

WHITTIER MOVES TRANSPORTATION MASTER PLAN



Pop-up Booth & Survey Summary

Wednesday, July 16, 2025

Morning (10:30 AM – 2:00 PM)

- Head of the Bay Cruise Ship Dock
- Whittier Harbor

Afternoon (3:30 PM – 6:00 PM)

- Begich Towers
- Cliffside Marina Cruise Ship Dock

Pop-up Booth Staff:

Judy Chapman, Planning Lead

Adison Spafford, Assistant City Manager

Renee Whitesell, PTP, SSGI-CAP, Project Manager

Kendal Ramage, Transportation Planner

Kate Silber, Land Use Planner

Connor Denning, Traffic Engineer

Talli Vittetoe, Public Involvement

DOT&PF

City of Whittier

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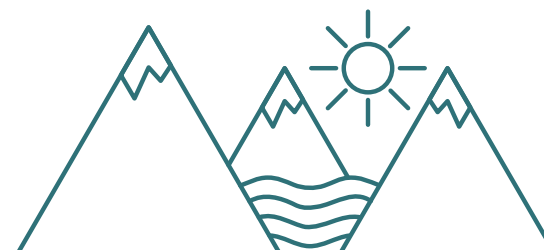
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Pop-up Booth Summary

Whittier Moves Overview

On Wednesday, July 16, 2025, the Whittier Moves Transportation Master Plan (Whittier Moves) planning team, hosted four pop-up information booths throughout Whittier to share plan information, listen to local perspectives, and gather input from the community. Temporary booths included a tent, table, and engagement materials (fact sheets, maps, e-mail sign up forms, and online survey QR codes) Staff from the planning team were present to answer questions and facilitate conversations. The informal pop-up format allowed participants to engage at their convenience and provided an approachable way to participate in the planning process.



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Figure 1: Kate Silber and Kendal Ramage from DOWL at the Head of the Bay pop-up booth on July 16, 2025.
(Photo by Yereth Rosen/Alaska Beacon)

Summary of Comments

Community feedback gathered at the pop-up booths reflected a wide range of interests and concerns. Attendees shared thoughtful comments and asked questions about project goals, timelines, and how priorities would be incorporated. Comments are summarized below based on suggestions for improvement and comments/concerns:

Suggestions for Improvement:

- Improved signage and wayfinding, specifically for:
 - Cruise ship docks
 - Trailheads
 - Parking payment booths
 - Waterfront businesses
 - Whittier Street/ Whittier Access Road intersection
 - Shuttles locating Phillips Cruises
 - Dock unloading locations
 - Smitty's Cove



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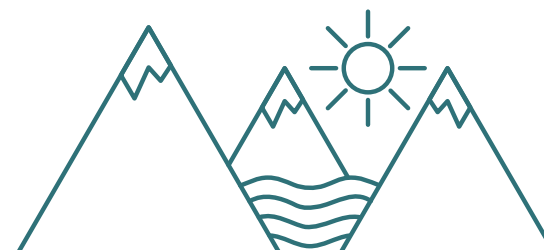
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- Pedestrian tunnel
- Maps of Whittier for visitors
- Expand harbor capacity and amenities, including:
 - Additional parking and slips
 - Improved bathroom facilities and ongoing maintenance
- Implement traffic calming measures in high-activity areas, such as:
 - Boat launch and harbor triangle
 - Railroad passenger platform
- Provide summer shuttle service connecting the Head of the Bay terminal, popular trailheads, Whittier Harbor, and downtown Whittier
- Add parking near the Head of the Bay terminal, paired with a shuttle service to reduce congestion and improve access
- Pave the road to the Head of the Bay terminal, which is frequently rutted by RV and bus traffic
- Add a pavilion to the tunnel staging area
- Consider building another tunnel to address future demand
- Replace DeLong Dock
- Add a helipad to support emergency services and helicopter tour operations
- Remove the Buckner Building to open up space and improve connectivity
- Improve Blackstone Road to accommodate trucks
- Clear the brush that causes a blind turn at Blackstone Road and Depot Road
- Improve the line of sight at the bend coming into Whittier
- Extend the railroad track to the Head of the Bay terminal

Comments and Concerns:

- Parking availability on busy weekends
- Preference for visitors to use the train instead of buses to improve congestion and safety on the Seward Highway
- Tour buses queue behind the railroad passenger platform, creating unsafe conditions for pedestrians crossing the road
- Personal vehicles are often delayed in the tunnel due to bus traffic; some suggested prioritizing cars or opening the heavy traffic side when the tunnel is otherwise empty
- Concerns that Whittier may outgrow the current tunnel capacity, particularly with tourism
- Businesses in the harbor struggle to move customers efficiently when buses have tunnel priority



