - AKDOT_ST 000061650066

Site Name 61650066 Site ID 000061650066 Description Monastery St North Etolin Way(Sitka)

Data Item	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Statistics Type	Actual	User-supplied	User-supplied	-	-	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated	Estimated	Actual
AAADT	282	281	286	-	-	260	280	280	280	150
SU AADT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
CU AADT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
K-Factor	0.1275	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.2306
D-Factor	0.5	1	1	-	-	1	1	1	1	0.5

Single Station Annualized Statistics - AKDOT_ST 000061650066



Dear Planning Commission:

Please reject outright the conditional use permit on matter CUP 25-17 to operate a transportation facility at 408 and 410 Oja Way in the CBD.

I oppose this proposal for several reasons, the primary being the loss of affordable, downtown accessible housing in our town in exchange for greater profits for private enterprise—from my perspective, a very poor trade off. As I read through public comment on-line and listened to discussion on this topic, I found my perspective particularly aligned with the comments from Laurinda Marcello. I will note, as Laurinda did, that: 1) A bus turn-around for non-resident buses is very much outside the purpose of the CBD, and the use of the word “public”, as in public transportation facility, is deliberately misleading since the summary and application identify that this is clearly for private enterprise use; and, 2) the application pushes external costs on numerous other private businesses and the public while retaining profits privately.

As you know, the city code reads that the “The central business district is designed specifically for concentrated retail, personal and business services of all kinds satisfying all residents in one central location. It should further prohibit exclusive residential or industrial uses which would interfere with the development and continuation of its cohesive business purposes.” Goals for the CBD also include promoting mixed retail and office space to keep the downtown vibrant year-round. All of these purposes would be compromised should this proposal move ahead. The proposal also allows the applicant to avoid the fees associated with use of the Centennial Building, which is not insignificant, and creates additional competition for the existing public transportation system that Sitka and Sitka Tribe currently provide. That affordable public transportation system becomes increasingly important as the cost of living escalates in Sitka and more residents rely on public transportation to access work, health services, and grocery stores.

Again, affordability is currently Sitka’s biggest challenge. Increasingly, hard-working young people and families cannot afford to live in our town—precisely because Sitka lacks high density affordable housing that provides access to the necessary goods and services. Proposal CUP 25-17 exacerbates each of these problems. I strongly oppose the proposal and ask that the Planning Commission hold communities needs above private industry profits as you make your decision.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. I am sorry that I will not be able to attend the meeting tonight to testify but appreciate your consideration of my perspective.

Sincerely, Linda Behnken

Name: Suzan Brawnlyn, 207 Monastery St. #1, Sitka, AK

I am strongly oppose the granting of a conditional use permit for a bus depot that services a bus transfer business for Cruise Ship passengers.

In this proposed locale block of lower Monastery street, Oja Way, Lake St and Sawmill creek Rd. there is a Primary School (Xo'ots), an after-school Program, (Ventures), a dozen residential properties, Police Dept. Governmental agencies and a Courtroom facility; small cottage rentals and Bed and Breakfast businesses, a small van tour company, as well as 2 lawyer offices, and a hotel which has its car parking lot on Oja Way.

This new business will be operating during school hours of drop-off and Pickup for end and start of the school year. Ventures has an after-school program as well as a 5-day/week summer program during the tourist season. A safety concern is created because of on and off-loading of students, lack of parking and congestion.

In addition, this area also has 2 once/hour transit city buses, that utilize this area as a route. With this proposed plan, we will be losing all Oja Way street parking.

Lower Monastery Street is used as a "cut through" to avoid traffic lights downtown, or when traffic is backed up at the round-about during heavy traffic time, or accidents. This creates a congested and safety concern where speed limits and the Stop sign **are not** observed or obeyed. Additionally, there are no sidewalks on lower Monastery St. between Etolin way and Oja way, so pedestrians usually walk in the streets.

In addition, these smaller streets do not have the capability or capacity to support this new increase in traffic and would further add congestion to the flow onto Lake Street and Sawmill Creek Rd.

This also adds another concern that there is no possible mitigation for the noise or the added excessive vibration and fumes from the buses during operation, as well as how it affects disturbing adjacent established hospitality businesses clients, and their guests.

Although this new endeavor would be approximately 5-6 months of the year, this would affect the established character of this neighborhood. It does have a rustic and quiet disposition and currently doesn't have diesel buses off and on-loading tourists and excess foot traffic! There is a better locale for those services at the Centennial Hall.

I am not an engineer, but I have viewed and have concerns about the proposed site and cannot visualize a feasible way to have a new bus depot built in this location. This process of development and change will impact the land, homes and businesses in this neighborhood.

Thank you for listening.

Kim Davis

From: jeff budd <jbudd3500@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, December 14, 2025 3:34 PM
To: Planning Department
Subject: Chris McGraw plan for buses around an elementary school.

Dear Planning Commission, This is a disaster waiting to happen.
I don't care how careful you say you can be or will be. When you have little kids running around there's bound to be accidents.
It isn't worth the risk.
You are putting the city and possibly yourselves in jeopardy if something happens.
Do not take a chance on this.
Thank you. Jeff Budd

Kim Davis

From: Karen Christner <k.christner@icloud.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 17, 2025 4:45 PM
To: Kim Davis
Subject: Planning mtg

[You don't often get email from k.christner@icloud.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification>]

I am not sure we will be able to get to the planning committee tonight. I do want to express our opposition to the proposed McGraw bus lot. The proposed route is on narrow streets and adjacent to the elementary school playground and pick up point. The tour season overlaps the school season during 2 months. The kids during recess would be breathing exhaust fumes and be subjected to the noise of frequent buses. Along with many other uses, the Centennial Building campus was designed as a welcoming center for the cruise passengers with restrooms, tour operator information, and visitor information. It certainly makes a better impression, even though crowded, than walking thru alleys in the rain to access the facilities and town center.

Please vote to refuse the permitting of this project for our children and the citizens who live in the area Karen and Jere Christner Sent from Karen

Dec 17, 2025

TO: Planning and Community Development Department
100 Lincoln St
Sitka, AK 99835
FROM: Kristina Cranston
205 Monastery St.
Sitka, AK 99835
TOPIC: CUP 25-17

I am writing to express my serious concern for the possible approval by this body (PCDD) for the Conditional Use Permit for a private bus depot on Oja Way, in the Central Business District.

When I first heard of this concept (through rumors), of course I was concerned about the impact on us and a handful of neighbors, we are ground zero. Our property borders the 410 Oja lot. Our home and outdoor studio sit a few feet away from the proposed bus line up/depot. We are concerned about how this will affect our property value, our taxes, our ability to do business, or continue to live here. How do you carve totem poles and dugout canoes outside next to a bus depot all the negative effects regarding air quality, noise pollution, heavily increased foot traffic, increased bus traffic, and other increased activity attracted to the bus depot? How do you raise a family there? Can we ever open a window again? Would we ever be able to sit outside, grow our indigenous potatoes, or conduct any business again? We have asked these questions many times. What I didn't think about immediately, and what we didn't realize until recently (due to the application), how far reaching this is and how many problems this will in all likelihood create for our community at large. This is a can of worms that should not be opened. This application and proposal appear to benefit (financial gain) a limited entity (McGraw LLC) and a few property owners, without consideration to neighboring homes/business, schools, garden, public services, etc. This proposal attempts to control and corral the hundreds (into the thousands) of tourists getting off the shuttle buses to benefit who? So instead of using Harrigan Centennial Hall (which was made with great consideration for tour buses and tourists), they get bused to a toxic bus depot, corralled through more McGraw LLC property lined with food trucks and retail? Who will be living in the two floors of apartments? Is it for McGraw LLC employees? Will it create a highly transient area?

Primary concerns

1. Probable health risks. This needs to be seriously considered. Common sense and a little research indicate high diesel exhaust in condensed areas is not good for individuals or for public health. Chronic exposure to poisonous toxins (particles) and poor air quality (carbon monoxide) lead to chronic and acute health issues, especially for young children whose lungs, hearts and brains are developing. I will insert a government study for you to review. Please read. It's alarming and informative. <https://oehha.ca.gov/air/health-effects-diesel-exhaust> It seems to me putting local Sitkans who live and work in the area (including children and seniors), our school children (pre K, 1st graders, and Ventures students), or SPD employees, visitors and detainees), courthouse, and others at such risk is NOT in the best interest of Sitka, or for Sitkans. Very few benefit while many are put at risk.
2. Safety issues. We cannot predict all risks and behaviors, but we can see with our eyes that there are considerable risks and inconveniences with the plan. From pedestrians being lined up across small narrow public streets and dispersed to the Lincoln/Lake St intersection, to increased shuttle buses through proposed route, the near blind turn from Oja onto Lake (left AND right is challenging, especially for a large constant buses). There will be traffic jams and backups with this plan that will interfere with local traffic in the area, emergency responders, parent pick up/drop offs, etc., creating unnecessary high traffic/bus density for 6 to 12 hours per day. All of the concerns citizens have regarding these added issues is valid and need serious consideration by you. Funneling large amounts of people/pedestrians to Lincoln/Lake St is for sure an added burden to the already but managed high traffic volume. They are LITERALLY being funneled there via private properties (providing easements and leasing space) to the intersection. Currently at Harrigan Centennial Building, they can disperse in an open safe place. As I understand, much consideration, planning and funds went into designing Harrigan Centennial to accommodate, and it seems to be working. Will the City lose money with the change? How much will all the added burdens and consequences cost Sitkans? And Sitka? This part of CBD has a strong historical residential AND business history. It adds to the charm of the CBD, most of us who live here also make our livelihood here and provide services. We live there, but it's also our work and carving studio. Please do not dismiss a "grandfathered" code as unimportant or dismiss its value to the community and visitors. Do we displace totem pole carvers for diesel buses? Push out small business and short term and long-term affordable housing and air b and b/s for unnecessary burdens and costs to the neighbors, the neighborhood, the CBD, and Sitka at large. That seems contrary to the vision and planning commission and what Sitkans want.

