

Preliminary Transportation Alternatives

J. N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge



CHAPTER 1:

USER PROFILES, PUBLIC COMMENT AND SURVEYS

INTRODUCTION	2
USER PROFILES	2
REFUGE USER PROFILE	2
GENERAL OBSERVATIONS	2
REFUGE USER STATISTICS	3
CITY OF SANIBEL USER PROFILE	5
GENERAL OBSERVATIONS	5
CITY OF SANIBEL AND CAPTIVA ISLAND USER STATISTICS	6
PUBLIC OUTREACH SUMMARY	8
PROJECT WEBSITE	9
STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS	9
PUBLIC WORKSHOPS AND SPEAKER EVENTS	9
PUBLIC INFORMATION WORKSHOP #1 – JANUARY 29, 2009	9
PUBLIC INFORMATION WORKSHOPS #2 AND #3 – APRIL, 2009	10
SPEAKERS BUREAU	11
SEASONAL PUBLIC SURVEYS	11
PUBLIC OUTREACH COMMENT MATRIX	11

INTRODUCTION

As one of the most visited refuges in the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) network, the Refuge struggles to meet its goal of ecological conservation and wildlife habitat protection while providing an educational experience. This problem is also felt by the City of Sanibel, which is committed to remain a sanctuary barrier island community.

In an effort to develop appropriate and environmentally sensitive alternative transportation solutions for the Refuge and the City of Sanibel, public participants were asked to identify options during several outreach activities held during the peak visitation season of 2008 and 2009. These public comments established a framework for developing conceptual transportation alternatives. Continued coordination with the project Steering Committee members (J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge, City of Sanibel, and Lee County) occurred over the summer months of 2009. During this period several conceptual alternatives were developed using input as follows:

- Stakeholder Interviews (September – November 2008)
- Public Workshops, Presentations, and Project Website (January – March 2009)
 - Project Website <http://www.dingdarlingtransportation.com/>
- Steering Committee Input, Review, and Guidance (September 2008 – September 2009)

Before development of preliminary or even conceptual alternatives could begin, an in-depth understanding of the types of people who use and visit the Refuge and Sanibel Island was necessary. This understanding was completed through the review of demographic statistics and a synthesis of key messages generated by public outreach activities. Demographic statistics, or user profiles, identify the types of people who use and visit the Refuge and Sanibel Island. Key messages, concerns, and visions were collected through several different public outreach activities and efforts.

USER PROFILES

Information collected on the types of Island and Refuge users and their travel patterns assist in understanding the area's transportation needs, thereby providing a baseline condition to which alternative transportation concepts can be applied. For the purposes of the study, two groups of users were identified; the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge user and the City of Sanibel/ Captiva Island user.

REFUGE USER PROFILE

The following is a summary of the types of visitors and their pattern and frequency of visitation within the boundaries of the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge. Information used in compiling this summary, provided by the Refuge, includes visitors to the education center between the years of 2000 and 2007, concessionaire data from Tarpon Bay Explores for the entrance to Wildlife Drive in 2008 (Entrance fees only, does not include passes), and seasonal surveys conducted for the ATPPL project (2009).

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The peak visitor season occurs annually during the months of January through March with the peak visitation days occurring on weekends. The average visitor to the refuge is over the age of



25 with a significant number of visitors over the age of 65. Of those visiting the Refuge, the majority are individuals who do not live on Island, and who visit less than once a year. Island residents were almost equally divided in to two groups, those who tend to visit either weekly or those who visit annually. Most of visitors to the Refuge originate from either an island residence or lodging location and generally return to the same location after their visit. Those visitors using Wildlife Drive (who do not have passes or use the tram) generally use private vehicles for transportation with significantly fewer people bicycling or walking within the Refuge.

REFUGE USER STATISTICS

The following tables highlights Refuge user statistics including the time period, the trend over that time period, and the data source used to identify the trend.

