

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine
Baltimore, Maryland



Fort McHenry

Alternative Transportation Study

Appendix F

May 2004

John A. Volpe National Transportation Systems Center
Research and Special Programs Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation





Comments and Recommendations
National Park Service (NPS) Transportation Assistance Group (TAG) Site Visit to
Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine (FOMC)
Baltimore, Maryland

February 20-21, 2002

Summary of Recommendations:

- Subject to the recommendations of this report and the review of the final scope of work, the TAG recommends funding Project Management Information System (PMIS) project #63506 in the amount of \$160,000 of FY 2003 Alternative Transportation Program (ATP) funds for the development of an alternative transportation plan. This report recommends funding an increase of \$80,000 requested in the original PMIS submittal to complement and complete the consolidated planning studies recommended below. The alternative transportation plan should be developed in conjunction with the examination of a proposed new park educational/administrative facility, and should be consistent with the options considered in that study, as well as support the associated environmental assessment and include the appropriate public involvement;
- Recommend the park combine the funding for the park educational/administrative facility Development Concept Plan/Environmental Assessment (DCP/EA), more appropriately titled a Site Development Assessment, and the above mentioned Transportation Plan (TP), in order to realize planning and financial efficiencies;
- Recommend the park re-examine its cost estimates for the DCP. It will be necessary to apply for additional funding, in the estimated amount of \$110,000 in order to conduct the required Environmental Assessment (EA), with about \$50,000 of that amount for the transportation element;
- Recommend that the Denver Service Center (DSC) be funded in the amount of \$30,000 to assist the park in the formulation of project agreements, Architecture/Engineering tasks, and a work plan to respond to the above recommendations; and

- To receive these funds, the park must update their PMIS submission to reflect the recommendations contained in the TAG report and changed conditions.

Background and Conditions:

The NPS TAG conducted a site visit to FOMC, February 20-21, 2002, to review transportation needs contained in PMIS #63506, and to meet with park staff. The \$80,000 FY 2003 ATP submission calls for the review of existing transportation projects and systems and the development of alternative transportation systems in conjunction with the evaluation of the need for a new educational/administrative facility.

Located on Locust Point peninsula, which guards the approach to Baltimore Harbor, Fort McHenry was originally established in the late 18th Century as part of a national system of coastal fortifications. The 43-acre historic site and “star fort” played an important role in the War of 1812 when the British unsuccessfully attempted to take Baltimore during September 13-14, 1814. Their heavy 24-hour bombardment was witnessed and memorialized by Francis Scott Key in a poem, “The Star-Spangled Banner”, which subsequently became the National Anthem.

Land access to Fort McHenry is through the Locust Point neighborhood via Fort Avenue, a minor urban arterial street. In addition to being accessible by car, it is also possible to reach the fort via public transit using the Maryland Department of Transportation’s Mass Transit Administration’s (MTA) along Route 1, which stops directly in front of the fort’s entrance. In addition, numerous public schools and private tour bus operators visit the fort.

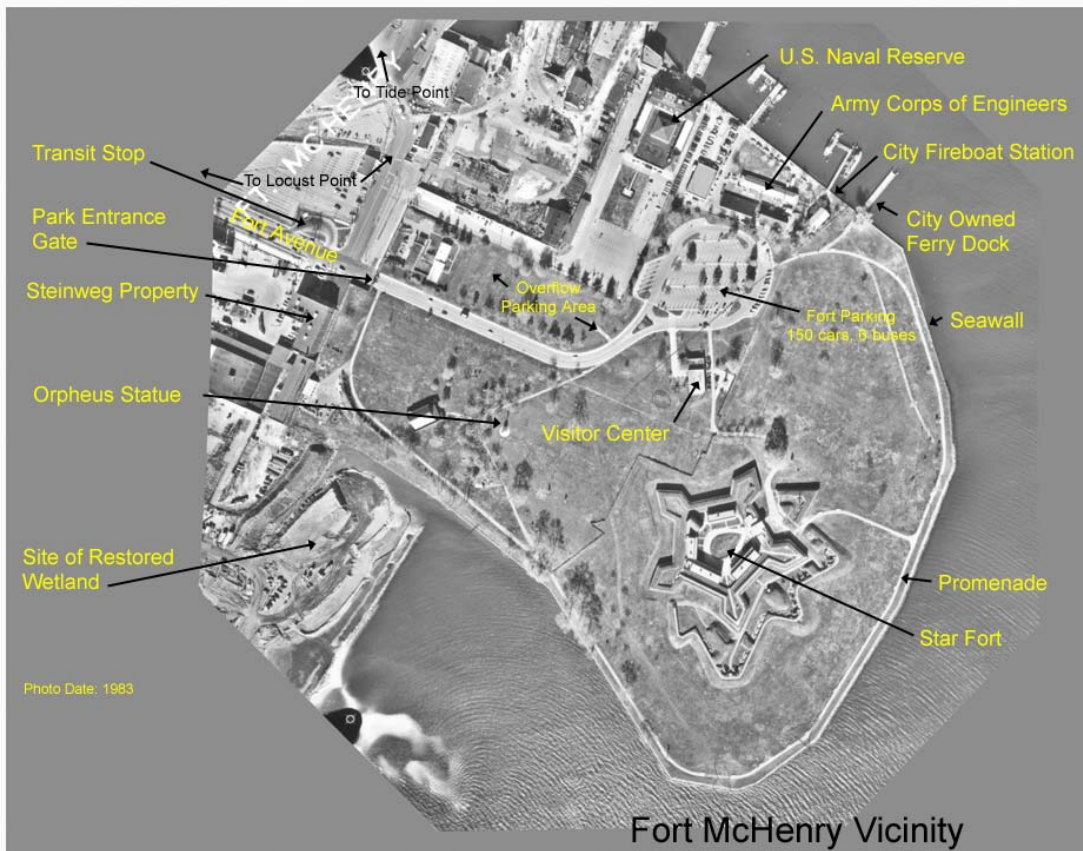
Water access to the park is provided under of the National Historic Seaport of operates the Seaport Taxi, and by a private which operates the Water Taxi. Both to the Inner Harbor, which is a major tourist attraction in Baltimore. The Seaport Taxi city of Baltimore-owned and maintained fort property, also used by the city of Department. The privately owned Water concessioner, docks at Tide Point (Pier 10), passengers to and from the fort by means of



