

Alternative Transportation Study Public Meeting

# Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge

August 2014

## ABOUT BACK BAY

Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge is one of over 545 refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System that is administered by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Established in 1938, Back Bay comprises more than 9,200 acres in southeastern Virginia and is a showcase for large concentrations of waterfowl. The Refuge provides opportunities for the visiting public to experience the outdoors through fishing, hunting, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education and interpretation. It is through these opportunities that people connect with nature, foster an appreciation for its beauty, and become inspired to help protect it.

**For more information  
on the study, visit:**

[www.VBgov.com/BackBayGrant](http://www.VBgov.com/BackBayGrant)

## Welcome

Thank you for your participation in this important transportation study. The City of Virginia Beach, in coordination with Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge, is evaluating ways for visitors to access Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge and False Cape State Park without using private motor vehicles. The purpose of this Public Information Meeting is to solicit your ideas on alternative transportation solutions and your opinion on the relative importance of the screening criteria.

## Study Background

The study is being funded by a \$449,000 planning grant from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The money is provided by the FTA's Paul S. Sarbanes Transit in Parks Program (TRIPP), designed to fund projects that will provide safe, convenient access for visitors to America's national parks, forests and wildlife refuges, and modernize aging transportation infrastructure.



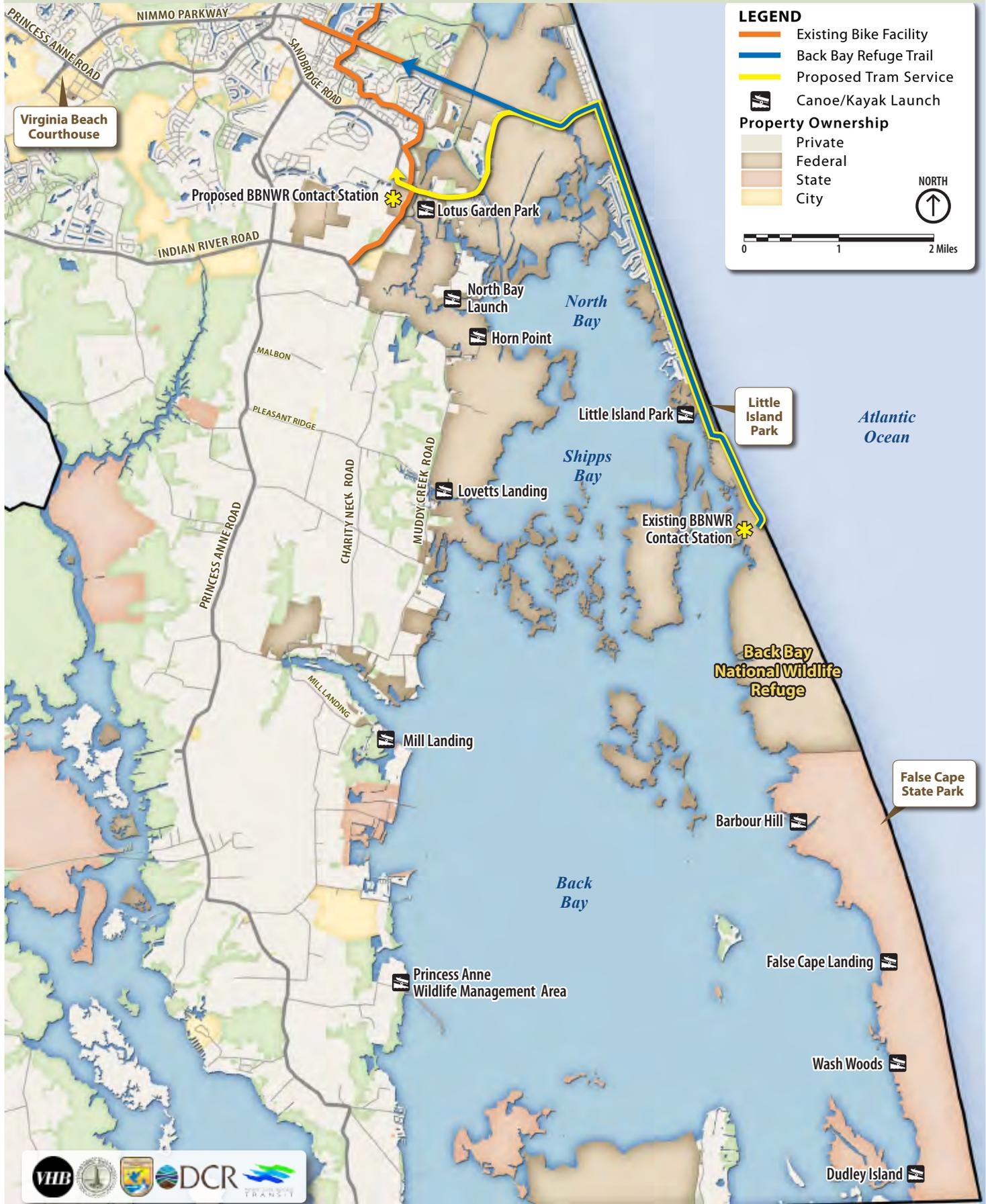
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# Map of Study Area

Potential transportation alternatives for accessing Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge include providing tram service to the Refuge, constructing a shared-use path for

biking and walking, enhancing existing and developing new canoe and kayak facilities, and other possible ideas to be suggested by the public.



