



2018

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Juneau Economic Development Council (JEDC) partnered with the Alaska Committee to survey all elected officials and staff of the 30th Alaska State Legislature about their satisfaction with Juneau and its amenities. The survey objective was to determine how the community of Juneau, through collaboration among community partners, can better serve legislators and staff. The survey also served to elicit ideas for changes or upgrades to the Capitol Complex and for improvements to Gavel Alaska.

The survey was made available to elected officials and staff both in paper and online in March 2018. 135 responses were received, providing an overall response rate of 55 percent and a 5.7 percent margin of error at the 95 percent confidence level. Survey analysis focused on the 103 responses from elected officials and staff who made their home outside of Juneau.

Survey results show that for the most part, legislators and staff coming to Juneau for the session prefer to find accommodations in or proximal to downtown Juneau in a long-term rental and to get around by driving their own car. The safety, walkability, availability of affordable housing and parking downtown was found to be of primary importance to survey respondents.

Overall, Juneau received satisfactory ratings from out-of-town legislators and staff. The walkability of downtown received the highest satisfaction rating. The friendliness of the community, and Juneau's arts, entertainment and recreation also received the highest ratings.

However, the availability of parking, the safety and cleanliness of downtown, the affordability of accommodations, and the restaurant hours of operation received the lowest satisfaction ratings of all Juneau amenities. Many commented that they do not feel safe walking downtown due to the increase in vagrants and inebriates in recent years. Safety was also a concern due to poor snow and ice removal on sidewalks and streets downtown. Working with the City and Borough of Juneau (CBJ) to address these issues should be an immediate priority.

Suggestions for improved access to Juneau are consistent with findings of the Business Visitor Satisfaction Survey that was conducted simultaneously at the Juneau Airport and with past airport surveys. These included building the road, improving ferry service, providing more flights/earlier flights in the evening, and providing a shuttle between downtown and the airport.

Gavel Alaska, the service providing tv coverage of state government activities, is highly valued. Comments indicated that the service needs more publicity in the rest of the state and more availability on local channels. Suggestions for improvement included easier to navigate archives and less House, more Senate coverage.

Respondents gave the Capitol Complex high satisfaction ratings. Many complimented the well-maintained premises. Comments concerned the need for more space, and suggestions included moving the Governor and Lt Governor out of the building to free up space.

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

The Juneau Economic Development Council (JEDC) partnered with the Alaska Committee to survey both elected officials and staff of the 30th Alaska State Legislature about their satisfaction with Juneau and its amenities. The survey was distributed in March 2018 to all legislators and staff, both in paper form and by link to SurveyMonkey, an online survey development and analysis tool, where the survey could be taken electronically. Respondents were asked to take the survey only once, in the form most convenient for them. The survey asked about living situation, transportation, satisfaction with amenities, satisfaction with capitol facilities, the importance of Gavel Alaska, and solicited opinion on how to improve the Capitol Complex and how to improve Juneau. Several questions were adapted from the Juneau Visitor Satisfaction Survey that was simultaneously conducted at the Juneau Airport to compare results.

The Legislative Satisfaction survey was developed by JEDC, with input from members of the Alaska Committee, Travel Juneau, the Juneau Chamber of Commerce, and Gavel Alaska. The survey consisted of 18 questions. Some were multiple choice, some were open response, and some were opinions based on a rating scale. To encourage participation, respondents were offered the opportunity at the end of the survey to submit their name into a drawing for a pizza party for their entire office. Anonymity was guaranteed.

The survey was launched March 15, 2018 when advanced notification was emailed to every legislator in the form of a letter of introduction from the JEDC Executive Director. The following day, the letter of introduction was hand delivered to each legislative office. The letter put legislators and staff on notice that the survey would be delivered to their mailbox on March 19. That day, the paper survey was delivered to all offices, and a link to the online survey was emailed to each legislator and staff. On March 27, a follow up email was sent to legislators and staff, and all completed paper surveys were collected from legislative offices. The online survey closed on March 30.

In total, 135 respondents completed the survey out of a total possible of 244 legislators and staff. This provides a 55 percent overall response rate with a 5.7 percent margin of error at a 95 percent confidence level. Of total respondents, 103 (76 percent) indicated that they do not live in Juneau year-round. This report discusses the survey results for this subset of respondents, as improving the experience of living in Juneau for this population is a specific intent of this survey. In some cases, results are compared to the subset of respondents who live in Juneau year-round. Further breakdown of responses is given in the chart below.

