

Water Taxi Demonstration Project

for the proposed Thames River Heritage Park

When: Saturday & Sunday, September 6, 7, 13, 14, from 11 AM to 9 PM

Where: Connecting Groton Bank, New London Historic Waterfront District & Fort Trumbull State Park

Vessel: *Liberty*, 42 passenger, 2 crew open boat on loan from Mystic Seaport Museum

Operator: Cross Sound Ferry Services

Report: Submitted by Penny Parsekian, Chair, Heritage Park Steering Committee, December, 2014

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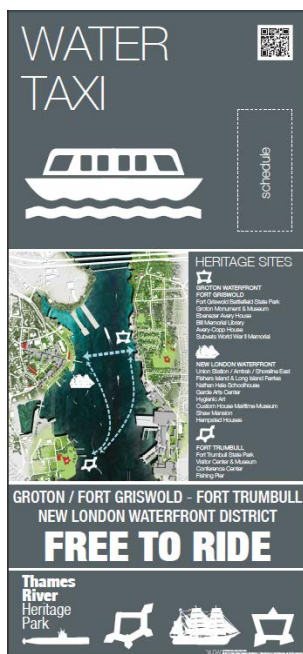
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Temporary Landing Sign

Actual size 22 X 48 Coroplast vinyl



Summary

During the first two weekends of September, 2014, the Thames River Heritage Park Steering Committee, an *ad hoc* committee of the Avery-Copp House Board of Directors, coordinated a water taxi demonstration project to test the viability of establishing a ferry service across the Thames River estuary as a key component of a future heritage park. The committee raised funds, worked with the SE CT Council of Governments to create a service agreement with Cross Sound Ferry, who offered to run the service, placed advertisements, coordinated signage, secured permission from the required agencies, secured a viable vessel from Mystic Seaport and filled 60 shifts of volunteers.

The demonstration and subsequent survey of passengers established a number of positive impacts from the service:

- Residents visited sites that they had never visited before.
- Visitors were drawn from outside the area to ride the water taxi and explore the area.
- Businesses on both sides of the river experienced sales increases. Residents of Groton crossed the river to New London to try new restaurants, and New London residents crossed the river to patronize Paul's Pasta and Ralph's Coffee Shop.
- The Avery-Copp House had the highest attendance in its history, 400 people, at an event it held during the second weekend of water taxi service. On the other hand, paid admission to Fort Trumbull was 98 the first weekend and 106 the second, not a noticeable increase from the prior few weekends, according to Park Supervisor Jon Lincoln, but the number of visitors to the grounds appeared to be higher than usual.
- People who do not own a boat were able to get out on the water and gain a new perspective of the region – its history and geography.
- An on-line survey following the demonstration project indicated that many passengers would use the service to get to Union Station, commute to work, shop, dine or attend classes.

The demonstration indicates that such a shuttle service should be considered for permanent status to stimulate economic development and activity and support existing heritage tourism in the region.

Liberty Water Taxi
Saturday, September 6, 2014

City Pier				Fort Griswold				Fort Trumbull			
Departue	Pax stay	New pax	Total	Departue	Pax stay	New pax	Total	Departue	Pax stay	New pax	Total
1100	0	24	24	1115	?	?	33	1130	?	?	29
1145	?	?	24	1200	?	?	23	1215	?	?	32
1230	?	?	12	1245	?	?	18	1300	?	?	2
1315	?	?	8	1330	?	?	11	1345	?	?	12
1400	?	?	42	1415	15	12	27	1430	16	3	19
1445	3	18	21	1500	11	21	32	1515	23	13	36
1530	15	11	26	1545	13	29	42	1600	30	8	38
1615	9	21	30	1630	7	19	26	1645	12	9	21
1700	5	11	16	1730*	5	10	15	1715*	26	16	42
1745	4	15	19	1800	19	5	24	1815	19	6	25
1830	9	0	9	1845	3	14	17	1900	11	0	11
1915	3	10	13	1930	5	10	15	1945	10	12	22
2000	16	2	18	2015	4	15	19	2030	1	0	1
2045	1	5	6	2100	0	0	0				
Total			268	Total			302	Total			290