3. As a community, we are still working out some kinks with the high number of cruise ship passengers, but we've done pretty well. This plan appears to have the potential, and probability to cost our city and our citizens, too much. Too much risk. Too much traffic. Too much toxic diesel emissions. Too many people (too dense). Too much burden on the area. Too industrial. Too much. It's just too much to ask of us. Too much risk for very little/to no benefit. Who benefits by this? I suspect it's a very narrow few who gain something from this, while the rest of us lose. Lose the right to breathe breathable air? To grow a garden because we won't be able to eat them due to the effects of the toxins/particles in the exhaust? I implore this body to decline this Conditional Use Permit request. While we can't foresee every impact, either positive or negative, of the CUP, it is apparent that there are serious concerns and probable costs not worth granting this application. The cost is just too high.
4. Why? It's a legit question. Why tear down good business real estate for professional services (ie. Law Practice and therapy practice)? Why disregard and hurt neighbors and community members? Why put our kids at risk? Is there a way to measure who gets sick? Visitors crave the charm of Sikta, that's things like cottages and totem poles, community gardens and personal gardens. Why not continue using Harragen Centennial Hall? Why break something we've spent time and money fixing? It makes no sense unless you ask "why". I liken it to "Hey, I *think* I fixed that mosquito problem you had. I dropped a hornet's nest. Don't worry, I'm putting up a fence. "
5. Just to be clear, this "bus depot" shuttle bus whatever is NOT a Public Transportation Facility. This all appears to be LLC, privately owned. Private. Public implies that we would benefit, we do not. Public transit helps people get to and from work, medical, education, etc. This is strictly for bus shuttle passengers via LLC. An 8-foot chain-link fence with panels will not mitigate the toxic fumes/particles. A no idle rule is to be frank "lip service". It's filler. It sounds good. It makes people think it's okay. It's not. According to studies and evidence, the most toxic particles the exhaust emits are from starting the engines. Please read the studies and evidence regarding this. It is all bad in a condensed area where we have schools, gardens, residential, small businesses, short-term and long-term housing, critical public facilities etc. Final question...I wonder what the shuttle bus passengers experience will be driving the shuttle to this location, walking through coral/signage/private property, forced down allies past shops and food trucks (dare I ask where the bathrooms are) to get dumped out at the one street light intersection? This is just weird. Currently they are in an open, beautiful location at HCB. They can get their bearings and use the facilities and or disperse. Due to the open apace, hundreds can be lined up and its not noisy. They can chat and take in the sights, see the ocean and so much beauty that helps create a happy visitor. Not corralling them. Forcing

them down alleys, annoying neighbors, causing congestion and noise. I looked it up, People don't like feeling trapped, told what to do, etc. They feel more anxiety and other negative experiences. This does not seem healthy or happy. I ask this body to reject this CUP request. This is not balanced. Too many people get damaged and potentially hurt.

My final thought, even though there has been some public exposure for this CUP request, I don't think it was nearly enough or provided enough time for some or many to respond. This is quite impactful and extensive. I have talked to many people who did not know about this and are just finding out about it, who have concerns. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kristina Cranston

205 Monastery St.

Amy Ainslie

From: Victoria OConnell Curran <victoria.oconnell@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, December 15, 2025 10:42 AM
To: Amy Ainslie
Subject: Is it too late to submit a public comment for Wednesday's meeting?

You don't often get email from victoria.oconnell@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Hi Amy,

I have a comment for the Planning Commission but I don't see a place to submit it. Is it too late to do this via email?

Here is the comment:

Thank you for considering my comments. I am strongly opposed to the conditional use permit request CUP 25-17. I have read every use detailed in the city tables for Central Business District and a private transportation facility is not listed as an allowable use. Further, there have been long time allowances for residential use in this block and for the Xóots elementary school. Beyond the school year children are using the playground and school as part of the Ventures Program. There is a garden on this block that feeds our students. A private bus facility in this neighborhood does not meet the standards for a conditional use permit. I live on the opposite side of the school yard and my granddaughter attends Xóots. I pick her up at school most afternoons. There is already a congestion problem on Monastery Street with parent pickups and school bus traffic. Adding in commercial buses would create physical hazards, environmental hazards, and excessive noise. The Centennial Building is the drop off point for private buses and meets the conditions needed for this purpose. A lot of planning went into this drop off point at the Centennial building to accommodate the large increase in bus traffic created by the private dock out Halibut Point Road. It is not credible to say that placing this facility in the Xóots neighborhood will do anything to alleviate congestion or enhance public safety. In fact it will exacerbate the traffic flow and pedestrian crossing issues at Lake/Lincoln/Harbor Drive by increasing volume pedestrian traffic across this intersection while creating a new problem in a neighborhood and school. It feels sometimes like the tail is wagging the dog lately. Please deny this conditional use permit. Thank you very much for your time and your service on the Planning Commission, it is appreciated.

--

Tory O'Connell Curran
Grateful to live on **Língit Aaní**

Kim Davis

From: Linda Danner <lsdanner@yahoo.com>
Sent: Sunday, December 14, 2025 5:55 PM
To: Planning Department
Subject: Conditional use permit

You don't often get email from lsdanner@yahoo.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

I am apposed to this permit.

1. Narrow streets.
2. School area.
3. Residential area in summer with windows open.
4. Noise level.
5. ADF&G office. Where catch regulation brochures and permit issues are kept for public distribution.
6. The library and Centennial Hall have already been dedicated to this bus traffic use.
7. Small, locally owned independent traveler accommodation, owned by year round resident. will be greatly impacted.
8. Heavy pedestrian flow on Sawmill Creek, both tourists on advertised walking path, Crescent Harbor, and local home owners walking in town.
9. Restricted to locals during school season and then allowing the cruise ship buses to occupy it would be dramatically unfair.

Why does Chris McGraw want this? Why isn't the existing system satisfactory?

Linda Danner

Get [TypeApp for Android](#)

Kim Davis

From: Jeff Farvour <jefarv@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 17, 2025 3:34 PM
To: dwindsor@gci.net; Jacqueline Foss; frankmm925@gmail.com; Wendy Alderson
Cc: Amy Ainslie; Kim Davis; Katie Riley; Thor Christianson
Subject: Agenda item D 12/17/25

You don't often get email from jefarv@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Dear Planning Commission,

I am writing to ask that you **oppose** the request for a conditional use permit for a public transportation facility at 408 and 410 Oja Way in the CBD central business district. Conversely, approving this conditional use permit would increase traffic, noise and crowding and safety issues at an industrial level in an area used as a safe place for residents and visitors alike.

I do not believe that any more space in our town should be gobbled up for large scale industrial cruise ship tourism uses.

Sincerely, Jeff Farvour, Sitka

Kim Davis

From: Lexi Fish <fish.lexi@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 17, 2025 3:29 PM
To: Planning Department
Subject: Bus depot downtown

> Hi there,

>

> Just a couple of thoughts regarding the proposed bus depot, or what I know about it so far. It seems to me that continuing to have buses based out of Centennial building area is better.

>

> Anywhere we have a bus depot will create some congestion & chaos, but at least Centennial building is more on the outskirts of town for local drivers, with easy walking access to all areas of downtown for tourists. Harbor users are already used to the inconveniences...

>

> If it were to be moved near the police station in the proposed area, it seems like it would create a bottleneck before even reaching downtown. I also don't like the idea of having so many buses near the playground and the elementary school. School is in session during part of the tourist season and it's definitely not good for the kiddos to have all of that idling pollution & noise. That area is already complicated with parent pick up, kids & school buses in a small and awkward area. Also, in the summertime, Ventures students access the side door of Xoots, which would be seriously affected by the bus traffic. You generally have to cross the street to get in that door, with most parking on police station side.

>

> Don't love the idea of that many strangers wandering around the elementary school/playground either. But that's just me as a paranoid mother :) I do realize it has a fence :)

>

> I would also be concerned that if the buses moved from Centennial building, then independent tour operators do not have easy access to tourist getting off the buses... From what I understand, a lot of people book last minute, in-person tours from the parking lot at Centennial. I like the idea of keeping that area & business potential as open access as possible to all of the vendors in town.

>

> Also, even though the proposed neighborhood is residential/commercial, this would be using it in a much different way than it has been historically...and would certainly change the feel & function of the area.

>

> It could possibly be a detriment to independent travelers, looking at the various Airbnb's that exist in that neighborhood already. There is a long-standing history of short-term rental rentals in that neighborhood... And out of all the neighborhoods in Sitka, this one seems to be a good neighborhood for short term rentals to exist given its proximity to downtown and the commercial/residential usage.

>

> Thanks for considering, I don't have all the details but have certainly been hearing a lot of rumors & reading what I find, hope I'm not too misinformed :)

>

> Lexi

>

Kim Davis

From: Tess Heyburn <sitkatess@hotmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 16, 2025 9:23 PM
To: Planning Department
Cc: dwindsor@gci.net; Foss.jacquie@gmail.com; frankmm925@gmail.com; franceswendellalderson@gmail.com; robin.sherman@me.com; Kim Davis; Katie Riley
Subject: Bus depot on Oja street

You don't often get email from sitkatess@hotmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

My name is Tess Heyburn and I am writing to express my strong opposition to granting a conditional use permit on Oja street.

