

Boston Harbor Islands Partnership
Meeting Minutes
WilmerHale, 60 State Street, 26th Floor, Boston, MA
January 17, 2017, 3:00–4:30 PM



Attendees: CDR Brad Kelly—United States Coast Guard (USCG); Michael Creasey and Giles Parker—National Park Service (NPS); Commissioner Leo Roy, Priscilla Geigis, and Susan Kane—Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR); Frederick Laskey—Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA); Stewart Dalzell—Massachusetts Port Authority (Massport); Austin Blackmon—City of Boston; Richard McGuinness—Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA); Kathy Abbott and Phil Griffiths—Boston Harbor NOW (BHN); Arthur Pearson—Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center (TIOBEC); Alicia Leuba—The Trustees of Reservations (Trustees); Maureen Cavanaugh, Elizabeth Solomon, Rob Moir and Heather Deschenes—Boston Harbor Islands Advisory Council (AC).

Arthur Pearson, chair, opened the meeting, a quorum was present. The minutes of the meeting held on November 15, 2016, were approved.

Update on Partnership Appointments

Michael Creasey, NPS, reported that several appointments were recently processed. He welcomed the new members, and thanked the returning members for their continuing service. Special thanks for Mary Raczko (NPS) for shepherding those through.

Partnership Nominating Committee

Arthur Pearson summarized the process of the nominating committee established at the November 15 meeting to identify and recommend candidates for chair and vice-chair of the Partnership. The committee, consisting of Michael Creasey (federal); Priscilla Geigis (state); Rich McGuinness (city); Arthur Pearson (NGO); and Elizabeth Solomon (AC) – met on January 9th with follow-up calls for those not in attendance. The committee talked about leadership needs for the Partnership, and encouraged the Partnership to look at avoiding conflicts of interests and recruiting participation to increase diversity moving forward. The members also recommending looking at the enabling legislation and the nomination process to improve future elections.

The committee unanimously brought forward Fred Laskey (MWRA) for Chair and Austin Blackmon (City of Boston) as Vice Chair. Arthur Pearson made a motion to approve the selections for new Chair and Vice Chair. Kathy Abbott seconded the motion. **The motion was approved.** Fred Laskey thanked the committee and the Partnership. Giles Parker (NPS) thanked Arthur for his service as Chair of the Partnership from July 2012 to January 2017, serving during the transition of voting members for most of our Partners and changes in city and state Administrations. Arthur Pearson passed the gavel to Fred Laskey so that he could preside over the remainder of the meeting.

Trustees of Reservations – Worlds End and Boston Waterfront Plan

Alicia Leuba, Trustees, joined the organization three months ago and serves as the Vice President for the Eastern Region. The Trustees are working on two separate projects – one at Worlds End and the other on the Boston Waterfront. At Worlds End, Alicia noted that Fran Blanchard has been promoted and Mathew Slayton has been promoted to her spot. The Trustees have been working to change circulation on the site to increase parking and create a welcome center. Early feedback and opposition from the neighbors that abut the property is that people believe there is already too much visitation at Worlds End.

The Trustees are also working on a Boston waterfront initiative lead by Jocelyn Forbush, looking for opportunities for the Trustees to activate more green space along the waterfront. Funded through the Barr Foundation, the waterfront planning is a collaboration with other city entities to look at creative approaches for place-making across the city while considering the effects of coastal vulnerability. The Trustees have 70 miles of coast line that could be affected and are looking at how climate will impact them. At this time, the Trustees are focusing on East Boston and Downtown. Alicia And Jocelyn are available for a more in depth review at a later meeting.

BPDA – ImagineBoston 2030

Richard McGuinness (BPDA) noted that the City of Boston does not have a city wide master plan. But, ImagineBoston: Expanding Opportunity was released in November and is available on the ImagineBoston website¹. The final version is anticipated by Spring 2017. The context to plan was centered on the themes of inequality (60% of Boston makes under \$3,500/year); how the city will tackle this issue; where the city can expand; find where the growth zones are; diversify job sectors; and adjust to dips in the market.

