

Project Description Memorandum

Memorandum

November 10, 2016

To: San Francisco Planning Department

From: Anchor QEA, LLC

Re: Alcatraz Ferry Embarkation – Pier 31½ Site Project Description

Introduction

The National Park Service (NPS or Park Service), the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy (GGNPC), and the Port of San Francisco (Port) seek to establish a long-term ferry embarkation site for passenger service between the northern San Francisco waterfront and Alcatraz Island, and provide additional occasional ferry service between the Alcatraz ferry embarkation site and the existing Fort Baker Pier, Angel Island, or other destinations in San Francisco Bay in the future.

The Project consists of a combination of indoor and outdoor spaces that serve to welcome, orient, and provide basic services for visitors (Figure 1). The Project also includes other administrative and operational spaces and ramps and floats to support the berthing of up to three ferry boats at one time. The purpose of this action is to create an identifiable, adequate, and quality visitor welcome and support area that connects visitors to the history of Alcatraz Island, other Golden Gate National Recreation Area sites, and provides orientation to the national park system in general. This action is needed because the NPS concession contract for water transportation services between San Francisco and Alcatraz Island has been subject to location changes every 10 years, which has led to visitor confusion, community concerns, and inconsistency in visitor support services, and the existing site is constrained by lease provisions. Selection of a specific ferry embarkation site is one step to addressing this need; however, that selection may also have to be coupled with agreements with the Port of San Francisco specifying the terms and conditions under which the site would be operated in the long-term. After exhaustive study and review, the Park Service, GGNPC, and the Port have selected the Pier 31½ alternative as the preferred alternative amongst several alternatives studied in the EIS and prior planning studies. The Park Service has separately prepared an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for this effort.

Purpose of the Project

The Project applicants seek to secure a site that will provide a long-term orientation and ferry embarkation facility for service to Alcatraz Island from the northern San Francisco waterfront. The applicants desire an identifiable and well-functioning facility that will provide a quality welcome and support program for visitors, orient visitors to the history of Alcatraz Island, and provide a connection to other Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) parklands and orientation to the

national park system in general. The applicants also seek to establish special ferry service between the primary Alcatraz ferry embarkation site and the existing Fort Baker Pier, as well as to potentially provide for recreational ferry service linkages to other parklands in the Bay. Many potential visitors are unable to obtain tickets to Alcatraz Island due to the high demand. Enhanced on-shore visitor facilities would provide those visitors with interpretive information about the island and options for ferry access to other NPS destinations from San Francisco.

Need for the Project

The need for the Project is driven by the following factors:

The Alcatraz ferry embarkation site and associated connections should be a consistent feature over time for visitors to the GGNRA. After operating out of Pier 41 for many years, the ferry embarkation site moved to Pier 31½ in 2006 when a new ferry service concessioner was selected, which led to inconsistencies in the delivery of visitor services and impacts on surrounding communities, business interests, and transit providers. Federal law generally limits the maximum term of concession contracts to 10 years, and requires that a competitive process be used to select new concessioners. An important objective for identifying a long-term site is to avoid having the site move again when NPS contracts are awarded in the future, producing stability for the Park Service and the City of San Francisco.

Selection of a more specific ferry embarkation site is one step to addressing this need. However, for any site at the Port, that selection would also need to be coupled with the execution of agreements with the Port specifying the long-term availability of and conditions under which the ferry embarkation sites would be made available to any ferry services concessioner selected by the Park Service through the solicitation and award process mandated by federal law. Given the statutory limitations on extensions of the terms of NPS concession contracts, the risk of delay creates a significant risk of interrupting visitor services through the San Francisco waterfront to Alcatraz Island. The current ferry service concession contract is a 10-year contract scheduled to expire in 2016, which could only be extended by up to 3 years. The Project does not identify the future ferry concessioner.