I own and operate cottages on Monastery street. My vacation rental business was established over 20 years ago and conforms to approved CBD uses. This business is my livelihood and a bus depot behind the business would affect me adversely. The 8 foot fence would mitigate but not eliminate noise and would not mitigate fumes. It is projected that there will be up to 150 trips to the site in a 12 hour period. That would be 12.5 trips per hour or roughly one bus every 5 minutes. Even with a no idling policy, there will be buses running nonstop. The plan does not address the extra bus start ups required to manage and maneuver 7 buses on the site. The property in CBD are zero lot lines. The distance from cottage kitchen to fence is 4 feet. Diesel fumes will be pouring into kitchens and bedrooms. The plan does not address the adverse health effects of diesel exhaust. I think health effects should be evaluated especially since there is a school nearby.

I have already had 2 repeat customers say they will not rent cottages if there is a bus depot behind cottages. Traffic issues are a safety concern. The right hand turn the buses will make onto Monastery is where the active drop off and pick up occurs for Ventures children.

Rerouting buses to turn left onto Oja during morning school .drop off times will exacerbate morning traffic on lake and cause traffic backups.

If there is a traffic emergency on Lake Street traffic is diverted to Monastery, Oja and Etolin streets. Twice in the last 6 months this has created total gridlock on these streets. Once when the cruise dock bus caught on fire and once when there was an accident in the roundabout.

The plan does not address how many connector buses there will be or where they will park. The left hand turn they make onto lake will add to the congestion.

Taxis coming to the site for pick up and dropoff will cause more congestion.

This plan will adversely affect the established character of the neighborhood. the noise and exhaust from a possible 200 buses on peak days and congestion from thousands of cruise ship passengers will make it difficult and unpleasant to navigate the streets and sidewalks. This is no mere transport facility, it is an intensive industrial scale operation.

Not all cruise ship passengers will opt to be coralled to the Lincoln Street stoplight.

When they head back to Oja, google maps will direct them there via Monastery street

Thank you for reading my comments. I request they be read aloud at the meeting.

Kim Davis

From: James Hughes <carterhughes@hotmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 16, 2025 12:42 PM
To: Planning Department
Subject: Conditional Use Permit to relocate downtown cruise shuttle operations

[You don't often get email from carterhughes@hotmail.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification>]

To members of the Planning Commission (PC):

My name is Carter Hughes and i am a Sitka resident. I am writing to the PC to express strong opposition to the granting of a conditional use permit for a bus depot for cruise ship passenger transfer busses on Oja Way. This area is already congested. There are residencies there. There is a grade school there and busses already are present twice a day to drop off and pick up school children during the school year, which will be in session during a significant part of the cruise ship season. There is the police station and courthouse and the Alaska Dept of Fish and Game (ADFG) offices across the street from the proposed bus depot. There is a vacation rental business immediately adjacent to the proposed bus depot. The area is already plenty congested. There is no possible mitigation for the chaos, noise and pollution that this bus depot will bring to the area. There will be no compensating the residents of the area or the school children and school staff for the pollution and noise. It will be harder for people to visit the ADFG offices and police station. Frankly this proposal is absurd and very unfair.

Keep the busses at Centennial Hall. It's a more open space. It's not next to private residencies and a school. The streets are broader.

One question i would consider about the request for this permit is, will it impact any revenues the City currently gets from the busses that have been using Centennial Hall? Is there a fee that the City currently receives that it will no longer receive? I see no practical reason for trying to shoehorn an industrial level bus depot into that tight an area (Oja Way) when the current situation (Centennial Hall) seems to work just fine.

Thanks for reading my comments.
James Carter Hughes
Sitka

Sent from my iPhone

Kim Davis

From: Gabby Kelly <gabbycc@live.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 17, 2025 11:00 AM
To: Planning Department
Subject: Attn: CUP 25-17

You don't often get email from gabbycc@live.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

To: Sitka Planning Committee and Community Development Department

I have attached my letter for the planning meeting tonight.

I am here today because this conditional use permit would deeply impact my family, my neighbors, and the community we call home.

I am Tlingit and have lived in Sitka for the past 14 years. This is where I worked for nearly a decade at the Pioneer Home, where I started my family, and where my son has just begun school at Xoots. Our roots are here. Sitka is not just where we live — it is who we are.

My mother lives next to the lot at 205 Monastery Street. Three days a week, she picks up my son from school. In the summers, they spend their time together in the garden, growing Tlingit potatoes and other foods that connect us to our culture, our ancestors, and each other. My brother once did the same through the school garden at Pacific High. These gardens are not hobbies — they are part of how we teach our children who they are. With the pollution this conditional use permit would bring, we would lose the ability to safely grow and share our traditional foods with our family and community.

This proposal would turn our quiet neighborhood into a place of constant tourist traffic. Hundreds of thousands of visitors would be walking through areas where families live, where children play outside all summer long. Next door at Xoots, Ventures childcare and summer school programs are in session. These are children — and their safety should matter more than convenience or profit.

The traffic concerns are frightening. The proposed bus routes using Oja Way to Lakeside have dangerous blind spots, making it difficult for everyday vehicles to pull out safely. Traffic coming from Sawmill Creek Road would be dangerously close to the roundabout, creating congestion and increasing the risk of accidents. This is not just inconvenient — it puts drivers and pedestrians, including children and elders, at real risk.

I ask you to consider what would be lost if this permit is approved: the safety of our children, the health of our elders, our ability to grow our own food, and the sense of home that makes this neighborhood a community. Once those things are gone, we cannot get them back.

Thank you,

Gabby Kelly
907-623-7920

Dear: Sithee

Putting a bus station and cafe right next to more than 20 peoples houses including my own and distracting a whole bunch of houses that house people that cant afford their own house helps no one. Not to mention that one of my friends live in one of the houses that are getting destroyed no one deserves to be kicked out of their only home especially because getting housing is really hard to get. Having 150 desule busses driving around from 7am-7pm creates so many risks for everyone. 12 hours of desule busses coming and going every day creates more than just a distraction it also creates a huge risk for humans and animals that much desule every day is cancer-causing and a sires health risk. The public can even use the busses its only for tourism. Not only are you destroying peoples only home, risking everyones health, and destroying multiple bildings but also helping no one but yourself. In my opione this would be a tareable idea that causes harm and risk but also helps no one but your self. I know Im only 13 but this is a real concern I have for not only myself but also for the people around me,

Thank you,

Natalie Kennedy

Kim Davis

From: Annemarie LaPalme <alapalme01@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 17, 2025 4:43 PM
To: Planning Department
Subject: Bus Proposal Oja and Monastery

You don't often get email from alapalme01@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

I have concern about public safety as it relates to the Police Station and the Fire Hall. Increased bus traffic could interfere with response time to emergencies. The applicant estimates on a 6000 passenger day there would be 150 bus trips and 25 would accommodate a 700 passenger day. The average between these two is 87 trips. Passenger numbers exceeding 6000 per day are not addressed. This amount of bus traffic entering Lake Street from Oja would logically affect emergency response from the Police Station, Fire Hall and traffic in general on Lake Street.

Cruise passengers will be funneled into the intersection at Lake and Lincoln Street causing a bottle neck at the traffic light. At the Centennial people could go directly into performances and the museum or follow the walk along the harbor to the Science Center or National Park without crossing the road, a safer alternative for everyone.

Exhaust from the bus traffic may be more confined in this in this area due to surrounding buildings than at the more open centennial.

Xoots Elementary school and playground will have increased exposure to exhaust fumes

Parking currently available on Oja Street will no longer be available and because of the needed turning radius for buses parking places along Lake street in the vicinity of Oja will be affected.

Thank you for considering and evaluating public comment for this proposal.

Annemarie LaPalme

Kim Davis

From: Laurinda Marcello <laurinda.marcello@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, December 14, 2025 10:26 PM
To: Planning Department
Subject: Public comment for CUP 25-17, oppose conditional use permit (12/17 meeting)

You don't often get email from laurinda.marcello@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Dear Planning Department - Please enter into public record the following for planning commission members at their 12/17 meeting:

Dear Planning Commission:

Please reject outright the conditional use permit on matter CUP 25-17 to operate a transportation facility at 408 and 410 Oja Way in the CBD. I will raise several points in summary, before delving into details,

- 1) A bus turn-around for non-resident buses is very much outside the purpose of the CBD. I also find the word “*public*” as in public transportation facility misleading as the summary and application is clearly for *private* enterprise use.
- 2) There is no consideration for bathrooms at the passenger gathering point.
- 3) The application pushes externalities only numerous other private businesses and the public while retaining profits privately. Further, it dodges existing fee structures at Harrigan Centennial Hall.

Point 1 – Non-conformity to the CBD:

City code reads that the “The central business district is designed specifically for concentrated retail, personal and business services of all kinds **satisfying all residents** in one central location. It should further **prohibit** exclusive residential or **industrial uses which would interfere** with the development and continuation of its cohesive business purposes.”

The central business district is primarily reserved for residents to be able to access key businesses: stores, doctors, attorneys, accountants, dentists, barbers, or similar. Yes, there is overnight accommodation in the CBD, but I find overnight tourism quite different from limited-hours daytime only tourism. Overnight tourists visiting family, working in town, or attending conferences have more overlapping needs with Sitka residents than do partial-day tourists.

A private high-volume bus turn-around to be used by private transportation companies unlike public bus stops for any other purpose. The private turn-around would necessitate a much higher volume of traffic for any fixed-route bus stops in town including nearby stops for school buses Xóots Elementary or public The Ride buses.

There is also no local resident need to accommodate such a depot as the CBD outside when there is already functional, city-owned bus accommodation made at HCH available to private bus companies.

Point 2 - Bathrooms

An operation of this size must be denied conditional use for not having a public bathroom designed for high volumes immediately adjacent to the bus turn-around.

The first thing so many people do when they arrive somewhere is use the bathroom or wash hands for hygiene. This application fails to even consider those very basic human needs.

