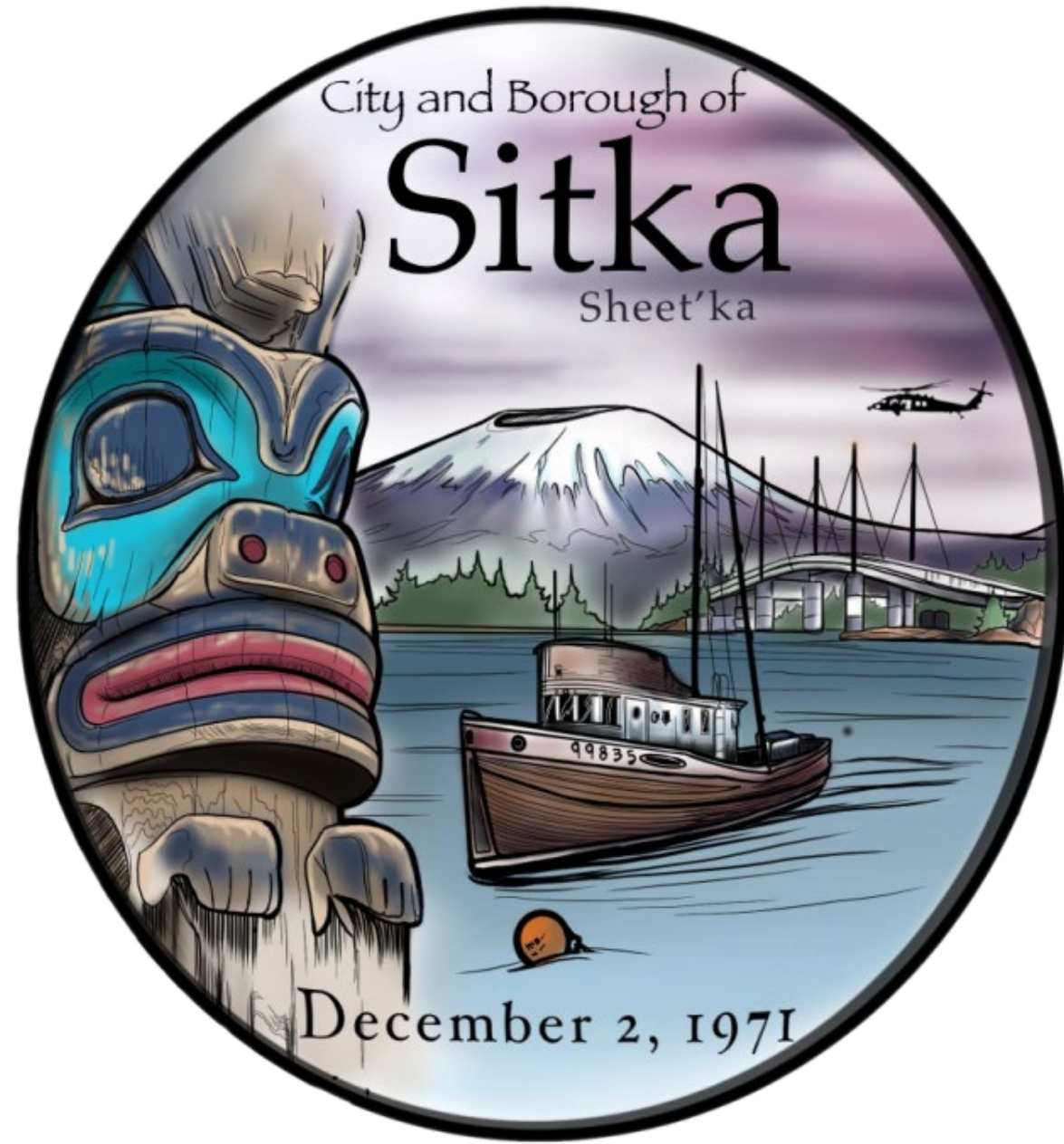


# Short-Term Tourism Plan *End-of-Season Review*

Assembly & Planning Commission  
Joint Work Session  
October 27, 2022



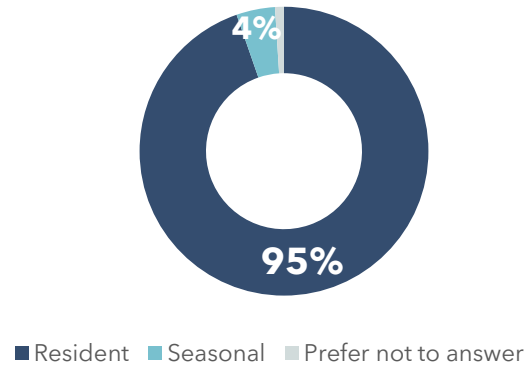
# Agenda

- I. Introduction & Plan Recap
- II. Presentations
  - a. Visit Sitka
  - b. Sitka Sound Cruise Terminal
  - c. Walk, Bike, Win!
  - d. Traffic Study
  - e. Cost Allocation Study
- III. Community Survey Results
- IV. Staff Lessons Learned & Recommendations
- V. Next Steps

