



## Northern Virginia Regional Commission

### Steering Committee for the Potomac Fast Ferry

September 21, 2017  
2 PM to 3:45 PM

Hosted at Blu 1681 restaurant  
13188 Marina Way  
Woodbridge, VA 22191

In attendance:

1. Peggy Tadej, Military Partners, NVRC
2. Tim Payne, Consultant, Nelson Nygaard
3. Akshali Gandhi, Consultant, Nelson Nygaard
4. Nick Bannon, Elliot Bay Design Group
5. Frank Principi, Prince William County Board of Supervisors
6. Tom Fitzgerald, DC Water
7. Eric Schwenke, Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority, Dept. of Planning
8. Devin Habbit, Senator \_\_\_\_\_'s office
9. Willem Pollak, Potomac Riverboat Company
10. Robert Lazaro, NVRC
11. Marissa Krusan NVRC
12. Scott Davies, Maritime Administration, USDOT
13. Karl Webner, Metal Shark Boats
14. John Karhnak, Karhnak Consulting/Civic Association
15. Kathy Graham, VDOT Richmond
16. Dr. Robert Schneider, Potomac And Rappahannock Transportation Commission (PRTC)
17. Dick Krause, Harbor Marina
18. Ed Welch, Passenger Vessel Association
19. Luz Lazo, Washington Post
20. Austina Casey, DC Dept. of Transportation
21. Jared Kupiak, \_\_\_\_\_
22. Arleta Hynes, \_\_\_\_\_
23. \_\_\_\_\_, National Capital Planning Commission
24. Tim Pickering, MARAD, Ports & Waterways
25. Lauren, \_\_\_\_\_
26. Rosa Castillo Krewson

VIA PHONE

27. Federal Transit Administration



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### Welcome and Self-Introduction

The meeting began at 2:03 pm with introductions around the room and on the telephone. Chairman Frank Principi introduced the lead consultant, Tim Payne of Nelson\Nygaard, who walked the group through his presentation about the Infrastructure Gap Analysis Study that would examine potential ferry service and terminal sites between Woodbridge, VA to the Washington DC waterfront.

### Reports

Mr. Payne provided a presentation with the following highlights:

- Development of Travel Demand Model
  - Purpose: To help MWCOG integrate ferry service into its current travel demand model.
  - Using Woodbridge, VA to Washington DC as a pilot for a market analysis.
  - Preliminary results will likely be ready by the next Steering Committee meeting.
- Information from FTA
  - Nelson\Nygaard had a productive meeting with FTA to clarify technical details of the grant application process.
  - Some route options are eligible for FTA grant funding, while others are suitable for maritime funding.
  - This project will qualify as both a commuter service + ferry service.
- Nelson\Nygaard is currently working on a website design for the study.

### Site Visit Summaries

Mr. Payne then presented evaluations of four potential ferry stop locations based on site visits from earlier in the summer; key takeaways are outlined below. Terminal needs include connections to transit, good walkability, parking adjacent or nearby (Woodbridge only), ability of people to navigate, dock, and unload/load the ferry, and passenger amenities near the terminal.

- **The Yards**
  - A passenger ferry terminal facility was built next to the Navy Yard in 2016.
  - Currently lacks lighting.
  - Home to new waterfront office and mixed use development.



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- **The Wharf**
  - Home to new waterfront office and mixed use development.
  - Still under construction today, but plans to open this fall.
  - Beautiful, well-built facility.
- **Diamond Teague Park**
  - Currently used for private ferry and water taxi services to the Nationals stadium.
  - Has lighting.
  - Proven to work with a relatively high volume of passengers.
  - Ready to operate passenger ferry service.
  - Does not have shelter facilities for inclement weather.
- **Washington Harbor at Georgetown**
  - Currently used for private passenger water taxi.
  - Missing a float.
  - Close proximity to K Street.

### Infrastructure Gap Analysis Study

To wrap up, Payne presented an overview about the Infrastructure Gap Analysis Study. The purpose of this study is to determine the difference between what exists today and what is needed to establish a commuter ferry operation within the next five years. The study will be looking for sites where FTA grant funding can be used to improve or build ferry terminals, as well as sites that make sense in terms of meeting the commute needs of the metropolitan Washington region. To be deemed eligible for consideration, a local authority should have long-terminal control over a potential terminal's lease and property.