## phase 1

### Define Alternatives

June 2014 - October 2014

- Public Meeting #1 - August 2014
- Public Comment Period
- Gather Public Input on the Alternatives
- Select Alternatives to be Studied

## phase 2

### Evaluation of Alternatives

November 2014 - May 2015

- Conceptual Design and Cost Estimates
- Evaluate the Alternatives, Benefits, and Impacts
- Prepare Draft Report

## phase 3

### Prepare Final Report

June 2015 - November 2015

- Agency Review
- Public Meeting #2 - October 2015
- Public Comment Period
- Finalize Report

## what's next?

Following the August public meeting, the study team will review and address relevant comments received and begin the evaluation of the transportation alternatives. A draft report will be developed and presented at another public meeting to be held in fall 2015. When the grant report is completed, the City, the Refuge, and other interested parties can pursue implementation through a variety of federal grants and other programs.

## Transportation Alternatives

Traffic congestion has long been a problem for residents and visitors in the Sandbridge area. The City of Virginia Beach will work with stakeholders to determine optimal solutions for alternative transportation systems that consider the unique local conditions, landscape, and seasonal demands. The following initial alternatives have been developed in order to reduce traffic congestion, improve safety, enhance the visitor experience, and minimize adverse affects to the natural environment:

- 1. Extend the tram service.** Trams are operated within the Refuge, using volunteers to give guided tours. This would expand the service beyond Back Bay and establish remote parking area(s), perhaps at the proposed Contact Station and/or in the Red Mill area.
- 2. Build the Back Bay Refuge Trail.** This would include a shared use path for pedestrians and bicyclists within the existing right-of-way between Atwoodtown Road and Sandpiper Road, as well as improvements along Sandpiper Road.
- 3. Improve water access.** Several canoe/kayak launch sites exist around Back Bay. We'll look at how we can improve them or add more in additional locations.
- 4. No Build Alternative.** The No Build Alternative represents future conditions if no improvements are made beyond those already planned.

## Evaluation of Alternatives

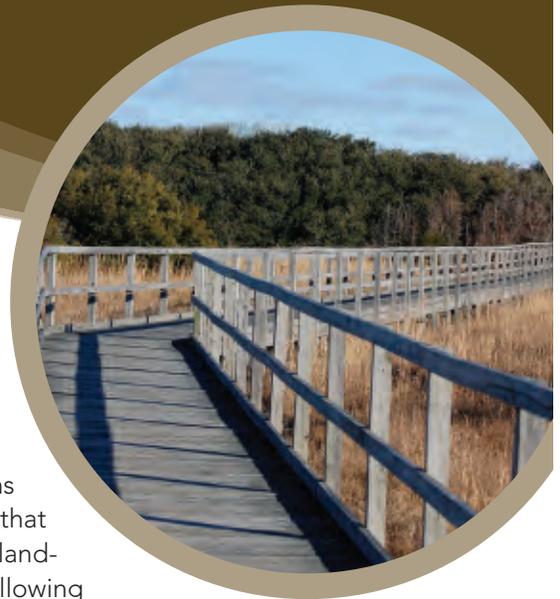
The alternatives will be evaluated based on their ability to satisfy the following criteria:

### 1. Visitor Mobility and Experience Benefits

- a. Reduced traffic congestion
- b. Enhanced visitor mobility, accessibility, and safety
- c. Improved visitor education, recreation, and health benefits

### 2. Environmental Benefits

- a. Protection of sensitive natural, cultural, and historical resources
- b. Reduced pollution



## did you know?

- Back Bay Refuge has 1.2 miles of interpreted trails.
- More than 152,000 visitors each year come to Back Bay Refuge to enjoy its pristine setting.
- Approximately 10,000 snow geese and a large variety of ducks and other waterfowl visit Back Bay Refuge during the peak of fall migration.
- The threatened loggerhead sea turtle nests along the beaches at Back Bay Refuge from late May through August. Five of the seven species of sea turtles can be found off the coast. The eggs are protected and monitored through their 60-day incubation period and the hatchlings are seen safely to the surf as they begin their long journey to the Gulf Stream.

## Add Your Voice to the Discussion

We invite your input on the alternatives under study and we would like to hear your ideas on additional alternatives that should be studied. Please visit the study website to stay informed about upcoming public meetings and to be added to the study email list. Comments can be submitted for the record in one of three ways:

- **Website:** A downloadable comment form and a link to an electronic comment form (on Virtual Town Hall) are available on the study website beginning August 7, 2014.

[www.VBgov.com/BackBayGrant](http://www.VBgov.com/BackBayGrant)

- **Mail:** Return the completed comment form to Chris DeWitt, VHB, Two Columbus Center 4500 Main Street, Suite 400, Virginia Beach, VA 23462
- **Email:** [BackBayGrant@VBgov.com](mailto:BackBayGrant@VBgov.com)

The formal public comment period for the first phase of the study ends on **September 9, 2014**.



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