Period	Trend	Data Source
Peak Year (2000-2007)	(Rank) Year (1) 2000 (2) 2002 (3) 2006	
	Peak Month	
Peak Day	(Rank) Day Avg. Daily Person Trips (1) Sunday (2) Saturday (3) Tuesday (4) Monday	
	Buffer Months (4) April (5) December	Tarpon Bay Explorers, Wildlife Drive (2008)

User	Trend	Data Source	
User Age	<u>(Rank) Refuge User</u> (1) 25-65yrs: 52% (2) Over 65yrs: 47%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under 25 yrs 25-65 yrs over 65 yrs 	ATPPL Study, Seasonal Surveys, Refuge Location Only (2009)
	<u>(Rank) Refuge User</u> (1) Visitor: 73% (2) Resident: 20%		ATPPL Study, Seasonal Surveys, Refuge Location Only (2009)
Visitor Island Resident &	<u>Frequency of Visit (Visitor)</u> (1) Less than Annually (2) Daily <u>Frequency of Visit (Resident)</u> (1) Weekly (2) Annually		ATPPL Study, Seasonal Surveys, Refuge Location Only (2009)
Mode Travel of	<u>(Rank) Mode</u> Avg. Daily Person Trips (1) Auto: 76% (2) Bike: 18% (3) Walk: 6%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walk Bike Auto 	Tarpon Bay Explorers, Entering Wildlife Drive (2008), Excluding Tram Users and Those with Passes
Traveling To/From	<u>(Rank) Location To Refuge From</u> (1) Residence: 38% (2) Lodging: 36% <u>(Rank) Location From Refuge To</u> (1) Residence: 38% (2) Lodging: 24%		ATPPL Study, Seasonal Surveys, Refuge Location Only (2009)

CITY OF SANIBEL USER PROFILE

The following section contains a summary of the types of visitors and their pattern and frequency of visitation within the City of Sanibel. Information used in compiling this summary was extracted from information collected at the Sanibel Causeway (Lee County Transportation Department), provided by the Sanibel Chamber of Commerce, US Census Bureau data for 2000, and seasonal surveys conducted for this project (2009).

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The peak number of Sanibel Causeway crossings occurs seasonally during the months of February through April (see below) and visitors predominantly use two-axle automobiles. Generally, those crossing the causeway are day trip visitors who take advantage of the recreational opportunities available on the Island. The average island resident is over the age of 25 with a significant number of residents over the age of 65. The 2009 survey participants visiting Island commercial destinations and Bowman's Beach indicated that they generally come directly from either an island residence or lodging. Most survey participants, when leaving the survey location, indicated that they were traveling to other various island locations (i.e. businesses or destinations of interest).

CITY OF SANIBEL AND CAPTIVA ISLAND USER STATISTICS

The following tables highlight a few Refuge user statistics including the time period, the trend over that time period, and the data source used to identify the trend.

Period	Sanibel Causeway Trends	Data Source	
Peak Year (1990-2008)	<u>(Rank) Year</u> Annual Crossings (1) 2001 (2) 2000 (3) 2002 (4) 1999		Lee County Transportation Department, Sanibel Causeway Crossings (1990 to 2008)
	<u>(Rank) Month</u> Avg. Monthly Crossings (1) March (2) February (3) April <u>Buffer Months</u> (4) January (5) May		
Monthly	<u>(Rank) Crossings by Vehicle Class</u> (1) Automobiles: 96% (2 Axles) (2) Heavy Truck: 3% (3 Axles of More) (3) Motorcycles: 1%		Lee County Transportation Department, Sanibel Causeway Crossings (2008)

User	Sanibel Causeway Trends (Continued)	Data Source	
Residency	<u>(Rank) Resident Status</u> Percent of Crossings (1) Lee County: 58% (2) Other: 25% (3) Sanibel: 17%		City of Sanibel, OD Survey (2002)
	<u>(Rank) Trip Purpose</u> Percent of Crossings (1) Recreation: 46% (2) Work: 30% (3) Home: 16% (4) Other: 9%		City of Sanibel, OD Survey (2002)

User	Seasonal Survey: Commercial & Beach Locations	Data Source	
Visitor vs. Island Resident	<u>(Rank) User</u> (1) 25-65 yrs (2) Over 65 yrs (3) Under 25 yrs		US Census Bureau (2000) ATPPL Study, Seasonal Surveys, City Locations Only (2009)
Visitor vs. Island Resident	<u>(Rank) User</u> (1) Visitor: 55% (2) Resident: 45%		ATPPL Study, Seasonal Surveys, City Locations Only (2009)
Traveling To/From	<u>(Rank) Location To Survey From</u> (1) Residence: 44% (2) Lodging: 31% <u>(Rank) Location From Survey To</u> (1) Residence: 30% (2) Business: 27%		ATPPL Study, Seasonal Surveys, City Locations Only (2009)