The closest public bathroom is very inadequate to handle extra visitors from the bus turn-around and is located at city-state building occupied by the Courthouse, Police Dept, ADF&G & Job Center. It's been a while since I worked there, but I remember the downstairs women's restroom having only two or three stalls in total and imagine the men's is similar.

The next closest bathrooms are publicly owned at the Lake-Lincoln intersection and at Centennial Hall and the Sitka Public Library. Undoubtedly, passengers will be directed to Centennial Hall to still use this public resource in great numbers.

The inevitable needs for many tourists to still visit HCH or Sitka Public Library for restrooms means that any applicant claims that "the project eliminates nearly all jaywalking conflicts" along Harbor Drive is null and void. I find no evidence congestion in those areas would decrease significantly. The location may further create additional jaywalking to Seward Square.

Point 3 - Public externalities for private gain & skirting of HCH fee structures:

Within this point I would like to say that it would not surprise me if the main motivation behind this project was to avoid paying a fair and modest fee for private use of public services. If built, these private enterprises can still profit handsomely from their customers, while not paying for fair use of CBS facilities like HCH. No parking fees means less money for all of the services clients and employees enjoy, such as the aforementioned public bathrooms.

The application itself is presumptuous and entitled to other people's sacrifices for private economic benefit. The condition requirements include that an exception to zoning cannot be detrimental to public health nor can it be injurious to improvements in the vicinity. Neither promise by the applicant can be realized.

The city assessment of this application lists numerous valid concerns: use of private alleyways not owned by the applicant, police department air intake facing Oja Way, concerns for traffic pattern changes detrimental to public safety, and disrupting traffic at Xóots elementary school.

On the Xóots issue in particular, since my son attends there, I can say that kindergarten has an earlier dismissal time than first grade. First grade shares four regular buses with Keet. However, kindergartens are NOT provided with any afternoon school bus and therefore all parents must drive, walk, or bike to pick their children up from school. Parents typically come park along the school's lot on Monastery from Lincoln or Etolin (crossing the proposed "pedestrian path" in this project). Congestion near the school during April-May and August-October when cruises still visit but school is in session cannot be sufficiently mitigated if this project is allowed to move forward.

On air quality concerns, the applicant mentions that buses will not idle. However, looking at the design, it would seem there are five times a bus might need to pull forward between entering and exiting the turn-around on Oja way. That in and of itself is not so different than idling an engine. I have no doubt the bus traffic will create issues for the neighbors, particularly at the Police Department and its jail which already has had building quality issues including poor air circulation. Will they now experience poor air circulation with the added burden of extra diesel exhaust?

Conclusion:

Thank you for your consideration of this issue. I again apologize that I cannot give testimony in person as I typically work when planning meetings are held.

On these issues, say enough. A facility exclusively for private enterprise may not ask members of the public and in other private ventures to experience this much harm while it generates its profits. Deny the conditional use in this location. It is the wrong type of project for the CBD.

Thank you,

Laurinda Marcello

Kim Davis

From: Leah Mason <nosam.m.hael@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, December 14, 2025 8:26 PM
To: Planning Department
Subject: Conditional use permit for seasonal bus terminal

You don't often get email from nosam.m.hael@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Dear commissioners,

The proposal to remove commercial office space in downtown for the purpose of imposing a seasonal bus terminal for the cruise tourism industry is staggering in its lack of concern or interest in the well-being of year-round residents and businesses. It represents a very substantial change to:

- the character of the neighborhood in which it is proposed
- levels of noise and pollutants where children's brains and lungs are developing
- higher levels of particulates and noxious gases will affect food being grown for consumption by local high school students
- flows of traffic in areas that are already very difficult to navigate during the tourist season.

To remove existing year-round office and business spaces for the purpose of a temporary and very high impact facility is short-sighted, to put it no more strongly. The impact that it will have on vehicle and pedestrian flows is not appropriate for a conditional use determination, particularly in the absence of professional traffic studies to rigorously identify the risks. I ask the planning commission to recognize that the scale and impacts of this proposal are unacceptable for assessment as a 'conditional use'.

In any other city, such a proposal would be incorporated into a much more extensive long-term planning processes.

This proposal simply adds to my existing concerns that the planning commission is being asked to make piece-meal decisions about proposals that have long-term cumulative impacts for the entire community. I will be attending the meeting on Wednesday, and encouraging others to do so.

Sincerely,
Leah Mason

Kim Davis

From: Nan Metashvili <ferenjinan@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, December 15, 2025 8:54 AM
To: Planning Department
Subject: Proposed McGrafia bus disaster

You don't often get email from ferenjinan@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

I am vehemently opposed to this horrendous proposal to further impact - oh so negatively!- life in the center of Sitka.

The constant to and fro of the busses (empty busses racing up and down HPR, belching pollution and endangering cyclists) is bad enough, now he wants to bring this same disaster into a small cozy friendly neighbourhood full of children.

NO. Please no.

Any claims they make about the apparent benign consequences of multiple huge busses in that location are obviously self serving obfuscations driven by greed and financial motives.

Let's just stop and think about Sitka please. We who live here (year round!!!) and do not stand to rake in the profits from this sort of endeavour have our rights to be considered.

We have the right to clean air, to safety as we walk around downtown, a fair amount of tranquility (why some of us choose to live on this remarkable island in the first place) and to have local traffic less impeded and disrupted by swarms of jaywalkers.

We who live here, pay taxes, vote and volunteer around the community and contribute of our best for the good of the town we love and support, have the right to have our views and well being considered. Our school children do not need to play to the background of mass tourism, and breathe in the diesel fumes from the shuttle busses.

Our elderly do not need to jostle with inconsiderate tourists to cross the street.

Many of us, myself included, do indeed enjoy meeting some of the visitors on a one to one basis as they stroll around town either looking lost and in need of directions or just willing to openly chat with a 'real local'.

But many times we have to seriously detour in our daily movements to avoid the crush. Do let's try to keep it down as much as possible. NOT to expand it, making life more and more difficult and, yes, unpleasant.

As a bicycle rider I have been endangered by the actions, the mess of traffic downtown. I actually live downtown, and unlike many of my friends who can just avoid downtown for the season, I cannot do that. It is downright terrifying at times.

NO.

Please do not permit this outrageous idea to go any further.

sincerely,

Nancy Metashvili

104 Lincoln Street

Sitka

Kim Davis

From: Phyllis Mulligan <plazatwina@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 17, 2025 5:40 AM
To: Planning Department
Subject: CUP 25-17

You don't often get email from plazatwina@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

I am writing in opposition of a bus depot at 408 and 410 Oja Way.

The site is next to homes,a school,and police station.

The exhaust that will be lingering in that area is a health hazard and that reason alone is is enough not to have the depot at the requested site.

I would hope the city will do an enviromental risk assessment.

I can invision a line of buses at the roundabout stopping traffic while buses are turning on to Monestary St. This bus depot site will bring more traffic to the area of the roundabout which is already congested in the summer.

The Centennial Hall site is the best location for the buses. The jaywalking problem I believe has been fixed and is not a problem like it had been.

The little cottages owned by Tess Hepbern will certainly be affected . Her clients will see,hear and smell (exhaust) the effects of this undertaking.

The residents of Sitka should take priority over the wants and gains of Chris McGraw.

He can certainly keep the bus depot where it is.

Thanks for your time ,

Phyllis Mulligan

224 Marine St

..Sitka,Ak.

Kim Davis

From: jack navitsky <jacknavitsky@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 16, 2025 4:17 PM
To: Planning Department
Subject: Bus depot

[You don't often get email from jacknavitsky@gmail.com. Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification>]

My name is Jack Navitsky and I am a Sitka resident who resides on the corner of

Monastery and Oja Street and I am opposed to the McGraw request for

A bus shuttle and parking use at the Oja street property . The request is in the CBD

Which is reminiscent of when the baker had his/her shop downstairs and resided

Upstairs a very practical arrangement , the CBS defines CBD as a “ concentrated retail , personal

And business services of all kinds satisfying all residents in one central location”.

In my research I did NOT FIND the use of buses in the CBD as an allowed use

Rather it is found in “ Commercial” zoning”. The McGraw request transcends the balance

Of the neighborhood consisting of schools, after school programs, small business, homes,

Short term rentals, retail space and will impede the police departments rapid response and transport

Activity, Congestion and safety will be a problem as the RIDE shares the same route going onto lake street in front of the fire hall

Enroute to the turn around , cross walks, bike rentals and food carts , Salvation Army, Elks Club , Xoots School . The Xoots school

Is a very busy area with parents retrieving and dropping off their children .

To allow the requested use of the OJA Street lot will have a profound , negative, character change in the balance of

This neighborhood. The loss of several on street parking places, the loss of two law offices with easy access to the

Court house the loss of a retail space and an apartment . The disruption of the COTTAGES On MONASTERY, with fumes

And noise possibly leading to a social media negative review and lost income for this quaint , historic property. If passed this request

Will add a substantial number of safety and environment concerns to an existing balanced neighborhood that share this property.

Thank You

Jack Navitsky

Kim Davis

From: Chandler O'Connell <cmoconn@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 17, 2025 2:55 PM
To: Planning Department
Subject: Re: Public Comment CUP Bus Depot

I would also add that if this proposal is going to remove housing units from Sitka, that is a detriment to community health and public safety, given our housing crisis. It might be worthwhile in the future for the planning commission to look at possible policy changes to require that housing units be maintained or replaced for projects in commercial areas.

Thanks,

Chandler

On Wed, Dec 17, 2025 at 2:34 PM Chandler O'Connell <cmoconn@gmail.com> wrote:

Hello,

I have some concerns about the proposal for a new bus depot.

I think the proximity to Xoots Elementary School and its year-round ventures program could possibly have a detrimental impact on children's health via air quality impacts and public safety risks from increased traffic on Sawmill Creek, Monastery St. and Oja Way.