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- Congestion was noted near Blackstone Road and Shotgun Cove Road
- No designated path for cruise passengers to walk between town and the Head of the Bay terminal; many must walk along the road and drag luggage, raising safety concerns
- Conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles were noted, especially in areas lacking proper striping
- Conflicts at the boat launch create operational challenges
- Confusion over where and how to pay for parking; many noted they would have paid for parking if they knew how to
- Clarification requested regarding ownership and maintenance responsibilities, specifically in relation to Alaska Marine Lines (AML)

Survey Response Summary

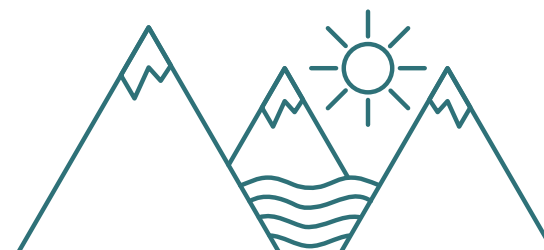
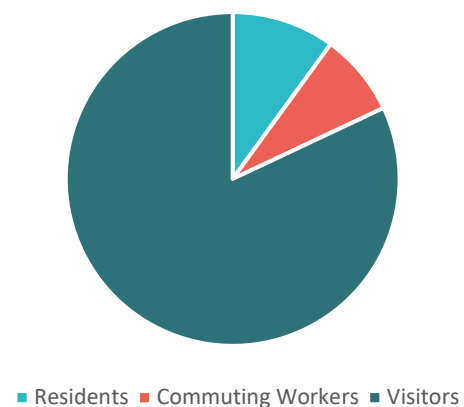
Survey Overview

The anonymous “Whittier Moves Transportation Master Plan Survey” was available to the public from July 15 to July 31, 2025. It was shared through email invitations, posted flyers, news media, and word of mouth, in addition to QR code cards distributed at the Bear Valley toll booth, the harbor master’s office, and during the pop-up events on July 16. The survey consisted of optional multiple-choice and free-response questions, which were tailored based on respondents’ self-reported connection to Whittier.

In total, 448 responses were received. Because some participants skipped individual questions, response counts vary by question. Results will be shared at public and stakeholder meetings and engagement events, and will help guide discussion, planning, and research throughout the master-planning process.

The first question asked respondents to identify their relationship to the community: resident, commuting worker, or visitor. Of the 448 who answered, ten percent (45) were residents, eight percent (36) were commuting workers, and 82 percent (367) were visitors. These groups serve as the framework for the following summary.

Response Breakdown



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Resident Question Summary

What is your primary mode of transportation within Whittier?

Among the 41 residents who answered, 80 percent (33) primarily use a vehicle (car, ATV, UTV, snowmachine, etc.). Walking was the next most common mode at 12 percent (5), followed by bicycling at five percent (2), and private plane use at three percent (1).

How satisfied are you with the condition and maintenance of local roads and parking areas?

Of the 41 residents who answered, seven percent (3) felt very satisfied and 27 percent (11) felt satisfied. The remaining respondents reported feeling dissatisfied or very dissatisfied, citing concerns such as:

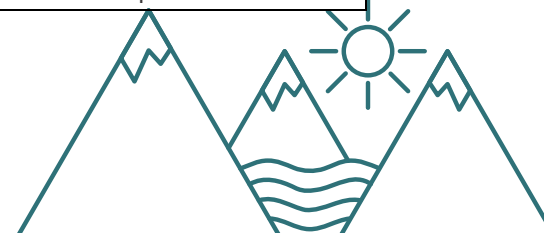
- Potholes and poor road conditions
- Delays due to train crossings
- Congestion from parking area placement
- Sidewalks in disrepair
- Disparity between conditions of state- and city-maintained roads

During the busy summer season, how often do you experience issues finding parking near your home or other local amenities?

Of the 41 residents who answered, 41 percent (17) reported frequent issues, 49 percent (20) reported occasional or rare issues, and 10 percent (4) reported never experiencing issues.

Of the following potential improvements, what type(s) are important to you? Please select your top three.

Answer Choices	Number of Responses
Reducing areas of congestion and delay	22
Other (please specify)	17
Improved snow removal and winter maintenance	16
Improved sidewalks and walking routes	15
Safer crossings near the harbor and small boat launch	14
Better signage and wayfinding	11
Improved tunnel parking and staging	10
More parking	9
Traffic calming (speed reduction)	7
Cruise ship development	4
Improved rail connections	3
None of the above	1