PUBLIC OUTREACH SUMMARY

Members of the public, including residents, business owners, and visitors to Sanibel and Captiva Islands and the Refuge were asked to provide input on transportation and transportation options in the area. In addition, meetings with project stakeholders were held over several days to better understand differences and similarities in opinions across key interest groups. Information collected from this group assisted the project team in the development of the seasonal surveys and in defining additional options for engaging the public. Small group presentations were also scheduled to discuss project goals with community organizations. The project team collected additional input by participating in Refuge and Island events, such as seasonal festivals and public meetings for the development of the Refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan.

During the peak visitor season of 2008/2009, three public open house workshops were conducted. Workshop #1 (January 29, 2009) introduced participants to the goals of the project through the use of a short video. Following the video presentation, participants were asked to move into a "charrette style" setting where public opinion was collected about a wide range of alternative transportation options at discussion tables organized by mode of transport.

Following the focus groups and Workshop #1, seasonal surveys covering several different market segments (i.e., residents, business owners, long term visitors, conservationists and Refuge visitors) were conducted during February 2009. This survey used in-person interviews during a typical weekday and on the weekend at the Refuge, two City commercial destinations, and two City recreational destinations. The survey helped map the characteristics of the residents and visitors with questions designed to capture frequency of use (daily, weekly, annually) and what type of activities were most common or attractive to survey participants. Surveys were also designed for participation either through the project website or at locations like the Refuge and the local library during the months of February and April 2009. Newspaper ads and an column on the Refuge manager were also used to clearly advertise the public's opportunity to participate in the surveys. The surveys were also designed to collect travel patterns, and origin-destination information.

Workshop #2 (April 2, 2009) involved a short introductory presentation and a review of a comment brochure outlining the opinions expressed in Workshop #1. Participants were asked to use this brochure to rank options based on geographic area or jurisdiction. For example, participants were asked to rank the transportation options appropriate to operate on the Refuge only, the City only, between the Refuge and the City, and between the Islands and the mainland. Participants had the opportunity to eliminate options deemed inappropriate or undesirable. Comments resulted in the elimination of an option that connected the islands to the mainland with waterborne transportation.

Workshop #3 (April 16, 2009) consisted of a formal presentation followed by a comment and answer session. On average between 20 and 50 people were present for each workshop with Workshop #3 attracting the most public participants and local policy makers, including the Mayor of the City of Sanibel who spoke briefly at the opening of the Workshop.

The opinions expressed and the data collected at these events which are summarized below, provided the framework for all conceptual and preliminary transportation alternatives. Detailed information, including press releases and advertisements for each public outreach effort can be found in **Appendix A** of this document.

PROJECT WEBSITE

At the onset of the project, a project web site (www.dingdarlingtransportation.com) was created to introduce the project to the public. This site also serves as a clearinghouse for documents such as newsletters, reports, and announcements of public information workshops. A press release was distributed to inform the public of the project kick-off and web site address. Website screen shots can be found in **Section 1 of Appendix A**

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

From September 16 to 18, 2008 the project team conducted 22 stakeholder interviews regarding alternative transportation for the Refuge and City of Sanibel. The interviewees consisted of representatives from civic organizations, not-for-profit organizations, the Sanibel School, emergency services and the Sanibel-Captiva Chamber of Commerce. An information packet was emailed to the participants prior to the interviews to provide study background. The interview questions were also provided so that they could discuss responses with the group they were representing.



Additional interviews were held with five commercial operators both on the island and off the island on October 7 and 8, 2008. A final summary of the interviews was compiled and posted on the project web site. A full list of stakeholders that participated in the interviews, information packet including interview questions and the Stakeholder Interview Summary can be found in **Section 2 of Appendix A**.

PUBLIC WORKSHOPS AND SPEAKER EVENTS

PUBLIC INFORMATION WORKSHOP #1 – JANUARY 29, 2009

The initial public information workshop for the study was held on Thursday, January 29, 2009 at the Sanibel Recreation Center at 3880 Sanibel-Captiva Road, Sanibel Island, Florida. It was advertised on Tuesday, January 27, 2009 in *The News-Press*. The workshop was held in an “open house” format with an informational video presentation that was made available to attendees throughout the evening. A total of 40 attendees signed in at the registration table for the workshop. Each attendee was given a handout that contained project information and described the workshop.