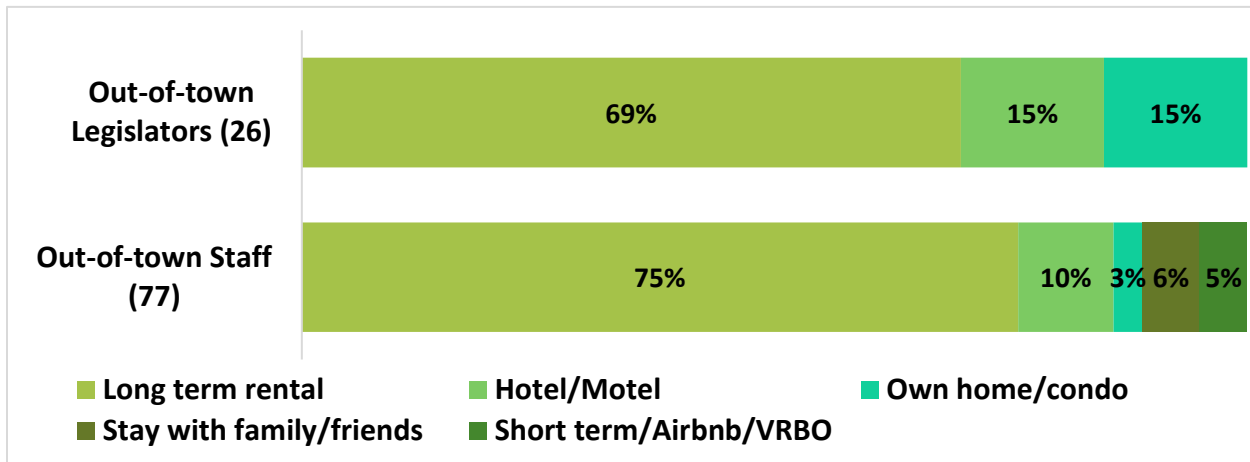
	<i>Total Pool</i>	<i>Responses</i>	<i>Percent of Total</i>	<i>Respondents from Out of Town</i>	<i>Percent of Total</i>
<i>Legislators</i>	60	28	47%	26	43%
<i>Staff</i>	184	107	58%	77	42%
<i>Total</i>	244	135	55%	103	42%

FINDINGS

Respondent Characteristics

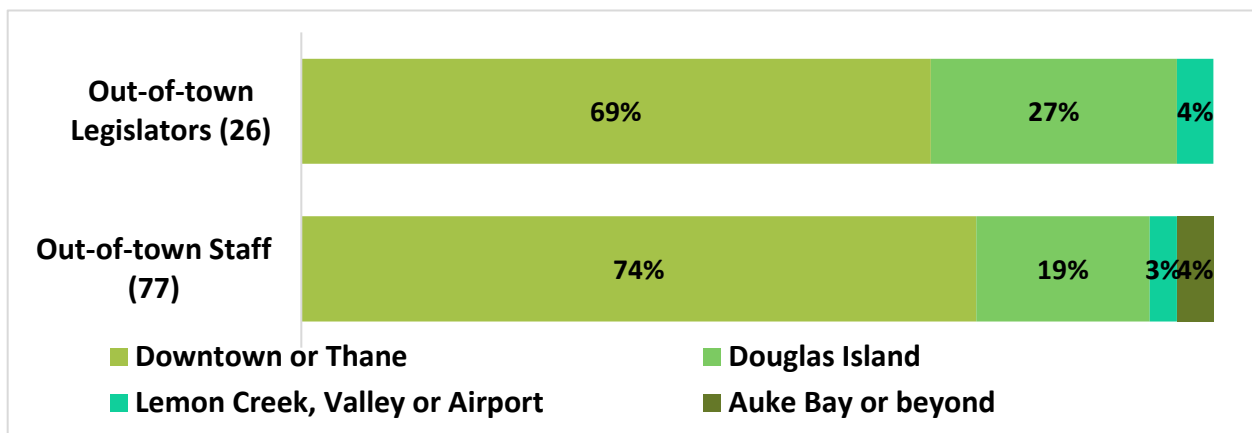
Among legislators who live in Juneau only during the legislative session, the majority (69 percent) find housing in a long-term rental, while 15 percent own a home in Juneau and another 15 percent lodge in a hotel or motel. Among out-of-town staffers, a higher number (75 percent) find a long-term rental, and only 3 percent own a home in Juneau. The rest find lodging in hotels, with family or friends, or short-term rentals. Lodging is more diversified, most likely reflecting lower pay and more turnover among staff.

Figure 1: What kind of accommodations do you have while in Juneau during this session?



