



City of Annapolis City Council  
Committee & Commission Referral Action Report

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Date: March 12, 2021

To: Jacqueline Lee  
City of Annapolis Office of Law,  
Legislative and Policy Analyst

The Maritime Advisory Board has reviewed O-40-21 and has taken the following action:

Favorable

Favorable with amendments

Unfavorable

No Action

Other

XXX Comments: Comments only approved 6-0 with one abstention.

The MAB has reviewed O-40-21, 100% Electric Mobility Plan, and in particular the provisions relating to a free electric ferry service across Spa Creek between the waterside end of Prince George Street and the waterside end of 5<sup>th</sup> Street. The MAB also received a detailed presentation from Mayor Gavin Buckley, and received additional information from MAB Members and attendees during the ensuing question and answer period. The MAB offers the following comments to the proposal for a City-owned and City-operated electric ferry across Spa Creek.

The MAB endorsed the aspirational goal of a multi-year plan to create a fully electric transit system in downtown Annapolis and in Eastport, and that such goal should be pursued. The MAB also found that the use of electric boats for water taxi, ferry and other on-the-water services should be encouraged where practical. However, the MAB had a number of reservations and concerns regarding the immediate purchase by the City of an electric boat at a minimum cost of \$300,000 for one boat and an initial cost of \$100,000 for infrastructure, as well as the ongoing operation by the City.

First and foremost, the proposal was described as a pilot program. Such a pilot program can be implemented by engaging the existing water taxi service to provide a free ferry on the route proposed (or an alternate route) at significantly less cost than the purchase, operation and maintenance of a City-owned electric boat. If, at the end of the pilot program, the proposed free ferry is not feasible, the City will not be burdened with an electric boat and infrastructure that is no longer needed. The further advantage of such a pilot program is that it can be implemented in 2022 as the Hillman Garage project is ongoing, rather than waiting the expected 18-months for delivery of a new boat and infrastructure improvements.

The MAB further notes that there currently exists a water taxi service from City Dock to all parts of Spa Creek, Back Creek and the various mooring locations. That current service receives approximately 80% of its operating revenue from transportation between City Dock and Eastport. The implementation of a free service, even on a limited route, will affect that revenue, and will jeopardize the service to the other areas that are served by the existing water taxis, to the detriment of City residents, land tourists and visiting boaters.

The MAB also heard from Jake Iversen, the owner of the current water taxis that Watermark was testing electric power on its existing water taxis to better understand the size of batteries that would need to be installed on new electric-powered water taxis, which new vessels will be consistent with the proposed mobility plan. The City would be better served economically and operationally by partnering with the operator of a fleet of electric boats already familiar with the operational challenges of water taxi service and ferry service in general, and on City waters in particular.

The Members of the MAB expressed the following additional concerns that must be addressed before proceeding with the City purchase of an electric boat or the implementation of ferry services as proposed.

1. Consistent with current Federal policy and Coast Guard regulations, the vessel should be "Made in the USA" and not foreign made and assembled in the United States. Small Vessel Waivers are limited to vessels at least three years old and may be limited in geographic and operational scope by the Maritime Administration.
2. Required US Coast Guard approvals are time-consuming, rigid and will require substantial modification to the proposed Swedish vessel. The existing water taxis already have that Coast Guard approval and can be modified to accommodate bicycles during the pilot period.
3. The City should review its prior history of the purchase and operation of an electric boat to ensure that the issues that led to the disuse of that prior vessel will not recur.

4. The proposed location at the end of Prince George Street will result in the loss of much-needed and much-used dinghy space for visiting boaters to come ashore. The elimination of that dinghy landing will have a negative impact on those visiting boaters.

5. The proposed location at the end of 5<sup>th</sup> Street in Eastport is subject to recurring nuisance flooding and will require extensive modification in order to be used on a reliable basis, particularly if the addition of electric service is required.

6. Both proposed locations will require extensive modifications in order to be ADA compliant.

7. The potential impact on traffic and parking in Eastport must be determined prior to the commencement of any pilot or permanent program and steps to mitigate that impact must be implemented.

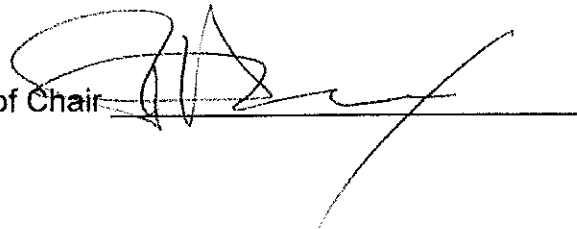
8. The acquisition and initial infrastructure costs (\$400,000) do not take into account the operational and maintenance costs, or the availability of adequate parts and personnel for that operation and maintenance. Those on-going costs should be ascertained prior to proceeding.

9. In order to ensure reliability, the City will need a minimum of two boats in order to allow for one vessel to be out of operation for maintenance and repairs.

In summary, the City should engage the existing water taxi operator to provide the proposed ferry service during the pilot program. Thereafter, should the City continue with a permanent ferry service, the City should look to a public-private partnership that provides for that service without the capital investment and ongoing operational, infrastructure and maintenance costs associated with owning the electric vessel.

Meeting Date: February 15, 2022

Signature of Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R. A.', written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and somewhat cursive.

cc: MAB Members