

## Notes from Bar Harbor Parking Solutions Task Force (Draft)

October 26, 2016

**Present: Mary Booher, Eben Salvatore, Jill Goldthwait, Erin Early-Ward, Liz Kase, John Kelly, Dick Cough, Matt Hochman, Sherry Rasmussen, Martha Searchfield, Ron Beard, Cornell Knight**

### Check-In Comments

Task Force Members checked in with thoughts or reflections since the last meeting:

The *demonstration parking meter* installed near the former Opera House Restaurant on Cottage Street elicited many comments... several members had conversations with residents, business-people and visitors. Erin Early-Ward had shared a list of 23 comments and questions she garnered using Facebook. The parking meter must have found some resonance, as there was \$8.60 in change in the coin box when it was removed; Mr. Knight said this sum had been deposited in the Town's Parking Fund.

Some additional themes seem to have emerged:

- Employers provide a range of options for employees, from no provision for employees to some provision for employees.
- We ought to consider some limited areas for "free parking" or metered spots allowing the first 15 minutes free for stop and go errands, etc.
- Our report/recommendations needs to show parking meters as part of a comprehensive program... with clear rationale.
- Because of irregular street-scapes, placement of the meters needs to consider pedestrian and handicapped accessibility on sidewalks, as well as potential damage due to sloppy parking techniques by a range of drivers/vehicles.
- Lodging establishments, including Bed & Breakfast owners, are generally required to provide offstreet parking to their guests. The task force determined that so called "grandfathered" B&Bs are allowed to operate without providing complete off-street parking, but they were not guaranteed street parking in the vicinity of their establishments. Should streets on which these grandfathered B&Bs are located be converted to permit parking, they would wish some opportunity to purchase permits for their guests.
- Should the town go forward with a comprehensive parking program, clear and uniform enforcement will go a long way to making it successful.

## **Implications of Acadia National Park transportation planning on Town of Bar Harbor (and vice versa)**

John Kelly, Task force member and planner for Acadia National Park, outlined the planning process that Acadia is using to consider options to deal with increased traffic and congestion in the park. Based on comments received from the public and various stakeholders in 2015, the planning team for Acadia (part of the national office) has outlined four concepts that are currently out for review and comment. He distributed outlines of the concepts and encouraged task force members to attend the public meeting on November 3<sup>rd</sup> at 6:30 pm at the MDI High School. Based on comments received at the public meeting and on-line, the park planning team would revise and refine the concepts for a second round of comments, working towards adoption of a final plan in the fall of 2018.

Generally, the concepts being discussed would provide some incentive for using the Island Explorer over private automobiles on park roads. About 75% of visitors stay in campgrounds and lodging establishments on Mount Desert Island, and presumably have parking spaces. However, some of those visitors seek to park in Bar Harbor and embark on the Island Explorer from there. If the town of Bar Harbor, has a comprehensive parking program, with a minimum of free parking, that would be a further incentive for visitors to begin their Island Explorer journeys from their campground or hotel.

Mr. Kelly outlined the original purpose of the Island Explorer was just that... to reduce traffic and congestion in the park and in the island towns by encouraging visitors to leave their automobiles in the lots where they are lodging. An email from Tom Crikelair (the transportation planner who designed the Island Explorer system operated by Downeast Transportation), indicated that use of the Explorer by visitors eliminates demand of approximately 250 parking spaces in Bar Harbor.

Mr. Crikelair also indicated that a rule of thumb is that doubling service frequency results in a 30% increase in usage. His email suggested that increasing the frequency of Island Explorer service on Eden Street and on a portion of the "campground route" to Ireson Hill, has the greatest potential for further reduction in demand for parking in downtown Bar Harbor.

Doubling service frequency on those routes can be accomplished with two additional buses and associated drivers. While Mr. Kelly indicated that current budgeting allows for replacement of the existing fleet of 28 buses and five additional buses over the next several years, the real limiting factor is the ability of Downeast Transportation to find and retain bus drivers for the season. Service this year had to be curtailed somewhat at the beginning and the end of the season due to shortage of drivers.

