

MINUTES

Subject	Site Visit Hampton Beach State Park Accessibility Feasibility Study GEI Project No. 2403202
Date/Time:	Monday, April 22, 2024; 8:30am to 5pm
Location:	Hampton Beach State Park: Morning site visits (South Beach & North Beach) - GEI/GPI & State Parks Staff Mid-morning South Beach / State Park Campground Site Tours – GEI/GPI, Committee & Guests Midday Project Status Update by GEI/GPI, Committee & Guests Afternoon Main Beach Site Tour - GEI/GPI, Committee & Guests Afternoon Site Visit Recap - GEI/GPI, Committee & Guests
Attendees	<i>Travis Pryor, PLA– GEI Consultants, Inc., Project Manager</i> <i>Alison Brady, EI – GEI Consultants, Inc.</i>
Consultant Team	<i>John Gareau, EI – GEI Consultants, Inc.</i> <i>Carolyn Radisch, AICP – Greenman-Pedersen, Inc.</i> <i>Robert White, R.L.A. – Greenman-Pedersen, Inc., Senior Landscape Architect</i>
Committee	<i>Johanna Lyons – NH DNCR, State Park Planning & Development Specialist</i> <i>Meredith Collins – NH DNCR, State Park Seacoast Regional Supervisor</i> <i>Paul Kelley – NH Governor’s Commission on Disability, Commissioner</i> <i>Thomas Manning – NH Governor’s Commission on Disability, Commissioner</i> <i>Pat Bushway – Hampton Beach Area Commission</i> <i>Bob Preston – Hampton Beach Area Commission</i> <i>Julia Callahan – NE Passage, Accessibility Specialist</i> <i>Jen Kennedy – Blue Ocean Society, Executive Director</i>
HBSP Staff	<i>Lucille Marino – Hampton Beach State Park Campground, Supervisor</i> <i>John Howe – Main Beach Facilities Maintenance</i>
Others	<i>Melinda Simms – United Spinal Association – NH Chapter, Advocacy Coordinator accessibleadvocate.nh@gmail.com</i> <i>Katie Ladlie – NE Passage, Recreational Therapist</i>



Site Visit

** Italicized text denotes minutes recorded*

General Discussion

The following general HBSP overarching accessibility discussion was recorded throughout the day:

- *One (1) in four (4) people in the general population have disabilities.*
- *There are an estimated 198,000 handicap people in New Hampshire.*
- *Operations and maintenance needs at Main Beach and South Beach in particular are challenged by regulatory restrictions during piping plover nesting periods.*
- *There is at least a perception of minimal educational and directional signage at all three beaches.*
- *More color coding / site markings denoting accessible routes would be beneficial.*
 - a. *There are opportunities for directional improvements through color schemes (on walkways, site features such as light pole bases, etc.)*
 - b. *Signage improvements could consider improvements to symbols, color coding, additional languages beside English, and technology improvements such as QR codes.*
- *Recommend that Hampton Beach Area Commission mention this project at their upcoming public commissioner's meeting(s).*
- *Northeast Passage can recommend stakeholder interest groups / individuals for soliciting additional accessibility input.*
- *HBSP can be a leader in accessibility accommodations for the rest of the state to learn from.*
- *Consider using innovative accessibility techniques (from other US communities / other countries) above and beyond the American's With Disabilities Act Guidelines to further improve universal access at Hampton Beach.*
- *NH DOT owns the Route 1A right-of-way to the seawall. HBSP owns the seawall, buildings, beaches and campground and has a 4F agreement to maintain the easterly sidewalk/boardwalk and parking spaces within the right-of-way. The Town of Hampton owns the sidewalk on the west side of Route 1A.*
- *Provide loading zones? (It was noted that there are some which led to further discussion about signage / markings for better wayfinding). Loading zones are not an accessible solution that works for everyone. For example, dropping off a person in a wheelchair at a loading zone is challenging if the person dropping them off then has to go find parking at a potentially prohibitive distance / time from the loading zone.*
- *Disabled / mobility challenged people have a lot more planning to do for a visit to Hampton Beach in consideration of accessibility to bathrooms, parking, meals, etc. It is not just a simple issue of focusing on finding an accessible parking space.*