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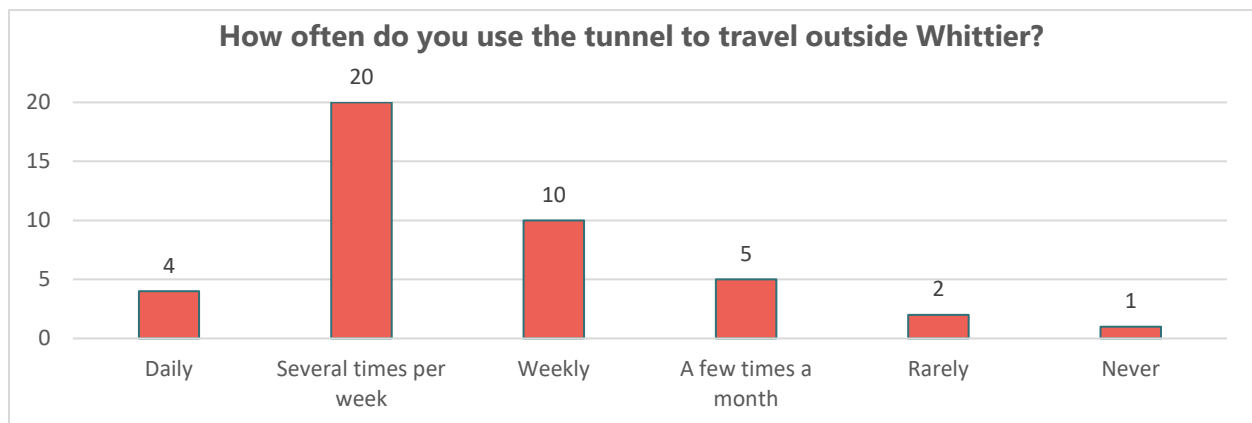


Residents who selected Other (please specify) noted the following improvements:

- Summer road maintenance
- Airport/airstrip maintenance and improvement
- Reduced railroad presence
- Construction of a separate vehicle tunnel/road
- Reduction of bus traffic
- Pothole repairs
- Priority harbor parking for residents
- Relocation of the ferry terminal
- Free tunnel access for residents
- Enforcement of zoning codes

How often do you use the tunnel to travel outside Whittier?

Of the 42 residents who answered, 10 percent (4) reported daily tunnel use, 70 percent (30) use it weekly or several times per week, 12 percent (5) a few times per month, and seven percent (3) rarely or never.



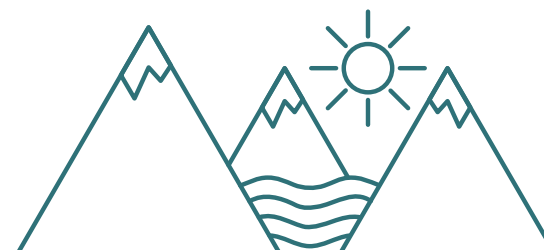
Do you feel the tunnel schedule meets residents' and visitors' needs?

Of the 42 residents who answered, 48 percent (20) said yes, 19 percent (8) said sometimes, 29 percent (12) said no, and five percent (2) said the question was not applicable.

Do you operate a commercial fishing boat or barge delivery service in Whittier? If so, please note your company and describe any issues or barriers to your operations.

Of the 10 residents who answered, seven said no. The three residents who answered yes cited the following concerns:

- Winter snow removal impacts freight trucks
- Inequitable harbor moorage allocation
- Congestion at railroad crossings



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If you currently own a business in Whittier or are interested in starting a business in Whittier, what are the transportation or land use problems you face?

Of the 14 residents who answered, five said they do not own and are not interested in owning a business. The nine who indicated they do own or are interested in owning a business provided the following responses:

- Tunnel schedule constraints
- Truck/bus traffic and speed
- Rail crossing blockages
- Limited housing
- City administration
- Cruise ship terminal congestion
- Limited land/unused storefront locations

What is the best thing about living in Whittier?

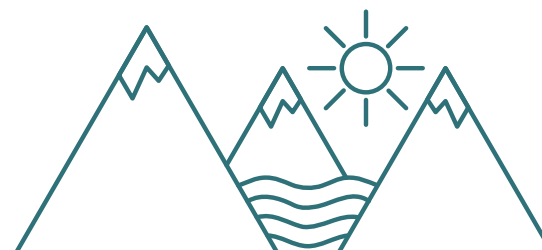
The 30 resident responses are summarized as follows:

- Small-town feel with proximity to the road system and Anchorage
- Scenic surroundings
- Outdoor recreation opportunities in Prince William Sound and Chugach National Forest
- In-town recreation options

Please share any additional comments or suggestions about transportation in Whittier.

