

EXPANDED ANSWER 47:

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF A NEW FERRY SYSTEM

The following envisions a privately (individual, corporate, or co-op) owned and run cargo ferry service via the short route.

The mission statement should read something like this: The purpose of the Private Ferry Service (PFS) is to provide safe, convenient, reliable, economical, and pleasant transport for passengers, vehicles, and cargo between Vieques (Mosquito Pier) and the Port of Vieques on a schedule that accommodates the needs of the community for both personal access and business operations and development.

The mission statement above is the basic statement of the goals and objectives. The following discusses how these objectives may be reached. This is not a complete business plan but merely a partial list of things that should be considered. It has become apparent that a two phase process addressing the short term problem first may bring a greater chance of success.

PHASE 1: INITIAL

EQUIPMENT: BOATS - CONFIGURATION

The boats used should be selected for their task and their environment. They should be enjoyable – even fun – to ride.

1. The fleet should consist of two similar boats, having most if not all system components identical. This would aid dramatically in both maintenance and operations for parts inventory, technical expertise, backup, and operational substitution. Outfitting older boats in an identical way should be cost effective and should come with Coast Guard certification for our purposes.
2. The preferred boats are drive-through for rapid loading and unloading, but it is unlikely that these could be found in the used boat inventory complying with the Jones Act.
3. All boats would be combination passenger and cargo. Passengers would load independently from the vehicles without a conflicting path. Multiple access points would be provided for embarkation.
4. All boats would be configured to include several restrooms, a ticketing area, and a small canteen. The restrooms should be plentiful, roomy and easily cleaned. The ticketing operation should allow for the sale of tickets and the making of reservations while in port **and while under way**. The canteen should allow the sale of food and beverages.
5. Boats should be large enough to accommodate the above requirements and plan for expansion. Passenger capacity of 150 and 25 vehicles would be absolute

minimums, although USCG thresholds may make other capacities preferable. Deck capacities should allow for moderately heavy trucks.

6. The cabins should include both outside and inside (air conditioned) seating options. The outside space should include both covered and uncovered seating.
7. Due to the shorter distance being run, a boat at 12kts would take about 30 minutes. Faster boats will typically burn more fuel but would allow faster turn-around.
8. Each boat should have effective high capacity internet service available for passengers. An AIS transponder for monitoring craft location is a must.
9. Ticket offices require both internet and dedicated cell phones for reservations, payments, crew, and M&O (maintenance and operations) communications.
10. Ample security cameras and related systems should capture activities throughout the boat and surrounding areas while in port.

FACILITIES

The most essential land side facility is the actual loading dock, and modifications (probably including hydraulic ramps) are required. Passenger loading should be through the sides. By way of an illustration, the ramp in the center of Mosquito Pier has only a couple of pilings used to hold the boats “straight”. A covered ramp combined with a wind break (for passengers and the ferry itself) needs to be constructed. Other infrastructure improvements will be dictated by the USCG.

Spacious queuing areas for loading should be provided for cars and trucks that do not conflict with disembarking vehicles or passengers. Parking areas should be provided for passengers without vehicles. On Mosquito Pier the current road side parking could continue but should be formalized. Publico parking could be the road side across from the dock and bus drop-off could be on the dock side of the road. Waiting areas for individual pickup should be north of the dock on the west side of the road. (*See the attached schematic design of the area near the center of the Rompeolas.*)

Equivalent accommodation at Roosevelt Roads is required. Additionally, the route from the ferry dock to the highway (to Humacao and/or Fajardo) should be streamlined, and trucks should not be run all over Ceiba.

A waiting terminal is not contemplated in the near term but should be planned for the future. Portable toilets might be used initially. Once the boat is docked and emptied, passengers could embark and use the salon, ticket office, or restrooms. Any exterior facilities should be as minimal as possible, primarily providing weather protection.

If adequate refueling facilities are already in place at the Roosevelt Roads ferry dock, they could be utilized. If not, it may be possible to service the boats directly from a mobile fuel truck. There should also be water service and “pump out” for removing all sewage as well.

SCHEDULES

Schedules are determined primarily to meet the needs of the customers but are constrained by the limitations of the system – including crew labor and costs of operation. While from a customer point of view there can never be too many departures, boats must run sufficiently full to cover costs. The objective is to spread out the trips to efficiently cover each day without turning people or vehicles away.

Schedule:

Depart Vieques	Depart Roosevelt Roads	(not on Sunday)
5:00 AM	6:00 AM	
7:00 AM	9:00 AM	
10:00 AM	12:00 PM	
1:00 PM	3:00 PM	
4:00 PM	5:00 PM	
7:00 PM	8:00 PM	

The primary boat would spend the night in Vieques and the backup in whichever port was convenient. Two full time crews would be required each day. Two part time crews would be required for the weekends and covering for vacations, sickness, etc. Fuel trucks would probably elect to use the ATM.

The schedule should be subject to modification over time to meet the customer demand. Space availability should be shown on the website in real time as online sales take place. Delays or other items impacting travel should be current and online.

PRICING

Setting price levels is a science. If the prices are low, there are typically more who will buy. Fewer will pay higher amounts. The secret is in understanding how elastic the demand is: how many buyers will there be at various prices.

From the business side, one wants to charge the price that yields the most return at any given service level. We don't have a clear picture of this from past performance given the subsidized rates of the ATM. When Aluma was running a private ferry service, their prices for vehicles were two to three times those of the ATM, and many people used them because dealing with the ATM was too difficult.