Site Visit

- *Consider having accessible planning information readily available to the public. Through the State's Accessibility webpage?*
- *Parking is very challenging.*
 - a. *There is a general lack of parking at Hampton Beach. Minimum designated ADA requirements are met and free parking for individuals with HC license plates are open at any state-owned spaces.*
 - b. *Satellite parking opportunities?*
 - c. *Consider timed parking limits?*
 - d. *HBSP should coordinate with Town's parking system.*
 - e. *Reserved parking spaces are available at the South Beach Campground. Can it be considered at the Main Beach and North Beach areas?*
 - f. *Should all accessible spaces be van accessible spaces? Reduces overall parking space area for marked access aisles. There are designated spaces at North Beach and Main Beach, however, none between the Marine Memorial and 18th Street.*
 - g. *Does the "Park Mobile" app notes accessible spaces?*
 - h. *Do all parking meters meet ADA accessibility clearance guidelines?*
- *There is a colored flag system at lifeguard chairs to communicate safe swimming access. Consideration to add symbols for the color blind?*
- *Wider walkways are better in general for universal accessibility for recreation, operations and maintenance uses.*
- *Include detectable warning surfaces at the tops of the beach access points?*
- *Public facilities at Main Beach / Seashell building are at least ten (10) years old. The rest of the facilities at North Beach and South Beach are much older. None may not meet the latest accessibility standards / improvements to facilities and equipment.*
 - a. *Push buttons for doors would be beneficial.*
 - b. *Motorized equipment to transfer people from their personal wheelchairs to the HBSP beach wheelchairs would be beneficial.*
 - c. *Accessible waste disposal improvements would be beneficial (Trash / Recycling receptacles?).*
 - d. *Provision of a centralized areas at each beach with water / shade / sitting focused on medical needs specifically would be beneficial.*

Site Visit

South Beach Campground

A brief summary of observations and discussions particular to the South Beach Campground area is as follows:

- *The South Beach Campground is open May 18th through Labor Day full-time and is open for some special events and on limited weekends outside of the full-time period.*
- *There is a storage building on the property near Route 1A that also includes an office space providing limited staff access by campsite users. HBSP staff would like a better office space.*
- *There are twenty-eight (28) full hookup (electric, water & sewer) camp sites which are available through a lottery system.*
- *Three to four (3-4) of the campsites have accessible fire rings and picnic tables.*
- *HBSP is looking to make all of the campsites accessible. They will be considering site access, as well as site features (utility services, fire pits, walkways, etc.)*
- *The campsites and parking areas have an approximate 1% average site grade in all directions. Most of the developed site is gravel.*
- *Gravel is generally challenging as an accessible surface, especially around campsites. Paved pedestrian routes and concrete pads at each site would be beneficial.*
- *Consider subtle curbing at edges of paved pedestrian routes for better guidance. Once a wheelchair or ankle encounters a hard edge next to soft sand conditions for example, it can become challenging / hazardous to navigate.*
- *Accessible points from the campsite to the parking lot / beach could be improved by adding more points through the shrub / guardrail barrier and by adding paved walkways.*
- *There are no designated pedestrian routes from Route 1A to the South Beach Campground area. Most people drive or bike to the site.*
- *There are no designated pedestrian routes around the campsites.*
- *There are three designated pedestrian routes through or around the coastal dunes to South Beach. One route is accessible with a concrete surface, although it is routinely covered with sand. HBSP would like a second accessible route to the beach. People would like easier surfaces to walk on in general across dunes.*
- *The end of the concrete paved path through the dune has been scoured by coastal storms in the past and segments have broken off.*
- *Pedestrian routes to the beach across / over the dunes could be improved. Look at examples from other beach and dune cross access systems. UNH has done some conceptual design work on dune walkovers.*