* reversed direction one trip for Ft. Griswold event

TOTAL FOR DAY 860

Liberty Water Taxi
Sunday, September 7, 2014

City Pier				Fort Griswold				Fort Trumbull			
Departue	Pax stay	New pax	Total	Departue	Pax stay	New pax	Total	Departue	Pax stay	New pax	Total
1100	0	6	6	1115	4	10	14	1130	11	16	27
1145	20	5	25	1200	19	16	35	1215	21	9	30
1230		out of service		1245		out of service		1300		out of service	
1315		out of service		1330		out of service		1345		out of service	
1345	0	19	19	1400	12	30	42	1415	36	5	41
1430	15	26	41	1445	20	22	42	1500	29	13	42
1515	25	16	41	1530	23	9	32	1545	22	20	42
1600	23	19	42	1615	16	26	42	1630	29	12	41
1645	30	12	42	1700	20	22	42	1715	30	10	40
1730	20	22	42	1745	23	13	36	1800	30	4	34
1815	4	16	20	1830	15	9	24	1845	8	10	18
1900	3	27	30	1915	2	18	20	1930	20	6	26
1945	13	15	28	2000	12	3	15	2015	4	7	11
2030	0	9	9	2045	0	0	0	2100	0	0	0
Total			345	Total			344	Total			352

TOTAL FOR DAY 1041

Liberty Water Taxi
Saturday, September 13, 2014

City Pier				Fort Griswold				Fort Trumbull			
Departue	Pax stay	New pax	Total	Departue	Pax stay	New pax	Total	Departue	Pax stay	New pax	Total
1100	0	16	16	1115	10	19	29	1130	21	5	26
1145	12	19	31	1200	12	29	41	1215	30	8	38
1230	3	29	32	1245	28	14	42	1300	39	3	42
1315	3	39	42	1330	26	16	42	1345	29	4	33
1400	3	39	42	1415	33	9	42	1430	30	12	42
1445	3	39	42	1500	24	18	42	1515	30	12	42
1530	0	42	42	1545	24	18	42	1600	31	11	42
1615	7	35	42	1630	33	9	42	1645	38	4	42
1700	4	27	31	1715	14	0	14	1730		cancelled Rain	
1745		cancelled Rain		1800		cancelled Rain		1815		cancelled Rain	
1830		cancelled Rain		1845		cancelled Rain		1900		cancelled Rain	
1915		cancelled Rain		1930		cancelled Rain		1945		cancelled Rain	
2000		cancelled Rain		2015		cancelled Rain		2030		cancelled Rain	
2045		cancelled Rain		2100		cancelled Rain					
Total			320	Total			336	Total			307
TOTAL FOR DAY										963	

Liberty Water Taxi
Sunday, September 14, 2014

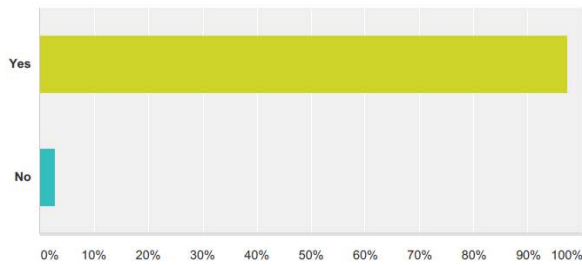
City Pier				Fort Griswold				Fort Trumbull			
Departue	Pax stay	New pax	Total	Departue	Pax stay	New pax	Total	Departue	Pax stay	New pax	Total
1100		9	9	1115	8	18	26	1130	16	12	28
1145	8	16	24	1200	11	21	32	1215	22	8	30
1230	6	33	39	1245	6	34	40	1300	35	7	42
1315	25	17	42	1330	10	31	41	1345	27	15	42
1355	6	36	42	1405	0	3	3				
1410	0	42	42	1415	16	26	42	1430	36	6	42
1445	15	27	42	1500	14	28	42	1515	30	12	42
1530	14	28	42	1545	15	27	42	1600	32	10	42
1615	12	30	42	1630	15	27	42	1645	34	8	42
1700	18	18	36	1715	8	34	42	1730	30	12	42
1745	10	32	42	1800	20	22	42	1815	30	4	34
1830	4	16	20	1845	15	9	24	1900	8	10	18
1915	3	27	30	1930	2	18	20	1945	20	6	26
2000	13	15	28	2015	12	3	15	2030	4	7	11
2045	0	9	9	2100	0	0	0			0	
Total			489	Total			453	Total			441
TOTAL FOR DAY										1383	