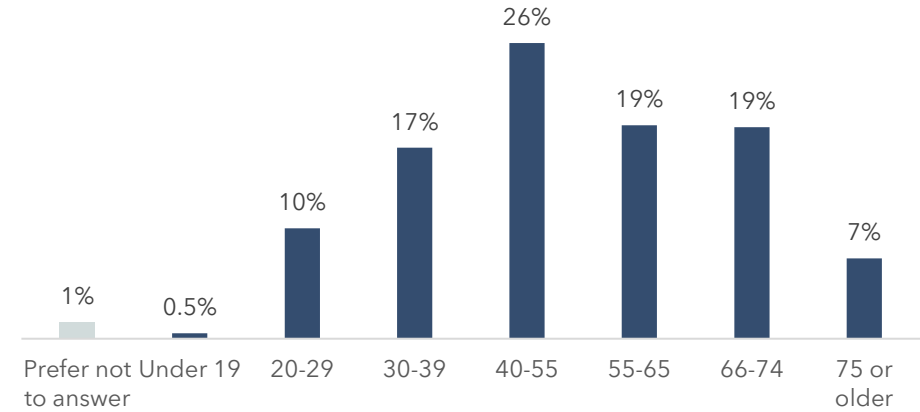
# Community Survey Preliminary Results

## DEMOGRAPHICS

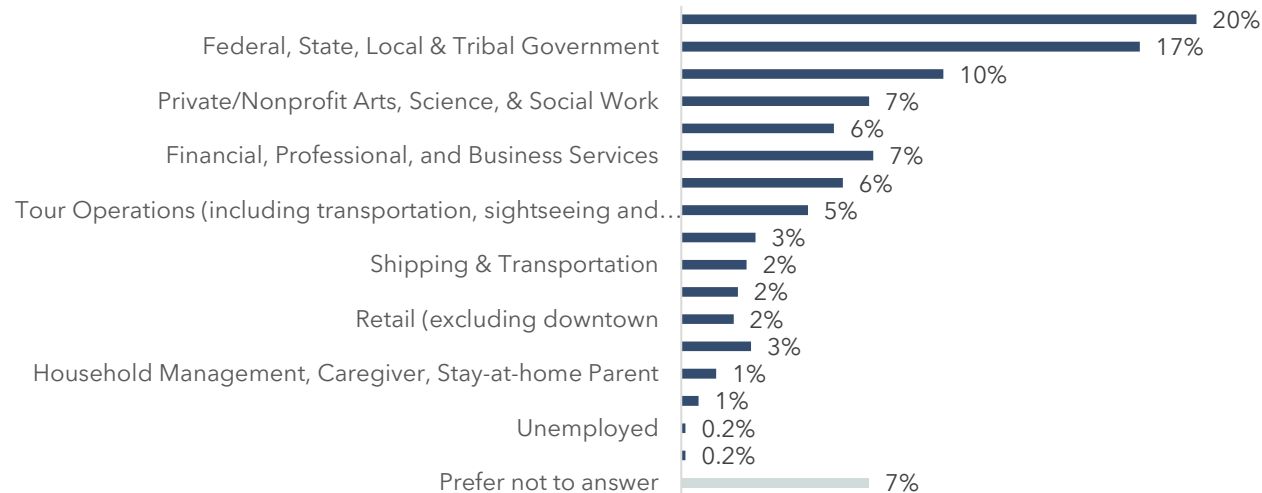
Q1. Describe your residency



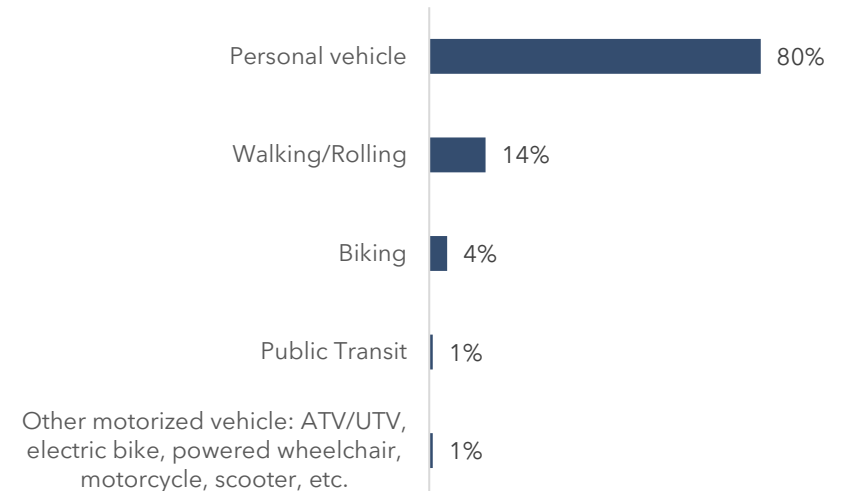
Q2. What is your age?



Q4. What is your primary occupation?



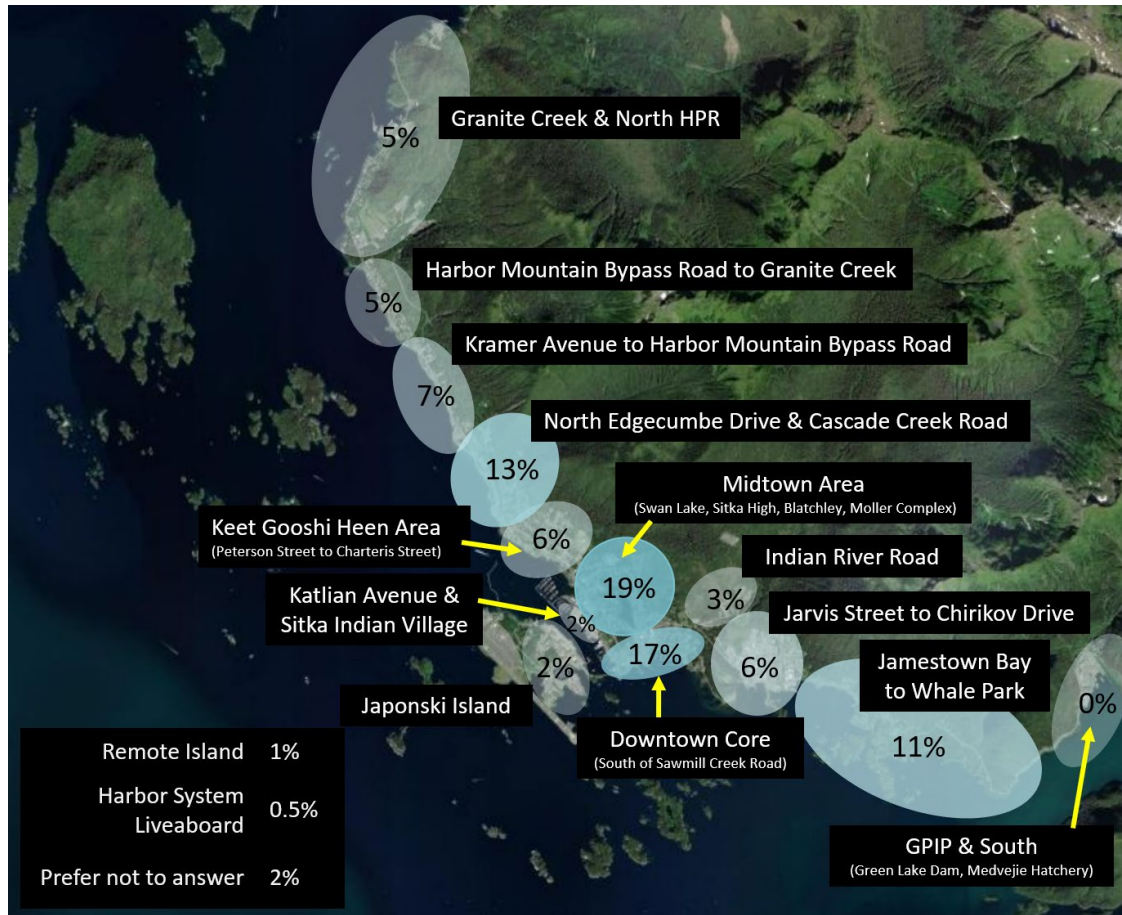
Q6. What is your primary mode of transportation?



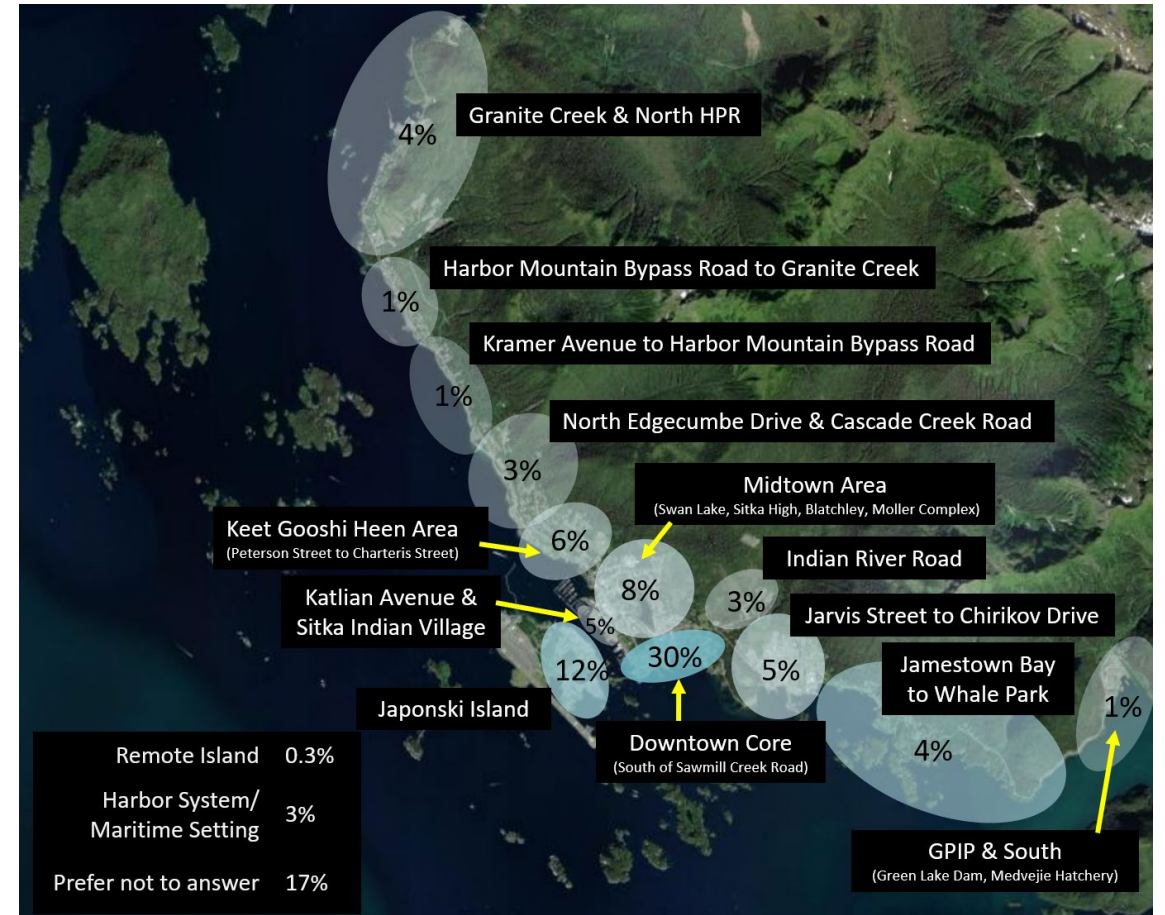
# Community Survey Preliminary Results

## DEMOGRAPHICS: RESIDENTIAL & WORK NEIGHBORHOODS

What area of town do you live in?