Site Visit

- *Public has requested temporary mats across south beach, but they would need to be removed and reset between each tide cycle.*
- *NH Fish and Game state regulated piping plover nesting periods limits HBSP operations and maintenance work at the beach.*
- *A walkway under the new Hampton River Bridge is anticipated.*
- *There are approximately 1,200 individual parking spaces and they are typically at full capacity on weekends during the peak summer season. Parking is less expensive here than it is at Main Beach and North Beach. (\$20 to \$60 elsewhere)*
- *There is a loading / drop-off zone and several designated accessible parking spaces close to the beach and outbuildings / picnic pavilion. The access path adjacent to these spaces needs routine clearing of sand sediments. The cross slope of these routes appeared to exceed ADAAG slopes.*
- *Bathroom openings are narrow (35-1/4" – 36" including door trim. More direct route from parking lot to bathrooms would be beneficial.*
- *The bathhouses are expected to be renovated during the fall of 2024.*
- *They have one (1) beach wheelchair available which is estimated to be used ten to twelve (10-12) times a month. Often when it is in use, another person requests one so demand could support additional beach wheelchair equipment.*
- *Access to the beach between HBSP South Beach and Main Beach areas (between Concord Avenue and Haverhill Avenue) is owned by the Town of Hampton or private properties.*
- *Consideration for fishing platform(s) along the Hampton River?*
- *A walkway is not designated between the Hampton River and the campsites.*
- *There is no designated walking route along the Hampton River / Jetty. There are safety concerns for the public from HBSP, the Town of Hampton and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Pedestrian use of this area, including fishing, is discouraged. HBSP makes several rescues each year in this area.*
- *Memorial benches stored under pavilion structures in offseason then moved to Main Beach boardwalk during peak summer season.*

Site Visit



Site Visit



Site Visit



Site Visit

**Main Beach**

A brief summary of observations and discussions particular to the Main Beach area is as follows:

- *HBSP has four to five (4-5?) beach wheelchair available which are estimated to be used two-hundred and fifty plus (250+) times a month.*
 - a. *HBSP had a request during the winter months to use one.*

Site Visit

- b. Availability of equipment outside of peak season when lifeguard staff is readily available is more challenging.*
 - c. They are constantly in use during peak season.*
 - d. Beach wheelchairs are heavy. Lifeguards assist users of beach wheelchairs with crossing of upper beach area, and over the berm at the edge of the intertidal beach area.*
- *More storage for accessibility equipment would be beneficial.*
- *Consider converting staircase access points to ramps. Especially since most of them get routinely covered by sand.*
- *On Wednesday's during the summer the Village District's fireworks display events close the beach between the Seashell building and the Marine Memorial starting around 3pm to 4pm – approximately 4 hours before the fireworks are launched. Many people head north of the Seashell building to watch them. Accessing the beach in this area becomes challenging as the accessible ramps to Main Beach in this area are closed and no ramps are available further to the north.*
- *More shade structures would be beneficial.*
- *More ramps to the beach would be beneficial.*
- *More ADA parking spaces would be beneficial.*
- *Parking on the east side of Route 1A would be better than current parking in the middle between north and south bound traffic. This is something that is being considered currently as part of NH DOT's Ocean Boulevard improvements project.*
- *Loading / unloading zone is signed as "Fire / Official Use". Could be considered for use by wheelchair lifts as well.*
- *Another bathhouse closer to Boars Head would be beneficial.*
- *Expansion of the bathhouse near the Marine Memorial would be beneficial.*
- *The more decentralized the site amenities and access points from the Seashell building area the better.*
- *The Village District operates the public events at HBSP's Main Beach area.*
- *The Village District operates and maintains the playground to the south of the Seashell building. The playground did not appear to be accessible.*
- *The side pavilion area to the north of the Seashell building is rarely used.*
- *Trash cans chained to the fence/railing systems along the boardwalk are challenging in some areas to navigate around.*
- *Boardwalk area south of the Seashell building was generally in good accessibility conditions.*

Site Visit

- *Lockers at buildings were accessible.*
- *The main Seashell pavilion stage should consider more interpretive services, especially for/during events at the stage.*
- *There is no designated accessible seating at the main Seashell pavilion. There is open space on the boardwalk that can be temporarily marked to reserve for accessibility needs during stage events.*
- *Wide ramps around the Seashell building are nice but they often get congested by visitors using the space to store their beach gear and setup/sit on their chairs.*
- *The area averages and estimated one-hundred thousand 100k visitors on a busy weekend during the summer and up to two-hundred thousand 200k on the busiest days. The VHB transportation study has data on traffic / visitor counts.*
- *Two temporary ramps provide access from the Seashell building across the beach throughout the peak summer season, starting with timber mats fastened to the concrete ramps, followed be rolled out fabric mats.*
- *There is often congestion at the end of these mats. Adding a “T” at the ends would be beneficial. Turning sidewalks on the mats is challenging as wheelchair wheels can get stuck in the mat ribbing. Especially motorized or personal wheelchairs with narrower wheels than the HBSP beach wheelchairs.*
- *Most of the Main Beach accessibility features are provided at and immediately around the Seashell building.*
- *About half (1/2) of the Main Beach access points are not accessible (ADA? Universally?).*
- *There are no benches on the north end of the Main Beach boardwalk (north of the last beach staircase access point).*
- *Site benches don’t have handrails/arm rests and are too low.*
- *Consider removing a picnic table under the shade pavilion to the south of the Seashell building*