The Alcatraz ferry embarkation site should allow for efficiency in making facility improvements when necessary and consistency in projecting facility costs. Under the current scenario, the lease between the Port and the concessioner hinders the ability for improvements to be made to the existing site. The Port has the authority to approve nearly all modifications made to leased pier facilities. Associated Port review and approval timelines can be unpredictable. At present, neither the Park Service nor its concessioner are motivated to make long-term investments in the site, which could be abandoned in 2016. This arrangement hinders the ability to create an identifiable and quality visitor welcome area and a unique visitor experience that starts with the arrival at the ferry embarkation site. In addition, considerable revenues from Alcatraz Island ferry service

operations are used to offset rent for the concessioner's pier leased from the Port, which reduces the amount available for improvements on Alcatraz Island or at other GGNRA parklands.

The Alcatraz ferry embarkation site and associated facilities should serve as a gateway to GGNRA, reflecting the Park Service's identity and providing a quality experience for visitors.

Under the current scenario, the condition of the existing embarkation site reduces the quality of the visitor experience. The existing embarkation site is on property that the concessioner has leased from the Port and is outside of GGNRA boundaries. Nevertheless, that embarkation site is the beginning and end point of the transportation services provided to the visiting public, and therefore is an integral part of the visitor services provided under the concession contract. Consequently, the Park Service has an interest in reviewing elements of the embarkation site facilities for purposes of considering their impact on the interpretation of GGNRA to the visiting public (including visitor appreciation and understanding of the resource). These elements include, for example, signs, logos, colors, or other means of demarcating the existing site as the Park Service's official Alcatraz Island departure location. Lack of formal authority, in combination with changing adjacent commercial uses and developments, hinders the Park Service's ability to create a clear sense of identity and quality visitor support services at the Alcatraz ferry embarkation site.

The Alcatraz ferry embarkation site should provide the space, circulation, and interpretive materials to appropriately and effectively orient visitors to Alcatraz Island and GGNRA. NPS policy is to provide public access and opportunities for all to enjoy and to learn about park resources. In its current configuration, space is unavailable at Pier 31½ to provide appropriate interpretive exhibits or an orientation to Alcatraz Island and GGNRA for visitors prior to departing for the island. These interpretive and orientation opportunities are also key for visitors wishing to visit Alcatraz Island but unable to secure reservations. The visitor facility does not currently provide a genuine park portal to GGNRA, and as such, many visitors or aspiring visitors to Alcatraz Island are unaware of the other recreational and educational opportunities provided by GGNRA.

The Alcatraz ferry embarkation site may provide a valuable opportunity for cross-bay ferry service to other GGNRA parklands. Convenient transit connections to other GGNRA parklands, such as Fort Baker, are currently unavailable from the existing ferry embarkation site. NPS policy promotes alternative transportation access that is energy conserving, convenient, and that provides multiple travel options for visitors. Increasing numbers of park visitors choose to use transit, do not have an automobile, and perceive travel by ferry as an enjoyable experience. The potential to add another (third) berth and promote additional special-event services to the ferry embarkation site would further enhance this opportunity.

Project Description

The Project retains the current Alcatraz ferry embarkation site at Pier 31½ and proposes improvements to the existing facility. It would use the historic Pier 31 north and south bulkhead

buildings on The Embarcadero, portions of the Pier 31 and 33 sheds, and all of the outdoor space between Piers 31 and 33 (otherwise known as the Pier 31½ marginal wharf) for embarkation services (Figure 1). This site is within and contributes to The Embarcadero National Register Historic District. This site is located between Fisherman's Wharf and other proposed Embarcadero tourist facilities, such as the cruise terminal and the Exploratorium.

Construction

The Project would replace the existing single dock and gangway with two parallel floating docks (to accommodate three berths) and two gangways accessed from the existing bulkhead.

Wharf Facilities

The existing Pier 31½ substructure is a marginal wharf structure located between Piers 31 and 33. It comprises two distinct pier construction types: an old pier, built in the 1910s; and a newer pier, built in the 1960s. The old pier is located adjacent to The Embarcadero and is a contiguous part of the original Pier 33 construction. The two bulkhead buildings are situated on this older portion of Pier 31½. The adjacent newer pier is in better condition and is used by the current ferry concessioner for parking and assembly.