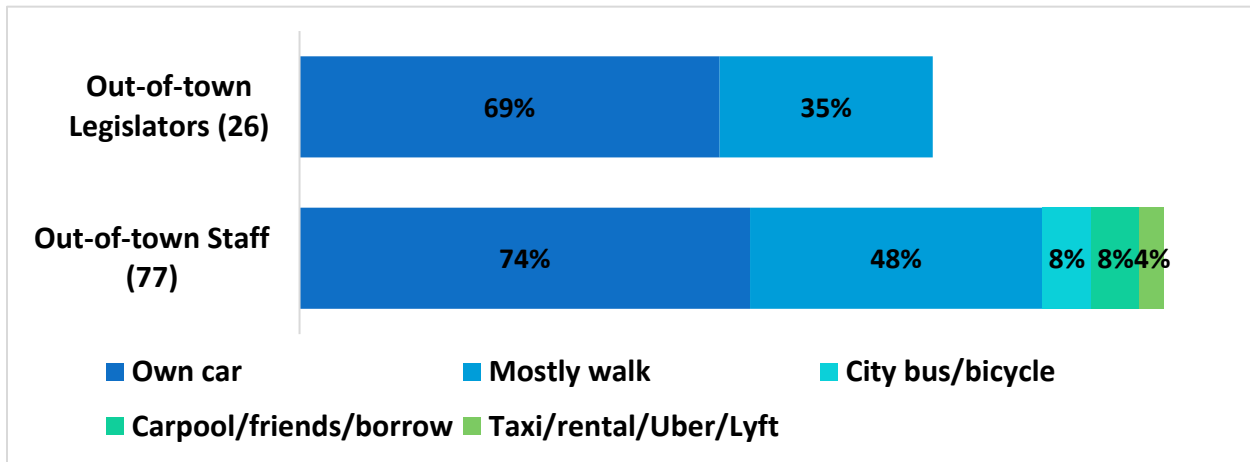
Legislators living in Juneau for the session prefer to live close to the Capitol, with 96 percent living downtown or on Douglas Island. Staff also prefer proximity to the Capitol, with 93 percent living downtown or Douglas. Again, there is more diversity among staff, with a few even living in Auke Bay and beyond.

Figure 2: Where in Juneau are your accommodations?



Despite proximity of housing to their offices, 69 percent of legislators indicated that their primary form of transportation during the session is their own car, and 35 percent primarily walked (more than one choice was allowed). No other option was selected. Staffers again were more diversified. While 74 percent drove their own cars and 48 percent walked, 20 percent also used other means of transportation.

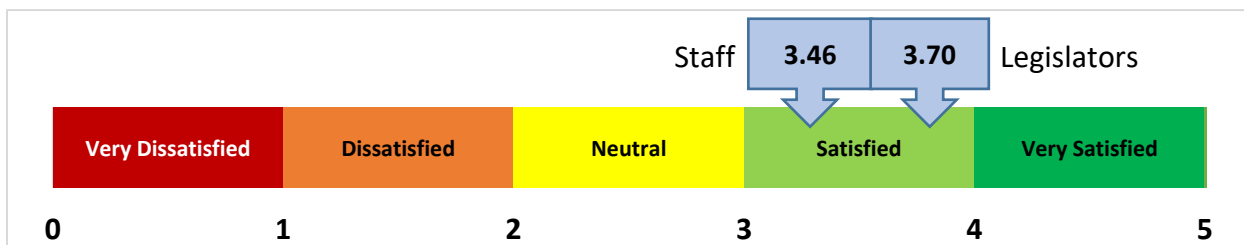
Figure 3: What is your primary form of transportation during this session? (More than one choice allowed)



Juneau Aspect Evaluation

The survey next asked a series of questions where, using a 1-5 scale, respondents were asked if they were very satisfied, satisfied, neutral, dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied with several aspects of their stay in Juneau (5=very satisfied, 1=very dissatisfied). Rating responses were averaged over the number of responses received for a question. The result is an average evaluation score for each aspect. Responses were tabulated for all respondents combined, and separately for legislators and for staff.