The 30 resident responses are summarized as follows:

- Increase rail usage over buses/motorcoaches for incoming cruise passengers
- Maintain or improve the airport
- Reprioritize the tunnel schedule to favor residents
- Extend tunnel operating hours
- Construct a pedestrian tunnel from the cruise terminal to the parking lot
- Improve the railroad crossing
- Reduce corporate land ownership
- Improve existing sidewalks and construct new ones
- Complete rail connections to the new terminal
- Improve interactions with city administration
- Add shuttle service for residents and visitors



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Resident Themes

Issues

- Poor road and sidewalk conditions, including potholes and winter maintenance
- Parking congestion and limited availability
- Railroad crossing delays and tunnel schedule constraints

Needs

- Improved snow removal and seasonal maintenance
- Safer and more accessible sidewalks and pedestrian crossings
- Airport/airstrip maintenance and improvements

Opportunities and Suggested Solutions

- Extend and reprioritize tunnel hours to better serve residents
- Increase rail use over buses/motorcoaches for cruise passengers
- Add shuttle service to improve local circulation
- Strengthen coordination with city administration and address corporate land ownership concerns

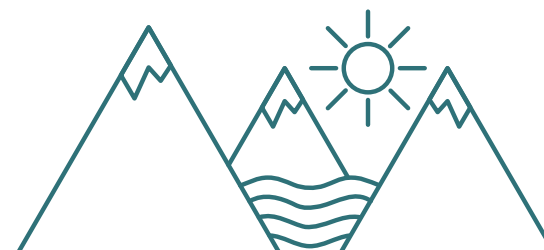
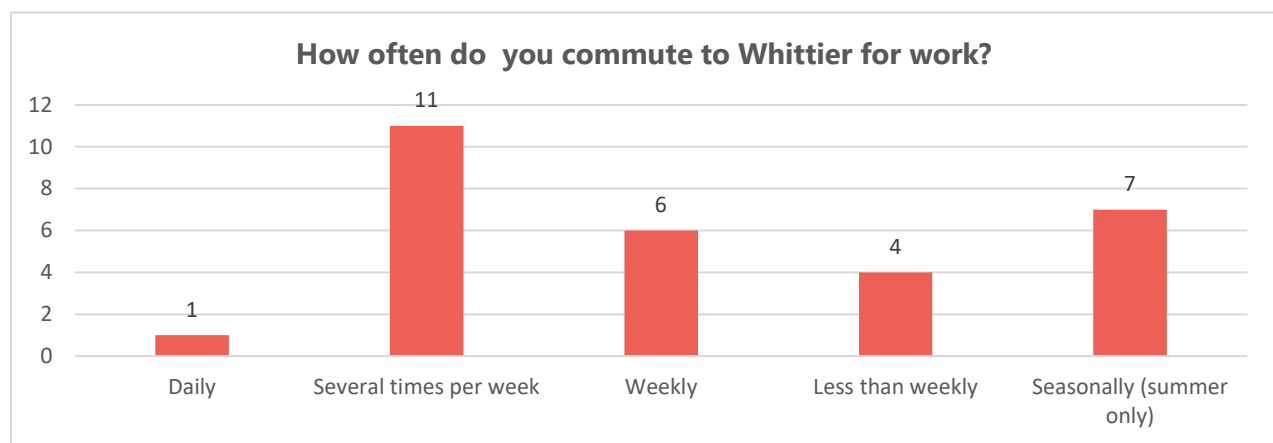
Commuter Question Summary

Where do you primarily commute from?

Of the 29 commuters who answered this question, 69 percent (20) commute from Anchorage, 10 percent (3) from Girdwood, and 21 percent from other locations, including Southern Kenai Peninsula, Chugiak/Peters Creek, Kenai, and Wasilla.

How often do you commute to Whittier for work?

Of the 29 commuters who responded, 3 percent (1) commute daily, 59 percent (17) commute weekly or several times per week, 14 percent (4) commute less than weekly, and 24 percent (7) commute only during the summer season.



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How often do you visit Whittier for recreational or commercial activities?