Abandoned utilities would be removed, and new utilities installed. Most of these would be underpier activities and would be performed from floats staged under the pier. A new gangway and two parallel floats would be installed, and eight steel guide piles would be installed on the sides of the floats (four guide piles per float).

Buildings

The design program for the Project utilizes the Pier 31 and Pier 33 sheds and bulkhead buildings. Only a small amount of space for essential functions such as restrooms and operational storage would be used in the Pier 33 shed. This space would be adjacent to the large existing doorways that open onto the marginal wharf. There would be remodeling of the interior of the Pier 33 south bulkhead building to recapture its historic character, as it has been changed substantially from its original condition, most notably by the addition of a mezzanine floor that has reduced the height of the first floor ceiling. The existing interior space plan would be extensively reconfigured on all floors of the Pier 33 south bulkhead building. The rehabilitated first floor would serve to welcome visitors and support interpretive retail sales. Similar to Pier 33, portions of the Pier 31 shed would be used for site operations such as restrooms, parking, and storage. The Pier 31 south bulkhead building would be remodeled to accommodate food and beverage functions. Remodeling the interior would seek to preserve its historic character, which is little changed since construction.

Because the sheds and bulkhead buildings are on the national register, rehabilitation would require consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer. The use of the sheds and bulkhead buildings

would require that they be compliant with seismic, life safety, and Architectural Barriers Act Accessibility codes. All substructure work is subject to review for consistency with the Port's Historic Preservation Guidelines for Pier and Bulkhead Wharf Substructures.

Operations

Transportation

Site transportation access and arrival options would be consistent with those of the No Action Alternative. No changes to transportation options are expected as a result of this alternative. The existing small parking area would be relocated inside the Pier 31 shed with Federal Accessibility Standards (FAS)-compliant access to the marginal wharf for persons with disabilities. A FAS-compliant drop-off for tour buses and persons with disabilities would be located along The Embarcadero, adjacent to the bulkhead buildings.

Site Circulation

Visitors on foot would enter this site from The Embarcadero, between the two bulkhead buildings; however, because parking would be removed from the wharf, the entry would encompass the full space between the buildings. Additional pedestrian access would be through the bulkhead buildings. The ferry queuing area (including seated and standing queuing options) would be covered by a freestanding structure. The bulkhead buildings and sheds would house the main restrooms for visitors, as well as space for operations. Visitors would board the ferry in a similar manner as the existing operation.

Interpretive Elements

By expanding some of the services into the bulkhead buildings, the Project would substantially increase the basic visitor services program functional area and provide additional and improved orientation and exhibition opportunities, as compared to the existing operation. The Project would also better accommodate people who are not visiting Alcatraz Island by providing additional information on other recreational options in the park system and access to those sites from ferries utilizing the third berth. Most of the program elements would be in the outdoor areas between Piers 33 and 31, including interpretive and rest areas, ferry queuing, and boat staging. The Project also proposes a small food service area and space for sale of interpretive products in the bulkhead buildings.

Visitor Levels

In 2010, approximately 6,160 visitors visited the primary embarkation site per day. In the future, with predicted increases in visitation and a third berth providing service to other GGNRA parklands in the Bay, it is estimated that 7,790 visitors could visit the primary ferry embarkation site per day under the Project.

