Response to Visitor Industry Task Force Proposals
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Residents of Thane Road

CROSSING GUARDS #17
The crossing guard program this summer was well organized and very effective. The new management by JEDC has made such a positive difference in easing traffic through an exceptionally congested area.

REINSTATING CROSSWALK BETWEEN HERITAGE WAY TO MARINE PARK
Please please, NO. With the experience of many years of having to stop as tourists crossed that particular section, I witnessed many problems. The #1 problem is any time there are 3-4 vehicles proceeding through the green light at the T-intersection, if pedestrians are in the crosswalk, traffic backs-up, creating a blocked intersection. When the light switches, nobody can move until the original flow of traffic is cleared.

It creates a particularly tense and dangerous situation. Drivers of vehicles farther back in the line, especially those unfamiliar with the layout, begin to honk. Slow moving individuals in the crosswalk, comfortable with knowing they have the right away, do not or cannot transit more quickly.

The crosswalk at the light is a mere 200 additional feet. For pedestrians going toward the library, the option for another crosswalk in 230 feet.

The final reason to NOT restore this crosswalk is the t-intersection coming from Seward St., between the municipal building and SeaAlaska. The raised concrete islands at that point definitely create confusion for drivers and walkers unfamiliar with the area, introducing another unsafe element.

A**LTERNATE HELIPORT SITES: NOT THANE!**
Note: This section is exactly the same as that written by Lari Spengler. I simply could not improve on her reasoning and persuasive arguments.

The draft recommendations include suggesting (#18) that a consultant look at, among other things, alternate heliport sites as a way to address the dreadful tourism helicopter noise assaults suffered by so many Juneau residents. While it may make sense for the city to look at this, the prospect of Thane as a potential alternative site should be taken off the table from the outset.

When alternate sites were being discussed in 2001-2002, the Thane Neighborhood Association did a survey of Thane residents which showed overwhelming opposition to any Thane-adjacent location. There were 89 responses to the survey, which had an 80% response rate.

There were very good reasons for that opposition, all of which have only intensified with the exponential growth of cruise ship tourism in the intervening 24 years.

There was concern about the increase in noise from the helicopters.

There was huge concern about the increase of traffic on Thane, which back then was (and still is) narrow and winding, with no shoulders. If putting a heliport on Thane was a bad idea 24 years ago, how much worse it would be now, with the still-decrepit state of Thane Road combined with the tremendous growth in visitor numbers and those transiting to heliports.

Another aspect of this equation is the difficulty in emergency vehicles (ambulances, fire trucks, police cars) getting through the increasingly unmanageable summer downtown congestion to travel to Thane, or to the southern cruise ship docks. The city has outlined a system to counter those delays with the help of crossing guards. But despite all the good will in the world, the downtown crowds make speedy and smooth access for emergency vehicles a huge challenge. If a heliport were placed somewhere Thane-adjacent, and there was a severely ill passenger — or, heaven forfend, a bad accident — Thane Road itself would be more crowded with heliport-related traffic, which would be on top of the regular downtown crush. Thus help would not come as swiftly as it would to another location.

Two other strikes against locating a heliport somewhere Thane-adjacent are the high winds that sometimes impact this end of the channel, and the fact that avalanche season (and thus, Thane Road closures) and the spring cruise ship shoulder season overlap.

An additional aspect of this is simple fairness. Of all neighborhoods, Thane already bears the hugely burdensome brunt of the seasonal downtown congestion. It would be simply unfair to add heliport-bound buses and vans to our decrepit road, and additional helicopter noise to our lives.

…our additional comment: Thane Road residents live with more than enough noise pollution from single and double-engine aircraft, helicopters, cruise ships, tour boats and jet skies. Add in the two additional months of tourist traffic in recent years and our cherished neighborhood and homes are beleaguered.

VISITOR/RESIDENT SAFETY: ADD STREETLIGHTS

The addition of street lights from just past the South Franklin Street Dock (Dock B) to Mill Street would greatly increase pedestrian safety. With the increasing length of the cruise ship season into early October, this would increase safety for tourists from ships berthed at the AJ Dock walking in the dusk or dark along that section of road. It would also improve safety for local pedestrians using that stretch of sidewalk throughout the dark winter months, in particular, those using the warming shelter off of Mill Street.