

# 2.0 CURRENT TRANSPORTATION CONDITIONS

## ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION STUDY BACK BAY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

The study area encompasses portions of both the City's Transition Area and Rural Area. The transportation system within the study area includes a variety of suburban and rural roadways. Bicycle facilities are provided throughout the community, however, the network has discontinuities and is considered to be unsafe for many interested, but concerned cyclists. Several canoe/kayak access points provide access to Back Bay; however, their condition varies and they are not linked by any coordinated wayfinding system. The closest regional bus transit service reaches into the Red Mill community and Nimmo Parkway at Newstead Drive, three miles west of the study area.

### 2.1 Roadway Network

The primary and secondary roads in the study area are rural, two-lane roads with occasional property access. Within the Sandbridge Area, Sandpiper Road and Sandfiddler Road provide frequent direct driveway access to homes and businesses. The neighborhoods in the northwest portion of the study area are of suburban character with low speeds and volumes. Just west of the study area, Sandbridge Road quickly becomes suburban within the Red Mill commercial area.

Sandpiper Road becomes heavily congested during the summer months with the change-over on the rental beach houses and the access to Little Island Park. The City has made improvements to access into Little Island Park in recent years to reduce congestion at the entry; however, delays at the Park influence the access to BBNWR and FCSP.



2.1 Roadway Network



Sandfiddler Road  
Roadway Network



Sandbridge Road  
Roadway Network

## 2.2 Bicycle and Pedestrian Network

Existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities within the study area are limited to the SUP along Nimmo Parkway (which terminates at the Albuquerque Road intersection in the northwest portion of the study area), on-road facilities within neighborhood streets, paved shoulders along Sandpiper Road (which do not have bike lane markings and frequently are obstructed), and trail amenities in BBNWR and FCSP.

Although cyclists and pedestrians use the rural roads in the area, there is not a separate network of bicycle and pedestrian accommodations; therefore, users often find

themselves in hazardous or uncomfortable positions on the more heavily travelled roads. Sandbridge Road from Princess Anne Road to Sandpiper Road, specifically, presents various hazards for cycling or walking. The traffic volumes are high, especially during summer months. The posted speed limit is 45 mph on some sections. The narrow pavement width in combination with the unpaved shoulders and ditches close to the edge result in difficult cycling conditions. These conditions severely limit the ability of local visitors to bike or walk to BBNWR and FCSP. During the public involvement process, people shared anecdotal reports of hostile behavior from motorists to cyclists.

## 2.3 Water Access Sites

Canoe/kayak access points, as well as a smaller number of boat ramps, exist around the perimeter of Back Bay (fourteen sites as shown in Figure 4.1). These range in condition from dirt and gravel kayak slides with limited parking to wooden docks and ramps with large parking areas. These launches and boat ramps are fairly well distributed around the Bay. The varying conditions and the lack of a consistent signs and wayfinding system limit visitor use of the access points for water-based transportation to BBNWR and FCSP, as well as their ability to simply enjoy the water resource.



Back Bay Landing  
 Water Access

## 2.4 Public Transit

Public transportation is provided to the City of Virginia Beach by HRT, the regional transit provider servicing the six cities of Chesapeake, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Virginia Beach. HRT provides a combination of local bus, commuter bus, light rail, and ferry. There is currently no transit service provided in the study area. The closest route is the 33 bus line that serves the Red Mill area and travels between the North Seashore and Tidewater Community College. Service operates on an hourly frequency Monday through Saturday from 6:30 am to 11:00 pm. Sunday service is limited to the North Seashore.



HRT Bus

## 2.5 Tram Service

The Back Bay Restoration Foundation (BBRF), BBNWR, and FCSP operate a seasonal (April through October) tram service that provides a guided tour of BBNWR and access through the Refuge to FCSP. Branded as the Blue Goose Tram, the service runs daily at 9:00 am, returning from FCSP at 1:00 pm. The cost is \$8.00 for adults and \$6.00 for seniors and children. The Tram is sometimes used for special tours of the Refuge and FCSP. The Blue Goose Tram carried 1,298 passengers during the 2014 season. August was the month with the highest observed ridership, at 357 passengers.