Initial attempts to estimate the optimal price structure follows:

<u>Pricing (Round Trips)</u>	<u>1 Ride</u>	<u>Vieques Resident</u>	<u>10 Ride</u>
Passenger	25	15	150
Car & Driver	75	45	450
Small Truck & Driver	125	75	750
Large Truck & Driver	300		
Semi-Truck & Driver	500		
Fuel Truck & Driver	750		

CONTRACT WITH FERRY SERVICE

It is not our intent to run the ferry system but rather contract the service, regulate it, and ensure compliance with the contract. Through a competitive bidding process we will select a contractor to run a system to our specifications.

Our requirements are results oriented and not an effort to micromanage the operation. Our bid points will include:

1. Contractor must provide all of the equipment and staff to operate a ferry system for passengers and cargo to meet our above stated requirements and schedules. All organization, management, maintenance, training, and certification are the responsibility of the contractor.
2. The orientation of the contract is to ensure a highly reliable, safe, and pleasant service to the customers - the citizens and guests of Vieques. The contractor is to operate in a manner to satisfy the stated goals. Failure to operate as contracted would lead to fines and/or termination of the contract.

PHASE 2: ADVANCED

Over the long run it is anticipated that the volume of business, resident, and tourist traffic will increase. As the available capacity of our initial operation becomes inadequate for the demand, we will need to expand the services and facilities to include:

EQUIPMENT: BOATS - CONFIGURATION

1. The boats should be drive-through for rapid loading and unloading. Backing on or off would never be necessary.
2. All boats would be combination passenger and cargo. Passengers would ride above the cargo bay and load independently from the vehicles without a conflicting path. Multiple access points would be provided for embarkation. Each passenger would have an electronically encoded Vieques ID Card scanned upon embarkation.
3. The canteen area should include salon seating with tables. A maintenance facility should be created to allow maintenance activity to continue wherever the craft is located. Keep the mechanics, tools, and boats together.
4. Passenger capacity of 300 and 35 vehicles would become the minimums. Larger boats could be run in anticipation of more growth.
5. Limited crew quarters are required for those occasions when one or more members are "stuck" out due to weather or maintenance issues.

FACILITIES

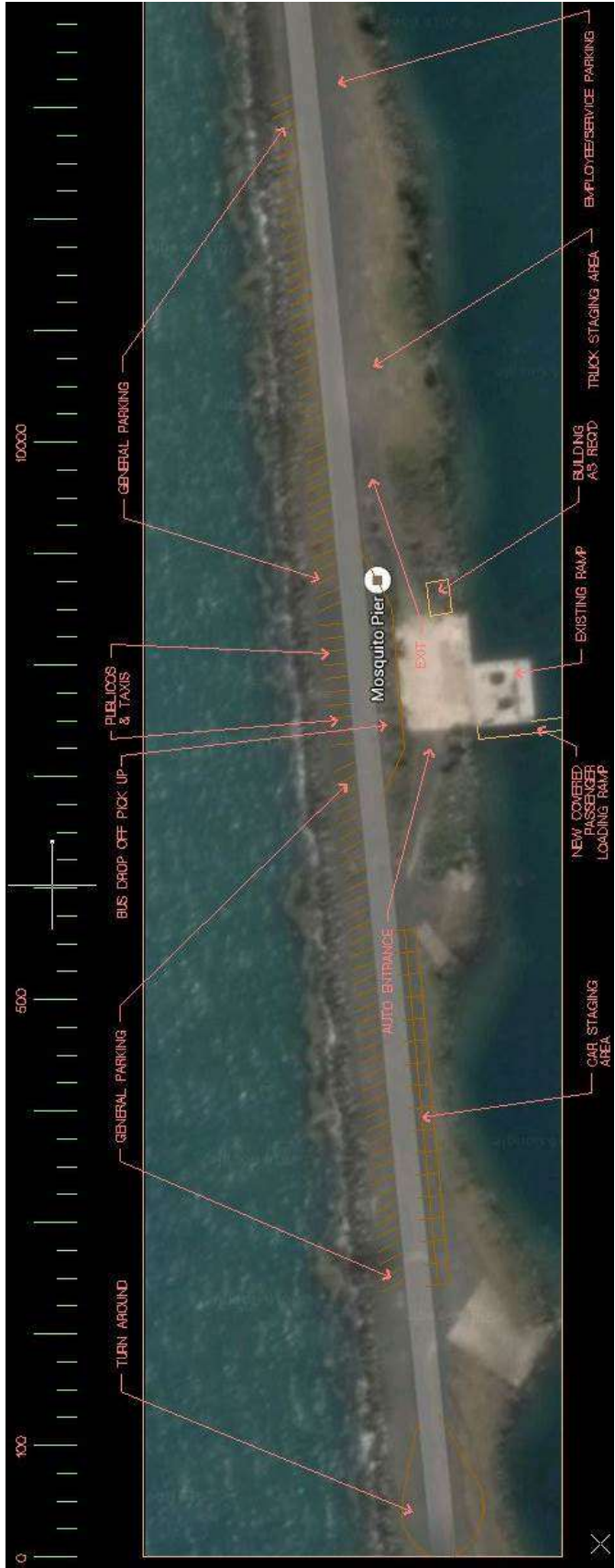
More extensive terminal waiting areas with rest rooms and food service would probably become justified, and even profitable.

SCHEDULES

Schedules should be modified as determined primarily to meet the needs of the customers.

PRICING

Pricing should be adjusted up or down to reflect the legitimate costs of operations and the needs of the market. Subsidies are not going to be available, so the business must be self-sustaining. Balancing the needs of the community against the monies available may require shifting the burden between businesses and customers.



North end