

Inspiring Personal Independence



SOUTHEAST ALASKA INDEPENDENT LIVING

3225 Hospital Dr, Suite 300, Juneau, Alaska 99801, 1-800-478-SAIL, ph/tty: 907-586-4920, fx: 907-586-4980

December 31, 2014

Kim Kiefer
City Manager
City and Borough of Juneau
155 S. Seward St.
Juneau, Alaska 99801

DEC 31 2014

CBJ Manager's Office

Re: Request for Marine Passenger Fee funding

Juneau Accessible Tourism Training and Services - \$44,887

Dear Ms. Kiefer:

Southeast Alaska Independent Living (SAIL) is submitting this request for Marine Passenger Fee proceeds for the period July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016 for our Accessible Tourism Program.

The goal of SAIL's Accessible Tourism Program is to help Juneau become the top destination in the country for safe and accessible travel for people with disabilities. With over 5,000 passengers who use wheelchairs expected to visit Juneau this coming summer, an aging "baby boomer" demographic, and growing global demand for accessible tour options for travelers with disabilities, the work of this program is increasingly imperative. Through this proposal, SAIL will build upon previous years' work and continue to expand and enhance partnerships made with the cruise industry, Juneau Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the Tourism Best Management Practices, to achieve this vision.

"[We] had a brilliant holiday – the best ever, and we found Alaska a truly amazing place. We hope to return again soon. With your help and lots of research Roger was able to participate in most experiences. The highlights were the accessible lift into the helicopter with Era helicopters in Juneau and the trip to the Taku glacier.... The staff at Era helicopters were brilliant and similarly on the Allen Marine boat trip. We were also impressed with the availability of tour coaches with wheelchair lifts. I wish there were more organizations [sic] like yours in other parts of the world."

-Mary Loveless, New Zealand,
September 2014

This project (entering its third season this summer, second with Marine Passenger Fee support) has provided assistance and services to hundreds of visitors with disabilities, their families, and the businesses who welcome them to Juneau each summer. Meeting the requirements of city code 69.20.120 under paragraph a, sections 2 and 3, continued support for this program means businesses and visitor venues will receive industry-leading training on best practices for assuring the comfort and safety of visitors with disabilities and that service gaps for those visitors are met while visiting Juneau (i.e. loan of wheel chairs and other assistive devices, trip planning, transportation options, etc.).

An Aging and Disability Resource Center and Partner Agency of United Way of Southeast Alaska

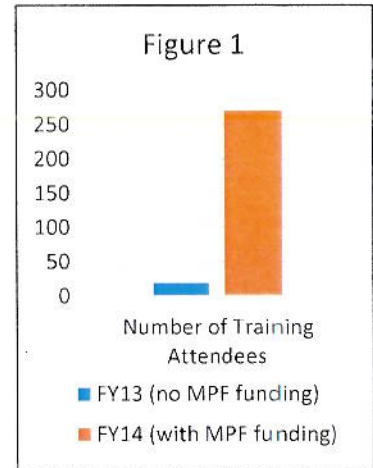
Information and Referral · Advocacy · Peer Support · Independent Living Skills Training
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SAIL’s funding request for FY16 has two main components:

1) **Training Program** SAIL will again provide a series of trainings to employees and volunteers serving cruise visitors to Alaska’s capital city. First year funding from the Marine Passenger Fee program in FY14 allowed SAIL to train over 250 volunteers, employees and business owners; a significant increase from just 19 individuals in FY13, prior to Marine Passenger Fee funding (see Figure 1). Continued funding will ensure that the number of individuals trained, and the quality of trainings, will be maintained at current levels. Each training opportunity is customized to fit the needs of the participants and/or specific sector, and focus on both the comfort and satisfaction of the visitor, but also the needs and requirements to safely assist a visitor with a disability. All participating venues/businesses/organizations will be recognized on the program’s accessible tourism website. \$7,544 will fund training opportunities for a minimum of 200 individuals.

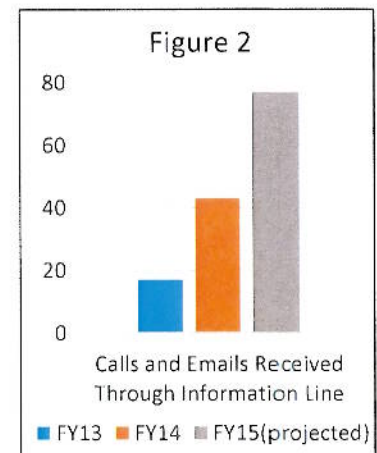


“The best practices in this field change fairly often and staying up to date on the relevant information is challenging. Having experienced professionals that are able to come give updates and answer service related questions brings significant value to our organization.”