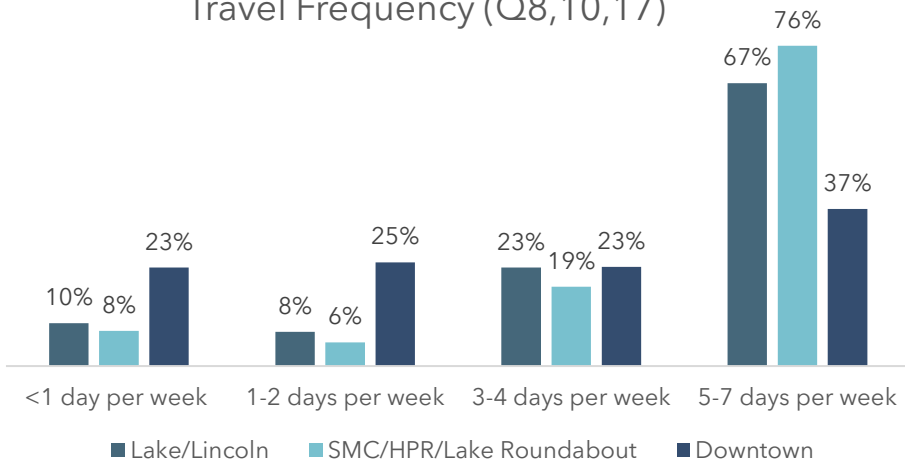
What area of town do you work in?



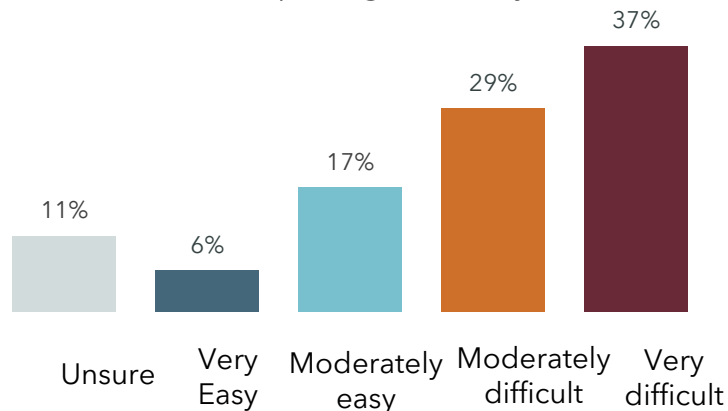
# Community Survey Preliminary Results

## TRAFFIC IMPACTS

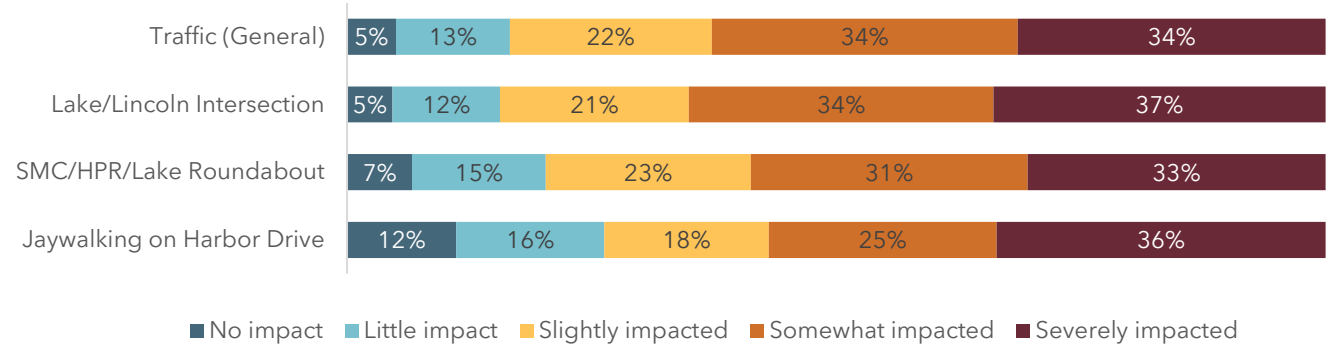
Travel Frequency (Q8,10,17)



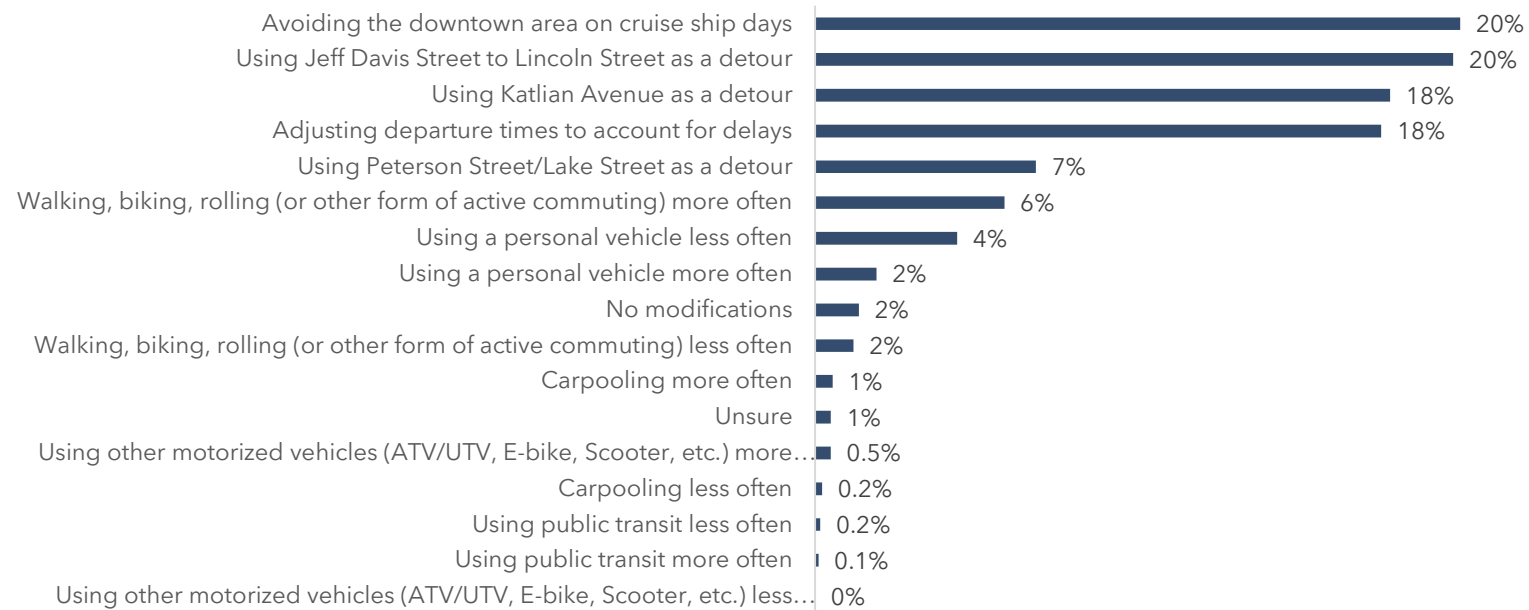
Q14. Rate downtown parking availability this summer.