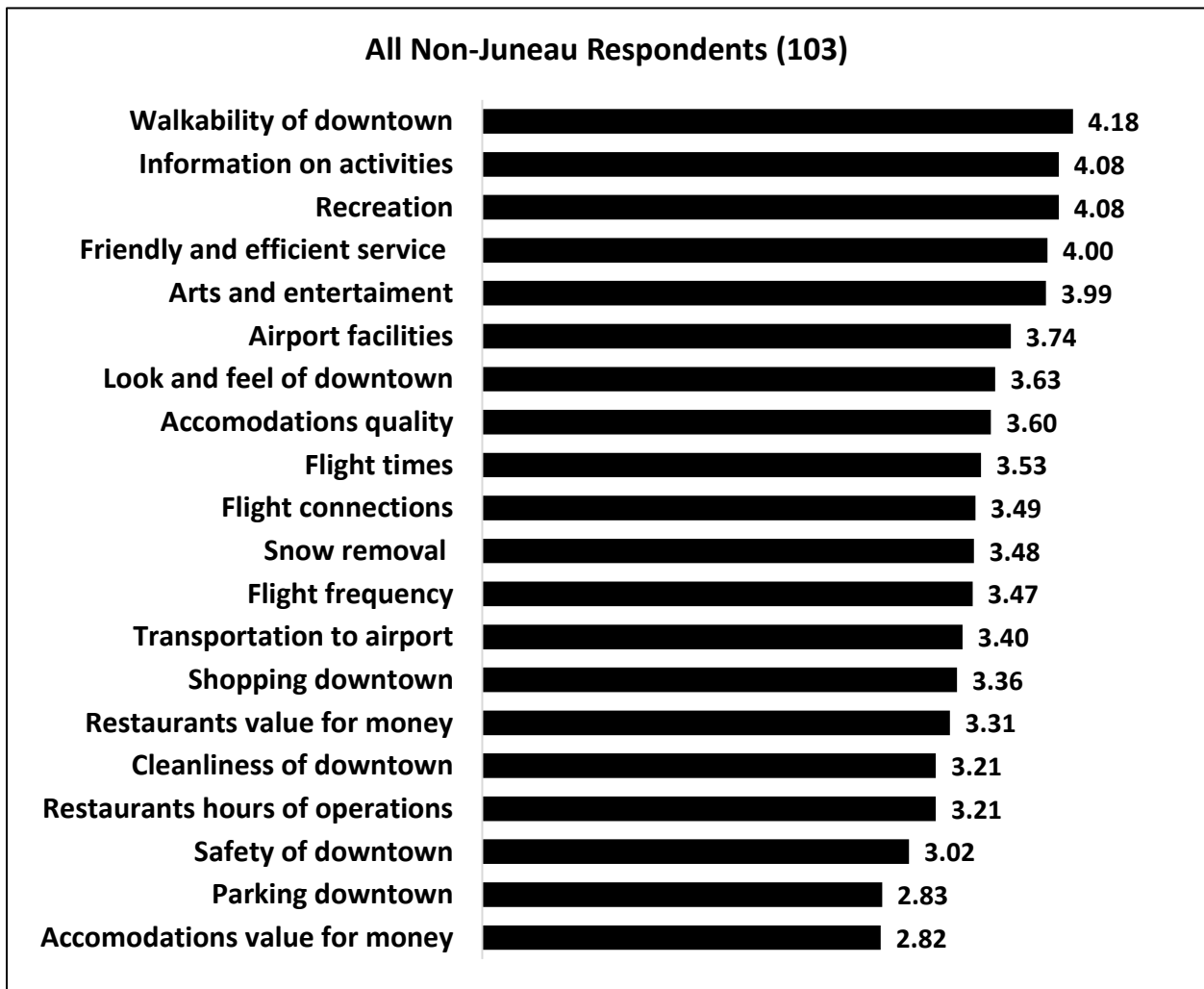
Figure 4: Overall rating of Juneau amenities



An overall average evaluation score was calculated for elected officials and for staff. Results showed that both legislators and staff were satisfied with Juneau, with legislators significantly happier than staff.

Individual scores for each aspect show Juneau to have a number of amenities that legislators and staff enjoy when they are here during session. Downtown is walkable; recreation, arts and entertainment get high marks along with information on activities; Juneau provides friendly and efficient service; and airport facilities are nice.

Figure 5: Average Evaluation Score from highest to lowest for all non-Juneau respondents



Respondents were given the opportunity to provide comments along with their satisfaction rating. Below are some representative comments:

- *Love Eaglecrest! So much more kid friendly than Alyeska.*
- *Great arts community....*
- *Love how many trail heads are accessible by car!! (vs boat) I spend as much of my free time hiking. Keeps me sane during the session.*
- *Senator Egan sends out an awesome summary of all the arts going on around Juneau.*

However, the bottom ranking aspects of Juneau should be of concern to the community, especially the low rank for safety and cleanliness. Respondents again were given the opportunity to provide comments along with their satisfaction score, and over 56 percent of all comments received about downtown Juneau concerned the perceived safety of downtown. Here are some representative comments.