the sponsorship Baltimore, which tour operator, connect the fort and recreational operates from a dock located on Baltimore Fire Taxi, and NPS and shuttles a red jitney bus.

The adjacent Locust Point neighborhood continues to be an active part of the Port of Baltimore, with several commercial piers and a marine terminal located next to the fort’s entrance. These give the neighborhood a distinctly maritime/industrial character. Currently, a United States Naval Reserve facility and a United States Army Corps of Engineers facility are located next to the park’s entrance on land which was originally part of the fort. The fort was an active military installation until its transfer to the NPS in 1933.

Recently, the Locust Point neighborhood has begun to experience some of the urban revitalization already centered on the areas surrounding the Inner Harbor. A 21-acre industrial/office park has been built in the renovated Proctor and Gamble facility at Tide Point. City plans call for the extension of the City Promenade from the Inner Harbor to that location. There is also discussion of the construction of an immigration museum in the area, as the building presently used by the Naval Reserve was originally designed and operated as an immigration processing facility similar to New York’s Ellis Island. The possibility has also been raised of constructing a dock for deep draft cruise boats across the harbor from the fort.



Annual visitation to the fort for the last couple of years has been approximately 700,000. For 2001 it stood at 647,495. The majority of these visitors (451,022) arrived at the park by means of private automobile, 73,091 by means of tour bus, and 75,534 by water shuttle. Lastly, about 47,128 visitors were recorded as being pedestrians, though how many of these might actually be using MTA'S Route 1 bus, is not known.

The park is served by a Mission 66 era 5,700-square-foot visitor center built in 1963 to accommodate 250,000 annual visitors. It has a 140-space parking lot, with six designated bus-sized parking spaces. In the height of the visitation period, April – May, only 50 percent of visiting school groups are able to see the primary interpretive audio-visual program as a result of overcrowding at the visitor center. The need for a new visitor center has been identified as a priority, and three alternatives (no action, add to the existing facility and build a new visitor center on park property slightly east of the present facility) were examined in the 1988 Master Plan Amendment. The local congressional delegation is supportive of the idea of an educational/administrative facility, at a different location, and Representative Benjamin L. Cardin is particularly interested in the adjacent Army Corps of Engineers site. The corps is willing to undertake a study, if funding is provided, to investigate the potential for their future relocation to another site.



The current park Master Plan dates from 1968, with an update conducted in 1988. The park is not presently on the list for Master Plan updates. Nevertheless, several other planning activities are either under way or about to begin. These include a DCP/EA for \$120,000-\$200,000, a \$70,000 Cultural Landscape Report (\$40,000 funded by the region, with \$30,000 needed from the Recreational Fee Demonstration Program), a Comprehensive Interpretation Plan (to be funded by the Northeast Region-amount to be determined) and a \$50,000 Environmental Assessment for the reconstruction of the historic seawall. In addition, the city of Baltimore, in conjunction with being designated by the state of Maryland as a Certified Heritage Area, has identified Fort McHenry as a site to be addressed in the heritage planning effort.

In addition to these customary planning efforts, several upcoming special events are likely to influence transportation needs at the fort. These include the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad anniversary celebration planned for 2003, and the associated special train which will run to the fort; the 150th anniversary of the U.S.S. Constellation in 2004; the 300th anniversary of the Port Authority and a Tall Ships event in 2006; and the Bicentennial of Fort McHenry in 2012-2014.