Site Visit



Site Visit



Site Visit

**North Beach**

A brief summary of observations and discussions particular to the North Beach area is as follows:

- *Public interest in ADA access to the shore at Dumas Avenue / Boars Head. This area is comprised of rocky shore and has large riprap placed at the end of the State's concrete seawall for flood protection. Some public interest prioritizes flood protection at this area.*
- *HBSP owns to the end of the concrete seawall at Boars Head.*
- *Approximate 12% grade in sidewalk ramp at 6th Street.*
- *Access stairs through the seawall to the shoreline are often covered on stone at the bottom of the staircases. Could consider replacements in the future with less steep stairs.*
- *The access stairs through the seawall to the shoreline at 6th street have been more recently constructed (reconstructed?) than other access points and are in better condition.*
- *Access stairs through the seawall to the shoreline south of 6th Street are in similar condition as the Dumas Avenue stairs.*
- *There are significant changes in cross slope / grades of the travel lanes and sidewalks from Dumas Avenue to 6th Street and then they are closer in elevation and cross slopes north of 6th Street.*
- *There are no benches along the sidewalk and seawall at North Beach.*
- *The access point from Route 1A through the seawall to the shore at 18th Street is the only ramp system in the North Beach area. This access point is challenging to navigate, operate and maintain. This access point is often crowded with users. It is a long way from the south end of North Beach (Boars Head neighborhood).*
- *The public has commented that they would like increased access to the North Beach shoreline. What will that look like if it is often underwater during high tide periods.*

Site Visit

- *Would opportunities to elevate pedestrian access to the top of the seawall for visible access to the ocean be of interest to the public?*
- *North Beach is reportedly losing sand. (See UNH / Seagrass Beach Profiling reports)*
- *Very little beach area is accessible below the sea wall. Most is rocky and/or only accessible during intermediate to low tide periods.*
- *There is no equipment access to North Beach on HBSP property. They currently access the 18th Street ramp area along the shoreline from the Town's Bicentennial Park, traveling south during low tide periods over the sand / rock beach. They often have to build a temporary ramp with sand to access the platform and ramp at the shoreline from the beach. Maintenance needs are less during the summer.*
- *Parking meters are new this year and there may need to be increases in clear width between the meter and bollards (5-feet) for accessibility.*
- *The 18th Street access point was constructed in 1994/1995 and has been required routine maintenance (mostly sand removal) since.*
- *It has 10% +/- running grades on the ramp and is 5-feet wide when clear of sand.*
- *ADA parking spaces are provided at each access point through the seawall along North Beach.*
- *The concrete seawall was constructed around 1986.*
- *The North Beach bathhouse at the northern most end of North Beach has challenging pedestrian access from Ocean Boulevard and the adjacent parking area. Gaps in pavement and steep grades.*
- *The question of accessibility from the sidewalk to the North Beach shoreline might be considered by HBSP in terms of universal access goals rather than ADA Accessibility Guidelines. HBSP may not be required under federal regulations to create accessibility into a natural area such as a volatile the shoreline condition of the rocky shores of the beach.*



Site Visit



Site Visit



Site Visit



Site Visit

Field Measurements

Field measurements by smart level reading were taken throughout the project area and the findings are generally described at each beach area below:

South Beach

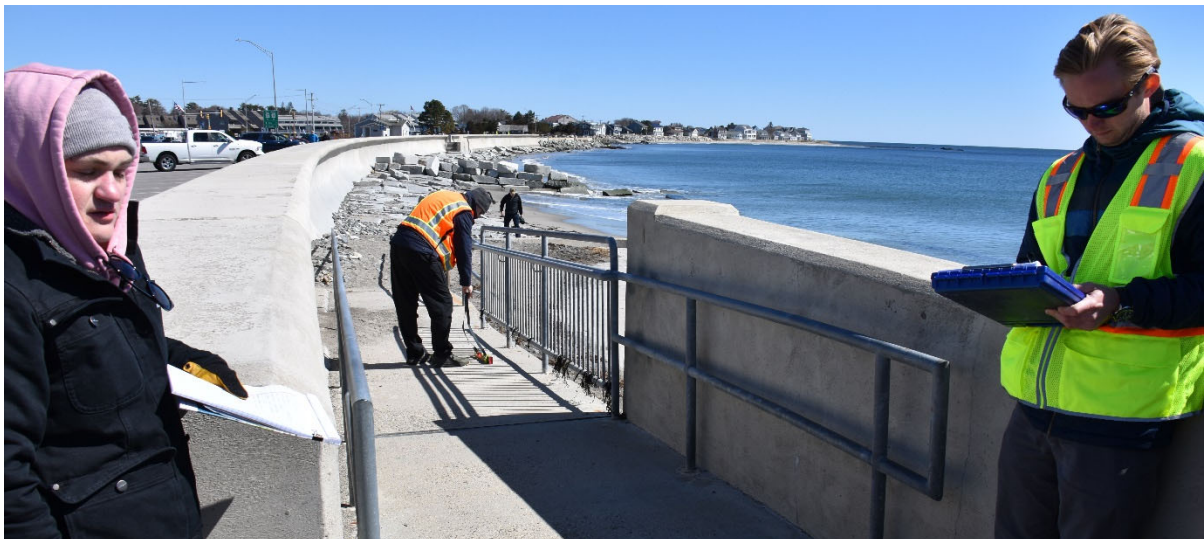
- *Parking areas, driveways and walkways into the area all appeared to be within approximate ADAAG grade limits for either running or cross slope grades given that the area as a whole is minimally sloped.*
- *The accessible route from parking areas to the pavilion and service buildings did not meet ADAAG dimensional standards for passage width in some areas.*

Main Beach

- *The prior recent 2012 facility improvements appeared to meet ADAAG standards for all accessible routes in linear and cross sloped conditions.*
- *In particular, the bathhouse nearest the Seashell building in the other bulb out area handicap ramps were all 5% or less in grade and felt comfortable to use at that grade transition.*
- *The Marine Memorial also appeared to meet ADAAG standards.*

North Beach

- *Both in the approach areas along the seawall and then at the North Beach bathhouse there appeared to be several non-compliant areas with ADAAG standards for excessively steep ramps and cross slopes on the sidewalks. The NH DOT Ocean Boulevard improvement project through this entire area will be challenged to address those slopes to meet ADAAG standards.*
- *The area around the North Beach bathhouse had non-compliant ADAAG standard grades although there were defined accessible routes within ADAAG standard grade acceptable limits from the handicap parking spaces on the curved walkway up to the bathrooms. This was not the apparent route to access the bathhouse and the other non-compliant transition slopes from the accessible entrances to the doorways of the bathrooms down to the parking area immediately at the bathhouse were in excess of 15%. Those routes might be improved by stairs with handrails.*



Site Visit

Next Steps / Action Items

Online Survey is active. Park Staff and Committee members are encouraged to take it and distribute it to beach visitors and other local / state agencies and interest groups.

May 22nd there is an HBSP Community Meeting at the Seashell Building from 5:00 to 6:30pm/ A representative from GPI will be there to introduce the Accessibility Feasibility Study to the public

On May 29th from 5:30 to 7:00pm a virtual Open House for Public Information about the Accessibility Feasibility Study and solicitation of public input will be hosted online by HBSP and facilitated by GPI staff with assistance from GEI staff.

On May 30th from 5:30 to 7:00pm an in-person Open House for Public Information about the Accessibility Feasibility Study and solicitation of public input will be held at the Seashell Building and facilitated by GPI staff with assistance from GEI staff.

On June 5th from 1:00 to 3:00 pm a virtual presentation to the Committee on the project existing conditions assessment findings will be hosted online by HBSP and facilitated by GEI staff and assisted by GPI staff.

The foregoing reflects the writer's understanding of items discussed and conclusions reached. Any discrepancies or misunderstandings should be brought to the attention of the writer immediately. Please forward any comments, errors, or omissions to these meeting notes to Travis Pryor at tpryor@geiconsultants.com.

TJP/ACB/JAG