Traffic Impact on Residents



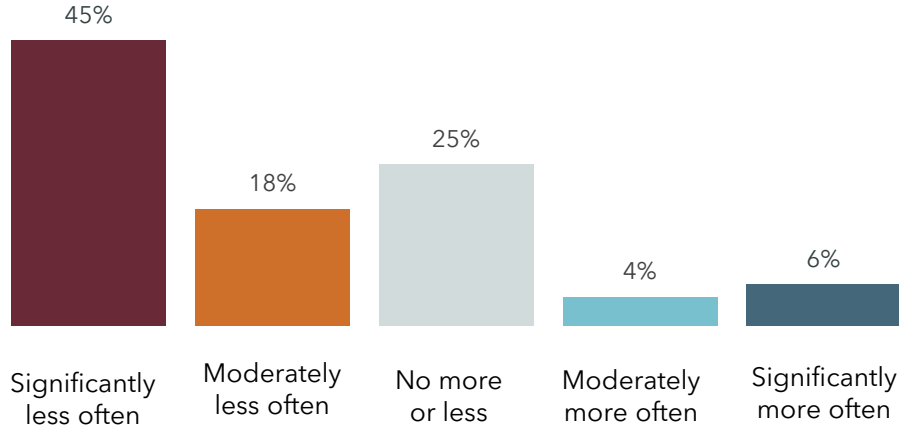
Q13. What modifications (if any) have you made to your commutes in light of traffic changes/impacts?



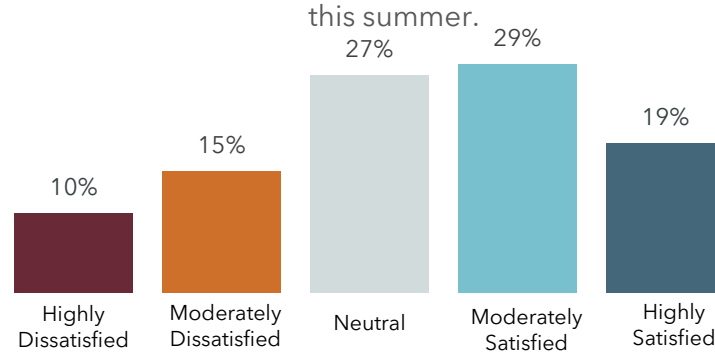
# Community Survey Preliminary Results

## LINCOLN STREET

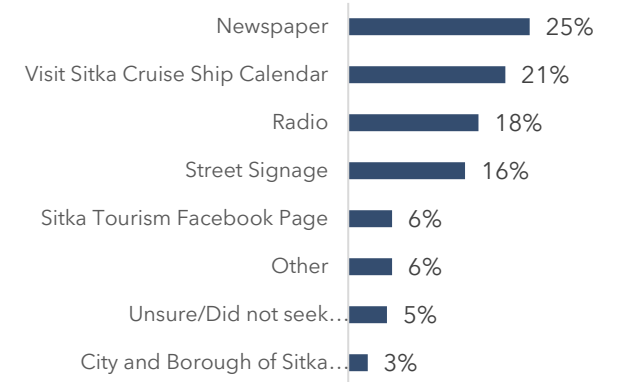
Q18. How much more or less did you go downtown on street closure days?



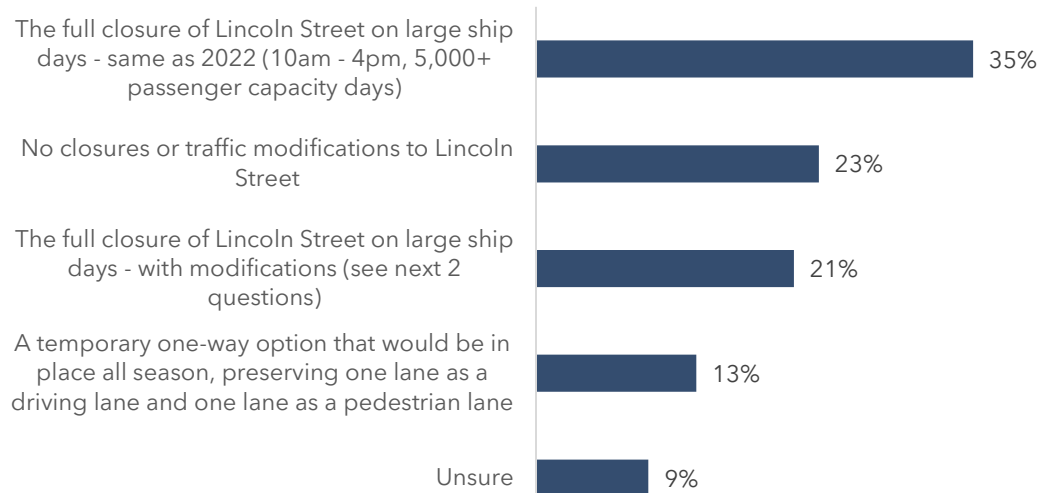
Q20. Rate your satisfaction with communications regarding Lincoln Street closures, traffic changes on city streets, or other public information relating to city tourism operations this summer.



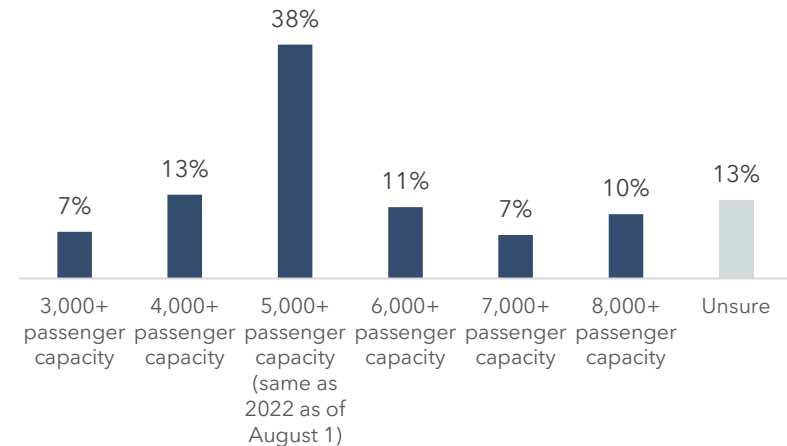
Q21. What was the primary communication medium you used for information regarding Lincoln Street closures?



Q22. Next season, I support:



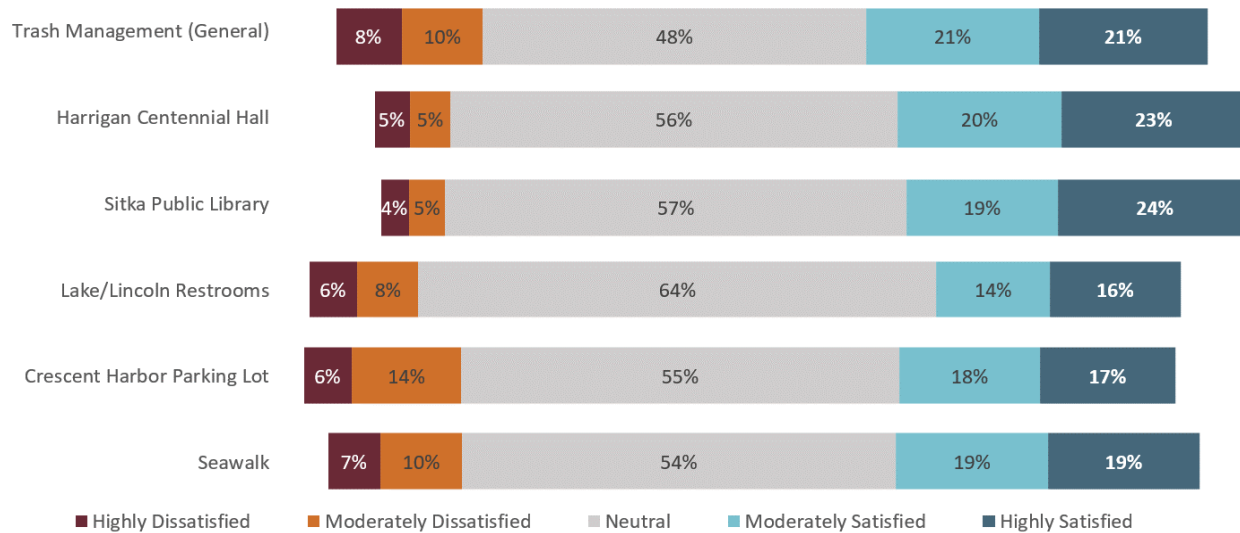
Q23. If Lincoln Street closures continue next season, closures should take place on days with:



