From: Robert Deering
To: Clerks Office
Subject: VTF Comments
Date: Friday, October 30, 2026 6:09:48 PM

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Hello,

Please include the following comments as input into the upcoming VTF meeting. I will be traveling and unable to attend.

1. Please reach out to the Neighborhood Associations that represent areas impacted by helicopter noise, as well as other tourism activities. The noise impacts to my neighborhood (Radcliffe Road) have been severe and consistent over the years. We, as a neighborhood, have reached out to the operators in the past and had substantive discussions, but to my knowledge our association has never been contacted by CBJ on this subject, despite repeated resident reports to the TBMP complaint line as well as participation in tourism impact surveys. You have formally established Neighborhood Associations - why aren't you engaging with them? This seems like the exact type of issue that they were set up for.

2. Remote flightseeing heliport - I strongly support the development of a seasonal heliport that reduces the transit of helicopters over residential areas. Several years ago the operations director for Northstar identified an optimal location for a seasonal heliport - a flat bench of State-owned land at the end of Montana Creek Road. In his opinion at the time, it possessed many of the qualities that would make it an ideal site, including shorter distance to the snow field, minimal congestion with airport operations, flight paths would avoid passing over residential areas, and the site size and contours lent themselves well to a remote operation. There would be some impacts to residents in the area from bus traffic on Montana Creek Road, but the impacts from periodic traffic on a public road do not remotely compare to continuous helicopter traffic above residential neighborhoods. If this option has been explored in further depth, is there a report documenting it?

3. Dangerous traffic intersection(s) associated with flightseeing bus traffic. While this is not exclusively a tourism impact issue, it plays a significant role. The traffic intersections around the Egan Drive/Old Dairy Road exit and on ramp have become chaotic and dangerous with the rapidly growing development of the Honsinger Pond area (Petro One/Global Credit Union/Juneau Greens). Honsinger Road and Maplesden Way (leading to Temsco Helicopters) are far too close together. The frequent bus traffic entering and exiting Maplesden and the growing traffic on Honsinger Way all converge with higher-speed traffic exiting Egan along with accelerating traffic entering Egan. There are no established turn lanes for these intersections. I have not seen any recognition of this specific issue in the conceptual solutions for traffic signals on Egan. The appropriate solution would be to merge Honsinger and Maplesden into one street before it intersects with Old Dairy Road. A remote seasonal heliport would also be very helpful in mitigating this issue.

4. Helicopter Noise Study - I support this effort, though the prospect of yet another study that adds years to any solutions is dismaying. I urge you to conduct multiple studies in parallel

rather than series. Regarding the noise study, I would ask that impacted residents have some input to the scope and structure of the study. We have decades of direct experience and observations of the helicopter noise as it pertains to our neighborhoods and can undoubted add value to the study. I reviewed the study conducted as part of the original USFS EIS for the establishment of landing permits on the snow field and found it deficient in several areas.

5. Consolidation of helicopter departures. While this would appear to be an obvious improvement from many perspectives, it also significantly increases the intensity of noise experienced on the ground due to the low-frequency noise generated by the interaction of sound waves from closely spaced helicopters. Noise impacts certainly are related to the duration of the noise, but the intensity of the noise can sometimes be more impactful. This should be included in the noise study.

6. The newer helicopters with enclosed tail rotors have certainly helped decrease low-frequency noise, meaning that the impact from more distant helicopters has been reduced. But as the helicopters pass overhead the rotor noise seems to be louder and more invasive. This should be included in the noise study.

7. The airspeed of helicopters as they return to the airport is a large factor in noise intensity. These speeds appear to be very inconsistent - establishment of slower speed limits should be adopted for all helicopters, regardless if flightseeing or charter. Whether the flight is related to a charter or flightseeing is utterly irrelevant to impacted residents - noise is noise. Operations should be low-impact regardless of the purpose of the flight.

8. Item #3 in the Mayor's Charge to the VTF is: *Develop a structure for revolving loan program to encourage investment in projects including clean energy, emission reduction, and other impact mitigation capital investments.*
- The City and VTF should seek the transition away from helicopter flightseeing to the glacier in favor of more sustainable and lower-emission energy sources, in accordance with the founding charge of the VTF. What efforts have been made to date to meet that charge?
- One option that should be explored is the installation of a tram up to the snowfield area. A tram would operate on clean, renewable energy. Noise impacts would vanish (other than buses perhaps). And the cost for visitors to experience the snowfield would be significantly reduced. I've had conceptual discussions with Leitner Poma, one of the primary builders of trams for the ski industry worldwide (including the Mt. Roberts tram incidentally). They stated that building a tram capable of operating in the terrain and distances being considered here would be a relatively routine project for them. They frequently install trams much longer and through more challenging terrain.
- Goldbelt would be the obvious operator of a tram, but there would likely be other companies willing to explore this opportunity.
- Another benefit of the tram option is that ticket sales would be subject to sales taxes, while helicopter flights are excluded from sales taxes by federal law.

9. Cruise ship wakes - Gastineau Channel. The wakes from cruise ships traveling from Marmion Island to Sheep Creek have grown significantly over the past couple decades. Wake magnitude is a function of vessel speed and displacement.
- The displacement of the cruise ships visiting Juneau has increased dramatically over the past 30 years. In 1996 the Carnival Destiny has a gross tonnage of 101,000 tons. The newest visiting cruise ships, such as the Icon of the Seas, are 249,000 tons.
- The cruise ships have decreased their speed as they approach Juneau Harbor, but they're still

traveling too fast at the south end of the channel - approximately 13 kts.
- The wakes present a safety hazard for other boaters transiting the channel, especially small boats fishing and crabbing in the channel, and property owners accessing their cabins on south Douglas Island. Due to the constrained nature of the channel, it's impossible for other boats to increase separation from the ships.
- Recommendation: Work with the Coast Guard and SEPA to establish more appropriate and safe speeds in Gastineau Channel.

Thank you,
Bob Deering
Juneau