It also seems that this site would greatly increase pedestrian traffic at the Lake/Lincoln four way stop. The status quo at Centennial has tourists dispersing in multiple directions - to the park, towards the bridge, and to the Lake/Lincoln intersection, and to private tours. With the proposed new depot, the vast majority of folks would be channeled directly to the Lake/Lincoln St. four way, creating significant congestion and a potential hazard for drivers and pedestrians.

I appreciate the effort to reduce vehicular traffic downtown, but I think that a bus depot is not a good conditional use for the Oja Way site. I think that Centennial Hall is a better option for health, safety, traffic flow and overall functioning of our downtown area.

Thank you for your public service.

Chandler O'Connell

Kim Davis

From: Megan & Walter C. Pasternak <mwpstnk@ptialaska.net>
Sent: Wednesday, December 17, 2025 4:12 PM
To: Planning Department
Subject: McGraw Bus Depot Application

You don't often get email from mwpstnk@ptialaska.net. [Learn why this is important](#)

I am opposed to the proposal for a tour bus staging area on Oja Way by Chris McGraw as Sitka Dock Company.

The area is very busy and all the streets in the area he is planning on using are short and narrow, definitely not suited for large tour buses making sharp turns onto them without encroaching into the oncoming lanes.

When Mr. McGraw made a similar proposal a few years ago that used the same neighborhood, he abandoned the plan because he decided the area was too cramped and busy.

As you all know there are also school buses and parents picking up and dropping off kindergargeners and first and second graders in the area and it is really quite crowded already. Further, there is a lot of traffic going into and coming out of the city/state building that houses the Sitka police department, state court offices, Alaska Department of Fish and Game offices and employment center.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Megan Pasternak

PO Box 830

Sitka, Ak 99835

907-738-2290

Ariadne Will

From: robert rose <robertpotterrose@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, December 8, 2025 12:43 PM
To: Planning Department
Subject: Oja Way Bus Depot

You don't often get email from robertpotterrose@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

This site has housing surrounding it. Consider the quality of life issues for people having to hear the noise of buses coming and going plus the air quality issues of the exhaust that would be present in any adjoining buildings where people are breathing the air. This site is definitely not appropriate for tour bus depot uses. It should be a no brainer if you give any value to the change you would be creating for these inhabitants!

Kim Davis

From: Callie Simmons <calliedianesimmons@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 17, 2025 3:51 PM
To: Planning Department
Subject: Opposing the Conditional Use Permit for Transportation Facility

You don't often get email from calliedianesimmons@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Good afternoon,

My name is Callie Simmons and I have been a resident of Sitka for the last ten years. I live downtown (Seward St). and am heavily impacted by tourism in the summer. I also have a Master's degree in Public Health.

I am very concerned about the air quality hazards associated with housing a diesel bus barn downtown in a residential neighborhood that is near a school and a playground. Exposure to traffic-related particulate matter (PM) has been associated with various health effects, especially in children, including respiratory allergies, decreased lung function, bronchitis, and exacerbation of existing childhood asthma ([Brauer et al. 2007](#); [Delfino et al. 2004](#); [Gauderman et al. 2007](#); [Gehring et al., 2010](#); [Kim et al. 2004](#); [McConnell et al. 2010](#); [Morgenstern et al., 2008](#); [Nordling et al., 2008](#); Ryan et al. 2005; [Shima et al., 2002](#); [Trenga et al. 2006](#)). As a Public Health Official I find it deeply concerning that proximity to schools, homes, and community gardens were not factored into the decision making of this facilities placement. I therefore ask the City of Sitka PLanning Commission to oppose the conditional use permit for the downtown transportation

Thank you for your time and consideration,

--

Callie Simmons (she/hers)
Master of Public Health, University of Alaska Anchorage
Read the Sitka Community Food Assessment [here!](#)

Small Town SOUL
Box 6064
Sitka, AK 99835
sitka@smalltownsoul.org

December 16, 2025

Planning Commission
Sitka, Alaska
via email: planning@cityofsitka.org

Subject: Comment on CUP 25-17 (“Request for Public Transport Facility”)

Dear Planning Commission members,

Small Town SOUL is a local organization concerned about the impacts of high-volume cruise tourism in Sitka. Our supporters include individuals who live in the vicinity of the proposed Private Bus Terminal, as well as many more who will be impacted by traffic changes and flow; and the health and safety of children at Xóots Elementary School.

First, we have three broad observations to make.

1) In both the December 17 agenda and staff’s report in the packet the proposed facility is referred to as a “public transportation facility.” This characterization is not accurate, because only a private clientele is served. It is not a public facility, in terms of either services provided or ownership.

This operation is not at all akin to a taxi service or taxi headquarters, contrary to earlier materials submitted (and not in the packet), and has very different impacts. Staff looked for a “best fit” of the proposed operation among other kinds uses specified in the planning code, and decided that “public transportation facility” is the closest fit. We believe it is not a close fit to a “public transportation facility” because it is not akin to bus hub that would serve our general public of about 8,200. In amount of traffic, both in frequency of bus arrivals/departures and in number of passengers, this is *an intensive, industrial-scale operation*. It is not likely what the Sitka General Code foresaw as a public transportation facility.

2) Though it is not among the criteria the commission must reach in their findings under SGC 22.10.160, the common characterization of the ownership of Sitka Dock Company, LLC deserves mention, lest that characterization sway commissioners’ opinions on whether granting the conditional use is merited.

Sitka Dock Company is a multi-national corporation. It is registered in Alaska as a “foreign limited liability company,” and is incorporated in Delaware. It is not just “a family-owned business,” as commonly characterized in local news stories. Though a local family has majority stake (as Halibut Point Marine Services, a 60 percent owner), the other forty-percent ownership is Baranof Island Partners, LLC, also a Delaware corporation, whose owners are Royal Caribbean Group along with global marine terminal operator, SSA Marine.

Application-specific comments

We believe the required findings cannot be reached regarding SGC 10.22.160 for the following reasons:

- Section 1(a) speaks to the public health, safety and general welfare of those in the vicinity, which we believe will be adversely affected. To issue the permit, the proposal should not be detrimental to these values.

The additional emissions will be uncharacteristic of and more intense than the emissions for existing traffic that affects Xóots School, offices in the city/state building and residences and businesses in the area, negatively affecting health and safety. This includes regular bus trips and an unknown number of “connector shuttle” trips.

Noise affects our general welfare. The applicant’s no idling policy may be difficult to monitor and enforce. Even if it is adhered to, it is clear from the layout of the driveway on the lot that when one bus leaves, other buses will have to restart and reposition to make room for the next arriving bus. This includes recurring engine starting and air brake relief noise, and pollution.

A safety issue will be created at the Oja/Lake intersection, in an area with a blind curve and the roundabout and its crosswalk.

So, for multiple reasons, it appears the required section 1(a) finding cannot be reached.

- It seems the section 1(b) finding cannot be reached because the proposal will substantially and adversely affect the character of the surrounding vicinity, which includes an elementary school, a number of grandfathered residences, and small, low-impact businesses. An intensively used bus shuttle terminal is uncharacteristic of the vicinity and not likely foreseen in the planning code or comprehensive plan.
- The section 1(c) finding should not be reached because the proposed industrial-scale use can be expected to harm the uses and values of properties in the vicinity, including residences and short-term rental cottages right next door.
- It seems the section 2 finding cannot be reached because of the nature and scale of bus and “connector shuttle” traffic in the proposal, plus the impacts of nearly half a million passengers per summer are inconsistent with uses the Comprehensive Plan contemplates for this part of the Central Business District. The City’s extensive planning and development placed the cruise bus dropoff/pick-up point at Harrigan Centennial Hall. This keeps operations away from residences and streets where constant buses are disruptive; and better disperses arriving cruise passengers.
- The hazardous conditions ‘mitigation’ needed for the section 4 finding cannot likely be reached because the proposed use would introduce ongoing health, safety and welfare problems for adjacent properties and the vicinity. The hazardous conditions are the ‘nature of the beast,’ which is best kept to the State’s highway (instead of City side streets) and the Harrigan Centennial Hall bus loop, where established City planning processes have placed it.

Other factors the Commission should consider.

The application implies a public benefit of “fewer buses.” There is no reduction in the number of passengers who will be transported, so the number of bus trips will not change. If there are fewer buses/drivers, that is part of operations; a private, not public, benefit. There is no benefit to the public.

The application states that “Fewer buses = lower noise and emission.” This is false because, without a reduction of visitors, there will be no reduction in the number of bus trips; the fewer buses operating on a given day will each be making more trips during a day.

The application claims the proposal “eliminates pedestrian conflicts at Centennial Hall.” Pedestrians will still be attracted to Centennial Hall by tour buses, the applicant’s own “connector shuttles” and just by walking there, so conflicts on Harbor Way will not be “eliminated” even if they are reduced. Instead the proposal will concentrate masses of cruise passengers in another place Etolin Way/Horton Alley vicinity, resulting in two loci of pedestrian conflicts instead just the present one. There is likely to be more jaywalking across Lake Street, possibly at multiple locations.

Conclusion

Masses of cruise passengers and their transport are best planned for through a governmental process, not by one private business. Ever since the huge mass of cruise tourists for 2022 was suddenly announced in 2021, there has been knee-jerk planning and multiple measures that have only solved a few problems. If all local tour buses cannot operate comfortably at Harrigan Centennial Hall, it's an indicator that the cruise ship booking is excessive to the capacity of Sitka. Sitka should either accept the alleged inconveniences of the Harrigan Centennial Hall bus loop, or cruise ship bookings should be downscaled.

Fundamentally, under the general code, the Commission is required to reach every one of several findings, if it is to issue a conditional use permit. We believe the Commission cannot reach several of those findings for this proposal.