- Terminals usually look for a 25-30 year life span.
- Some options are more feasible than other options.
- Site locations should make sense, reflecting regional travel trends.
- The initial evaluation criteria are ever changing.
- This study is not planning to evaluate parking.
- The study will be examining things horizontally, not in terms of destination sites.



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- Nelson\Nygaard created a matrix of feasibility, ranking potential routes and station choices for FTA funds. Of 6-8 choices, only 2 sites are currently in public ownership. The rest have private ownership or have private interests. Applying federal funds to land not publicly owned is more difficult to implement.

### Vessel & Terminal Design

Nick Bannon from Elliot Bay Design Group presented potential vessel and terminal designs for ferry service.

- There are five things to consider when evaluating potential passenger ferry service: firm experience, challenges in routes and terminals, vessel design, vessel operations, and vessel impacts, including wake wash and noise.
- Elliot Bay Design Group has 30 years of experience in naval architecture and engineering. Its portfolio includes North Carolina fast ferry, San Francisco Bay ferry, and various operational studies.
- Each ferry service is unique to its environment.
- Challenges to operating ferry service in the Potomac River include:
  - Shallow water
  - Debris and ice
  - Narrow channel
  - Depth issues
- Challenges for ferry service terminals include:
  - Passenger loading
  - Night operations
  - Safety
  - Maneuvering
  - Prop/Jet Scour
  - Vessel services - 7 minute trip duration considered for this facility
  - Maintenance
- Design Considerations
  - Props vs. Jets
  - EPA Tier
  - Ice belts
  - Jet backwashing
  - Loading arrangements
  - Weight



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To end with, Mr. Bannon presented an example of a WETA dual dock in California to show how one dock is used for passenger boarding and another for fuel and cargo.

### Other Matters of Interest

Mr. Bannon and Mr. Payne also went over some other considerations which may be of interest to the steering committee.

Other operating considerations include:

- Ferry service should connect to high capacity transit and/or bike-share whenever possible.
- Terminals should have wheel chair access and bike loading/parking.
- Large vessels get affected by Wake Wash.
  - Some vessels are long, narrow with an asymmetric design.
  - Others have a short design and light weight.
- Vessel Tracking
- Crewing and Navigation
- Fluctuating budget and insecure funding
- Vessel should minimize impact on environment, including mitigating radiated noise from exhaust, jets and propensity.
- Speed: Fast boats do not necessary equal fast service.
- Ferry service may wish to incorporate some technological deployment, such as a companion app (i.e. New York City East River Ferry).

### Open Discussion/Q&A

To end, the Steering Committee launched into an open discussion and question-and-answer session with the consultants.

- Observations
  - National Harbor could be a potential contender for a reverse commute in the long term.
  - Local ferries can difficult to operate.
  - Since facilities are brand new, vessels will not require much maintenance in the beginning.



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- *What type of fuel will the ferry use?*  
Diesel. Natural gas is more challenging for smaller vessels.
- Funding Discussion
  - *FTA Application deadlines are next month. Will information and assistance be available?*
    - The bigger challenge is that TIGER projects need to be shovel ready, including NEPA clearance.
    - Options should not require extensive environmental disturbance.
    - FTA is the ultimate federal authority in determining the level of environmental restrictions.
  - Cost estimates
    - 300 passenger boats are estimated to cost \$10 million per vessel, with an additional \$5 million for infrastructure.
    - This could include \$4-\$5 million in infrastructure dock costs and \$2-3 million for dock costs.
  - The shelf life for these grants is approximately 5 years to obligate the funding, and another 5 years to spend the funding.
  - FTA funding will require a 20-40% local match minimum, but more is preferred. There is a slight chance Department of Defense funding could contribute towards the local match, but this possibility has not been explored.
- Time wise, it is better to have this ferry service operated privately rather than through a transit agency. The public sector may take longer to implement and start the process.

### Next meetings

The next meeting will be held on **Thursday, October 26, 2017** at the National Harbor in Maryland in conjunction with an evening public meeting for Maryland residents.

- Meeting #5 will target residents of Prince George's County, Charles County, and the National Harbor area.

The last and final steering committee meeting will be held during the **week of November 13** in conjunction with a public meeting in Washington, DC.

- Final Meeting #6 will target DC residents.

*The meeting concluded at 3:45 PM to allow for steering committee members to board the boat in time for the 4:00 pm ferry demonstration.*

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