ImagineBoston 2030 is a growth plan that serves as an umbrella to other strategic planning efforts such as ClimateReady Boston.

Richard noted that city has expressed interest in open space and green space by the water, creating areas that also serve as protection from climate change. Richard recommended the ImagineBoston website².

Michael Creasey, NPS, asked where does Boston stand as relates to open space and population? And, how does the city view this?

Austin Blackmon, City of Boston, referenced the Trust for Public Land (TPL) annual rankings of open space. TPL ranks city based upon three factors – amount of dollars invested, access (number of parks and how close the parks are to them), and the number of acres the city has. Boston ranks in the top 10 for the amount of acreage, but is lower as relates to dollars invested.

Marc Albert, NPS, asked how is Long Island being addressed in Imagine Boston?

Richard noted that the City planning is focusing in five areas that are undergoing substantial change: East Boston, Downtown waterfront, Dorchester, Columbia Point and Long Island. The IB plan mostly focused on identifying the features of Long Island, but does not include specifics

¹ <http://20222-presscdn.pagely.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/lb2030-Vision-Report-WEB-2016-11-17-SPREADS.pdf>

² <http://imagine.boston.gov/>

beyond that. Richard recommended adding Long Island planning to a future Partnership agenda.

MassDCR – Park Development and Planning

Susan Kane, DCR, noted that 2016 was a great season. Six new yurts were installed on Peddocks Island and going to bring online shortly. Big thing behind the scenes starting last summer and into this season is how staff on the island are working together. DCR introduced a new position type on the islands: Visitor Services Supervisor. It worked well to have one Point of Contact per island, working to streamline position and make it even smoother this summer. Last year DCR had three road races on the islands – two on Spectacle and one on Peddocks.

The visitation numbers were higher than 2015, but not as high as the record year of 2014. 375 groups of 20 or more were issued for groups. DCR also keeps track in the number of people participating in programs, all a wide variety of programs: 25,600 people. 215th Army Band came out, they were tremendous.

Leo Roy, DCR, noted that they are looking to increase access to islands in 2017 and beyond. One way to do so is to provide more access for public and private boaters, which has also been expressed as a need by the public. DCR is currently going through permitting process to add to the mooring fields. DCR is also in conversation with NPS and BHN to fund a master plan for Peddocks Island and having a community conversation about the future of the island.

Elizabeth Solomon was asked to bring from Advisory Council the mooring issue. She also noted that the Master Plan for Peddocks Island may be something that the Advisory Council might be able to help with public comment.

Leo Roy expressed interest in a robust public comment of future uses of Peddocks.

Boston Harbor NOW – Organizational Vision, Priorities an Waterfront Activity

Kathy Abbott, BHN, provided an update based upon her first 6-7 months with the reorganized Boston Harbor Now. BHN is working with the City to support analysis associated with ImagineBoston 2030. As presented by Phil Griffiths at the November meeting, they are working with MassDOT and Massport on water transportation planning. On islands, BHN is working with DCR and NPS on organizing efforts focused on Peddocks Island. They are also interested in seeing Long Island incorporated into cities plan.

Kathy introduced Jill Valdes Horwood, BHN, who continues the TBHA-related work on Chapter 91. Public waterfront access continues to be a large part of what BHN is focused on. For example, Jill noted their role as part of the Advisory Councils for both the Downtown waterfront plan and South Boston.

BHN is championing water front access. Post Hurricane Sandy, climate change and sea level rise planning is emphasis area for their organization. BHN has also recently brought on board a Fellow researching white papers focused on maritime and industrial use of the Harbor and waterfront.

Kathy noted that BHN is ust kicking off a three-year strategic plan for the organization with a focus on the Economic, Social and Environmental Health of the Harbor. Planning, programing and marketing that takes into account the past 20 years of programming in Boston. Fundraising and revenue generation will also be an integral part of going forward.