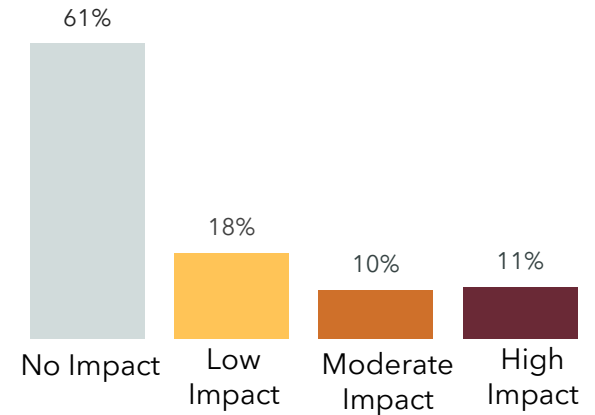
# Community Survey Preliminary Results

## OTHER CBS SITES/AMENITIES

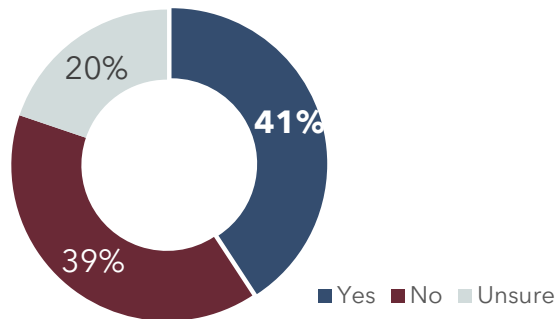
Rate your Satisfaction with trash management



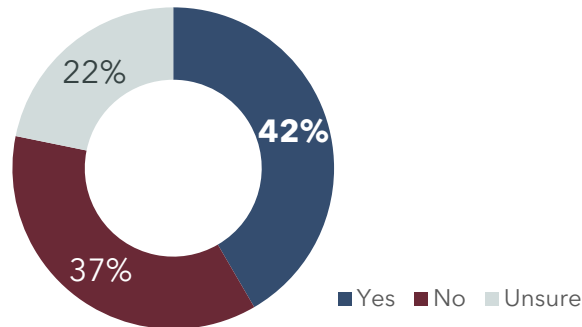
Q15. Describe how you were impacted by limited access to the Crescent Harbor boat launch.



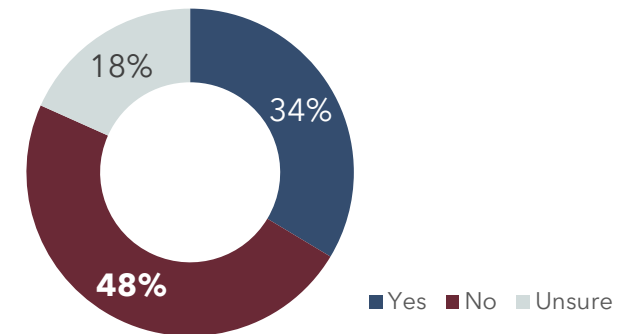
Q26. I support the use of the upper Maksoutoff Street for the placement of the temporary restroom units.



Q27. I support the use of the parking lane on Lincoln Street near Barracks Street for placement of a temporary restroom unit.



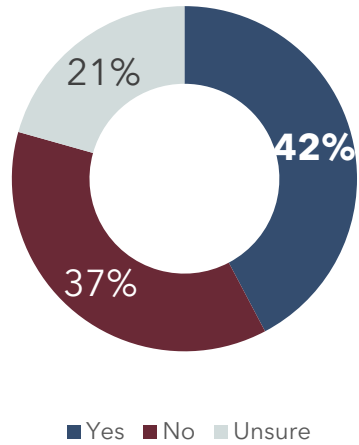
Q28. I would support the use of additional city funding to keep the temporary restrooms open during non-cruise ship days.



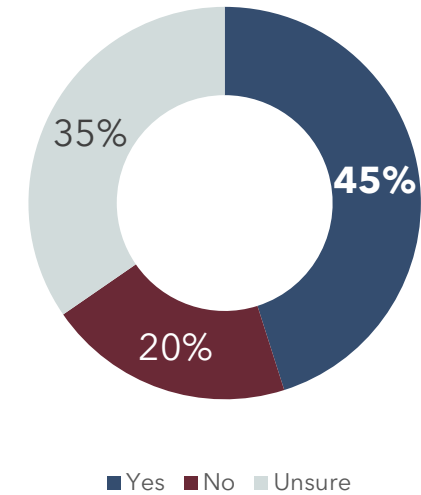
# Community Survey Preliminary Results

## PROGRAMS NEXT SEASON

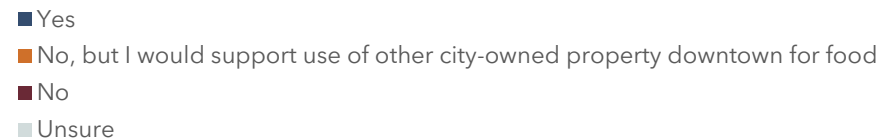
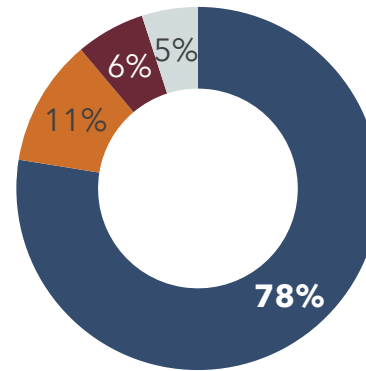
Q29. I support the use of city funding for a looping shuttle system to serve locals and visitors in the downtown area.



Q30. I would like to see the Walk, Bike, Win! program continued next season.



Q25. Next season, I support the permitting of food cart operations on Lincoln Street