Mr. Kelly indicated that the rough cost of operating the Island Explorer is \$2 million per year, about half coming through sale of Acadia Park passes, the remainder from

a variety of sources, including town funding, donation boxes on the buses, Friends of Acadia(including a significant donation from LL Bean), hotels where the bus has “front door” service, and some Federal Transit money coming through the State of Maine.

**Island Explorer Revenue - 2015**

National Park Service	980,000
State of Maine (Federal Transit Administration)	639,450
Municipalities	74,450
Corporate Support	200,500
Friends of Acadia	11,000
Business Direct Service	46,880
Business Donations	5,000
Individual Donations	40,000
Net Revenue (past year carry over)	117,258
Interest	684
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<i>Total</i>	<i>\$2,115,222</i>

Mr. Kelly also indicated

- 20% of Island Explorer riders are employees coming to or returning from work
- The Hulls Cove Visitor Center currently has spaces for 280 vehicles... there has been some discussion within ANP of providing a second level or deck to increase parking at that location.
- The proposed Acadia Welcome Center, when completed, will add spaces for some 450 vehicles, of which 104 are already available at the bus maintenance facility there.
- Plans for development of the ferry terminal to allow cruise ship passengers to disembark for ground transportation will have an impact on Acadia’s planning.

## Elements of Draft Report

Mr. Beard indicated he would draft a report for discussion at the November 8 meeting. Task force members discussed elements of the report, including

- a. *Introduction and background*** (including earlier work and the consultant's report)
- b. The *overall rationale*** for a parking program as part of an overall strategy to reduce traffic and congestion for the benefit of residents and visitors
- c. *Recommendations***, including
  - Paid Parking with meters and kiosks
  - Permit parking zones for residents and employees
  - Permit parking zones for residents only
  - Establishment of a Parking fund, similar to the cruise ship fund, which would cover the cost of equipment purchase, maintenance, enforcement and investment in facilities (including reserves for possible financing of a parking garage should the town decide such a facility is needed)... and with the Council to outline the range of other possible expenditures from this fund and relevant procedures.
- d. *Ways to improve success*** of the parking program, including an overall implementation plan that outlines enforcement and public education (residents, employees and visitors (an appendix of "frequently asked questions" and answers)
- e. *Further steps for consideration***, including work with stakeholders to create additional employee parking

## Next Meeting

The group will next meet at 4 pm on Tuesday, November 8 (location to be announced)

Notes prepared by Ron Beard, Task Force Facilitator

Reviewed by Sherry Rasmussen, Secretary



## **Parking Solutions Task Force Meeting topics and schedule (Autumn 2016)**

- August 30 An overview of the consultant’s report and recommendations, so that task force members understand the overall goals of the parking program and how each element of a parking program contributes to those goals; election of chair, vice chair and secretary.
- Sept 13 Consideration of ***on-street paid parking*** (via smart meters or kiosks) including review of available technology and costs, which streets, enforcement consideration, ordinance changes required, etc. *(Cornell will bring maps and provide background on available parking meters and kiosks)*
- Sept 27 Consideration of ***paid parking in town parking lots***, including review of available technology, which parking lots, enforcement considerations, current and improved efficiency, etc.
- Consideration of a draft outline for a “parking fund”, similar to the current Cruise Ship Fund, outlining sources of income and possible expenses. *(Cornell will provide a draft)*
- Oct 11 Consideration of ***residential parking permit system***, including how such a system might work, who gets permits (residents, guests, renters), enforcement considerations, etc. *Possible attendance by Police Chief to review overall enforcement concerns/opportunities.*
- Oct 25 Consideration of the current and possible roles of the Downeast Transportation and ***Island Explorer*** in contributing to solutions to the parking situation (including service to existing or proposed auxiliary parking lots such as Ferry Terminal *(Paul Murphy will be invited to attend)*); update on ***Acadia National Park transportation plan*** and any implications for parking solutions in Bar Harbor *(John Kelly will present overview)*
- Nov 8 Bringing all the pieces together, ***working toward draft task force recommendations*** to the Council, including any income projections, ordinance changes, budget implications, schedule for implementation
- Nov 22 Consideration and ***finalization of recommendations***
- Dec 6 ***Presentation of final recommendations*** to Town Council
- Dec 13 Consideration of any discussion or requests by the Town Council, based on Task Force recommendations