- *I do not feel safe walking in downtown after work. Too many suspicious looking people.*
- *Franklin Street is scary with drunks and vagrants. I rarely go to shop downtown now due to this. I don't feel safe.*
- *I don't always feel safe walking downtown due to the number of suspicious characters. There's also a lot of trash and pot wrappers. Between the pot shops and bars, I avoid many areas.*
- *I am not comfortable walking to the library parking garage due to homeless and unlighted areas.*
- *The number of drunks, homeless and drugged individuals has increased dramatically. It doesn't feel safe to walk around downtown.*

Comments were also received about the cleanliness of downtown and the poor snow and ice removal from streets and sidewalks. Here are representative comments:

- *The sidewalks were tough to navigate earlier this winter. As the snow is melting, I'm seeing a TON of dog poop that wasn't picked up during the snowy days.*
- *Several times I had to walk on the road because Gastineau/Gold had so much snow piled upon the sidewalk - it was unwalkable. This is dangerous for me but also super inconvenient for drivers who have to avoid pedestrians in the street.*

Accommodation value for money and restaurant hours of operations also ranked in the bottom five aspects of Juneau overall. Comments focused on the limited hours of operation for restaurants at night and especially that restaurants were closed Sunday night. Comments also spoke to the high price and low quality of housing. Here are some representative comments:

- *It seems impossible to get dinner at a restaurant on Sunday, starting in the early evenings.*
- *Many coffee shops and restaurants close too early, so for long legislative days, the only options for food are bars.*
- *It's more than a little ridiculous that I pay almost as much in rent each month staying in Juneau as I do on my mortgage payment in Anchorage. It's also next to impossible to find housing if (when) the session gets extended. Also reasonably priced pet friendly places are so unbelievably hard to find.*

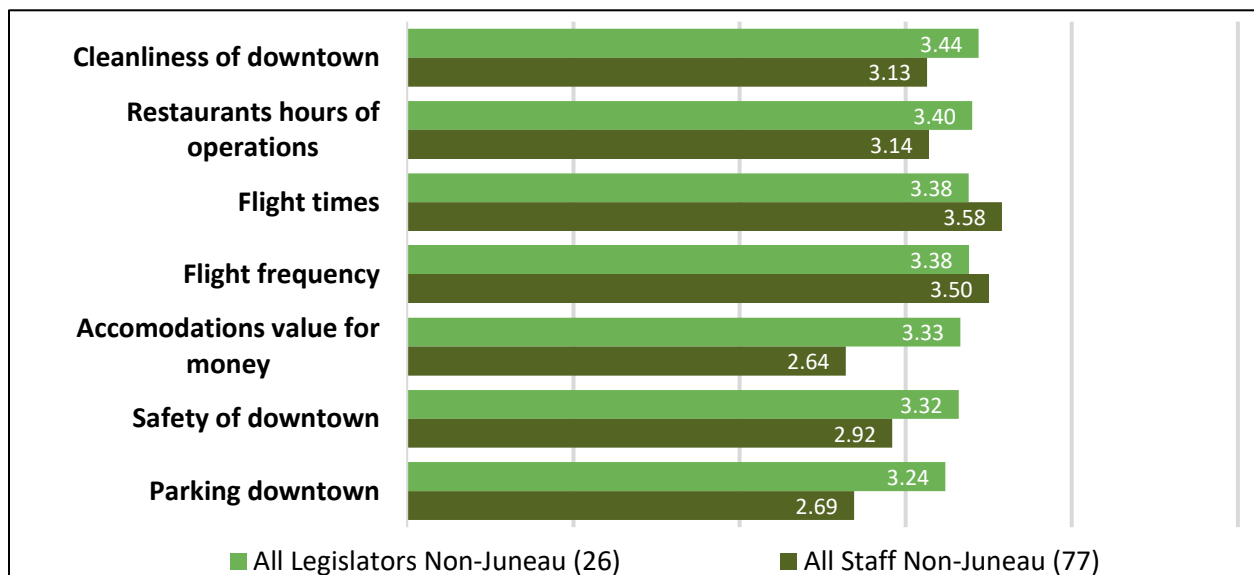
When responses from out-of-town legislators and from out-of-town staff are scored separately and compared, the 20 Juneau aspects have a different ranking.

Figure 6: Legislator and staff comparison of satisfaction ranking for top 5 and bottom 5 aspects

Legislator Satisfaction Ranking		Staff Satisfaction Ranking	
1	Information on activities	1	Walkability of downtown
2	Friendly and efficient service	2	Recreation
3	Walkability of downtown	3	Information on activities
4	Recreation	4	Arts and entertainment
5	Arts and entertainment	5	Friendly and efficient service
16	Flight times	16	Restaurants hours of operations
17	Flight frequency	17	Cleanliness of downtown
18	Accommodations value for money	18	Safety of downtown
19	Safety of downtown	19	Parking downtown
20	Parking downtown	20	Accommodations value for money

The ranking of the top five and bottom five Juneau aspects, from highest to lowest, for out-of-town legislators and out-of-town staff separately are shown in Figure 6. While the same five aspects, information on activities, walkability of downtown, friendly and efficient service, recreation and arts and entertainment make the top five for both groups, and both groups put safety, parking and accommodations value for money at the very bottom of the list, rankings diverge for the 16th and 17th amenities. For legislators, flight times and flight frequency fall below cleanliness of downtown and restaurant hours of operation, which ranks near the bottom for staffers. Figure 7 shows just how much lower staffers score accommodations, safety and parking compared to legislators.