Embarkation Site

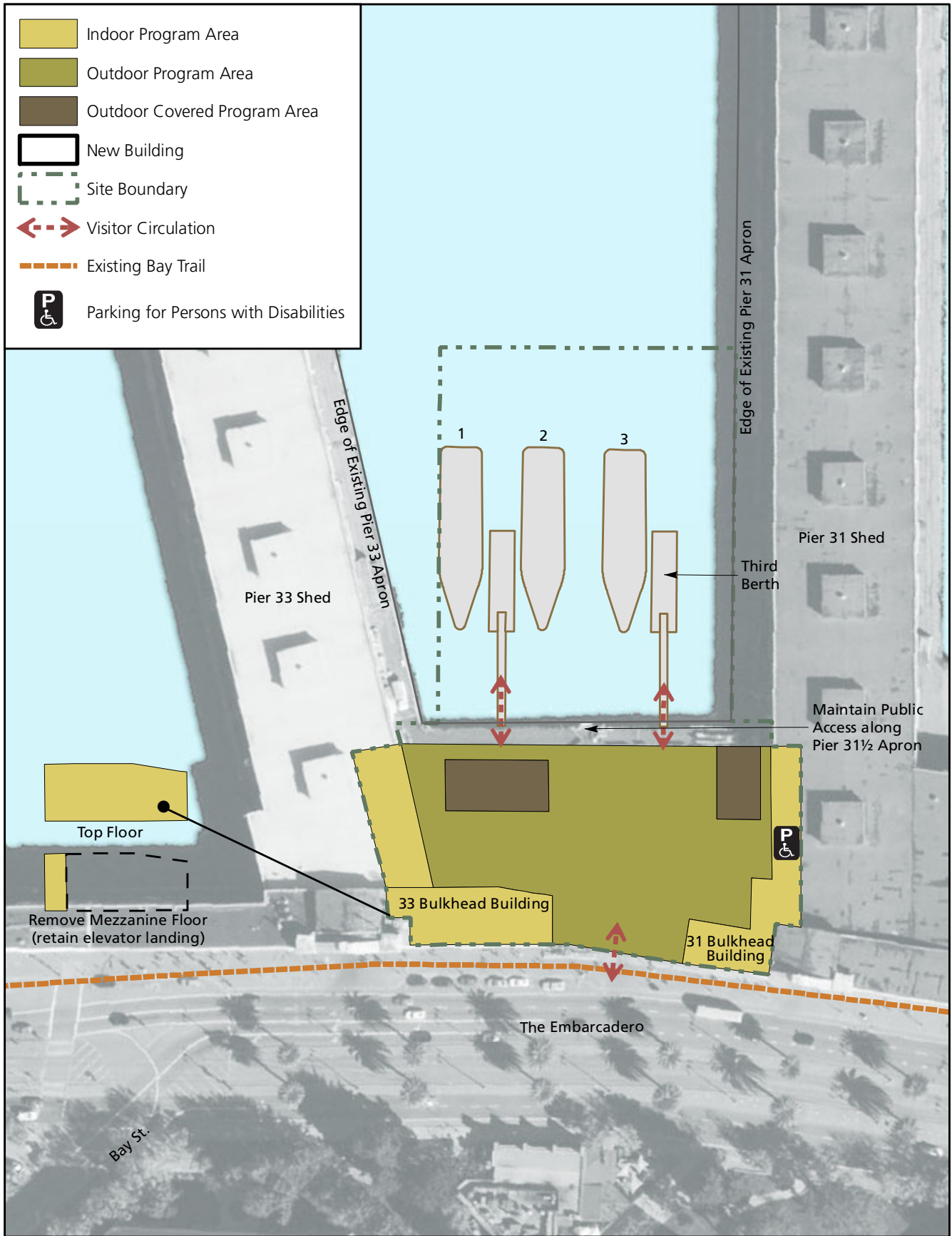
The embarkation site currently hosts visitors who do not have tickets to Alcatraz or other destinations but are visiting the site to enquire about tickets or learn more about Alcatraz Island. Facility improvements implemented under the Project would enhance the ability of the site to provide interpretive information to these visitors compared to the existing operation.

Alcatraz Island Passengers

Visitor demand at Alcatraz is projected to grow based on general increases in San Francisco tourism levels and population growth. As previously discussed, management improvements on Alcatraz Island will help the Park Service manage this growth in an efficient and safe manner. The Project would accommodate this increase, but would provide more room and newer facilities at the embarkation site to provide passengers with a better experience.

Additional Ferry Services

This alternative would construct an additional (third) berth at Pier 31½, which would increase its operational capacity and provide visitors the opportunity to visit other park sites within the Bay, including the Fort Baker Pier, Angel Island, or other destinations in San Francisco Bay in the future.



**FIGURE 1
PIER 31 1/2 ALTERNATIVE**

