

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 4/15/2022 4:00:58 PM

First name: Bruce

Last name: Abel

Organization: Don Abel Building Supply

Title:

Comments: Please bare with me, this document is very difficult to navigate. I attended the open house at the Visitors center and I appreciate the effort that has gone into the alternatives. However, as it's hard to distinguish the alternatives online I'll try to narrate my thoughts.

#### WEST SIDE IMPROVEMENTS:

Parking: Alternative #2 makes the most sense for a 50 year plan. It has the best tie in with the new Welcome Center and offers easiest access for elderly visitors. It also provides the most parking, thus offering the least disruption to local users. New lots for Crystal Lake trailhead and the Power-line trailhead are needed as well.

Welcome Center: This is a much needed improvement. Food, a indoor observation and rest area venue with restrooms to accommodate the volume of current and future traffic is essential. It also is gives Juneau a venue for events (weddings, recitals, etc) in off season months that would generate revenue and improve the community. Elderly visitors can have a warm dry place to observe and enjoy the glacier. This would be a welcome upgrade.

The existing Visitor Center should be expanded and improved. The current configuration is beyond its ability to accommodate summer demand. Even if nothing else is done this building needs additional capacity.

In general: There needs to be enough restroom capacity on site to eliminate the portable toilets. A food concession is also an important addition to the area.

Trails: The East Glacier loop could use minor surfacing improvements. This trail is used heavily and is showing wear.

A new trailing linking the East and West sides along the lake with a wide enough trail to accommodate winter activities such as cross country skiing should be built. My preference is to inset 1/2 the trail from the beach (I'm not sure which alternative this was) to leave some natural shore line. Beach trail spurs would allow access while ensuring a natural view-shed for part of the lake.

Steep creek: A majority raised walkway from the Welcome Center to the Power Line trail is a good idea for access, protection and wildlife.

Powerline Trail: this trail could use some minor resurfacing and drainage improvements. Currently the trail floods and people walk the edges to avoid getting wet. This causes further erosion.

Dredge Lake Trails: This area needs improved parking and could, in certain areas, use improved surfacing. I would do very little to this trail system.

Mendenhall Lake Campground: Improved Parking is urgently needed. The West Side cannot support any additional traffic without more parking. Connecting it to the East side via a new lake side trail would improved long term recreational use.

Trail improvements to the West Glacier Trail are needed for safety. Currently people climb up the rock outcrop, which is steep and dangerous, on the way to the glacier. It is easy to get lost since the trail becomes poorly defined. As the popularity of the West side grows this will become an increasing problem under its current configuration.

A West side visitor center and viewing area will become a must as the glacier continues to recede from the lake. Quality access to a warm indoor view area and restrooms are essential to continue observation and access to the glacier in the future.

The small rental cabins near the glacier are an intriguing idea that will be a popular addition to the campground. Local photographers would enjoy night viewing all year round and these could provide a safe place for photographing the Aurora. This is one of the most exciting proposals.

Boats & Docks. If boats are allowed on the lake then the dock and associated trail system make sense. The advantage to boats is that they help concentrate bus traffic on the East side of the lake, which is less disruptive to locals. Additionally, it is an easy way to regulate traffic to the West side, which would ensure visitors don't overrun the West side viewing area. As difficult as it would be to see this happen I do believe it would improve the overall Mendenhall area experience. The sale of the concession would also generate revenue.

My above comments are all written in support of the concepts mentioned. Some things, such as the curved bridge between the Welcome Center and the existing Visitor Center I've not mentioned as they are of little impact to any of the designs and seem integral to the plaza design and traffic flow.

Finally, what isn't a reasonable option is "No Further Development". Juneau will continue to grow as a tourist destination, hence the need to manage the visitor experience for current and future demand. If we allow the Mendenhall area to be overrun it will diminish the visitor experience for tourists and locals. Overuse of the facilities will ultimately increase maintenance and operations cost. Both people and wildlife will be negatively impacted.

Thank you,  
Bruce Abel