



HHFT Visitation Data Committee Meeting

Date: Sunday, October 22, 2023

Time: 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM (EST)

In Person

MINUTES

A meeting of the Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail Visitation Data Committee took place on October 22, 2023.

Committee Members Present: Henry Feldman, Village of Cold Spring; James Labate, Village of Cold Spring; Phil Cotennec, Town of Philipstown; Jeffrey Robins, Town of Philipstown

Committee Members Not Present: Chris Alice Winward, Village of Nelsonville; and Sarah Mencher, City of Beacon; Greg Totino, Town of Fishkill

Staff Present: Amy Kacala, Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail (HHFT)

Staff Members Not Present: MJ Martin, Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail (HHFT)

Guests Present (if any):

Chelsea Anderson, About the Work (AtW)

Al Shacklett (ORCA)

John Moss (ORCA)

ORCA and AtW called the meeting to order at 10:05pm and welcomed everyone present.

Committee Field Visit and Observations

Presented by: ORCA, Al Shacklett and John Moss

The committee met in person to review data collection points and observations ORCA has collected since May 2023. Chris Alice Winward wrote on Friday notifying the committee of a landslide near Tarrytown which would impact MNR service over the weekend. ORCA noted that limited train service had already created an uptick in vehicular visitation to lots north of Cold Spring. Washburn and Breakneck Ridge parking was monitored and counted throughout the day.

Upper Main Street

The field visit commenced on upper Main Street. While walking, ORCA pointed out where pinch points such as store sandwich boards or restaurant queue lines typically occur leading to obstructions along the pedestrian pathways. Restaurant queues, if not organized, can cause significant congestion. This is something the committee, a group of 8, witnessed while stopping to discuss the surrounding environment.

There is conflicting wayfinding being provided along the roadway. Signs do not contain iconography that would delineate vehicular or pedestrian access. Signage for the West Point Foundry intended for cars is not a route that is efficient for pedestrians. Alternate signage is not provided to direct pedestrians to the Northbound MNR platform which is the most efficient way for pedestrians to access West Point Foundry.

The committee made note of visitor's not being aware of their surroundings, often stopping to take pictures in the middle of the road and crosswalks. People in "vacation mode" typically stop and soak things in instead of moving continuously through the environment. It can create unsafe pedestrian and vehicular interactions.

MNR Tunnel Entrance/Information Booth Plaza

The plaza next to the Cold Spring information booth is currently under-utilized. The location is a great opportunity for pedestrian interception and visitor communication especially after MNR and SeaStreak arrivals.

MNR Northbound Station

There is limited wayfinding signage along the pathway from the north-bound MNR platform to the MNR underpass tunnel. No signage is provided at the southern end of the northbound platform which is the most efficient pedestrian route to West Point Foundry. The signage that is provided is small and prioritizes Main Street/downtown Cold Spring instead of hiking destinations and other area attractions. Small signs located far apart encourage herd mentality, people disembarking the train are following those in front of them.

The pathway from the MNR platform and current Fjord Trail signage is overgrown, something that will need to be remedied with MNR in the near future. MNR is now the owner of the train tracks and is responsible for station maintenance.

Lower Main Street

Lower Main Street is typically less crowded than the upper areas, closer to Highway 9D. The sidewalks are narrow and there is visible evidence of plantings/grass being eroded away from pedestrian volume. Many pedestrians walk in the roadway when sidewalks are congested.

Dockside/SeaStreak Docking

The committee congregated in front of the SeaStreak as it docked at approximately 11:25am. Passengers disembarked and the majority, if not all passengers, bee-lined for Main Street. The SeaStreak runs during the fall seasons with one drop off on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Anywhere from 250-400 passengers arrive in the Village via boat. The committee observed that passengers were unlikely hikers, many did not have the gear or mobility to account for a full day hike. There is minimal signage or wayfinding to communicate to large arrivals. Having SeaStreak announcements or an information booth volunteer greet visitors with itineraries, safety warnings, or lists of underutilized spaces could help to break up the herd mentality of those arriving at the dock prior to visitor groups making their way to Main Street.

There is a scheduled Northbound MNR train that typically stops in Cold Spring at 11:15am on weekends. No MNR service was observed on October 22nd due to a landslide near Tarrytown. It was noted that surge visitation could be created from simultaneous boat and train arrivals resulting in 400-800 people arriving in the Village at one time.

Upper Main Street

The committee returned to Upper Main Street to witness the impacts of the SeaStreak arrival. Local shops had many customers and queue lines began forming outside restaurants. Crowding conditions, pinch points and pedestrian behaviors previously described were witnessed.

HHFT encouraged municipal representatives to make observations through the lens of visitation management and examples discussed during the field visit. Any additional observations can be circulated via email to HHFT and AtW or discussed during future committee meetings.

The meeting adjourned at 12:00pm.

The next meeting of the Visitation Data Committee is scheduled for October 27, 2023.



Respectfully submitted,

Name: Amy Kacala

Title: Executive Director

HUDSON HIGHLANDS FJORD TRAIL, INC.

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