We hope this industrial bus terminal CUP will be denied at the December 17 meeting, for the many reasons we have shown in this letter.

If the commission does believe it can reach the required findings, we think there are enough unresolved questions that a decision should be delayed to one or more subsequent meetings, to ensure all pertinent information is on the table for all impacted parties to review.

Best Regards,

Klaudia Leccese, President
Larry Edwards, Secretary
Small Town SOUL

Kim Davis

From: Jim Steffen <1norcoast@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, December 15, 2025 5:20 PM
To: Planning Department
Subject: Agenda item CUP 25-17

I wish to offer public comment on this item.

- 1) This is the first I have heard of the item, so forgive me if I am not fully informed. Was this proposal made to the Tourism Commission previously?
- 2) The proposal claims a reduction in traffic. I believe it will result in **increased** traffic, because in addition to the shuttle bus traffic to it from the cruise terminal, some passengers will be shuttled from this new site to Harrigan Hall to catch other tours, performances, etc.
- 3) The proposal will result in increased traffic at the roundabout, as inbound buses will now circle 3/4 the way around to Sawmill Creek Road, and the secondary shuttles will have to fully transit the roundabout to get to Harrigan Hall.
- 4) The increased activity on this mixed residential, school, and office street will significantly add to noise and air pollution and will lengthen response time for the police department. In addition, Monastery and Oja streets are too narrow for large buses and there will be severed congestion at that intersection. There will be a significant increase in pedestrian traffic at the Lake and Lincoln intersection, and this cannot be mitigated without increasing traffic at the crosswalk on Lincoln Street just East of that intersection. Such an increase there will back up traffic to and through Lake and Lincoln.
- 5) The use of Harrigan Hall as a cruise shuttle destination was the result of an intensive planning process, and works well in that role. This request has not gone through an adequate public planning process.
- 6) **In my view, this proposal does not offer any public benefit to Sitka Residents or visitors.**

Jim Steffen

--

Jim Steffen, AMS
Norcoast Marine Surveyors, Inc.
cell (907) 738-6394
www.marinesurveyor.com/norcoast/

Kim Davis

From: Carol Voisin <cjvoisin@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 17, 2025 11:07 AM
To: Planning Department
Subject: Please forward to commissioners before this evenings meeting 12/17

Dear Planning Commissioners:

The proposal to remove permanent commercial office space for a seasonal bus terminal is lacks interest in the well-being of year-round residents and businesses. It is a high impact proposal that seems at odds with the purpose of conditional use. Far from providing 'flexibility' for developments appropriate to the existing character of the area, it requires the demolition of an existing community asset, and represents a substantial change to:

- *the character of the neighborhood in which it is proposed
- *levels of noise and pollutants
- *levels of particulates and noxious gases
- *flows of vehicular and pedestrian traffic that are difficult to navigate during the tourist season.

Please, do not approve this proposal. It simply flies in the face of common sense to allow this proposal to go forward.

Thank you,
Carol Voisin,
Sitka

Kim Davis

From: Bruce White <bawgofish@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, December 15, 2025 11:33 AM
To: Planning Department
Cc: assembly
Subject: No to bus terminal conditional use permit

You don't often get email from bawgofish@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Dear Planning Commissioners,

I urge you to reject the conditional use permit for a future bus terminal on Oja Way. I see nothing wrong with having cruise ship tourism in moderation, but that is not what is happening here. By all accounts the cruise industry and their enablers are attempting to dominate all other Sitka's by flooding the town with tourists and bending local politicians to their will. If you approve this new bus terminal it will be one more reason for people to move away thanks to having even more congestion and pollution, and continuing the erosion of Sitka's quality of life - something I can't imagine anyone wants.

Sincerely,
Bruce White
Sitka

Kim Davis

From: Caitlin Woolsey <cwoolsey@alumni.stanford.edu>
Sent: Tuesday, December 16, 2025 6:44 PM
To: Planning Department
Subject: Comment on CUP 27-17

You don't often get email from cwoolsey@alumni.stanford.edu. [Learn why this is important](#)

To the planning commission,

I am glad the applicant is looking to address pedestrian and traffic flow issues associated with shuttling passengers in from the cruise dock. However, it is concerning that the location is so close to two public schools. Xóots and Pacific High will be impacted in May, August, and September by the noise, exhaust, and increased traffic of vendors and pedestrians. I am glad the City is recommending a traffic study, and I hope the impact on schools will be investigated before a decision is made. I hope you will ask for a full traffic study, rather than just the minimum (items 1-3) outlined by the City. The new bussing location could bring positive impacts as well, but I agree that it is hard to fully weigh the pros and cons of the proposal without a professional assessment.

Another concern I have about tourism traffic by the schools is secondhand smoke. It is really alarming how many tourists smoke cigarettes as they walk through downtown, despite laws against smoking in public spaces. I have found it hard to avoid secondhand smoke as a pedestrian downtown in the summer. Data has been collected by the amazing SEARCH volunteers showing the increase in tourists has led to a big increase in cigarette butt litter (<https://www.kcaw.org/2023/08/31/butt-wait-sitkas-tourism-boom-brings-a-cigarette-litter-problem/>). Would there be a way to monitor and enforce non-smoking laws in the pedestrian corridor next to the schools? Who's responsibility would this be?

Finally, the document notes that the exhaust and noise issues would be mitigated if the applicant switched to electric busses. Is there enough electric service to the Oja site to support electric bus charging overnight? I have heard anecdotally that there is not enough power service to the HPR cruise dock to support electric busses at that location, but I haven't seen an official report. If the Oja location would allow for a switch to electric busses, that would be huge! Is it the intent of the applicant to switch to electric busses if possible?

Thank you for considering my questions and comments.

Sincerely,
Caitlin Woolsey
Pacific High School teacher

Ariadne Will

From: kaleb aldred <akaleb@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 17, 2025 5:47 PM
To: Planning Department
Subject: Bus depot.

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

You don't often get email from akaleb@hotmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

I understand we need to make town easy to access for tourists, but it seems like putting a bus depot in the middle of it takes away a tiny bit of what they come to enjoy.

Thank you for considering my opinion,
Kaleb.

Get [Outlook for Android](#)

Ariadne Will

From: Melissa Beadle <melissajanebeadle@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 17, 2025 5:57 PM
To: Planning Department
Subject: Chris McGraw's Bus Parking Lots

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

You don't often get email from melissajanebeadle@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Hi there,

I am just writing to offer comment for folks who are currently living in units at 400 Etolin Way that are covered by Alaska Housing. They are some of the only lower-income/affordable housing options in Sitka. The teardown of the units will displace multiple families and children who will not have another place to go. Some have fought months and even years to secure stable housing and it is devastating that these units will be taken from them. It would be disgraceful for the city to allow this especially if there is no plan to support the families who will be removed from their homes.

Thank you for reading,
Mel Beadle

Ariadne Will

From: Andrea Fraga <middleislandgardens@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 17, 2025 5:37 PM
To: Planning Department
Subject: Bus depot at 408 and 410 Oja Way

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

You don't often get email from middleislandgardens@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Good afternoon,

I recently learned of the possibility of a new bus depot being constructed within a block of two schools in the Sitka School District. While I understand the need to alleviate traffic near Centennial Hall, I am deeply concerned about the impact to students at Pacific High and Xoots Elementary during the school year, and Sitka Native Education Program, Outer Coast College, 3 to 5 Preschool and the many other youth who use the garden at Pacific High during the summer.

I work as the school garden coordinator, managing the garden at Pacific High, where students learn to grow and harvest fresh produce for use in school meals, including the culturally significant Lingit potato. Besides providing gardening lessons and fresh produce, the garden is also used in science, math and English lessons, and youth from other schools are regularly invited to participate. This program is currently the only one of its kind in Sitka, and provides valuable place-based food security lessons.

I feel that the proximity of a new and very busy bus depot will negatively impact student's ability to enjoy the garden as a place to commune with nature, relieve stress and learn new skills for self-reliance. Additionally, the quality of the fresh produce grown on site for school meals will be affected. Activities on the Xoots Elementary playground will also be negatively impacted. Please consider the health and well-being of our youth first and foremost.

Thank you for your consideration,
Andrea Fraga (writing as a concerned community member)
School Garden Coordinator
Pacific High School

Ariadne Will

From: Nellie Lipscomb <nellielipscomb@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 17, 2025 7:02 PM
To: Planning Department
Subject: Public Comment on the Conditional Use Permit Oja Way 12.17.25

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

You don't often get email from nellielipscomb@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Good evening,

I'm writing to voice my strong opposition to the application by Chris McGraw for a Conditional Use Permit of a Public Transportation Facility in the heart of downtown Sitka on Oja Way.

I echo the sentiments of the Planning Commission and public response outlined in the agenda available already, and would like to add the following:

The applicant's response denies staff concerns drawn from "generalized transportation concerns, speculative outcomes, or impacts that already exist independent of the proposed use," yet asserts that the preexisting jaywalking problems created by tourists will be improved by his proposal. This conclusion itself is speculative and cannot be substantiated by any current data. As a New Yorker, I [anecdotally] suggest that the solution to jaywalking is reduced pedestrian traffic as a whole, enforcement of traffic rules, or simply a crosswalk -- not the creation of an additional public transportation facility in the heart of our residential and elementary school zone.

Furthermore, allowing private, commercial interest to dictate a core of Sitka's functional, downtown infrastructure would effectively sell our community out from underneath us. While the proposal refers to the area as residential and commercial, it is important to further define this. One building on the site contains the legal offices of several professionals and teams that offer critical services to Sitkans in jeopardy. Just beyond the proposed site's limits, McGraw also recently purchased Crescent Court's high-density housing on Etolin -- raising concerns regarding his intent for developing the downtown corridor through Etolin. Finally, with Xóots Elementary just steps away, our youngest citizens will play, breathe, and learn our community values abutted by McGraw's noise-dampening fences, no-idling policies, and thousands of strangers each day. As our community contends with the role that tourism will play in its future, we ought to consider what a bleak message we send to future generations of Sitkans if we allow private industry to encroach upon the very edges of spaces we created exclusively for their enrichment.