Water Taxi Demonstration Project

On-line Survey Results

Q2 Did you enjoy the water taxi?

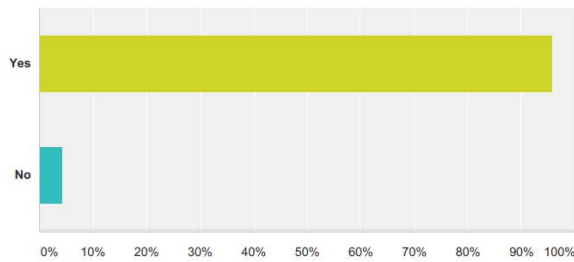
Answered: 221 Skipped: 3



Answer Choices	Responses	Count
Yes	97.29%	215
No	2.71%	6
Total		221

Q3 Would you do it again to visit area attractions?

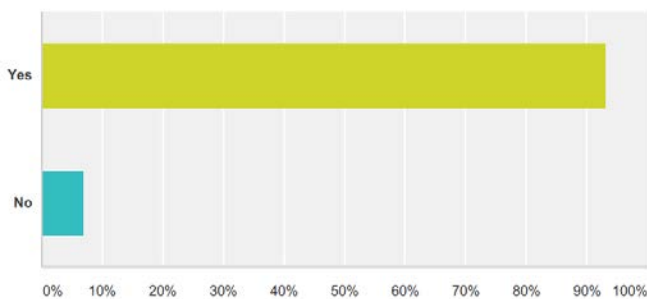
Answered: 221 Skipped: 3



Answer Choices	Responses	Count
Yes	95.93%	212
No	4.07%	9
Total		221

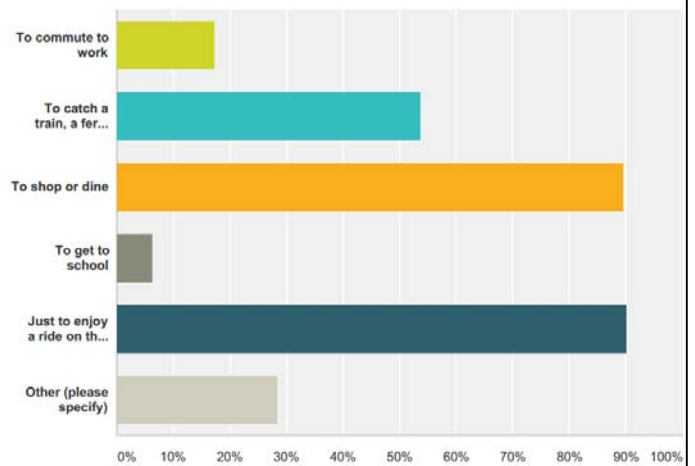
Q4 If running times were convenient, would you use it to cross the river for other activities?

Answered: 221 Skipped: 3



Q5 What other activities might you use the water taxi to attend? Check all that apply.

Answered: 173 Skipped: 2



OVERALL

While 224 passengers responded to the survey, not all answered every question. The number of respondents can be seen under each question on the charts. The overall response rate to the survey was over 20 percent, assuming the total number of passengers was approximately 1000.