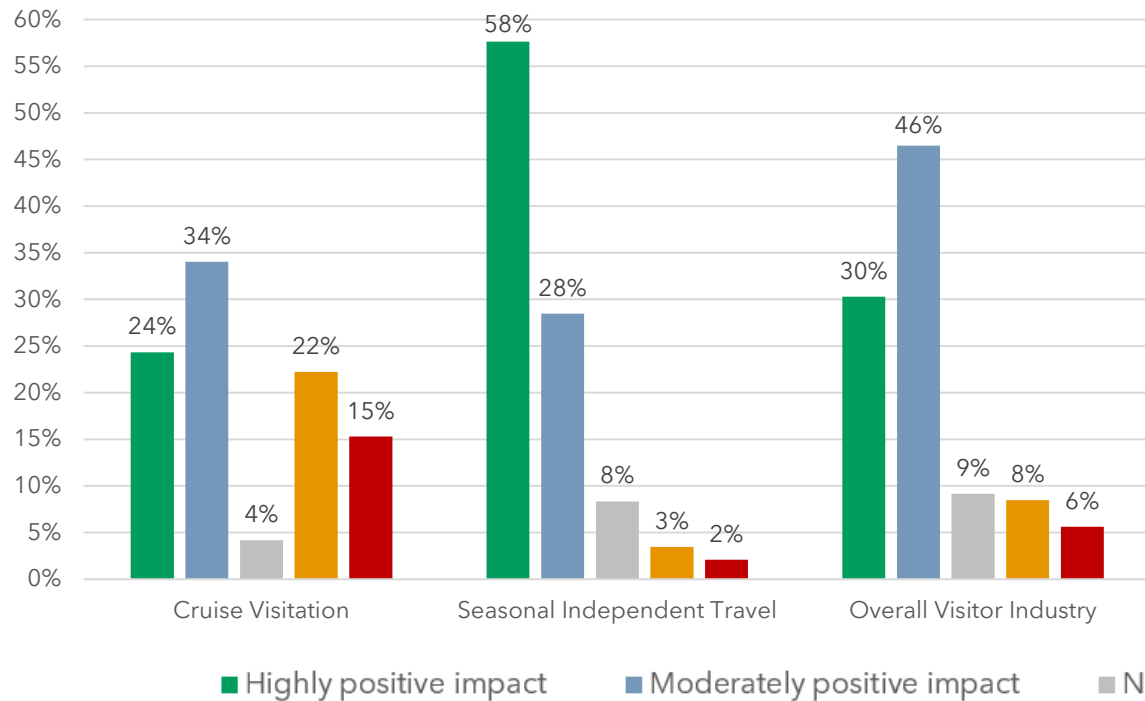




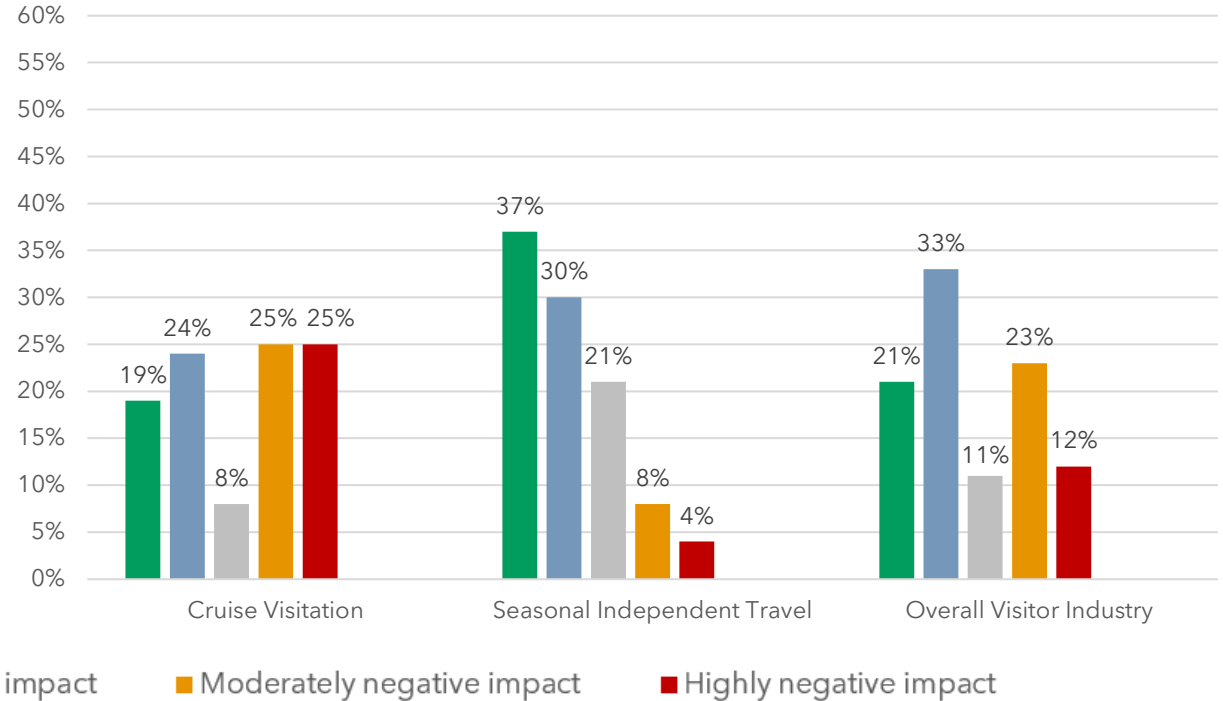
# Community Survey Preliminary Results

## OVERALL VISITOR INDUSTRY IMPACT

### Pre-Season Ratings



### Post-Season Ratings



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As an outcoming of the *Sitka Short-Term Tourism Plan*, which was developed in advance of the 2022 summer cruise ship season, CBS hired a traffic engineering team to collect traffic data and conduct field observations on multiple dates in August 2022 in order to:

- Understand the traffic impacts of the Lincoln Street closure on downtown circulation, pedestrian activity, wayfinding, road user behavior, resident travel impacts and downtown parking
- Quantify the range of bus, vehicle and pedestrian activity on quieter and larger volume cruise ship tourism days.
- Document traffic volume data, intersection operations and pedestrian crossings as justification for the Alaska Department of Transportation (DOT&PF) to make changes to state-managed transportation facilities in Sitka
- Support planning for continued tourism growth in Sitka

### Key Traffic Data Trends and Observations

- The Lake Street/Lincoln Street traffic signal serves significant tourism related pedestrian demand.
  - **The lack of left-turn lanes at the Lake Street / Lincoln Street intersection, in combination with high pedestrian demand many hours of the day can lead to significant vehicular delay and queues on Lake Street.**
  - While the timing of tourism related pedestrian activity varies based on cruise ship arrival and departure times, on a high volume tourism day, **pedestrian volumes crossing Lake Street (Harbor Drive) at the Lake Street / Lincoln Street intersection can exceed 500 pedestrian per hour for 7 hours of the day**
  - **On lower volume tourism days, pedestrian demand still exceeds 200 pedestrians per hour 6 hours of the day**
- There is significant pedestrian crossing activity across Harbor Drive between Harrigan Centennial Hall and Lincoln Street, with more than 14,000 pedestrian crossings a day on high volume cruise ship days.
  - **On high volume cruise ship tourism days, there are more pedestrians crossing Harbor Drive than vehicles driving along Harbor Drive.**
  - While a majority of pedestrians (8,500) utilize the signalized crosswalks at the Lake Street/Lincoln Street intersection, more than 3,000 pedestrians a day crossed Harbor Drive mid-block in front of Harrigan Centennial Hall.
  - Lack of obvious wayfinding and active (physical) routing leads to many pedestrians choosing to cross Harbor Drive wherever is convenient.
- **Overall, the Lincoln Street closure to vehicular traffic works well for accommodating the thousands of pedestrians present downtown on high volume cruise ship tourism days.**
  - When Lincoln Street is closed to traffic, there is no observable increase in traffic on adjacent roadways such as Seward Street and Katlian Street.
  - Many residents interviewed cited waiting until Lincoln Street is opened to vehicles to visit downtown.
- When Lincoln Street remains open to vehicle traffic on lower volume tourism days:
  - There is more pedestrian activity on the Lincoln Street corridor than vehicle use
  - The existing sidewalks seemed to reasonably accommodate the 1,000 – 2,000 daily pedestrians present in the downtown area
- When Lincoln Street is closed, downtown parking lots are more highly utilized, with 10% of spots available midday as compared to 20-25% of spots available on a lower tourism volume Lincoln Street open day.
- **Harrigan Centennial Hall is a focal point of tourism related activities downtown as the drop-off and pickup location for thousands of visitors a day.**
  - With more than 500 vehicles entering the main parking lot daily, including nearly 200 bus trips, and serving as the launching point for thousands of pedestrians, there are conflicts at the driveways and throughout the parking lot.
- There is also regular tourism related pedestrian crossing activity on Sawmill Creek Road at Rapor Way (leading the Raptor Center), and between the Fortress of the Bear parking area and main facility.

### Next Steps

Following the fall CBS Assembly and Planning Commission End-Tourism-Season work session, the transportation engineering team will work with CBS staff to develop transportation related recommendations to inform tourism planning efforts for 2023 and beyond, which will be further documented in a forthcoming Traffic Study.

# Stakeholder Outreach Summary Memorandum

September 13, 2022

Project# 27735

**To:** Amy Ainslie, Planning Director  
 City and Borough of Sitka  
 100 Lincoln Street  
 Sitka, AK 99835

**From:** Holly Spoth-Torres, Andrew Ooms, PE; Claire Dougherty, PE

**CC:** PTS - Dan Kirsch, PE and Jenny Liljedahl, PE,

**RE:** City of Sitka Traffic Study

## STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH SUMMARY

Stakeholder outreach focused on the 2022 cruise ship season and the Lincoln Street closures was conducted in parallel with traffic data collection in August 2022 to give the team a genuine view into the real experiences of stakeholders. The project team received input and feedback through a variety of methods including:

- Stakeholder Interviews
- Community Feedback Line

Following is a summary of the outreach tools, process, and major takeaway themes.

### Stakeholder Interview Summary

Stakeholder interview participants were identified by CBS staff and the project team. Participants were intended to be representative of a variety of individuals, businesses, agencies, and organizations who play a role in tourism, CBS operations and those impacted by traffic.

