

THANE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

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Re: Thane Neighborhood Association: Tourism Suggestions

January 15, 2020

Greetings, Visitor Industry Task Force:

The Thane Neighborhood Association has put together the below 11 specific suggestions, generated by Thane residents, for mitigating some of the ways Thane folk have been impacted by tourism. The ideas are the result of discussion at the Thane annual meeting held in November, discussion at the December Thane board meeting, discussion at a January special Thane meeting on tourism impacts, and numerous e-mail exchanges among Thane residents.

Note that there is a separate Thane letter to the task force, forwarding the individual views of responding Thane residents on the cruise ship/passenger limits question.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns and proposed solutions!

Sincerely,

Larri Irene Spengler
Secretary, Thane Neighborhood Association

cc: Juneau Assembly

1. Emergency Vehicles: Two summers ago, a Thane resident flat-lined in an ambulance traveling at a crawl, stopping and starting and stopping again, through the South Franklin traffic bottleneck. This past summer, another Thane resident at the library observed an ambulance having the same kind of trouble. Getting emergency vehicles (ambulances, police cars, fire trucks) smoothly and speedily through this area to reach and to return from various cruise ship docks, the rock dump area, and the Thane residential area is critically important to life and safety.

We have come up with three possibilities that the city should consider. One of these or another plan should be implemented before the upcoming cruise ship season:

A) Juneau's first responders could establish a protocol that for the duration of an emergency vehicle's passage would let the crossing guards know to keep traffic moving (instead of stopping it for pedestrians), and would stop busses from entering the main road from the bus loading zones. Dispatch could communicate with the crossing guards using whatever technology the first responders determine would work best (such as walkie talkies or pagers or smart phone alerts or an alert siren such as used for the Salmon Creek dam).

Note: When emergency vehicles use their sirens, drivers are trained to pull over and stop. On South Franklin there is no place to pull over, and stopping results in gridlock. So maybe the protocol should have the emergency vehicles not using their sirens on the South Franklin stretch.

B) Emergency vehicles could travel via the sea walk between the Princess dock and Marine Park.

C) The city could improve the Gastineau Avenue extension sufficiently to allow emergency vehicles use it to bypass the South Franklin bottleneck.

2. Speed (Wake) Reduction Between Dupont and Town: A few years ago an elderly Thane resident got knocked out of his skiff in front of his home by the wake wave of a passing cruise ship. Only by luck did a neighbor see him fall out so her husband was able to get him to the beach. Another Thane resident's skiff, moored offshore from his home, was flipped at the mooring by a wake wave. Another had his vessel's antennae broken by a wake wave. A number of people who have been fishing along the shore of Gastineau Channel have been dramatically disrupted by such waves. Something must be done by the coming summer to ensure that the cruise ships go more slowly between Dupont and town as they travel Gastineau Channel. Perhaps the city could request the Coast Guard

to impose a speed limit, or slower speeds could be incorporated into the Tourism Best Management Practices (like ships refraining from making loud onboard announcement as they pass the Thane residential area).

3. Extend Railings, Plantings, and Chains: The passive tool of using railings, plantings, and picturesque chain blockades along the South Franklin's congested stretch has worked very well to deter pedestrians from wandering into the street except at pedestrian cross-walks, making those on foot safer and making life easier for those driving. This appears to be a very easy and effective improvement: the city should use marine passenger fee funds to extend such blockades all along that stretch by the coming summer.

4. Crossing Guards: Overall the crossing guards have made a huge difference in regulating traffic flow in the downtown bottleneck. Thinking back to the time before they became part of the picture, many Thane residents remember a constant yet unpredictable flow of tourists crossing the streets — both on the crosswalks, and any other place on the street as well.

However, improvements are needed, probably largely via training to improve consistency. Here are seven observations about how the crossing guard coverage could be changed for the better.

- a. Every crosswalk should have at least one crossing guard, rather than some having none and some having two.
- b. It seems rather random which crosswalks get guards; some almost never have any, some do sometimes and other times don't.
- c. It is dangerous to have crosswalks without guards. Drivers are used to just driving through unless a guard stops the traffic along that problematic section, and are out of the habit of yielding to pedestrians for crosswalks with no guards.
- d. Crossing guards are intermittently very disrespected by visitors. It might be useful to have some sort of supervisor (maybe even in a city uniform) pass the various crosswalks intermittently throughout the day to see if they have had any problems, or need help brainstorming how to handle a situation.
- e. Occasionally some crossing guards can seem spacey or irritable or erratic; we wonder if the contract the city has for the guards requires them

to be given adequate breaks from what is at once a repetitive and stressful job.

f. Crossing guards should not be texting or on their phones while on duty.

g. The city should use the marine passenger fee funds to ensure that crosswalks are covered by crossing guards at least through the going-home commute hour, and later than on days with more ships staying late in port.

5. Pedicabs Limitations: Thane residents have observed that pedicabs slow traffic in the South Franklin congestion zone considerably. One possible solution would be to move them out on to the sea walk between the Princess dock and Marine Park. Additionally, the city should not allow any more such non-standard, slower-than-the-normal-traffic-flow, tour businesses to operate on city streets, be it any additional pedicab companies or be it something new, like horse- or dog-drawn carts.

6. Minimize Distracted Driving: When a tour bus or van driver is both driving and narrating a tour for the passengers, distracted and slow driving results. The city should require that until leaving the downtown area (including along Calhoun Avenue past the Governor's Mansion) tour vehicles should either have two guides on board (one to drive, the other to narrate), or have a recording that describes Juneau history and such while the driver drives.

7. No Sidewalk Blockages: Given the relatively narrow sidewalks (compared to the surging crowds of visitors) along South Franklin, the city should prohibit shops along there from using precious sidewalk space to display their wares or to post hawkers.

8. Timing Garbage and Freight Trucks: The difficulty of driving on South Franklin during the summer is exacerbated when garbage trucks — which must stop continually at bins — are added in to the mix. The city should do what it can to time garbage trucks (and large freight trucks, for that matter) before or after the flood of tourism-related transportation.

9. Dock Electrification: In order to improve air quality, cruise ship docks should be equipped with shore power connections.

10. Explore Circulator Concept: We understand that there have been discussions about whether downtown congestion (so unpleasant for visitors as well as locals) could be improved by a circulator system that could take cruise ship visitors to another location to connect with the busses and vans that currently pick them up on the waterfront. The city should analyze that possibility systematically and carefully, to see if it would be a useful addition — especially considering how it might change the way downtown looks and feels 10 or 20 years into the future.

11. Explore Ship Timing: We think it would be very worthwhile for the city to analyze systematically and carefully what the effect would be on downtown congestion, and the overall welcoming feel of downtown, if cruise ship arrivals were spaced out throughout the day (rather than so many arriving early in the morning) and throughout the week (so that the distribution of visitors was more even, rather than peaking dramatically on Tuesdays, for example). Further, the city should determine what authority it has for implementing management techniques for such spacing.