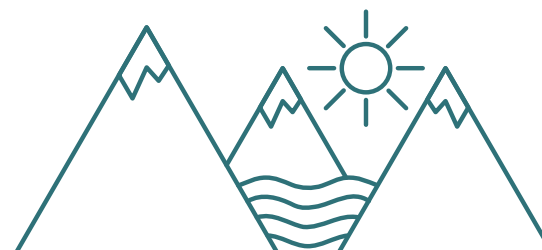
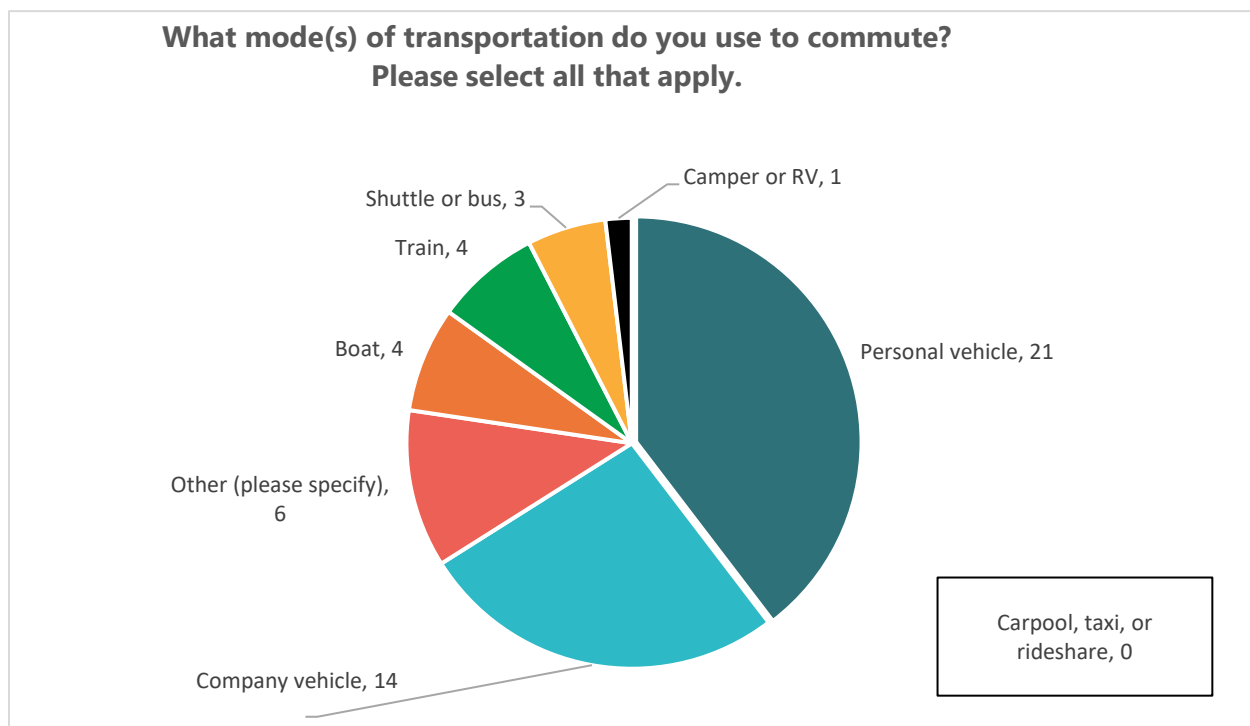
Of the 29 commuters who answered this question, three percent (1) visit daily, 38 percent (11) visit weekly or a few times per week, 34 percent (10) visit monthly or a few times per month, and 24 percent (7) visit less than once per month.

What mode(s) of transportation do you use to commute? Please select all that apply.

The responses of the 29 commuters who answered this question are as follows:

- Personal vehicle, 21
- Company vehicle, 14
- Other (please specify), 6
- Boat, 4
- Train, 4
- Shuttle or bus, 3
- Camper or RV, 1
- Carpool, 0
- Taxi or rideshare, 0

Among those who selected Other (please specify), responses included commuting by aircraft/airplane.



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What challenges do you face while commuting to Whittier? Please check all that apply.

Answer Choices	Number of Responses
Tunnel delays or schedule limitations	21
Road conditions on the Seward Highway or Portage Road	17
Weather conditions (snow, ice, visibility)	13
Parking availability	10
Limited services or facilities	10
Other (please specify)	2

Among those who selected Other (please specify), responses included weather-permitting flights to Whittier and the Prince William Sound, as well as concerns about the harbor conditions.

Do you ever walk or bike within Whittier during your workday?

Of the 29 commuters who answered this question, 21 percent (6) answered yes, regularly, 31 percent (9) answered occasionally, and 48 percent (14) answered no.

Do you operate a commercial fishing boat or barge delivery service in Whittier? If so, please note your company and describe any issues or barriers to your operations.

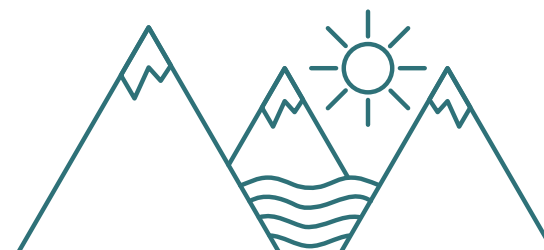
Of the 18 commuters who answered this question, 12 answered no. The six who indicated they do operate a commercial fishing boat or barge delivery service cited the following concerns:

- Lack of basic harbor infrastructure (dock cranes, boat lifts, repair areas)
- Traffic and congestion, combined with train schedule constraints for customers
- Limited boat slips
- Limited parking availability

What is the best thing about working in Whittier?

The 25 commuter responses are summarized as follows:

- Friendly community
- Access to Prince William Sound and surrounding nature
- Scenic beauty and enjoyable weather
- Convenient week-on/week-off work schedules with the option to live outside Whittier
- Local businesses
- Proximity to Anchorage



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What transportation or traffic improvements would make commuting or working in Whittier easier or safer?