-Robert Barr, Juneau Public Libraries Director

2) **Services to Increase Safety and Participation of Passengers with Disabilities** SAIL will provide on-shore and pre-trip support to passengers visiting Juneau experiencing a disability. These services can be broken down into two parts:

- a) SAIL will continue to offer a phone and email “info-line”. This service is available to visitors to Juneau, businesses and locals who are serving guests who experience a disability. Calls and requests range from day-of wheelchair and other adaptive equipment loan to questions regarding excursion and transportation accessibility. With the funds provided by the Marine Passenger program, SAIL responded to more than twice the number of inquiries compared to the prior year (see Figure 2). With continued funding, we expect that number to again nearly double in FY15. SAIL will also assist in making custom arrangements for tours, transportation and other services as needed. Here are two examples of letters and emails SAIL received from visitors who reached out to this program for assistance:



“SAIL provided my wife with a walker for the entire 10 days we were on a cruise. I thank you for this fine service.... Your [staff] was most cordial, reliable and efficient.”

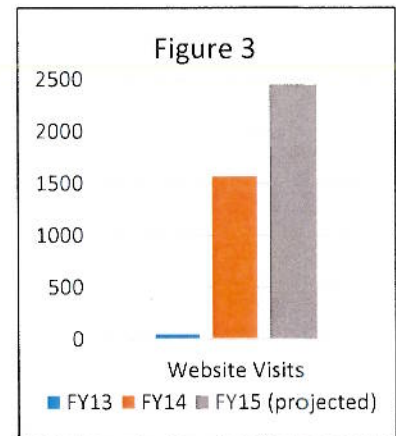
-George Tregasksi, New York



"I wish there were more people in the world like you. I was able to really enjoy myself [in Juneau]. Thanks for the loan of the wheelchair!"

-Letter from visitor Mae Eckard

b) The second component of this request is managing and enhancing the program's website, initiated last summer: www.alaskaaccessibletravel.com. The website contains, among other features and information, a list of accessible businesses. With over 1,500 website visits in FY14, we project a roughly 40% increase in website visits in FY15 (see Figure 3). As visitors increasingly turn to web-based platforms for information while traveling, SAIL's Accessible Tourism Program seeks to provide as much up-to-date information for visitors and others in their party as they plan their trip to Juneau. As SAIL continues to work with Juneau-based tour operators and businesses to provide appropriate information on the level of accessibility of their businesses, this website and business listing will work as a "carrot" to encourage the development of better, safer, and more diverse shore excursion, shopping and dining opportunities for people with disabilities visiting Juneau. This builds on our long-range goal of establishing a certification process for accessible businesses and venues.



"Providing access to all is a fundamental goal of our visitor center and a responsibility we take very seriously. SAIL helped us fulfill that responsibility."

-John Neary, Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center Director

Total cost to SAIL for staff support, website development, and information services for visitors to Juneau (components a and b): **\$37,343.**

Although clearly mission aligned, the SAIL Accessible Tourism Program would not be possible without funding from the Marine Passenger Fee program—SAIL simply does not have the resources to provide such a far reaching and comprehensive program without direct program support. That said, SAIL has, and will continue to, investigate possible revenue sources—including fees for service and direct contributions from the cruise line industry—to lessen or eliminate the need for ongoing support from the Marine Passenger Fund. Meanwhile, we urge you to look favorably upon this request.

We contend the SAIL Accessible Tourism Program fits squarely within the stated goals and intent of the fund and provides tremendous 'bang for the buck.' By addressing the safety and satisfaction of people with disabilities and their traveling companions, SAIL provides a benefit to everyone in the business community and local population associated with tourism. SAIL's Accessible Tourism Program has seen a dramatic increase in the number of businesses and venues trained and the number of visitors assisted—all of which is a direct result from Marine Passenger Fee funding. Continued support for this program will allow SAIL to further develop

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and establish services and training for the visitor industry, while pursuing alternative and/or augmentative funding. Thank you for this opportunity to apply for Marine Passenger Fee Funding for **Juneau Accessible Tourism Training and Services** in the amount of **\$44,887**.

If you have questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Joan O'Keefe', written in a cursive style.

Joan O'Keefe
Executive Director

An Aging and Disability Resource Center and Partner Agency of United Way of Southeast Alaska

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