CBS Maintenance & Operations, Buildings/Grounds/Parks	Cruise Line Agencies of Alaska
Sitka Police Department	Sitka Sound Cruise Terminal
Sitka Fire Department	Alaska Coach Tours
State of Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities	Visit Sitka/Sitka Chamber of Commerce
Harrigan Centennial Hall	CBS Harbors

## Interview Methodology

Interviews were conducted by consultant staff. Following a brief overview of the purpose and goals of the Traffic Study, interviewers asked participants for their feedback on a variety of topics and questions, ranging from stakeholders' opinions on traffic and pedestrian circulation at various locations in Sitka, to their opinions on the 2022 Lincoln Street closures. All formal interviews were completed between August 8<sup>th</sup> and August 18<sup>th</sup>. In addition to formally identified and scheduled interviews, the project team spent two (2) days observing traffic patterns (August 9<sup>th</sup> and August 10<sup>th</sup>) and while doing so, completed dozens of informal interviews with visitors, downtown merchants, and staff of major tourist destinations.

## Major Themes

### *Lincoln Street Closure*

Overall, the logistics of the Lincoln Street closure is going very well for the agencies and organizations responsible for implementing the daily closures (CBS operations staff, emergency and safety personnel, and Visit Sitka). There is a communications protocol in place to respond to closure schedule adjustments due to shifts cruise ship schedules and estimated passenger counts, and the various departments and organizations are coordinating successfully. Agencies and organizations indicate that the closure was a little rocky at the beginning, but as residents and businesses become used to the process and know what to expect, things operate much, much more smoothly. Specific ideas from CBS and Visit Sitka staff for future adjustments include:

- More wayfinding and informational signs are needed on barriers to direct pedestrians and vehicles during closures.
- Consider more permanent infrastructure to assist with closures and circulation.

Informal discussions with merchants and locals indicated that at first, many were very skeptical of the Lincoln Street closure. However, after implementation of the closure many say that they have experienced very few negative impacts. Any impacts they do experience are outweighed by the huge benefits of pedestrian safety and an improved atmosphere on Lincoln Street. With few exceptions, businesses that provide services to local Sitkans are not experiencing significant impacts (banks, pharmacy). Businesses who serve locals, who indicated they were experiencing impacts due to the closure, generally didn't have an alternate parking or access point to their business. Additional, specific comments from informal interviews include:

- Most were glad that the threshold to close Lincoln Street was raised to 5,000.
- Some feel that 5,000 passenger count is still too low to close Lincoln Street.
- Many merchants would prefer visitors to be on a sidewalk and closer to their business, than in the middle of the street.
- An 11 AM closure time would significantly help delivery drivers needing access to Lincoln Street businesses.
- There should be more seating provided within the closure space.
- Some loved the restrooms, some did not. There was not an overall indication of consensus either way, however, it appears that the current restroom locations are not ideal for everyone.

### Lake Street & Lincoln Street Intersection

Almost every stakeholder interview of Sitkans, both formal and informal, expressed concern and frustration about the Lake Street & Lincoln Street intersection. The intersection is often unavoidable to get to and from services. Motorists traveling southbound on Lake Street who make a left turn from Lake Street onto Lincoln Street cause congestion and delays because the left turn and through lane are a shared lane. Public safety personnel indicate that emergency response times could be impacted with the congestion in the area. Interviewees provided many suggestions to remedy the delays including removing the Harbor Drive street parking in front of Stereo North to provide room for a through lane and a variety of signal timing changes for both vehicles and pedestrians.

### Pedestrian Circulation

Almost all interview participants stated that with increased numbers of pedestrians Downtown, more emphasis needs to be placed on wayfinding. Many agree that the new Visit Sitka wayfinding signs are beautiful and an amazing start, but the high flow of tourists who are unfamiliar with Sitka need even more directional assistance and general orientation. Interviewees expressed frustration and concern about the congestion and confusion of pedestrians at Harrigan Centennial Hall because visitor safety and experience is diminished. Visitors often don't know where to go, what to do, or how to find Downtown or their tour excursion. Specific comments heard multiple times include:

- Pedestrian circulation improvements should equitably distribute people throughout downtown
- Pedestrians frequently cross Harbor Drive in locations that do not have a crosswalk. Consideration should be given to add additional safe crossings.
- Pedestrian circulation through the Harrigan Centennial Hall parking lot and across Harbor Drive impacts coach bus ingress/egress



### Downtown Parking

Some interviewees, both formal and informal, discussed availability of downtown parking as a concern. However, other interviewees stated that though they had previously thought the Lincoln Street closure would create a lack of downtown parking, that overtime they have not experienced it as an issue. Many indicated that every time they look for parking, they are successful finding a spot. Multiple interview participants indicated that increased parking enforcement has helped to ensure vehicles are following the rules, thus freeing up more parking. Additionally, most indicated that the relocation of RIDE to Lincoln Street is a successful change, freeing up 10 spots in the Crescent Harbor parking lot.

## Community Feedback Line

CBS and Visit Sitka have established a Community Feedback line that gives anyone the opportunity to ask questions or provide feedback about the Lincoln Street Closures. The line (both telephone [907-747-4088] and email[sitkatourism@gmail.com]) is monitored by Visit Sitka staff and is reported monthly to the CBS staff.

Between May 13 and August 15 forty-five comments were received.

Related to traffic and the Lincoln Street Closure the comment log indicates very similar comments both positive and negative that the project team heard during the stakeholder interviews including:

- Comments in support of the Lincoln Street closure and commending the CBS for developing a tourism plan to accommodate increased visitation.
- Comments that don't support the Lincoln Street closure because of the impacts to businesses.
- Concerns with traffic congestion and delays at the Lake Street and Lincoln Street intersection.
- Concerns with tour bus noise and pollution.
- Concerns about the location and operating hours of the restrooms.
- Concerns about pedestrians not using crosswalks when crossing Harbor Drive
- Comments suggesting that the timing of the Lincoln Street closure could be reduced during the day.
- Many comments about needing more trash cans on Lincoln Street

A complete comment log can be found in the Appendix.

Appendix A  
**Community Feedback Line Summaries**

**LINCOLN  
STREET**

**CLOSURES**

## 2022 Sitka Tourism Feedback Tracking

May 13-July 18, 2022

Date	Source	Concern Type	Submitter Type	Summary
5/13/2022	VS Staff Email	Lincoln St. Closure	Resident	Resident concerned that the street is deserted and needs some vibrancy
5/15/2022	CBS Staff Email	Maksoutoff Restrooms	Resident	Resident concerned that restrooms were going to be located on the Harbor Drive side of Maksoutoff Street.
5/18/2022	VS Staff Phone	Lincoln St. Restrooms	Business Manager	Business concerned with the location of the restrooms on Lincoln St. changing the character of the street and the view in front of their business and would like alternate locations to be considered.
5/21/2022	Sitka Tourism Email	Shore Excursion	Cruise Visitor	Cruise visitor's perception that a tour she went on was not following health safety prodicals
5/23/2022	Feedback Line	Unknown	Unknown	None
5/23/2022	Feedback Line	Lincoln St. Closure	Business Owner	Business Owner concerned with the conjection with traffic at Lake and Lincoln intersection
6/3/2022	VS Email	Traffic Light@ Lincoln & Lake	Resident	Resident concerned with the conjection with traffic at Lake and Lincoln intersection
6/5/2022	Shared with VS Staff	Lincoln St. Closure	Business Owner	Business owner concerned about tar from road patch being tracked in to his store.
6/7/2022	Shared with VS Staff	Lincoln St. Restrooms	Resident	Resident did not understand why the Lincoln St. restrooms were not open for Porch Fest, a community event on 6/4/22