NPS – Park Water Transportation Study

Giles Parker, NPS, provided a hand-out and update on \$115,000 of NPS funding focused on water transportation planning for the park. In the materials given (see Attachment #1), the scope of work will coincide with the commuter planning by BHN and presented by Phil Griffiths at the November meeting. This funding will help support investigating current services to the islands, water transportation needs and operational efficiencies to meet a desired visitor experience. Knowing that the ferry contract expires in two years, the study will also serve as an input into the next solicitation.

Phil Griffiths, BHN, noted that the MBTA schedule is different than what it was earlier. The park contract runs through 2018, and Phil will confirm when the MBTA contract(s) expire. Phil also noted that the park schedule is already completed for this summer, early than usual. Ferries start May 13, and the summer season starts June 27th.

Michael Creasey, NPS, provided an update on the Boston Harbor Islands Welcome Center on the Rose Kennedy Greenway. During development of the facility, it was envisioned that the Pavilion would serve as a gateway to the islands, the Greenway and to other open space. Now that we've seen it in play for the past five years, NPS with BHN and others have done some reevaluating of the building is used and functions. How can we sustain it? Paying for custodial and security? How do we activate that space in terms of placemaking with the Green way and the partners? This would include the NPS with NPS investigating commercial services to offer food.

Kathy Abbott, BHN, noted that the idea being explored is to connect the Pavilion as a venue for island related food and retail with a direct connection to the service on Georges and Spectacle Islands.

Phil Griffiths, BHN, added that they are engaging a new vendor for food on the islands and incorporating into that a request for proposal for new type of retail on the Greenway as one package. This will bring a higher level of attraction of the islands.

Richard McGuinness, BPDA, noted the disconnect between the distance of Pavilion and docks, which the city and Partnership can take into consideration as the city fulfills the Chapter 91 plan by Long Wharf North with support usage to the islands.

Advisory Council

Elizabeth Solomon brought forward Advisory Council questions about what is happening with Long Island and requesting that the advisory council be involved in the process. The Council has recently added new members and it's an opportunity to engage partnership, community, and advisory council.

Maureen Cavanaugh added that the Annual meeting is scheduled for March, 2nd Wed from 6:00-8:00PM.

Partner Updates

Fred Laskey asked for additional updates from each of the partners.

Brad Kelly, USCG, reiterated the successful 300th anniversary of Boston Light and extended appreciation for everyone's effort. Publicity increased visitors 35 percent to about 5,000 people. For future plans, the USCG has received funds from within Coast Guard to do an investigation of the undersea cable to light at approximately \$75,000. They will look to complete that work by 2019. Currently, the main focus for Sector Boston is SailBoston 2017. USCG with local law enforcement have robust security plan and traffic plan for harbor. They expect large influx of support. Boston Police and State Police are also very much involved.

Michael Creasey, NPS, asked if the USS Eagle is coming for SailBoston. Brad was 95% sure that the Eagle will be in Boston. Michael noted that Charlestown might host the Eagle. With the USS Constitution out of dry dock by then but not ready to sail, the Eagle may berth at Constitution's Pier 1. Dates of SailBoston are June 17 – 21st.

Arthur Pearson noted Thompson Island is quiet now as they start rotating caretakers for the winter. They continue to work with the City on orchestrating a place for more permanent dockage for students to access Thompson Island.

Stewart Dalzell, Massport, was sitting in for Andrew Hargens. Replacement of light pier of south end of airport. Massport is in the process of permitting a replacement light pier at the south end of the airport. Conley Terminal is also getting repairs.

Public Comment

No public comments.

Fred Laskey thanked Arthur Pearson again for his years of service as the Chair.

The meeting was adjourned.



Boston Harbor Islands Partnership

A Transportation Vision, Strategy and Action Plan

Boston Harbor Islands
Water Transportation Study

NPS Funding: \$115,000

Fiscal Year: 2017

Project Description

The Boston Harbor Islands Water Transportation Study will play a pivotal role in the next phase of city, harbor and island revitalization. The recent expansion of water transportation facilities and services – around Boston Harbor and on the islands – demonstrate the growing appeal of water travel and island access for local commuters and visitors. As landside transit routes around the harbor continue to be increasingly congested, the water ferry routes can provide more efficient and enjoyable access around the harbor, to the islands and to other waterfront destinations. As the ferry contract with the current ferry operator expires after 2018 and the park's nonprofit partner Boston Harbor NOW leads a broader multi-agency water transportation planning effort city-wide, this study would be contracted on a parallel track to:

- Investigate ferry service alternatives for the Boston Harbor Islands, including potential roles of BHI Park Partners, other governmental agencies, and private ferry operators;
- Address water transportation services currently available in Boston Harbor, or that are projected to be operating in the near future, and the advantages/disadvantages of contracting with one or more of them;
- Analyze opportunities and cost efficiencies in combining water transportation services to the Boston Harbor Islands with commuter services and with services to other harbor attractions;
- Examine the interface between water and land transportation facilities including recommendations for public destinations and amenities at the off-island gateway staging locations;
- Discuss a business plan for the ferry service operation and the potential for private sector investment; and,
- Provide the framework for the next Request for Proposal for ferry service to the islands.

The final report will include recommendations for a shared vision, strategy and action plan to improve upon the water transportation network for the park.

Attachment #1

Background

A boat ride to the islands is the iconic visitor experience at Boston Harbor Islands National and State Park.³ A mandate of the Boston Harbor Islands enabling legislation is to “improve access to the Harbor Islands through the use of public water transportation.” In developing strategies to address this mandate, the Boston Harbor Islands Partnership made several assumptions about water transportation:

- passenger ferry service will be expanded in phases over time
- additional mainland departure points and routes are added when there is demonstrated demand⁴
- island docks, which are controlled by park managers, are also open for commercial ferries under regulation by the park (dock) manager
- ferry service is intended to be self-sustaining over time.

In 2009, the Boston Harbor Islands Partnership adopted a Strategic Plan that includes goals for the Boston Harbor Islands water transportation system. The Strategic Plan calls for:

- instituting performance standards;
- increasing ferryboat capacity by 50%;
- increasing ridership by 100% (to 300,000 annually);
- lowering passenger fares; and,
- increasing the number of people brought to the park via free access programs.

The Strategic Plan identifies a need for a feasibility study and financial analysis to identify future water transportation options before the current contract for ferry services expires in 2014.

Since seasonal passenger service began to Boston Harbor Islands State Park (c. 1968), primary service from Boston has been offered to the public by commercial providers through contracted service. With transportation added to other islands in the system after 1999, major components of the Boston Harbor Islands seasonal water transportation system include:

- scheduled contracted service to six islands
- scheduled service to Thompson Island
- contracted excursions to Little Brewster Island
- commuter ferry connections to Georges Island
- island and mainland dock infrastructure
- Boston Harbor Islands Pavilion at Long Wharf
- Hingham Shipyard Transportation Center (planned)

Six islands—Bumpkin, Georges, Grape, Lovells, Peddocks, and Spectacle—are served by the

³ Notwithstanding less than a third of visitors arrive via the park’s passenger ferries. Of approximately 4.5 million visits to the park since 1999, 1.4 million arrived via park contracted ferries. Another 350,000 arrived on commercial charters and private boats. The remainder visited portions of the park available by auto, such as Worlds End, Webb Memorial, and Deer Island. Visitor/ferry counts are not precise due to changes in methods over the years; counts before 1999 are totally unsystematic and not useful.

⁴ A U.S. Department of Transportation Volpe Center studied ferry routes and funding, concluding the system would not be self sufficient until there is a major increase in annual visitation to 500,000.

Attachment #1

park's contract ferry service. The contract is managed as a single vendor under agreement to Boston Harbor NOW (the nonprofit partner of the park) on behalf of the park partnership. Service varies by season and day of the week. Park ferries operate late May through mid-October from Long Wharf-North in Boston, which accounted for more than 90%⁵ of visitors since 1999. Late June through Labor Day service from Hingham Shipyard in Hingham, Pemberton Point in Hull, and previously from Fore River Shipyard in Quincy has carried 8% of park ferry passengers. The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) occasionally supplements regularly scheduled service to the "camping islands" with the 36-passenger MV *Abigail*. In 2015, contracted park ferries run by Boston Harbor Cruises carried 109,661 passengers after a record high of 125,368 in 2014.

