

Date: May 17, 2004

To: Dale Pernula, Director  
Community Development Department

From: Sam Kito III, PE  
Transportation Development Manager

Subject: Potential impacts of cruise ship moorage in the Subport area

The State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities has a project entitled "Egan Drive – Whittier to Main Street" programmed in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) for funding in Federal Fiscal Year 2006. This project will be assumed as existing for the purpose of this analysis.

The Egan Drive Whittier to Main Street improvements project includes a traffic signal at Whittier Street, widened sidewalks along most of the route, a raised median between Whittier and Willoughby, restriction of left turns out of Willoughby, and pedestrian crossing improvements at Willoughby. The project will also include trees located along Egan, which will assist in calming traffic between Whittier and Willoughby. A map identifying most of these improvements is attached to this memorandum.

In the event the City considers cruise ship facilities located at the Subport complex, the following comments are offered as preliminary review and assessment of the impacts of such development on congestion in downtown Juneau.

The existing transportation system located at the Subport complex includes Egan Drive, a four-lane primary arterial that connects downtown Juneau with Douglas and the Mendenhall Valley. Whittier Street is a collector that links Egan Drive with Willoughby Avenue.

Adding cruise ship moorage at the Subport location will result in tour bus, passenger vehicle and service vehicle trips in to and out of the Subport area. The signal located at Whittier Street will allow the site to effectively accommodate left turning vehicles exiting the Subport. The signal will also serve to slow traffic along Egan Drive, and will accommodate pedestrians crossing Egan. The intersection has the capability to accommodate tour bus activities much more easily than does the existing infrastructure on Egan Drive south of Main Street. The proposed signal at Whittier will allow vehicles to perform all necessary traffic movements to access and exit the site without concerns of significant traffic delay.

Assuming that the property currently held by the Mental Health Trust is utilized to accommodate the upland development needs for servicing the cruise ships, there should be adequate land area to accommodate the loading and maneuvering of tour buses and other vehicles. Depending on the offshore location of a cruise ship pier, the existing uses of the Coast Guard and NOAA could be compatible with the cruise ship use.

Pedestrian activity would be effectively accommodated through crosswalks at Whittier Street, an improved pedestrian crossing at the intersection of Egan Drive with Willoughby Avenue, and by widened sidewalks along Egan Drive. There will still be a narrow area of sidewalk adjacent to the Merchants Wharf building. This could possibly be mitigated by addition of a sea-walk located on the waterside between the Seadrome Building and Marine Park.

The addition of tourist related pedestrian activity in the Whittier/Willoughby area will result in a significant increase of pedestrian/vehicle conflicts, especially along the interior streets of Whittier and Willoughby. The nature of this will change from predominantly state and local business oriented, to a mixture of tourism activities and business activities. The improvements to Egan Drive should accommodate the additional pedestrian activity, but Egan Drive between Whittier and Main Streets will take on a decidedly local character.

By far, the greatest traffic impact of adding cruise ship berths at the Subport will not be a result of the development itself, but will result from the loss of parking at the Subport due to redevelopment of the property. It is anticipated that the loss of parking will occur before redevelopment of the Subport in what ever form that may take. The Subport parking lot currently holds between 170-195 vehicles. These vehicles will still be downtown, and will be attempting to occupy any on street parking downtown.