Analysis and Recommendations:

- Recommend that prior to undertaking the transportation planning study, the park should define the desired visitor experience, taking into consideration opportunities as well as constraints (both physical and staff resources). The park should define the visitor qualitative experience, and from this could come quantitative visitor capacities. Such an estimate is useful in planning for adequate transportation services;
- Recommend that in combination with the above NPS funded studies, the park also coordinate their planning efforts with other related initiatives such as with the city of Baltimore's heritage-area endeavor or with the area regional, multi-modal transportation planning entity, the Baltimore Metropolitan Council, in conjunction with their long range transportation planning, or with the currently being revised MTA Baltimore Regional Rail System Plan. At the very least, the park should keep abreast of new developments in these programs and explore transportation data sharing opportunities;
- Recommend that the ATP study incorporate an examination of accident data to determine if a safety problem exists at the main park entrance due to its current design. The present entrance, while historic, is very narrow, and a vast expanse of pavement separates it from the nearby transit station (bus stop) and community. This is not only potentially unsafe to both motorists and pedestrians, it is also highly disruptive to the visitor experience and makes access to the park difficult;





- Recommend examining the options for enlarging or otherwise reconfiguring the current ferry dock to improve accessibility and safety, as the park begins to consider an expanded role for water transportation in providing access to the fort. Partnerships with other organizations and stakeholders may also help determine how the park achieves this. In conjunction with this, the possibility of improving transit/intermodal connectivity by having the MTA transit buses enter the fort grounds to link with the ferry should be explored;
- Recommend taking an active role in providing traveler information. The park will need to engage in an outreach/information campaign, in cooperation with other organizations such as the MTA and water taxi operators, in order to assure that the public is aware of, and makes good use of, transportation services available to them. There also exists a strong need for better way-finding signage to the park;

For the short term, the park should look into modifying their website so that it provides more explicit driving directions. (For instance, at the Fort McHenry Tunnel southbound drivers on Interstate-95 need to be in the rightmost tunnel tube after leaving the toll booths in order to be able to access the exit to the fort.);

- Recommend formulating seasonal and special event transportation strategies that reflect the variation in visitation numbers and transportation access modes. For instance, in the summer, boat passengers exceed those arriving by bus, while in the spring and fall this pattern is reversed. A seasonal transportation strategy will allow the park to effectively plan for and respond to each period, as needed. Similarly, the park needs to develop parking plans for recurring special events and for one time celebration events; and
- Recommend the park formulate a phased implementation strategy for planned transportation improvements, beginning with relatively inexpensive, easy to implement measures, and proceeding to more difficult actions.

Supporting Documents:

National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine
“Alternative Transportation Study Scoping Meeting, Background Briefing Paper,” February 2002

National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine “Amendment to the 1968 Master Plan and Environmental Assessment,” September 1988

U.S. Congress. Senate. House. 80th Congress, 1st Session, 1947, (37 Stat. 311)

Volpe National Transportation Systems Center “Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine,” August 2001

Yale University, The Urban Resources Initiative, Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies “Working Paper #8: Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine Market Study, Reports 1-8,” August 1991

Key Officials

ATP Transportation Assistance Group:

- Susan Grosser, NPS Washington Office, Transportation Planner
- Eric Plosky, U.S. D.O.T. Volpe National Transportation Systems Center, Transportation Planner
- Patricia Sacks, NPS Denver Service Center, Landscape Architect
- Chris Webster, Federal Highway Administration, Eastern Federal Lands Highway Program Division, Planning Engineer

FOMC:

- Paul Bitzel, Horticulturist
- Laura Joss, Superintendent
- Anna von Lunz, Cultural Resource Program
- Hugh Manar, Acting Chief Ranger
- Pete McCarthy, Acting Superintendent
- Greg McGuire, Facility Manager

OTHER:

- Andy Murray, National Historic Seaport, Director

ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION – NO HARD COPY TO FOLLOW

August 20, 2002

A8815(2420)

Memorandum

To: Regional Director, Northeast Region
Attention: Superintendent, Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine

From: Associate Director, Park Operations and Education

Subject: Comments and Recommendations on the National Park Service Transportation Assistance Group Site Visit to Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine

A Transportation Assistance Group (TAG) made a site visit to Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine (FOMC) on February 20-21, 2002, to review the Northeast Region's Project Management Information System (PMIS) Project Submission #63506 for FY 2003 Alternative Transportation Program (ATP) funding. This report summarizes the analysis of the PMIS funding request and recommendations by the TAG.

This report recommends funding an increase of \$80,000 over the \$80,000 requested in the original PMIS submittal. The total revised funding recommendation is \$160,000 to develop an alternative transportation plan. Our office will approve funding for this study pending the receipt of an executed project agreement and a review of the final scope of work.

TAG extends special appreciation to Superintendent Laura Joss, Acting Superintendent Peter McCarthy and other FOMC staff, for their assistance during this review. If you have any questions, please call Mr. Kevin Percival, ATP Planning Group Manager, Park Facility Management Division, at 303/969-2429 or Ms. Susan Grosser, Transportation Planner, at 202/501-8926.

/s/ Richard G. Ring

Attachment

cc: Dale Ditmason, Associate Regional Director, Park Operations, Northeast Region
Robert J. Holzheimer, Northeast Region
Eric Plosky, Volpe National Transportation Center
Patricia Sachs, Denver Service Center
Chris Webster, FHWA/EFHLP