The 25 commuter responses are summarized as follows:

- Extended tunnel hours
- Regulated traffic hours for RV, bus, and motorcoach traffic
- Airport improvements
- Additional parking
- Increased road speed enforcement and pedestrian crossing enforcement
- Additional sidewalks
- Reduced cruise ship mooring
- Expanded shuttle service between cruise ports, the train stop, and the harbor
- Elevated gondolas
- New traffic-only tunnel
- Additional road lanes
- Additional harbor amenities
- Consistent road maintenance

Please share any additional comments or suggestions about transportation in Whittier.

The 17 commuter responses are summarized as follows:

- Improve the airport
- Keep Whittier the same
- Reduce or eliminate tunnel access fees and taxes for local residents and businesses
- Additional infrastructure like mini-elevated gondolas
- Maximize cruise ship passenger interactions with Whittier through transportation
- Promote pedestrian and bicycle traffic
- Limit rail freight to non-active hours

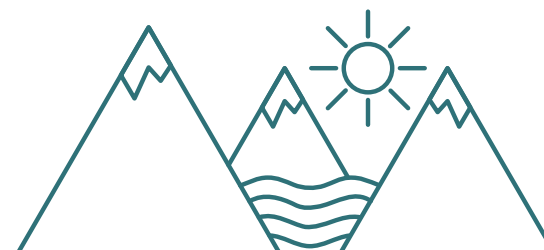
Commuter Themes

Issues

- High tunnel fees, limited schedules, and conflicts with freight, RVs, buses, and trains
- Road and weather conditions on the Seward Highway and Portage Road
- Limited harbor amenities, parking shortages, and inadequate services/facilities
- Insufficient airport infrastructure for emergencies or weather-dependent uses

Needs

- More consistent parking and expanded harbor amenities (slips, repair areas)
- Improved airport facilities and maintenance
- Safer sidewalks, crossings, and bicycle connections within town
- Stronger traffic management and enforcement to reduce congestion



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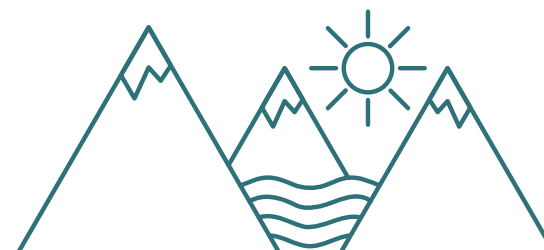
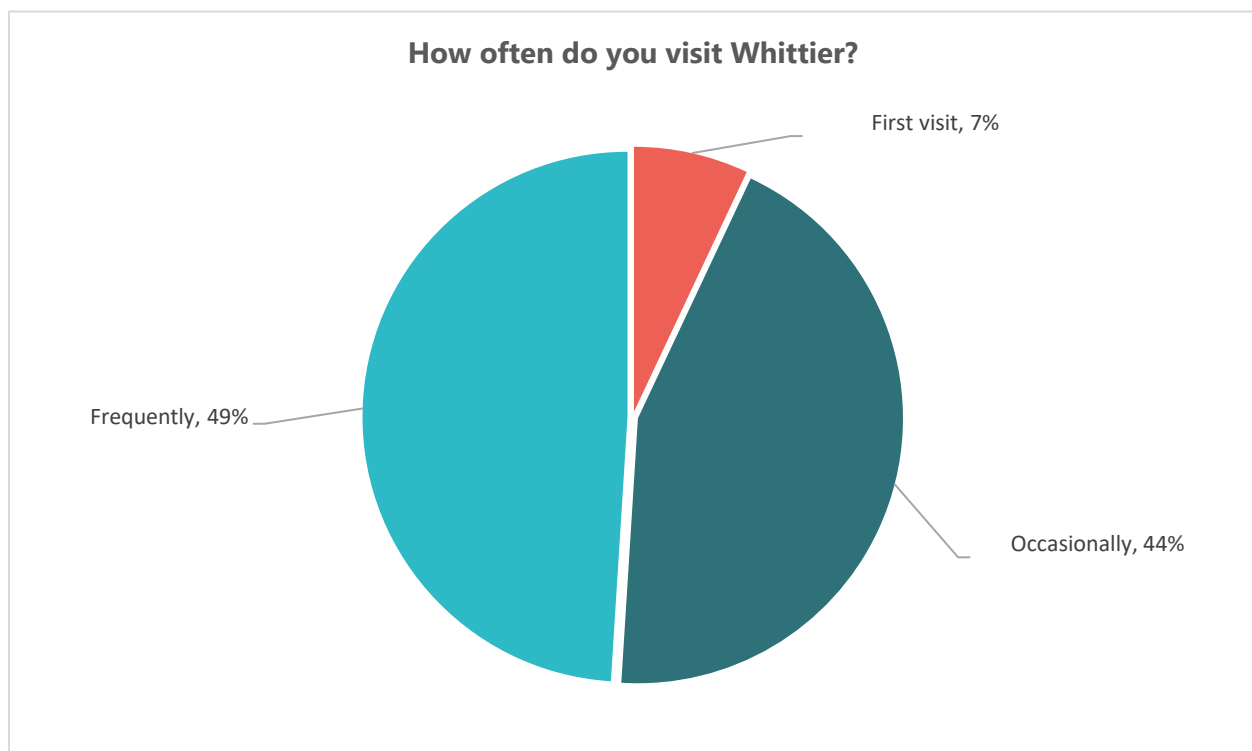
Opportunities and Suggested Solutions