Figure 7: Satisfaction score compared for out-of-town legislators and staff, bottom 7 aspects

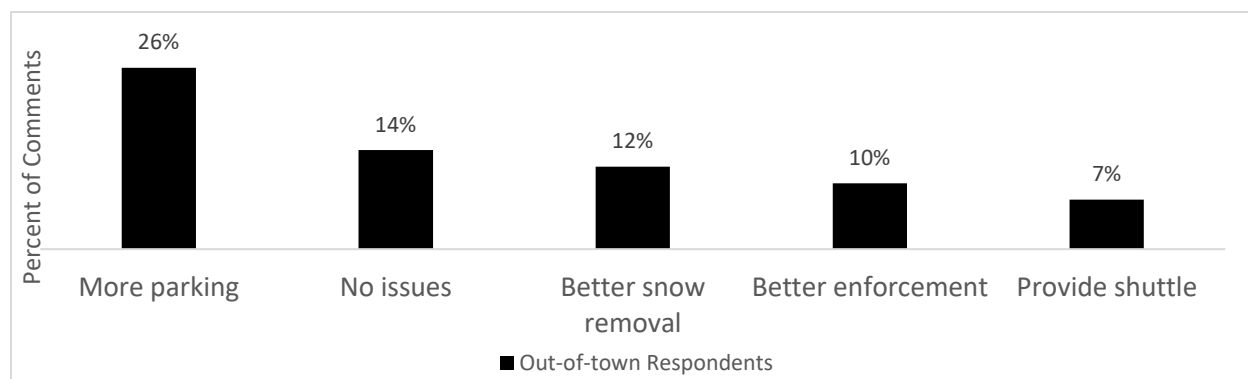


Overall, legislators are much more satisfied with Juneau than staff, giving higher scores to every amenity except for flight times and flight frequency, the only two aspects for which legislators were less satisfied than staff.

Parking Downtown

Respondents were solicited for opinions on what Juneau could do to improve parking downtown. Of comments received, most suggested building another garage or providing more surface parking. Other comments suggested that keeping streets clean of snow would improve parking, better enforcement of parking ordinances would help, off-site parking with a shuttle was suggested, and finally some respondents commented that they had no issues. (They could provide more than one suggestion.)

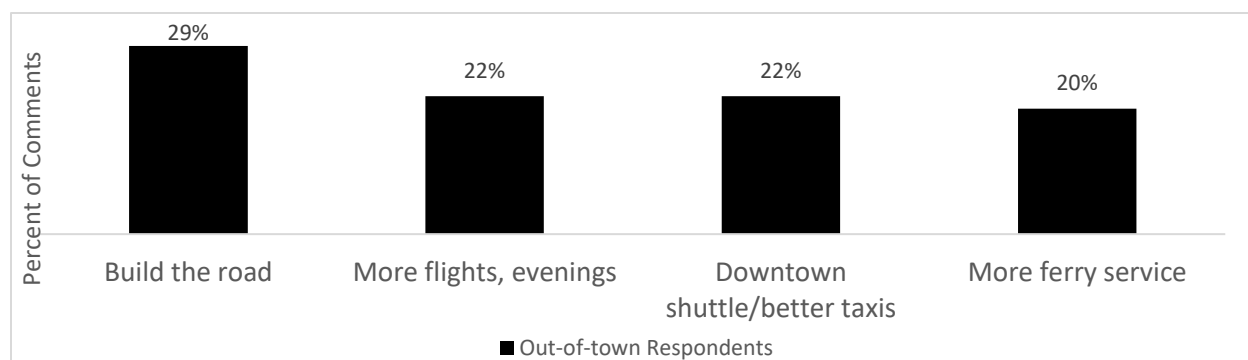
Figure 8: What can Juneau do to improve parking downtown?



Access to Juneau

Survey respondents were asked for opinions on what would improve their access to Juneau. The top choices were to build “the road”, provide more flights, especially evening flights, provide a shuttle between downtown and the airport, and more frequent ferry service. Several comments indicated that access could be improved with better taxi service and improved public transportation. (They could provide more than one suggestion.)