The workshop consisted of five stations that the attendees were encouraged to visit and ask questions and provide their input and suggestions. These stations were:

1. General Concerns for The Refuge & Island
2. Motorized Options
3. Non-Motorized Options
4. Waterborne Options
5. Congestion Management Options



Comments and suggestions were recorded at each station. General comment sheets were also provided to attendees for further detail. The sign-in sheets, legal display advertisement, press release, workshop handout, summary of verbal comments and written comments can be found in **Section 3 of Appendix A**. Meeting photos are included in this appendix as well.

PUBLIC INFORMATION WORKSHOPS #2 AND #3 – APRIL, 2009

Two additional project workshops were held in April 2009. They were held on Thursday, April 2, 2009 and Thursday, April 16, 2009. Both workshops were held from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. at the Sanibel Community House, 2173 Periwinkle Way, Sanibel Island, Florida.



Along with the announcement in the March 2009 project newsletter, a flyer was created and posted at various island businesses, the library, the Refuge and City Hall advertising the April workshops.



The April 2, 2009 workshop (Workshop #2) began with a presentation, followed by the 34 attendees and project team breaking out into small working groups. Project team members presented preliminary transportation themes and elements for discussion. Each attendee was given a workbook that contained project information and was used as a guide through the workshop. Attendees filled out their workbooks with their thoughts and ideas. The flyer, legal display ad, press release, sign in sheets, workbook handout, presentation, and workbook theme rankings, workbook feedback and verbal comment summaries can all be found in **Section 4 of Appendix A**.



As a reminder for the April 16, 2009 workshop, a press release was sent to local media outlets on the same day. At workshop #3 Attendees were given a handout that contained project information and described the workshop. This workshop again began with a presentation and question and answer session, followed by the 52 attendees and the project team breaking out into small working groups. This workshop focused on clearly stating the purpose of the study, needs and challenges of the project. The press release announcing the workshop, sign in sheets, handout, presentation, written comments, as well as verbal and written comment summaries can all be found in **Section 5 of Appendix A**.

SPEAKERS BUREAU

As a part of the study, presentations were made to both the Captiva Community Panel and the Sanibel-Captiva Rotary Club. The presentation to the Captiva Community Panel was a part of their regular meeting at 'Tween Waters Inn on January 13, 2009. The presentation to the Rotary was given during their regular meeting at the Beachview Golf & Tennis Club. These presentations were another method used to inform the community of the study and to involve them in the public process. The presentation used in the Speakers Bureau is attached as **Section 6 of Appendix A**.

SEASONAL PUBLIC SURVEYS

In-person surveys were conducted on the Island, as well as through the project web site with over 2,100 completed surveys received. The survey collected information from residents and visitors with questions designed to capture frequency of use (daily, weekly, annually) and what type of activities were most common or attractive to survey participants. The surveys were also designed to collect travel patterns and origin-destination information.

The in-person surveys were conducted on Sanibel Island on Wednesday, February 4th and Saturday, February 7th, 2009. Surveyors were stationed at various places around the island including the Refuge, City beaches and retail centers. Surveyors had an informational flyer available for anyone who was interested in the project. Mail back surveys were also made available at City Hall, the Refuge, Sanibel Library and the Sanibel Recreation Center. Larger resorts such as Casa Ybel, Sundial, West Wind Inn and 'Tween Waters Inn were supplied with surveys for their guests and various businesses on Sanibel and Captiva were supplied with surveys for customers. The online survey was made available on the project website from January 29, 2009 through the first week of March 2009.



Information collected from the surveys was incorporated into the user profiles identified previously. A copy of the survey, survey summary report, informational handout, notification flyer, press releases and newspaper advertisement can be found in **Section 7 of Appendix A**.

PUBLIC OUTREACH COMMENT MATRIX

Input collected during all public outreach efforts was compiled into a comment matrix. This comment matrix served as the first step in alternatives development and provided the framework against which all alternative concepts adhere. The comment matrix was divided into common themes as well as the frequency of times the comment occurred and during which engagement effort. This comment matrix can be found in **Section 8 of Appendix A**.