Scheduled service is provided to Thompson Island for the general public on weekends, Memorial Day to Labor Day, from EDIC pier in South Boston. During spring, summer and fall, Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center and their contracted vessels carry visitors to park islands for environmental education, peer leadership programs, and events. In 2015, 30,286 visitors were carried aboard the Thompson Island ferry and contracted vessels.

Service between Central Wharf in Boston and Little Brewster Island is provided by the UMass-Boston Marine Division twice a day on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays from mid-June through late September. In 2015, 2,292 passengers were brought to the island for the Boston Light Tour.

In 2016, service was begun on a trial basis between Winthrop town pier, downtown Boston and Spectacle Island. The operator, Boston Harbor Cruises (BHC) is under contract to the Town.

Reduced rates are available on the primary park ferry service for families and for groups of 10 or more people. An Island Pass program offers free access for non-profit groups in an effort to expand access to underserved populations. School groups participating in park-sponsored programs receive free or reduced rates. In 2011, 20,000 individuals were provided free passage.⁶

Fixed piers and floating docks owned by DCR provide access to the six islands served by contract ferry service. Thompson Island's fixed pier and floating dock is owned by Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center. The fixed pier at Little Brewster Island is owned by U.S. Coast Guard, and the floating dock by National Park Service. Ferry docks at Long Wharf-North are leased to Boston's Best Cruises by Boston Redevelopment Authority; the adjacent commuter ferry dock is owned by MBTA. The fixed pier and ferry docks at Hingham are owned by DCR and leased to the MBTA, and the ferry dock in Hull is owned by MBTA. The ferry dock in South Boston is controlled by BRA's Economic Development and Industrial Corporation (EDIC). The Central Wharf dock used for Boston Light trips is owned by the New England Aquarium.

⁵ Of 1,066,974 total visitors, 986,405 arrived from Long Wharf in Boston; or 92%.

⁶ The Partnership's Island Pass program brought 16,257 people for free and TIOBEC-NPS park-sponsored school trips brought 3,500+ for total of more than 20,000 free trips.

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An ongoing project (#221458) has confirmed the condition of all on-island docks and piers as fair to good, laying the structure to a joint long-term funding strategy to improve on-island facilities. As part of the status assessment, a feasibility study/cost analysis will be done to aid the park and partners in making decisions about future needs and projects.

In 2011, the award-winning Boston Harbor Islands Pavilion opened on the Rose Kennedy Greenway in downtown Boston. It provides park visitor information and orientation, ferry ticket sales, and retail sales related to the park. In addition, a transportation center is planned for the Hingham Shipyard. Among other functions, this \$4.5 million MBTA facility would include Boston Harbor Islands visitor information, MBTA ticket sales, ferry waiting areas, and office space for park staff. A small kiosk serves visitors in the interim.

Other park-wide transportation opportunities and challenges include:

- The park ferry contract expires after the 2018 season, and the park partnership will need to solicit for a new vendor.
- The MBTA commuter ferry service contract expires after 2018, and the MBTA will need to solicit for a new vendor.
- The dock utilized by Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center in South Boston is under agreement with the city through 2017 and commercial development has expanded greatly around the Ray Flynn Marine Park.
- Due to the Centennial of the National Park Service and the TriCentennial of Boston Light, the park has received greater exposure and public visibility than ever before. The water transportation vision, strategy and action plan needs to provide opportunities for rising visitation.
- As part of the Municipal Harbor Planning and ImagineBoston 2030 plan, the waterfront, harbor, and islands have a greater connection to the city than ever before. The water transportation system to the park needs to build upon those renewed connections with flexibility to adapt to new prospects on islands like Long and Gallops Islands.
- Climate and weather are important factors in tourists' decision making and also influence the successful operation of parks. People take a lot of factors into consideration when they plan trips to a state or national park, such as school holiday schedules. An analysis of island visitation finds that based on visitation patterns, no factor influences visitation patterns on the islands more than climate. Unlike other parks, visitors have few options on the islands if it rains or is too hot and they can not quickly leave if the weather becomes a factor. The strong link between visitation and climate can help park managers and transportation planners anticipate and plan for changing demands in the types and timing of services within the park.
- Vessels: Vehicles including the current fleet of ferries are the number one contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. The marine industry is facing challenges to reduce engine exhaust emissions and greenhouse gases (GHGs) — in particular, carbon dioxide (CO₂) from their vessels. Present-day propulsion plants and marine fuels, cannot meet these new regulations without installing expensive exhaust after-treatment equipment or switching to low-sulfur diesel, low-sulfur residual, or alternative fuels with properties that reduce engine emissions below mandated limits, all of which impact bottom-line profits. A lot of good faith effort has also been made by the current ferry operator to provide access accommodations.