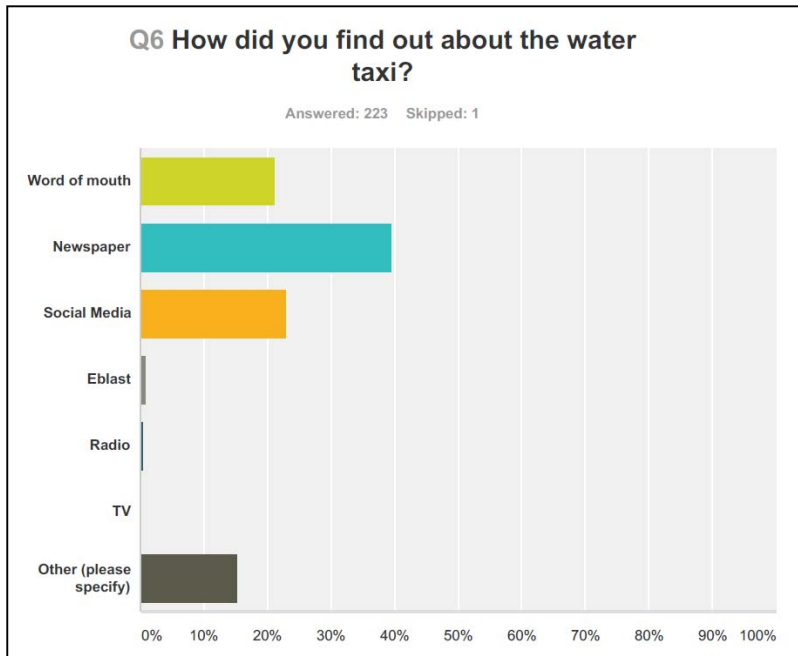
Estimating passenger counts is difficult due to the number of people embarking and disembarking at the three stops. The taxi was, on average, 73 percent full, with a carrying capacity of 42 passengers and two crew.

The survey was available on the Avery-Copp House website from September 6 to 21, 2014.

Responses were overwhelmingly positive and provided useful information for future service.

