TO: CBJ Visitor Industry Task Force
FROM: Jo Boehme
Date: 11/2/2026
RE: Public Comment on VITF's Preliminary Recommendations

Thank you for your work during the 2026 Visitor Industry Task Force 2.0 session. I've lived full-time in Juneau for 32 years; I've seen explosive growth of cruise ship tourism with many negative impacts on my quality of life and Juneau's overall quality of life.

I will address the 42 items in your Recommendations Tracker spreadsheet by category on page two. I must begin with what I see as a glaring omission - your recommendations don't address the second half of your defined vision.

Vision and Guiding Principles

Carried forward unchanged from the 2002 Juneau Tourism Management Plan and reaffirmed by VITF. This plan revisits the vision only if the Task Force finds it outdated:

- Anchors every goal, strategy and metric against a single, consistent standard
- Gives the public and the Assembly a fixed reference point for evaluating whether the Plan is working

Vision Statement

"A healthy and vibrant tourism sector protecting Juneau's heritage and cultural values, and making a positive contribution to the community's quality of life."

The Task Force failed to address public comments about quality of life obtained during the 2023 and 2025 Juneau Tourism Survey Reports. These survey results include:

1. Cruise Passenger Volume: in 2023, 50% responded their preference for future cruise passenger volume to be lower; one third (33%) preferred keeping it the same. Passenger volumes have grown steadily for the past 4 years.

2. Tourism Management: Despite the 5 ship limit and the 16,000/12,000 passenger limit agreement between CBJ and the cruise line association, Juneau's cruise passenger volume continues to grow annually, negatively impacting the community's quality of life, as listed in the 42 items in VITF's preliminary recommendations.

The 2025 survey measured residents' sentiment of tourism impacts with 39% reporting both positive and negative impacts, 10% reporting negatives outweigh positives, for a combined 49% reporting cruise tourism contributing negative impacts in their lives. 31% of residents reported positive cruise tourism impacts outweighing negative.

Draft Recommendation #20 states, "Recognizing that the status quo is not sustainable….."
It's time to right that wrong with recommendations to CBJ Assembly for Juneau's Tourism Plan to include measurable goals and performance measures to reduce cruise ship passenger volume. The 5 ship limit and passenger limits failed to prevent Juneau's cruise ship passenger growth.

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Turning to VITF's Draft Recommendation tracker by category:
My overarching input on the majority of these 42 items is that most can be mitigated by reducing Juneau's annual cruise passenger volume.

Items 1-4 General:
Improving reports, audits, communication with the public are all fine targets.
- **Improve transparency** between the public and CBJ Tourism Management, cruise line agencies, TBMP partners.
- **Housing**: USCG first! Hire local.
- Establish a **permanent visitor industry task force** working group established by the Assembly that reports to the Assembly and the public quarterly.
- **Re-define "small cruise ships"** to not more than 200 passengers. UnCruise, Lindblad/NatGeo and American Cruise Lines' passenger capacity are all under 200. The current definition is 950 passengers.

Items 5-17 Downtown Congestion
Prioritize finishing the Sea Walk to support walkers, reduce sidewalk congestion and bus/ van traffic.
Work closely with DOT on all downtown projects/improvements to maximize cyclist and pedestrian safety and vehicle flow. Prioritize access for police/fire/rescue for Thane residents.
- No new/alternative heliports - this would only increase congestion in downtown and other neighborhoods by transporting cruise passengers by bus/van and increase helicopter noise to remote neighborhoods.

Items 18 Helicopter Flightseeing
Include focus on flights during low cloud ceiling weather, because helicopters fly lower (Mendenhall) or change routes to low along the coast above houses rather than inland (Herbert/Eagle Glaciers) in low visibility conditions.
Proceed with described helicopter flight seeing studies
- **study float plane flightseeing** in Gastineau Channel: noise, congestion.

Items 20-23 Whale Watching…."Status quo is not sustainable. "
I agree with all recommendations. Make this a 2027 priority.
- **Regulate NOW.**
- **Establish a moratorium** - no new operators, limited entry
- require permitting, self-regulation is NOT working.
- apply to 6 pack fishing charters which also offer whale watching en route to fishing grounds.

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Items 24-41 Data Gathering

Agree with Visitor and Resident Sentiment Surveys if question selection/analysis is done by a third party contractor to eliminate bias. Post all survey results prominently for transparency with the public.

Agree with TBMP reports - post results prominently for transparency with the public.

- **measure volume and impact of downtown car rentals** such as Turo, peer-to-peer rentals, direct rentals contracted with cruise lines.

- **track unreimbursed CBJ services** such as medical transport of passengers to/from airport or hospital, and police/rescue services to identify potential new revenue streams.

Item 42 General

Re-write the VITF Vision Statement to define **"Community's Quality of Life"** based on public input.