Attachment #1

However, since no ADA regulations for vessel access has been issued, access solutions are needed for a very diverse industry with multi-deck access for wheelchairs and solutions from shore over docks and piers.

- Gateways: With (15) identified in the park General Management, what is the right combination of departure points in order to offer a range of efficient and convenient connections between homes, jobs, and services to the recreational opportunities on the islands. Of the ones currently utilized, the gateway terminals have limited landside amenities, no real-time departure information, are not owned or controlled by the park and high and low tide variations create issues.

Scope of Work

The existing agreement with the contracted water transportation vendor, which has been in place since 2004, expires in 2018. Much has changed in the park and Boston Harbor since 2004. Given the critical role of water transportation, park management would like to craft a new operating model for transportation to park islands. Therefore, the National Park Service on behalf of the Boston Harbor Islands Partnership seeks to carry out a study to identify alternatives for improving the quality, reliability, and long-term viability of the water transportation system for Boston Harbor Islands.

The purpose of the study is to assist the BHI Partnership in preparing a comprehensive development plan for expanded and new passenger water transportation service. The project will include the synthesis of past planning reports and current Harbor ferry experiences, with new evaluations of primary and secondary needs and options to develop an achievable Action Plan.

The study will produce a plan with a series of alternatives that address water transportation over several stages during the continued development of BOHA, to be incorporated in strategic plan for the park. The plan will include specific recommendations for accommodating public access that could be implemented in the short-term, as well as more conceptual recommendations for later phases. The plan will help develop the support of park partners including Boston Harbor Now and Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation. With the renewed energy and investment in waterfront development as signaled by ongoing construction in South Boston, East Boston, Fort Point Channel and Battery Wharf, the time is right to enhance and expand the harbor water transportation network. As such, the study will need to incorporate for new factors influencing harbor and island passenger service including:

- Coordination of plans with the Municipal Harbor Plan, Charlestown Navy Yard development concept planning, East Boston master planning and Hingham Shipyard development
- Adaptation of future ferry plans to accommodate for the Boston Harbor Dredging project;
- Response to a new and dynamic wave of waterfront revitalization in all neighborhoods;
- Application of new transportation funding resources;
- Keeping pace with national trend of growing popularity and demand for ferry transportation in other urban areas;
- Provision of the islands to accommodate emerging new vessel technologies providing fast, environmentally friendly and affordable options

Attachment #1

Deliverables

A report focused on the water transportation needs, vision, strategy and action plan of the Boston Harbor Islands, including:

- Current conditions on the Boston Harbor Islands and in Greater Boston outlining other planning initiatives, potential business opportunities and also presents information about the islands as well as the off-island gateways.
- A list of categorized transportation requirements including transportation gateways, destination points, ferry schedule, fare, service type, and operator used to evaluate various alternatives.
- Information on “comparable” parks and other areas accessible only by water transportation.
- Detailed list of current and proposed Boston Harbor ferry routes, including major service characteristics (operator, schedule/frequency, fare, boat type) as available from other planning efforts.
- Detailed route-by-route ridership information.
- Transportation alternatives assembled from the transportation requisite list and assessed against the current service as well as commuter service alternatives.
- Preliminary actions for implementation of a preferred alternative.
- Visitor projections based upon the preferred alternative.
- Business plan

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