This proposed 'transportation hub' (it is a parking lot with a restroom) is designed exclusively for non-Sitkans and the enrichment of external entities (other than McGraw and those directly employed by him). It is fundamentally antithetical to the smalltown values and aesthetics that residents and visitors alike prize Sitka for. Throughout the southeast, the cruise industry's enormous financial influence has already hollowed the downtown cores of many other communities; tourists come to Sitka to see this ever-rare example of "real Alaska." I hope that the Planning Commission will respect Sitka's community-wide efforts to maintain a semblance of balance between economic development and the diverse community

playing host to this new face of extractive industry. We must be able to trust our community representation to make choices that promote our greater good and protect those without the power to do so themselves.

Thank you,

Nellie Lipscomb

Ariadne Will

From: Linda Waller <sitkalinda@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 17, 2025 5:38 PM
To: Planning Department
Subject: CUP 25.17

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Flagged

You don't often get email from sitkalinda@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

Wednesday December 17th CUP 25.17

My name is Linda Waller. I have lived in Sitka for more than 50 years and I thank you for considering my comments. I am opposed to CUP25.17. I did not realize there was any reason to change the bus pick up from HCH. I thought we just worked out all the bugs. I fear moving this bus station will impact the Museum, the Russian Dancers and other vendors and tourist activities.

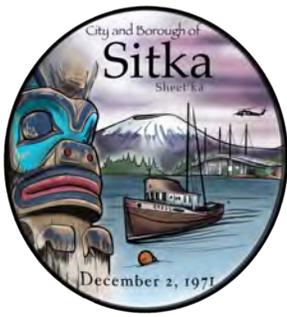
The current system works now. The impact of moving the buses to a new cramped area will be huge. Where is the budget for road maintenance (on little city streets, not built for big bus traffic) and for signage.

The offset of the non-idling buses will be negated by constant restarting buses to move forward. Is Sitka Dock Company going to pay for this?

Tearing down a building instead adding needed housing is difficult to understand. It is understood that the residences and small businesses are Grandfathered into the CBD but we should consider them before adding the traffic congestion, noise, and air pollution to our sweet downtown area. The sea breezes will not clear the air on Oja street.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Linda Waller
she/her/hers
907-738-0627



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

A COAST GUARD CITY

PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

100 Lincoln Street | Sitka, Alaska 99835

www.cityofsitka.com

planning@cityofsitka.org

907-747-1814

October 15, 2025

VIA EMAIL

Chris McGraw
Sitka Dock Company, LLC
4513 Halibut Point Road, Suite B-201
Sitka, AK 99835
chris@sitkadock.com

Re: Request for Interpretation – Oja Way Shuttle Drop-Off

Dear Mr. McGraw,

Pursuant to your September 16th Request for Determination (enclosed) regarding a proposed shuttle-drop off on Oja Way, the following includes my review of your request and resulting administrative interpretation under SGC 22.05.090.

Summary of Proposed Use and Requested Determination

As stated in your Request for Determination, your proposed use of the properties at 408 and 410 Oja Way (“Oja Way properties”) located in the Central Business District zone (CBD) would be for facilitating private shuttle buses operated by the Sitka Dock Company to transport cruise passengers between the Sitka Sound Cruise Terminal located at 4513 Halibut Point Road to downtown Sitka (“proposed use” or “proposal”). The Oja Way properties would be used solely for picking up and dropping off those passengers, and would not be open to the general public nor function as a bus station or depot.

In the Request for Determination, you contend that the proposed use should be considered an accessory use for the following reasons (summarized):

1. The proposed use supports the purpose of the CBD
2. The proposed use is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan
3. The proposed use is an accessory use to existing cruise operations on your property at which the Sitka Sound Cruise Terminal is located
4. There is legal precedent/support for interpreting the proposed use as accessory
5. There are community benefits associated with the proposed use

Analysis of Proposed Use as an Accessory Use Under Sitka General Code (SGC), Title 22 “Zoning”

SGC 22.05.1650 states: *“Accessory use” means a use customarily incidental and subordinate to the principal use of the land, building or structure and located on the same lot or parcel of land.*

SGC 22.05.1570 states: *“Principal use” means the main, primary or principal use of the land, buildings, or structures located on a lot or parcel of land.*

SGC 22.16.016.A states: *Intent. Certain uses are incidental and supportive of the principal use. These are indicated for each zoning district in the following table.*

Table 22.16.016-1 Accessory Uses lists *“Accessory uses incidental to any permitted use”* as allowed in all *“Nonresidential zones.”*

22.16.070.A states: *Intent. The central business district is designed specifically for concentrated retail, personal and business services of all kinds satisfying all residents in one central location. It should further prohibit exclusive residential or industrial uses which would interfere with the development and continuation of its cohesive business purposes.*

As demonstrated in the relevant provisions listed above, SGC clearly defines accessory uses as those that are incidental and/or subordinate to a primary use of a lot or parcel of land. Given that no other uses of the Oja Way properties are proposed, and the scale and intensity of the proposed use, I do not find that your proposed use is consistent with SGC definitions for, or considerations of, accessory uses. Further, I do not find that the proposed use could be considered an accessory use to the Sitka Sound Cruise Terminal, or as you put it, “the overall cruise passenger transportation system”, given that the Oja Way properties are not the same lot or parcel of land and in fact separated by over five miles; my finding on this point may differ were the properties contiguous and in the same zoning district.

In relation to your argument that the proposed use supports the purpose of the central business district, I agree in principle that accessory uses should be judged in the context of the character and purpose of the zoning district as a whole, rather than solely the principle use of a single lot. However, this consideration serves to inform whether a proposed accessory use is “customarily incidental”, i.e. an appropriate use in the zone. My interpretation on this point is in fact affirmed by the case you later cite, *Dykstra v. Municipality of Anchorage*, Alaska Supreme Court, No. S-10512 (2004). I do not find that this principle can be used to contravene whether or not a use is considered a principal versus accessory use under SGC.

Further, I conclude that your arguments regarding the proposed use’s consistency with the Comprehensive Plan and the potential community benefits of the proposed use,

speak to the merits of the proposed use itself and not its classification as an accessory use under SGC.

In response to the supporting case law cited in your Request for Determination:

1. *Anchorage v. Nesbett*, 530 P.2d 1324 (Alaska 1975): This case was about a conflict regarding the City of Anchorage's asserted right to maintain a power line on private property; I do not find that this case is relevant to your Request for Determination.
2. *City of Miami Beach v. 8701 Collins Ave., Inc.*, 77 So.2d 428 (Fla. 1954): This case is neither controlling in its jurisdiction nor comparable to the proposed use as it was about an estoppel claim regarding a change in zoning regulations and how said change impacted an ongoing development that had received authorization from the City of Miami Beach prior to the change in regulations.
3. *Griswold v. City of Homer*, Alaska Supreme Court, No. S-18608 (2024): This case centered on whether approval for an accessory structure (a detached dwelling unit) was appropriately issued as an accessory use allowed outright, or, as the appellant argued, one that should have required a conditional use permit as a second principal use. I do not find the facts or conclusions of this case applicable to your requested determination.
4. *Dykstra v. Municipality of Anchorage*, Alaska Supreme Court, No. S-10512 (2004): In contrast to your summary of this case, the court found that the Municipality of Anchorage's zoning code was not impermissibly vague in its description of permissible accessory uses which were defined (in part) "as a use that can be considered customarily subordinate or incidental to and located on the same lot with a principal use, building, or structure." In fact, the court held that the Municipality of Anchorage had adequately demonstrated that the appellant's use of his property was not an accessory use as it had exceeded the scope of permissible accessory uses in the subject zoning district. Further, in comparing other relevant cases, the court found, "... Anchorage zoning code's flexible approach to accessory use is neither uncommon nor impermissibly vague; they show that a pliant, objective test of this kind - one that asks whether a reasonable person would consider the particular level of use in question as customary and relatively minor - can be readily understood and applied." My finding that the proposed use is not an accessory use appears to be supported by this case.

Interpretation of the Proposed Use under SGC, Title 22 "Zoning"

In reviewing Title 22 – both Chapter 22.05 General Provisions and Chapter 22.16 District Regulations, a privately run shuttle bus service or as you characterize in your Request for Determination, a "shuttle drop-off location", is not specifically listed use.

SGC 22.05.090 addresses interpretations of unlisted meanings. It states, "*When a word or term is not specifically stated, the city and borough administrator or his designee*

shall have the authority to interpret the meaning or description most comparable, subject to appeal to the planning commission, then to the assembly.”

In looking for other comparable uses, I do not find that the proposed use is reasonably consistent with “*Trucking, courier, and taxi service facilities*” as listed in Table 22.16.015-5, as this listed as a storage and warehousing use which speaks to its intent as a location in which vehicles are stored as opposed to active loading/unloading of guests/clients.

I do find that the proposed use is reasonably comparable to the “*Public transportation facility/airport*” use as listed in SGC Table 22.16.015-4. While the proposed use is not “public” from the standpoint of it being run by a public agency, it is analogous to other mass public transportation services such as aviation or the Alaska Marine Highway which require members of the public to purchase a ticket in order to utilize the facility for transportation (in this case, a paid ticket aboard a cruise ship berthing at the Sitka Sound Cruise Terminal).