Water Taxi Demonstration Project

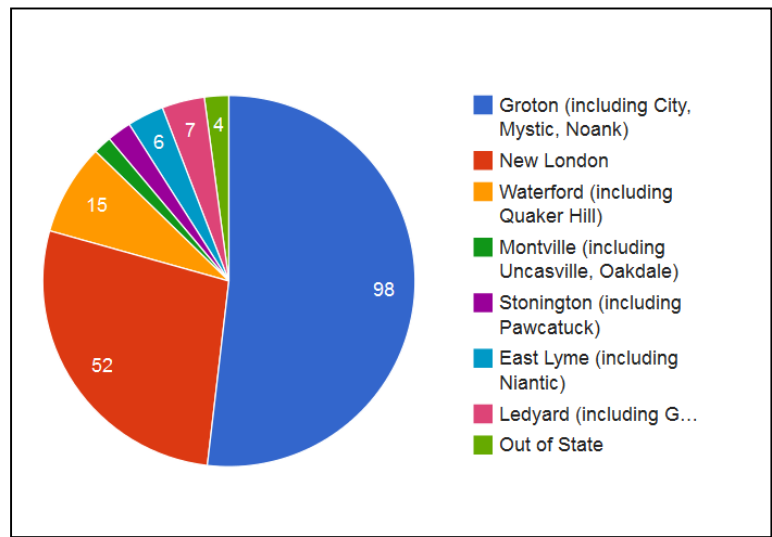
On-line Survey Results



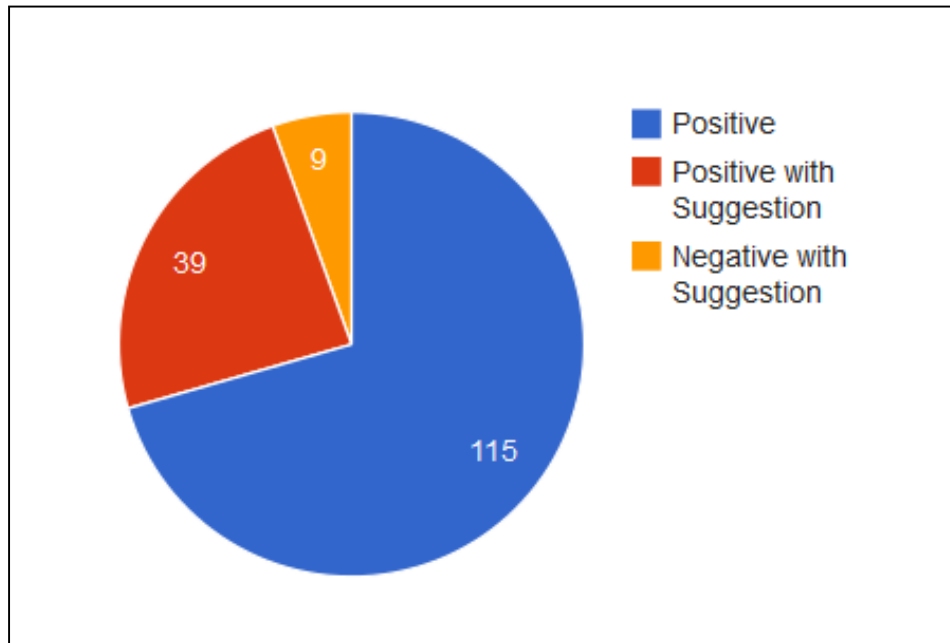
Regarding the 34 'Other' responses in the chart to the left, 21 of them belonged in one of the categories above, 7 were on committees associated with either the water taxi or an event happening that day, 4 discovered the water taxi by chance, and 2 discovered the water taxi by seeing the signs directing people to the taxi.

Answer Choices	Responses	Count
Word of mouth	21.08%	47
Newspaper	39.46%	88
Social Media	22.87%	51
Eblast	0.90%	2
Radio	0.45%	1
TV	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	15.25%	34
Total		223

Where did the passengers come from?



Q7 Open ended comments



Summary of opened-ended comments

The **positive comments** had five key common denominators:

1. Praise for the operators and the volunteers/organizers
2. Recognition of the water taxi as a tourism/economic development asset
3. Mention as a good alternative to driving and finding parking etc.
4. Mention of doing things they had never or would not have otherwise done, such as visiting sites
5. General, unspecified support for the idea

The **negative comments** were mostly about wanting more than what was offered: more transportation to get up the hill in Groton, larger boat to avoid waiting in long lines, more promotion, more signage.

Email addresses provided

106 respondents provided email addresses indicating they wanted to be kept informed of progress on the Thames River Heritage Park. This represents 47 percent of respondents.

Thank you to Gerry Keeler for help with the open-ended questions.

Media & Promotion

Three-column, 10 inch ads ran in *The Day* immediately prior to the two weekends of service.

TWO WEEKENDS ONLY!
SATURDAY & SUNDAY
SEPTEMBER 6-7 & 13-14
11:00 AM TO 9:00 PM
CATCH THE THAMES RIVER
WATER TAXI
FREE TO RIDE

BOARDING AT:
FORT STREET LANDING, THAMES ST., GROTON
CITY PIER, NEW LONDON WATERFRONT DISTRICT
PIER 7, FORT TRUMBULL STATE PARK

GROTON WATERFRONT
FORT GRISWOLD
Fort Griswold Battlefield State Park
Groton Monument & Museum
Ebenzer Avery House
Bill Memorial Library
Avery-Copp House
Subvets World War II Memorial

NEW LONDON WATERFRONT
Union Station/Amtrak/Shoreline East
Fishers Island & Long Island Ferries
Nathan Hale Schoolhouse
Garde Arts Center
Hygienic Art
Custom House Maritime Museum
Shaw Mansion
Hempsted Houses

FORT TRUMBULL
Fort Trumbull State Park
Visitor Center & Museum
Conference Center
Fishing Pier

