

## Susan Phillips

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**From:** Alice Rarig <ararig@gci.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 02, 2017 1:59 PM  
**To:** Susan Phillips  
**Cc:** Jim Duncan; Mary Lou King; John Wilcock  
**Subject:** Proposal for Passenger Fees -- Observation Decks  
**Attachments:** Mount Roberts Observation Deck Repair.docx

Dear Mayor Koelsch, City Assembly and City Manager:

We have prepared a brief proposal for Juneau Cruise Ship Passenger Fee funds. We would be glad to provide letters of support and additional information if this meets with preliminary acceptance.

You can contact me as a representative of the Mount Roberts Stewardship Program of the Taku Conservation Foundation, or communicate with Mary Lou King of the Taku Conservation Society, Jim Duncan, General Manager of the Mount Roberts Tramway for Goldbelt Corporation, or John Wilcock, Chair of the Juneau Area State Parks Advisory Committee (emails included in the cc list) if you need additional information or background.

Thank you for your consideration of our application. We feel it addresses directly safety and access concerns for a very high proportion -- perhaps one quarter -- and large number of cruise ship passengers who visit Juneau each year.

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Mount Roberts Observation Deck Repair/Replacement  
Proposal for Cruise Ship Passenger Fee Use  
For Juneau Assembly Consideration, FY2017  
January 2, 2017

**Proposal:**

**Whereas:**

- (1) the three decks on the Alpine Loop Trail and Trail to the Cross just above the Mount Roberts Tram have become favorite destinations for tens of thousands of cruise ship passengers every summer,
- (2) the Mount Roberts Tramway is second only to the Mendenhall Glacier as a visitor destination in Southeast Alaska [or all Alaska?]
- (3) the decks accommodate visitors wishing to take photos, providing expansive and dramatic views, and providing safe space off the trail so that traffic is not obstructed, and so hikers do not trample vegetation, risk tripping on roots, or create muddy side trails – the decks have proven to vastly improve the tourist experience on the trail since they were built one year after the Tram’s opening,
- (4) the decks provide access to the “alpine” environment above tree line to visitors from around the world who may have no other opportunity to experience this environment during their Alaska cruise – this is a unique opportunity, with an easy trail walk,
- (5) the first and second decks are accessible to visitors with moderate limitations of mobility – no stairs need be climbed, and the distance from the observation building to the decks is less than 500’; the decks themselves have greatly enhanced the safety of the trail by providing a safe viewing area; the third deck can be reached without stairs but requires walking about two tenths of a mile up the trail,
- (6) the emergency landing area for helicopters is just a few yards above the first and second decks, which serve as gathering and waiting areas in instances where people may need to be shuttled by helicopter (for example in case of Tram breakdown),
- (7) the decks were built on City and Borough of Juneau land designated for recreational use, with an earlier passenger cruise fee allocation, nearly twenty years ago,
- (8) deterioration of the railings and the decking has become noticeable in the last several years,

**Therefore:**

Repairs or preferably replacement of the observation decks are increasingly necessary to ensure the safety of cruise ship passenger visitors, and continued access to exceptional views and the alpine environment not elsewhere available to those with mobility limitations.

**Relevant Information:**

The observation decks were built with CBJ funds on CBJ property, nearly twenty years ago, in response to the need to manage the enormous influx of visitors. Predominantly off the cruise ships, who wanted to walk safely to good views, to see the panoramas, look for wildlife, and take pictures. The amount of foot traffic resulting from the opening of the Tram vastly increased, resulting in a huge impact on the trail system. This was addressed by the State Parks Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, the City and Borough of Juneau Parks and Recreation Department, the nonprofit Trail Mix, Inc. and the commercial enterprises of the Mount Roberts Tram and Gastineau Guiding Nature Center in a collaborative effort with public volunteers who formed the voluntary Mount Roberts Stewardship Program. Trail widening and hardening, signage, and construction of the decks as “destinations” were the significant infrastructure improvements accomplished, all by joint and collaborative effort.

**Estimated Project Cost:**

Preliminary estimates of the cost of replacing the decks is \$25,000, about half for material and helicopter delivery, and half for labor.

**Responsibility:**

Project oversight and management could most appropriately be handled by CBJ Parks and Recreation. Mount Roberts Stewardship Program (now affiliated with Taku Conservation Society) could assist with planning and monitoring, and with implementation as needed. (Contact: Alice Rarig, [ararig@gci.net](mailto:ararig@gci.net), 907 789-4852)

**Eligibility:**

The observation decks are critical to the access to the alpine area, for safe and enjoyable visits even by people with some mobility limitations, and to the safety of the tens of thousands of cruise ship passengers who annually visit one of Juneau’s signature destinations.

Most days of the summer season, cruise ship passengers vastly outnumber “local” hikers on the trail and decks near the Tram “Mountain House” – with 250,000 Tram riders a season, we know Juneau residents likely make up fewer than 5% of the total riders – “season passes” number about 1200. Thus the decks are a critical piece of infrastructure for cruise ship passengers’ safe and enjoyable access to a favorite Juneau destination.