In looking at whether the proposed use is comparable to a public transportation facility, I also considered the scale and impact of use. Cruise Line Agencies of Alaska reported 523,548 passengers arriving at the Sitka Sound Cruise Terminal for May-September of 2023. For comparison, The Bureau of Transportation Statistics (<https://www.transtats.bts.gov/DataElements.aspx?Data=2>) lists total enplanements at the Sitka Rocky Guitierrez Airport at 59,564 passengers for the same months of 2023. Even if a significant portion of cruise passengers arriving at the Sitka Sound Cruise Terminal do not utilize the bus shuttle, I contend that usage levels of the proposed use still exceed that of the airport. Given this scale of use, and the potential for like-impacts on the surrounding area from what one would reasonably consider mass transit (especially in Sitka), I interpret that the proposed use is most comparable to “public transportation facility/airport” in the SGC. This use is conditional in the CBD, which therefore requires a conditional use permit approved by the Planning Commission in order to proceed.

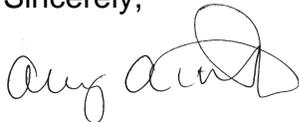
In accordance with SGC 22.05.090, you may appeal this interpretation to the Planning Commission, and then the Assembly. In order to file an appeal to the Planning Commission, per SGC 22.10.220, an appeal must be filed with the Municipal Clerk within ten (10) days of the issuance of this interpretation. As this interpretation is dated October 15, 2025, the appeal must be filed no later than **5:00 PM AKST on Monday, October 27, 2025.** The contents of the notice of appeal must include a concise statement identifying:

1. The decision being appealed.
2. The name and address of the appellant and his interest(s) in the matter.
3. The specific reasons why the appellant believes to be wrong. The appellant shall bear the burden of proving the decision was wrong.
4. The desired outcome or requested changes to the decision.

If you do not wish to appeal this interpretation, there are two available procedural options under the zoning code to advance your proposal for consideration. The first would be to apply for a conditional use permit under the “*public transportation facility/airport*” interpretation I have made per this letter. The second would be to pursue a zoning code amendment to add a new use that you feel would better define your proposed use to the zoning code. Applications for conditional use permits and zoning amendments can be found on our department’s page of the CBS website (<https://www.cityofsitka.com/departments/PlanningCommunityDevelopment>), and you are welcome to contact my office to discuss a potential application under either scenario.

Thank you for reaching out with your request for a determination/interpretation on your proposal for the Oja Way properties. My office will continue to be available to discuss any questions or next steps.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amy Ainslie". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Amy Ainslie
Planning & Community Development Director

Enclosed: Request for Determination – Oja Way

CC (via email): John Leach, CBS Municipal Administrator
 Rachel Jones, CBS Municipal Attorney
 Sara Peterson, CBS Municipal Clerk
 Kim Davis, CBS Planning Manager

Request for Determination

To: Amy Ainslie, Planning Director
From: Chris McGraw
Date: September 16, 2025
Re: Request for Determination – Oja Way Shuttle Drop-Off

I am requesting a determination from the Planning Department regarding the use of 408 and 410 Oja Way as a shuttle drop-off location for cruise passengers. Based on our meeting last week it was indicated that the Central Business District (CBD) does not identify shuttle drop off as a use in this zone and a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) would be required. My request is that this use should be treated as an accessory use CBD and does not require a CUP.

Background

- Sitka Dock Company operates private shuttle buses that transport cruise passengers from the terminal to downtown Sitka.
- The Oja Way properties would be used solely for dropping off and picking up those passengers in a safe and efficient manner.
- The site is not open to the general public and does not function as a bus station or depot.

Why This Should Be Considered an Accessory Use

1. Supports the Purpose of the CBD

The CBD is meant to support commerce, tourism, and pedestrian activity. A shuttle drop-off directly enables this purpose by:

- Bringing visitors safely into downtown to shop, dine, and explore.
- Improving circulation and pedestrian safety.
- Strengthening the role of the CBD as Sitka's economic hub.

2. Consistent with the Comprehensive Plan

The Sitka Comprehensive Plan 2030 calls for:

- Supporting and attracting businesses.
- Improving pedestrian crossings downtown.
- Designing transportation to reduce conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians.

This project does exactly that: it eliminates jaywalking across Harbor Drive by relocating the drop off from Harrigan Centennial Hall, avoids bus traffic at Lake and Lincoln intersection, and shortens routes so fewer buses are needed overall.

3. Accessory to Existing Cruise Operations

- Shuttle loading already occurs on my C-2 zoned terminal property without a CUP.
- It would be inconsistent to now require a CUP for unloading in the CBD, especially when the drop-off is incidental to the same activity.
- The drop-off is not a stand-alone "principal use." It is a supporting piece of the larger shuttle system that connects the terminal to downtown commerce.

Here's a revised version of that section so it flows in plain language, references your Exhibit A, and ties the cases directly into your accessory use argument:

4. Legal Support for Accessory Use Interpretation

Courts have consistently recognized that accessory uses should be understood functionally and in light of the broader zoning district, not just on a strict lot-by-lot basis. As summarized in Exhibit A, the following cases support this approach:

- In *Anchorage v. Nesbett* (Alaska Supreme Court, 1975), the Court emphasized that zoning codes must be interpreted to carry out legislative intent and community goals, not applied so narrowly that they block reasonable and customary uses consistent with the district's purpose.
- In *City of Miami Beach v. 8701 Collins Ave.* (Florida Supreme Court, 1954), the Court held that accessory uses should be judged in light of the character and function of the zoning district as a whole, not solely by what occurs on a single parcel.
- More recently, in *Griswold v. City of Homer* (Alaska Supreme Court, 2024), the Court affirmed that a structure may qualify as an accessory use when it is subordinate and incidental to the primary activity, even if it is not expressly listed in the code.
- Likewise, in *Dykstra v. Municipality of Anchorage* (Alaska Supreme Court, 2004), the Court stressed that zoning ordinances should be applied reasonably and consistent with the aims of the district, not in a way that excludes reasonable uses.

Land use authorities such as Rathkopf's *Law of Zoning and Planning* also note that where properties are under common control and function as one integrated operation, accessory uses may extend across parcels.

Taken together, these cases and authorities reinforce that the Oja Way drop-off is not a stand-alone public transportation facility, but rather an incidental, subordinate function that directly supports the intent of the CBD and the Comprehensive Plan.

5. Community Benefits

- Traffic relief: Shorter turnaround = fewer buses on the road.
- Safety: Eliminates jaywalking and keeps buses out of downtown's busiest intersection.
- Environment: Fewer buses = lower emissions and less noise.
- Economy: Visitors spend more time and money in Sitka businesses.

Request

Based on the purpose of the CBD, the Comprehensive Plan, the accessory/incidental nature of this use, and legal precedent supporting broader accessory-use interpretations, I respectfully request that the Planning Department determine that the Oja Way shuttle drop-off is an accessory use permitted within the CBD and not a separate principal use requiring a CUP.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Chris McGraw

Exhibit A – Supporting Case Law on Accessory Use and Zoning Interpretation

1. Anchorage v. Nesbett, 530 P.2d 1324 (Alaska 1975)

- Facts: A property owner in Anchorage was challenged for using land in a way not specifically listed in the zoning ordinance. The city argued that if a use is not listed, it must be prohibited.
- Court's Decision: The Alaska Supreme Court disagreed with that rigid approach. The Court held that zoning ordinances should be interpreted in line with legislative intent and community goals, and not enforced so strictly that they block reasonable, customary uses.
- Key Principle: Unlisted but reasonable uses consistent with the purpose of the zoning district should not automatically be prohibited.
- Relevance to Oja Way: Even though "shuttle drop-off" is not listed, it is consistent with the CBD's purpose and should be recognized as a reasonable accessory use.

2. City of Miami Beach v. 8701 Collins Ave., Inc., 77 So.2d 428 (Fla. 1954)

- Facts: The City of Miami Beach argued that certain activities on a lot were not permitted because they weren't listed as principal uses.
- Court's Decision: The Florida Supreme Court ruled that accessory uses must be judged in light of the character and purpose of the zoning district as a whole, not just the principal use of a single lot.
- Key Principle: Accessory uses can be recognized at the district level where they are customary and incidental to the district's function.
- Relevance to Oja Way: The shuttle drop-off is incidental to the CBD's purpose — to support commerce, tourism, and pedestrian activity — and should therefore be treated as an accessory use.

3. Griswold v. City of Homer, Alaska Supreme Court, No. S-18608 (2024)

- Facts: A Homer property owner added a conex container dwelling unit alongside a mobile home. Neighbors argued it required a CUP or was not allowed under the zoning code.
- Court's Decision: The Supreme Court of Alaska held the conex dwelling was an accessory building because it was subordinate and incidental to the main use, even though it wasn't explicitly listed in the zoning code.
- Key Principle: Accessory uses do not have to be explicitly listed if they are subordinate, incidental, and consistent with the zoning district's purpose.
- Relevance to Oja Way: The drop-off is subordinate and incidental to the overall cruise passenger transportation system and consistent with CBD purposes, even if not named in the code.

4. Dykstra v. Municipality of Anchorage, Alaska Supreme Court, No. S-10512 (2004)

- Facts: A landowner challenged Anchorage's interpretation of how a proposed use fit within the zoning code.
- Court's Decision: The Court emphasized that zoning ordinances should be interpreted reasonably and consistent with the aims of the district, rather than being applied so rigidly that they exclude reasonable land uses.
- Key Principle: Zoning enforcement must balance control with reasonableness, always tying interpretation back to the district's purpose.
- Relevance to Oja Way: The CBD's purpose is to facilitate commerce and tourism. A shuttle drop-off directly advances those aims, so it should be recognized as permissible without requiring a CUP.

Together, these cases show a clear pattern: courts favor interpreting zoning codes in a flexible, purpose-driven way that allows reasonable accessory uses, especially when they advance the goals of the district and the comprehensive plan.