- Extend/flex tunnel hours and regulate traffic by mode (freight, RVs, buses, motorcoaches)
- Explore new infrastructure such as elevated gondolas or a traffic-only tunnel
- Expand shuttle services linking cruise ports, train station, harbor, and town areas
- Roadway upgrades, including added lanes, consistent maintenance, and crossing enforcement
- Shift rail freight operations to non-active hours while balancing tourism growth

Visitor Question Summary

How often do you visit Whittier?

Of the 287 visitors who answered this question, seven percent (21) answered this was their first visit, 44 percent (126) visit one to two times per year, and 49 percent (140) visit three or more times per year.



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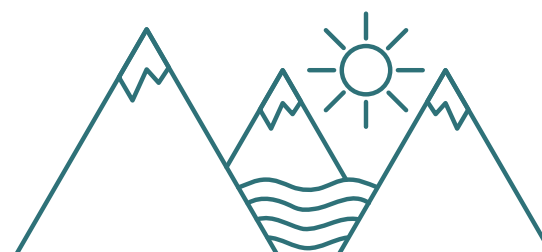


What is the main reason for your visit today?

Answer Choices	Number of Responses	
	Percent (%)	Number
Sightseeing or day trip	30	85
Fishing charter or recreational boating	24	68
Other (please specify)	23	66
Hiking or camping	12	33
Kayaking in Prince William Sound	4	10
Taking a day cruise out of Whittier	3	2
Cruise ship port	2	6
Business	2	5
Visiting friends or family	1	4

Visitors who answered Other (please specify) responded with the following:

- Flying through for personal needs, weather restrictions, or sightseeing
- Visiting local business
- Dining
- Multiple activities
- Marine debris removal work
- Scuba diving and other water recreation
- Accessing public lands
- Berry picking
- Accessing the Alaska Marine Highway



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How did you travel to Whittier today?

Answer Choices	Number of Responses	
	Percent (%)	Number
Airplane	55	159
Personal vehicle	38	109
Other (please specify)	4	11
Cruise ship	1	4
Camper or RV	<1	2
Alaska Railroad	<1	2
Tour bus or shuttle	≤1	1

Visitors who answered Other (please specify) noted commuting by helicopter, ferry, or bicycle.

If you entered Whittier via the tunnel, how easy was it to locate and understand the tunnel schedule and toll fees?

Of the 267 visitors who responded, 29 percent (78) found it very easy, 24 percent (64) somewhat easy, two percent (5) somewhat difficult, and one percent (3) very difficult. The remaining 44 percent (117) indicated the question was not applicable.

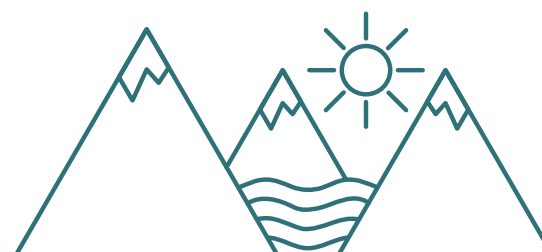
How satisfied were you with parking availability?

Of the 270 visitors who responded, 10 percent (26) were very satisfied, 37 percent (101) satisfied, 17 percent (45) dissatisfied, and four percent (10) very dissatisfied. The remaining 33 percent (88) indicated the question was not applicable.

Did you feel safe walking around the harbor and downtown areas?

Of the 280 visitors who answered this question, 89 percent (248) said yes and four percent (11) said no. The remaining eight percent (21) indicated the question was not applicable. Additional comments from visitors who answered no are summarized as follows:

- Heavy vehicle traffic
- Minimal pedestrian facilities and sidewalks
- Need for slower road speeds near the harbor and boat launch
- Wildlife-related safety concerns
- Unsafe or unregulated pedestrian behaviors
- Poor road striping and signage



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How likely are you to return to Whittier?

Of the 284 visitors who answered this question, 86 percent (245) are very likely, 11 percent (32) are somewhat likely, two percent (5) are somewhat unlikely, and less than one percent (2) are very unlikely to return.

What was the highlight of your time in Whittier?