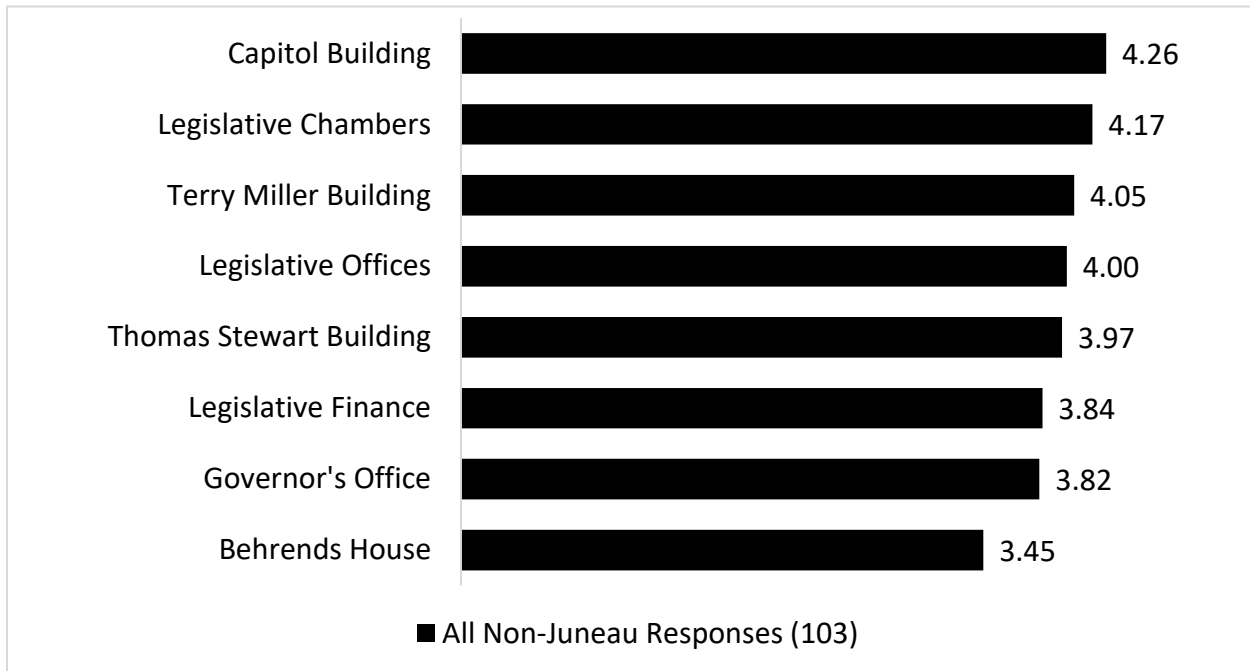
Figure 9: In your opinion, which of the following would most improve your access to Juneau?



Capitol Complex

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the eight buildings that constitute Juneau’s Capitol Complex. Except for the Behrends House, all buildings received very high satisfaction scores.

Figure 10: Please rate your satisfaction with the following aspects of Juneau’s Capitol Complex



In the space for comments, a few suggested that the Governor’s offices be relocated, others would like to see more equitable office spaces, and several complimented the well-maintained premises.

Respondents were next asked if they could suggest any physical or structural changes or additions to the Capitol Complex to improve interactions or productivity. A quarter of the comments concerned minor improvements. Here are some sample comments:

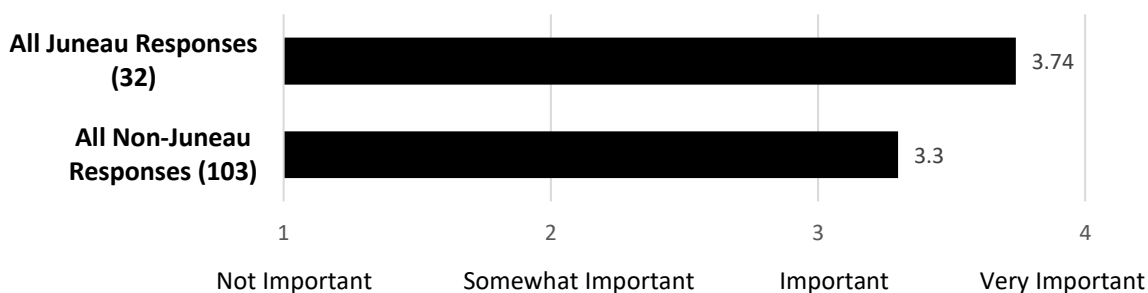
- *I like the Capitol Complex structure. I do think our IT in committee hearing rooms needs help. Specifically, it is generally a very poor audio connection with testifiers who call in online to speak to issues.*
- *There are a couple of steps in the sidewalk on Seward Street just uphill of the garage driveway that I feel should be painted yellow so an unsuspecting pedestrian doesn't miss them. They are often difficult to see due to lack of contrast and depending on weather and lighting.*
- *A shower at the Terry Miller or Capitol open to staffers.*
- *GCI cell service non-operative in portions of complex. Super frustrating.*

Covered or underground walkways were also suggested, and so was a coffee shop in the Capitol Building. Staffers requested more and/or closer parking. Finally, there again were comments to move the Governor out of the Capitol to free up more space (a dining area was among the requests).