Date	Source	Concern Type	Submitter Type	Summary
6/8/2022	Shared with VS Staff/Rover	Cruise Passenger Support Services/ & Roving Information Staff program	Business Owner	Business owners wanted to commend Visit Sitka and the City for development of the Cruise Passenger Support Services/ & Roving Information Staff program. They stated that this program is so wonderful and has been needed in the community.
6/8/2022	Sitka Tourism Email	Traffic Light@ Lincoln & Lake, restrooms on Lincoln Street	Resident	Resident concerned with the congestion and traffic at Lake and Lincoln intersection & resident thinks potable restrooms shouldn't be on Lincoln Street.
6/8/2022	Sitka Tourism Email	Commending community on tourism plan	Resident	Commending the community on putting together a tourism plan to manage visitors. Commented on that the city should put the decorative flags back up on the street lamps and barricades need covers.
6/8/2022	Sitka Tourism Email	Concerned about the shuttle buses & e-bikes	Resident	Resident doesn't like the shuttle buses on the road or the e-bikes or bikes at all on the cross trail.
6/9/2022	Sitka Tourism Email	Traffic Light@ Lincoln & Lake	Resident	Resident wanted to share a possible solution to the traffic problem at Lake and Lincoln Street intersection. Suggested that a left turn lane be added with a left arrow.
6/9/2022	Feedback Line	Barricades on Lincoln Street	Resident	Resident doesn't think there should be barricades blocking Lincoln Street
6/9/2022	Sitka Tourism Email	Traffic Light@ Lincoln & Lake	Resident	Resident wanted to share a possible solution to the traffic problem at Lake and Lincoln Street intersection. Suggested that a left turn lane be added with a left arrow.
6/9/2022	Sitka Tourism Email	General Tourism	Resident	Resident is negative about tourism, doesn't like change
6/10/2022	Feedback Line	Lincon Street Closure	Resident	Resident gave positive feedback about downtown closure after initially expecting the worst.
6/13/2022	Sitka Tourism Email & Feedback line	Trash receptacles in downtown	Resident	Resident made suggestions about replacement of grey trash receptacles in downtown with brown bear proof cans.

Date	Source	Concern Type	Submitter Type	Summary
6/13/2022	Sitka Tourism Email	Lincoln Street Closure	Business Owner	Business owner is concerned that the street closure is hurting local business because people walking in the closed street are not being encouraged to go into the stores.
6/14/2022	Feedback Line	Lack of enough trash cans in the right places	Business	More trash cans near food booths, especially between The Cellar and City Hall.
6/14/2022	Feedback Line	Lincoln Street Closure	Resident	Resident gave his thoughts on benefits to the City overall on the closure of Lincoln Street. He didn't think it was overall profitable for the city, but didn't mind it. He was not crazy about the portable restrooms either, but had no other useful alternative.
6/15/2022	Feedback Line	Lack of enough trash cans in the right places	Business	More trash cans near food booths, especially between The Cellar and City Hall.
6/21/2022	Feedback Line	Lincoln St. Closure	Resident	He thinks closing off Lincoln Street is not necessary and more attention needs to be focused on the fishing fleet.
6/22/2022	Visit Sitka Phone Line	Visitors not using crosswalks at Harrigan Centennial	Resident	Visitors not using crosswalks at Harrigan Centennial when crossing Harbor Drive.
6/22/2022	VS Staff Email	General Tourism	International Visitor	Visitor loved trail system in Sitka.
6/23/2022	Sitka Tourism Email	Portable restrooms on Lincoln Street	Business Owner	Business owner wanted signage on portable restrooms so that visitors could find them better.
6/26/2022	Sitka Tourism Email	Traffic Light@ Lincoln & Lake and parking @ HCH	Resident	The taxi stand should not be 24-hours, so that parking spaces can be used at other times. Changing the traffic lanes at Lake & Lincoln Streets to a left turn lane and straight ahead with a right turn lane would help traffic congestion.
6/28/2022	Spoke to VS Sandy White	Lincoln Street Closure	Business Owner	Suggested that end times for closures should reflect the times the ships leave.

Date	Source	Concern Type	Submitter Type	Summary
6/29/2022	Spoke to VS Sandy White	No way to get to and from the airport	Visitors	The visitor center regularly receives calls regularly concerning how to get to and from the airport. The staff has received reports of a number of visitors being left stranded, having to walk to and from town with luggage. Locals have witnessed visitors walking to town after the midnight flight using the freight carts to get their luggage to downtown hotels.
7/1/2022	Feedback Line	Lincoln Street Closure	Business Owner	Business owner likes street closure and would like to see more activities in the street during closure.
7/4/2022	Spoke to Visit Service Coordinator	Lincoln Street Closure, Garbage	Business Owner	Business owner said that street was trashy after the July 3rd Cruise Ship traffic. She wondered if on heavy days like that if the street could be swept.
7/8/2022	Spoke to Visit Service Coordinator	Lincoln Street Closure	Business Owner	Business owner asked if there was a planning committee formed for the planning of next years summer closures and activities. She would like to participate and help.
7/11/2022	Sitka Tourism Email & Feedback line	Garbage	Resident	Resident is following up on his request of 6/13/22, where he requested the gray trash cans in downtown be replaced with the brown metal cans.
7/13/2022	Spoke to Visit Service Coordinator	Lincoln Street Closure	Business Owner	Business owner is still concerned that the street closure is hurting local business. He was not happy with the closure on the 13th. He thought it should not have happened.

Date	Source	Concern Type	Submitter Type	Summary
7/14/2022	Sitka Tourism Email	Lincoln Street Closure, Pedestrians @ HCH, Parking	Business	<p>It should be noted that on many street closure days that the street is nearly empty by 3 pm. Opening the street to traffic at that time would benefit businesses needing to load or unload product.</p> <p>Flaggers or signs are needed to keep people from jaywalking in front of the HCH. Also, the 3-hour parking should be increased to give people/business owners and employees more flexibility.</p>
7/14/2022	Feedback line	Lincoln Street Closure, Restrooms, Cell Phone Interruption, Transportation	Resident	<p>Caller had four main issues: Lincoln Street closure times are too long, restrooms should be open for every event, ships cause cell phone interruption, big buses tear up the roads and ships and buses should pay for upkeep.</p>
7/18/2022	Feedback line	Transportation	Resident	<p>Unknown caller from 7/14/22 called back with more concerns. The focus was on transportation, specifically expanding The Ride bus service to the weekends, and to address needs of the small boat cruise business.</p>
7/18/2022	CBS Planning Department	Pedestrians @ HCH	Business Owner	<p>Business owner stated that signage is needed for directions to crosswalks at Lincoln and Maksoutoff coming out of Centennial Hall. Tourists jaywalking like crazy in front of Harrigan.</p>

**LINCOLN  
STREET**

**CLOSURES**

## 2022 Sitka Tourism Feedback Tracking

July 19- August 1, 2022

Date	Source	Concern Type	Submitter Type	Summary
7/21/2022	Sitka Chamber Email	Visitor Misinformation	Business Owner	The merchant requested information concerning what food items were allowed back on board ship when passengers returned to their ship. The merchant also stated that they receive numerous questions from visitors concerning misinformation visitors were receiving about Sitka from their tour bus drivers.
7/27/2022	Spoke to Visit Center Staff	ADA Concerns	Visitors	Visiting couple expressed concern with having difficulty entering some stores due to wife's mobility issues.
7/27/2022	Spoke to Visit Service Coordinator	Pedestrians @ HCH	Business Staff	Downtown business staff relayed an incident concerning visitors crossing Harbor Drive in front of Harrigan Hall without using the cross walks.
7/28/2022	Visit Sitka Email	Transportation- Bikes	Resident	Resident is concerned about bike collisions with pedestrians on downtown sidewalks and has included flyers, graphics and PSA's to help mitigate the problem.
8/1/2022	Feedback Line	Traffic Noise	Resident	Resident is concerned about traffic noise. She wants something done about the loud tour buses.

**LINCOLN  
STREET**

**CLOSURES**

## 2022 Sitka Tourism Feedback Tracking

**August 2-15, 2022**

Date	Source	Concern Type	Submitter Type	Recipient	Summary
8/11/2022	Spoke to Visit Service Coordinator	Transportation	Business Staff	VS Sandy White	Downtown business staff relayed that he had heard from numerous visitors how difficult it was to get to and from the Airport and there needed to be a shuttle or other forms of transportation.
8/15/2022	Spoke to Visit Service Coordinator	Lincoln Street Closures	Resident	VS Sandy White	Resident on the street positively commented to Visit Services Coordinator that he liked the new barricade covers that were being installed and thought they were attractive and would leave a positive impression on visitors to Sitka.