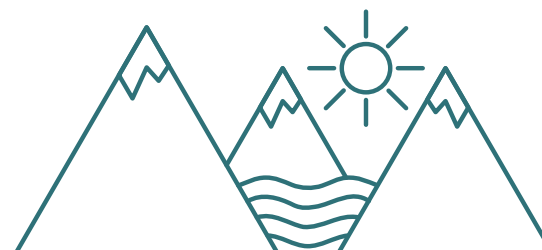
Of the 212 visitors who responded, highlights included:

- Shopping, dining, and supporting local businesses
- Walking along the harbor and exploring the town
- Flying in and the availability of the airport
- Using rail, tunnel, port, and harbor infrastructure
- Hunting
- Fishing
- Berry picking
- Hiking
- Water-based recreation (boating, kayaking, scuba, etc.)
- Learning about Whittier's history
- Scenery and wildlife
- Enjoying the small-town character and atmosphere

What transportation or traffic improvements would make your visit to Whittier easier?

The 226 visitor responses are summarized as follows:

- Airport and airstrip maintenance and improvements, including:
 - Extending the runway
 - Adding tie-downs
 - Expanding aircraft and vehicle parking
 - Providing winter maintenance
 - Constructing a large apron
 - Installing weather computers
 - Improving the windsock
 - Creating a camping or lodging area
- Tunnel enhancements, such as expanding the existing tunnel or constructing a second tunnel to allow simultaneous use, including bicycles
- Sell fuel in Whittier
- Add parking, including long-term boat trailer space, with shuttle connections to the harbor
- Reconfigure tunnel schedules and usage rates
- Add a pedestrian path to the harbor
- Improve and add pathways between terminals
- Expand public harbor space, including:
 - Additional harbor staff and deck hands
 - More public vehicle/trailer parking
 - Additional boat slips



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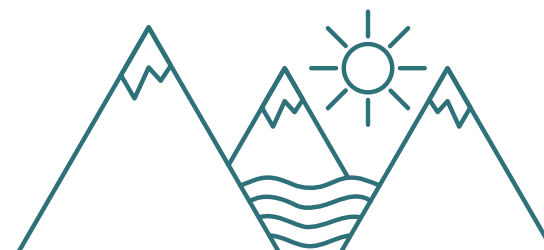


- More boat launch sites
- Improved signage in staging and launch areas for direction and pedestrian safety
- Clear road signage
- Improve tunnel lighting
- Operate a cross-gulf ferry to Valdez
- Reduce corporate land ownership
- Create and pave scenic roads and accessible trails nearby
- Add covered walkways through town
- Add a tunnel shuttle with stops in Portage, Girdwood, and near trailheads
- Add RV and camping areas
- Increase road maintenance efforts
- Add signage, wayfinding, and informational centers

Please share any additional comments or suggestions about visiting Whittier.

The 170 visitor responses are summarized as follows:

- Keep, maintain, and improve the airport
- Parking in the summer season is limited
- Improve safety and security in the pedestrian tunnel from the parking area
- Add camping and RV areas
- Add signage and information regarding day parking and water access
- Add aviation considerations to the Master Plan
- Add taxi service to and from the airport
- Add housing to the Buckner Building
- Improved parking enforcement
- Encourage more local business
- Improve traffic signage at tunnel entrances
- Assess harbor fees and property taxes compared to similar locations
- Add lodging for visitors
- Increase public transportation within town
- Add public kayak launch
- Add a tunnel shuttle
- Add a visitor's center or more public information signage
- Use land space for something other than parking and vehicle storage
- Tunnel movement is well-organized
- Harbor facilities are useful and enjoyable
- Scenery and recreation access are desirable
- Reduce tunnel use fees
- Establish more hiking trails



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Visitor Themes

Issues

- Limited and inconsistent airport/airstrip infrastructure, with seasonal maintenance needs
- Pedestrian safety concerns, including limited sidewalks, poor signage, and unsafe behaviors
- Tunnel inconvenience due to fees, schedules, and traffic conflicts
- Parking shortages, particularly during the summer season
- Heavy vehicle traffic near the harbor and downtown, with speed and congestion issues

Needs

- Maintain and improve the airport/airstrip to ensure year-round access
- Expanded parking, including long-term boat trailer and seasonal visitor spaces
- Safer and more accessible pedestrian facilities, crossings, and pathways
- Clearer traffic and road signage, improved tunnel lighting, and parking enforcement
- Additional visitor amenities such as camping areas, lodging, and public kayak launches

Opportunities and Suggested Solutions

- Reassess tunnel fees, harbor charges, and local tax structures to improve affordability
- Improve harbor facilities (boat slips, launch sites, staffing, signage, and staging areas)
- Add covered walkways, wayfinding, and visitor information centers to support navigation
- Develop scenic roads, hiking trails, and recreation access to strengthen Whittier's tourism appeal
- Support more local business and mixed land uses to diversify beyond parking and storage