Gavel Alaska

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of Gavel Alaska to their constituents on a scale of 1 to 4. Overall, 79 percent of out-of-town respondents rated the service from Important to Very Important. In comparison, 90 percent of legislators and staffers who are year-round Juneau residents scored the service Important to Very Important.

Figure 10: How important is Gavel Alaska to your constituents?



The next two questions asked for specific recommendations, first on how to better reach constituents and next on how to improve the tv and web services. Both questions were answered with a mix of comments on both issues, but most comments complimented Gavel Alaska, such as the following:

- *Gavel is awesome!*
- *I think they do a good job.*
- *It's already pretty good. Occasionally videographer focuses on a speaker without showing the slide show that's being referred to, and that's pretty boring.*
- *We could look at something besides the back of Rep. Wilson's head in Finance! Other than that, I think they do a great job!*

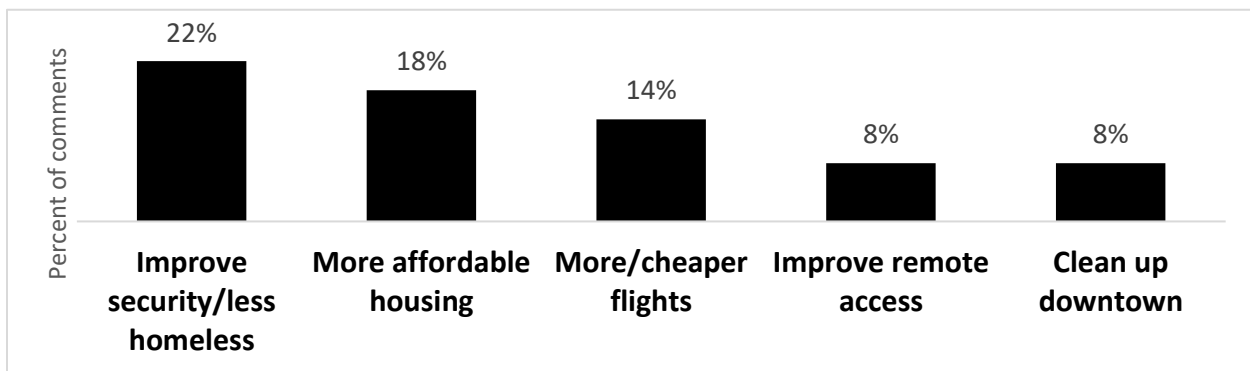
Suggestions for better reaching constituents focused on getting the local station to carry it in Fairbanks; more promotion, especially on social media, possibly streaming on Facebook; and broadcasting the audio on local radio stations. From these comments, it appears that the existence of this service is better known in Juneau than in Fairbanks and rural Alaska, accounting for the higher satisfaction rating from Juneau.

Suggestions for improvement included easier to navigate archives and less House, more Senate coverage. Copyright issues with disseminating excerpts from Gavel Alaska were also mentioned as a concern.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Overall, survey results show that out-of-town legislators and staff are satisfied with Juneau during the legislative session. One final survey question asked respondents “*What can the people and/or the local government of Juneau do to make Juneau a better capital for all of Alaska?*” Constructive suggestions fell into a diverse range of responses, many repeating concerns already expressed above and effectively providing a summary of issues raised in this survey. The largest percent of responses to this question (22 percent), repeated concerns about the perceived safety of downtown Juneau and the growing number of indigents. Next most frequent was a request for more affordable housing, followed by a request for cheaper airfares and more flight options. A few commented on the need to improve remote access for Alaskans who live outside of Juneau.

Figure 11: What can the people and/or the local government of Juneau do to make Juneau a better capital for all of Alaska?



Based on the results of this survey, the issue that needs immediate attention is the perceived safety in Juneau’s downtown area. While the Alaska Committee, CBJ and partners cannot directly address landlord rents, Alaska Airlines pricing and scheduling, and restaurant hours of operation, safety is an issue that can be influenced through community action.

The second issue that can be directly mitigated by the CBJ is the cleanliness and the snow removal in downtown, both in the Capitol Complex and in the residential areas, where most legislators and staff live.

Gavel Alaska is highly valued and is perceived to do a good job of connecting Alaskans to the capital, but better advertising in the rest of the state is a need.

Finally, the issue of access to Juneau can be improved by working with Alaska Airlines to modify winter flight times, add flights, and reduce airfare during the legislative session.