



Northern Virginia Regional Commission

Gap Analysis Agenda Meeting Notes

July 24, 2017

10 AM to 12 PM

Hosted at:

Foley & Lardner LLP
3000 K Street NW, Suite 600
Washington, DC 20007

In attendance:

Robert Iosco, VDOT
Katherine Graham, VDOT
Ed Welch, Passenger Vessel Association
Jen Wilk, Passenger Vessel Association
Bob Schneider, OMNIRIDE/PRTC
Emily Votrubek, Georgetown Business Improvement District
Will Handsfield, Georgetown Business Improvement District
Ira Dorfman, GWRCCC
Sydney Hawthorne, DC Council
Jennifer Dietzen, DOEE
Yves Springuez, Winstangle Planners
Tim Payne, Nelson Nygaard
Bob Williams, Nelson Nygaard
Peggy Tjade, NVRC
Rosa Krewson, NVRC
Matt Scoble, Mr. Principi Chief of Staff
Mark Oliphant, JBAB

On phone:

Travis Black
Kathy Anderson
?National Harbor
?Norfolk District Corp
?Washington Airport
Melissa McGill ?

1. Welcome & Introductions

- a. Mr. Scoble spoke on behalf of Mr. Principi to make everyone aware of the Sept. 21 ferry demonstration meeting.

2. Report on Meeting with ACOE Baltimore
 - a. Discussed the process of pulling permits to understand who the actors are. This process is promising for the future as it is better organized than previously anticipated.
 - b. Parties should be aware of the special process for dealing with “federal channels” and “federal levies.” This is not a prohibitive issue, but does require special processes that ACOE was able to walk through.
 - c. May need to involve Virginia as well
 - d. The Corps of Engineers will need to understand any involvement/interfaces in the flood levee at JBAB, in which there is federal interest.
3. Report on Meeting with JBAB and DHS
 - a. Positive meeting in which both expressed interest in fast ferry service. Commander of JBAB is running awareness of this potential up the chain of command to Naval District Washington, so hopefully it will get to DOD and DON. The hope is that this will generate support. JBAB has no funding for capital improvements; however, at the individual level, there is \$245 month in commuter benefits for employees.
 - b. DHS might have some funding, but not very specific of how much and when the funding would become available. They are looking for ways to deal with traffic congestion issues on I295, so this project could be beneficial to them.
4. Website Development
 - a. Domain name: www.potomaccommuterfastferry.com/
 - b. No agency representation on the website, so it is very generic at this point. This is up for further discussion as to who should be listed, which jurisdictions, etc.
5. Site visits:
 - a. Occoquan Marina – nestled between 95 and Route 1; currently 1200 apartments are under construction with another 1200 to come; under-utilized park & ride lot is 1/3 mile from marina; Woodbridge VRE station is about a mile away; Marina banquet facility could be potential waiting area for passengers; owners are looking to retire and sell; channel is constrained because of shallow waters, much of what was dredged out is probably filled in by now. Greatest potential of sites currently available from an on-shore infrastructure perspective, but marine infrastructure still needs work for daily commuter services.
 - b. Belmont Bay – a mile south of Occoquan much closer to the end of the no wake area, which slows things down significantly (like 10 to 12 minutes longer from Occoquan). Three sites have potential but no public roadways. The most downstream site would require the building of a new roadway, which might be a fatal flaw. The site at the existing pier has no access from parking to the pier other than stairs (not ADA compliant); third site is the kayak launch area could experience interference from other boat traffic; must also take into consideration the declared depth on Occoquan Creek (possibly 7 ft or more).
 - c. JBAB North – Old marine operations center; offers most direct access to work places; pretty close to the flood plain, which is why it is part of the levy system. The pier itself is very close to the water level. It is possible to build a transition space from sea wall to pier, but not suitable as is.
 - d. JBAB South – recreational boat and fuel facility already exists; land is slightly higher at this end; possible to build a floating dock; site still needs significant improvement for commuter services. More difficult to access Coast Guard and DHS employment centers.
 - e. National Harbor – most ready for passenger operations; ferry routes listed on Google are inaccurate as channel approach is actually from the south; this makes travel to JBAB

difficult because the boat will have to double back (go South for about a mile) to be able to head towards JBAB meaning that significantly more time would be added to a chained trip. National Harbor is planning to further develop the current passenger pier and eventually move passenger services to pier with The Wheel. Marina side and connecting transit infrastructure are top notch.