Thames River Heritage Park averycopp.house.org/thames

TWO DAYS LEFT!
SATURDAY & SUNDAY
SEPTEMBER 13 & 14
11:00 AM TO 9:00 PM
CATCH THE THAMES RIVER
WATER TAXI
FREE TO RIDE

BOARDING AT:
GROTON, FORT STREET LANDING, THAMES STREET
NEW LONDON WATERFRONT DISTRICT, CITY PIER,
FORT TRUMBULL STATE PARK, PIER 7

GROTON WATERFRONT
FORT GRISWOLD
Fort Griswold Battlefield State Park
Groton Monument & Museum
Ebenzer Avery House
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Garde Arts Center
Hygienic Art
Custom House Maritime Museum
Shaw Mansion
Hempsted Houses

FORT TRUMBULL
Fort Trumbull State Park
Visitor Center & Museum
Conference Center
Fishing Pier

Thames River Heritage Park averycopp.house.org/thames

A network of supporters used their social media and media contacts to spread the word. The network included:

- The Garde Arts Center
- City of New London
- CT Office of Tourism
- CT OpSail
- Eastern CT Chamber
- Fishers Island Ferry
- New London Main Street
- Eastern CT Tourism District

Meeting with the Editorial Board

A small group of key individuals met with The Day editorial board on Sept. 2, 2014 to discuss the Heritage Park and water taxi and were encouraged by the response. *The Day* continues to closely follow park progress, including sending a reporter to Heritage Park Steering Committee meetings.

Headlines and links to stories (published in *The Day*, Aug. 22, 2014 through Nov. 12, 2014)

- 1 [Four more groups join push for Thames River Heritage Park](#)
- 2 [Parsekian to speak on Heritage Park](#)
- 3 [Water taxi surveys tally up support](#)
- 4 [Gov. Malloy jumps on board with water taxi](#)
- 5 [Water taxi survey available through midnight Sunday](#)
- 6 [Committee takes next steps toward making Thames River Heritage Park a reality](#)
- 7 [Regional heritage park plan backers hope success translates to support](#)
- 8 [Water taxi makes a splash in New London, Groton](#)
- 9 [Dry run for water taxi planned this weekend on Thames River](#)
- 10 [Voila: A new state park](#)
- 11 [Community comes together to revive water taxi idea](#)
- 12 [New London-Groton water taxi to run on trial basis next month](#)

Thames River Heritage Park Water Shuttle Demonstration Project Budget

OPERATING BUDGET

One-time Costs

LEASE	\$ -
TRANSIT TO/FROM NEW LONDON/MYSTIC	
BOARDING PLATFORMS 3@1500 each	\$ 4,500
INSURANCE	\$ 2,300
TOTAL ONE-TIME COST	\$ 6,800

Daily Costs

LABOR	\$ 1,820
FUEL AND CONSUMABLES	\$ 365

TOTAL DAILY COST	\$ 2,185
COST FOR FOUR DAYS	\$ 8,740

TOTAL OPERATING \$ 15,540

NOTES: All figures except labor are rough estimates. Labor is based on a 12 hour day, which equates to approximately 10 hours of operation.

MARKETING BUDGET

Signage at Ferry Stops and directional signs

3 signs @ \$300 each , waterproof	\$	900.00
3 plexiglas holders for schedules @ 20 each	\$	60.00
6 coreplast at \$27 each	\$	162.00
Assembly	\$	280.00
Shipping signage	\$	50.00

Handouts

Flyer on heritage park, 4/4 full bleed, 100# gloss text		
1600 (See copy attached)	\$	290.00
Ferry Schedule Card with operating details		
1000	\$	60.00

Advertising

Print and on-line campaign with The Day	\$	800.00
TOTAL MARKETING COSTS	\$	2,602.00
GRAND TOTAL OPERATING & MARKETING	\$	18,142.00

SOURCES OF FUNDS

	\$	10,000.00	Anonymous donor
	\$	2,500.00	DECD marketing
	\$	500.00	Schooner Festival
	\$	3,000.00	City of Groton
	\$	2,000.00	City of New London
TOTAL	\$	18,000.00	