

6/14/2023

City of Santa Barbara Harbor Commission  
735 Anacapa Street  
Santa Barbara, CA, 93101

**RE: Cruise Ship Subcommittee Update and Proposed Program Improvements**

Dear Commissioners:

The Santa Barbara South Coast Chamber of Commerce, representing businesses from Goleta to Carpinteria, would like to express our support for some of the proposed cruise ship program updates. One primary focus of the Chamber is the continued economic development and success of our regions, and to continue to make the South Coast a place where our local businesses and community members can thrive. Santa Barbara's cruise ship program is an important part of that success. The Chamber would like to continue to stress that the direct economic impact of cruise ships to Santa Barbara is supported by studies that show they generate \$4 million in economic benefits to the city annually.

The Chamber supports the proposed Improvements to Addressing Scheduling, such as prohibiting cruise ship visitation Memorial Day through Labor Day, prohibiting weekend cruise ship visits, and prohibiting back-to-back day cruise ship visits. This scheduling ensures that cruise ship visits do not place undo strain on local business resources during peak visitation times, while ensuring they drive more business in the off-peak times when a boost to local businesses is needed. This promotes the most efficient distribution of the economic benefits offered by the cruise ships to our community.

The Chamber supports the proposals to work with local businesses to increase awareness of, and accessibility to, the economic benefits of cruise ship visitation, and to work with cruise lines to further integrate local businesses into shoreside excursion operations. The Chamber believes we are a key partner to local businesses, the Waterfront, and cruise lines in these efforts. The Chamber continues to provide existing work in this area through Ruairi Bateson our Visitors Center Manager, our Visitor Center staff, our volunteers, Laurie Barene – Visitor Center Advertising, and Cheyenne Brooks – Tourism and Communications. The Chamber is in close contact with our members, which we promote to cruise ship visitors, guaranteeing that the goods and services we highlight to visitors are relevant and available.

The Chamber also supports working with cruise lines and local students to improve connections for education and career development in the maritime sector. The Chamber is already involved in similar work with the hospitality industry through the Hospitality Inspiration Campaign, and we are in discussions to explore further educational and career development pipelines with other local industries. The Chamber would be a willing partner to do the same as part of a collaboration with cruise lines and maritime businesses.

The Chamber supports increasing passenger fees from \$10 to \$15 for FY24 and FY25. As we understand it, Santa Barbara is already below other communities when it comes to passenger fees. In fact, the Chamber would support further increased fees if proposed, especially considering the high-quality concierge services provided to cruise ship passengers upon arriving in the Waterfront.



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Regarding the environmental concerns related to cruise ships – these concerns should not be taken lightly, and it is important that we continue to ensure that cruise ships continue to act in good faith and as good partners. However, we must also continue to acknowledge the important economic benefits cruise ships offer, as well as the businesses whose livelihood they support, when considering future actions.

Thank you for your support of the continued success of Santa Barbara’s cruise ship program, which plays an important role in the economic success and reputation of Santa Barbara.

Sincerely,

Kristen Miller  
President & CEO  
Santa Barbara South Coast Chamber of Commerce