6. Gap Analysis Report – This process will not choose a site, but help to narrow preferable sites down. All alternatives must still undergo environmental analysis.
 - a. Where can FTA grant funds be applied and be operational within 5 years, and needs of intended population? Economics and time are high criteria for commuters.
 - b. Review of dashboard for criteria and evaluation
 - i. Red doesn't necessary disqualify a location, but
 - ii. Environmental consequences are a separate issue. Once a site is identified, then an environmental screening will take place.
 - iii. Dredging needs must be clear, whether on-site or in the site approach
 - c. Georgetown is intentionally left off as it is not part of the initial scope of work; however, it is being added into analyses and suitability is expected to be similar to National Harbor.
 - d. FTA funds suitability has not been done yet, but as process moves forward, this will come into consideration.
7. Outreach Efforts
 - a. Project schedule is running slightly behind; by Sept. meeting, the Gap Analysis will be completed.
 - b. Open Houses will happen in September in various locations, particularly in Wards 7 & 8, DHS, and National Harbor. NVRC is working to schedule these meetings.
8. Other Matters
 - a. MWECOG meeting happening today to possibly include ferry service in regional transportation planning. Data will be uncovered with their help to determine the market demands. The problem is that there is no existing service to compare and calibrate the model for pricing.
 - b. Environmental document is not the project document, but intended to inform the decision maker of the environmental consequences of that decision. This project will submit an initial worksheet to the FTA. FTA must decide if funds are given to a ferry project, what the environmental consequences of those funds are and what class of environmental action is required to gain approval. All federal stakeholder agencies have their own set of NEPA policies to determine class of action, so for example NPS controls the Potomac from Mt. Vernon to head waterways. It is unclear how NPS will apply criteria to the project. This project will identify who the interested parties are to at least understand how these various agencies will apply the environmental impact policy to this project.
 - c. Sites will not be ranked, but will identify necessary improvements and declare sites suitable & unsuitable. The analysis seeks to stick to the original objectives of the markets: commuters to JBAB, National Harbor, Navy Yard from Woodbridge.
 - d. At what point and who will make the determinations as to the benefit of pursuing a flawed site yet more desirable location? This continues to be unknown because there is no lead agency as of yet.
 - e. Summary of FTA grant: 3.38 million dollars for VDOT and NVRC to begin services from Jones Point Park to JBAB; however, things have shifted from Alexandria to Woodbridge.

So this means an amendment needs to be submitted to FTA, and assuming they accept, then the FTA will help determine which kinds of services can be offered (what vessels will be allowed). No funding for operations, and so to move forward, this must be a P3.

- f. Resiliency factors into how a lead agency might determine the decision-making process. The federal government may see value in a facility that helps evacuate JBAB, for example. However, that is an unknown at the point. NYC ferries played an important role in natural and unnatural disasters; however, no one in this area has made this a priority in supporting the project.
- g. Who is willing to pay to have their logo on the website? No one in the public sector has stepped up; however, private sector is making significant investments for future ferry services.
- h. GWRCC has offered to help search for funding sources for non-diesel fuel vessels.
- i. Another issues for existing water taxis is that there is no logistics support center currently available for vessels. Have to go to Annapolis or Hampton. Trying to get property on the Anacostia River, and having a commuter ferry service would make this a worthwhile investment.
- j. Potomac Riverboat approached issues of the need for wave attenuation if timing is a major factor