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MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY - BOZEMAN
PUBLIC LANDS TRANSPORTATION FELLOWS PRESENTATION
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>> Thank you everyone for joining us for today's webinar. This will be presented by Amanda Daisey, Naomi Fireman. It is the wrap-up for Naomi's 2019-2020 public lands transportation fellows program. In just a few webinar logistics for you. The duration is going to be one hour. This webinar is being recorded and will be archived on our website for quality of this recording the mics have been muted during this presentation. It should be posted on the public lands transportation fellows website within about a week. If you are listening on your phone, we would ask you to mute your computers otherwise you may hear some feedback. Also if you are only listening on your computer and you have any audio issues, we would ask you to dial in by phone. The phone number can be found in the top left hand corner of your screen. You will have a few graphics in today's presentation. So if it would be helpful to you, you can maximize the presentation itself. You can do so by clicking the four arrows that press outward on the top right-hand corner of your screen and that will make the PowerPoint full screen and get rid of the extraneous information along the outside. At the end of today's presentation, there will also be time for question and answers. Because everyone is muted, you may utilize the chat pod on the left side of your screen. If you have any questions there, I will read them out to our presenters at the very end of today's presentation.

For today's presenters, as I mentioned before, we have Amanda Daisey and Naomi Fireman. Amanda is the project leader for the Potomac river -- where she oversees the management of three national wildlife refuges. She works for the U.S. fish and wildlife service

for 19 years at five different stations including -- McKay national wildlife refuges in North Carolina. Refuge in Massachusetts. And a national wildlife refuge in Virginia. She has a refuge in wildlife science in Virginia Tech and masters of natural resources from the University of Maryland eastern shore. And I am going to let Naomi introduce herself a little bit later as she does her presentation. The goal of today's webinar is to document and archive the work completed by the public lands transportation fellow at the Potomac national wildlife refuge complex from 2019-2020 including her lessons learned and tips and tricks for applying to other wildlife units. Our audience for today's webinar we have two specific audiences today. We hope those that are joining us. We are trying to educate units, regions and headquarter staff from public lands agencies on what a fellow in the program can accomplish. We may also have some of the future in here as well although again this will be archived and posted on our website for the future. And the intention for that is for it to be used in training for future classes of public lands transportation fellows. And also used in our orientation. However, as I mentioned, I do believe we may have some of the potential fellows for next year's class joining us today as well.

Naomi's agenda for her presentation today is to have an introduction by Amanda. Then talk about her presenter profile. To talk about our foundational documents, her project list. Some of those projects in detail and lessons learned. General suggestions to have for other fellows and acknowledgments and then we will have a question-and-answer session as I mentioned earlier.

At this point in time I am going to turn the presentation over to Amanda and Amanda, if you want to do a quick mic check to make sure we can hear you.

>> Okay, can you hear me?

>> Perfect. Thank you.

>> All right. Okay. Thanks. It's good to see you. A few familiar names on the list today. I'm really excited for today's presentation and thank you to everyone for listening in. I'm going to briefly provide some context and background information about our refuge complex before I turn over the presentation to Naomi.

Potomac river national complex is comprised of three national wildlife refuges and offset headquarters office located 20 miles south of Washington, D.C.

All of the refuges are situated adjacent to each other along the Virginia side of the Potomac River. Our first refuge the Mason Neck is dedicated to the protection of the bald eagle. Today over 2700 acres of refuge offer biking, hiking and auto route viewing opportunities to visitors. Feather stone was established in '79 to preserve acres of wild woods and wetlands which were disappearing within our region. The area situated adjacent to an active railroad for access to the refuge is limited to non-motorized boats. This fall a multi-use trail will be constructed allowing visitors safe access to. The third refuge Occoquan Bay is the future home -- Occoquan Bay which will have staff offices and visitor contact area. The one square myelocyte was a U.S. army radio transmission station. Later the base's mission shifted to electromagnetic pulse testing and other top research. The research facility closed and the property was conveyed to the national wildlife refuge system in '98 for its particular value in carrying out the national migratory bird program. The four miles of army administrative roads were then converted into hiking, biking and auto routes.

Now that I given you a quick synopsis of our refuges I will step back a time for a minute or two and tell you how our refuge complex -- concept came about. The Potomac require complex is part of a land -- river complex was conceived by a local environmental group and northern Virginia citizens in the 60s and 70s. The group aimed to conserve river front habitat along the Potomac. I found a copy of their original concept plan in our old dusty historic files a couple of years ago. In the plan is a map with hand drawn sketches and highlights of areas that the group thought was important to preserve for wildlife and recreation. When looking at a map today of northern Virginia, and the Potomac and Occoquan, the group achieved a large portion of their goal. Many of the sites highlighted are in preservation status and now form a series of park and recreational areas along the Potomac and Occoquan Rivers. Since the creation of the parks and refuges in the 60s and 70s, the greater D.C. metro area has expanded farther south. With new neighborhoods also come along the associated accoutrements such as community and business centers so the areas between and around the aforementioned have been completely developed. Fast forward to now, the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area has more than 6 million people making it the sixth largest metropolitan area in the country. And it's still growing. Prince William County alone has averaged 10,000 new residents annually over the past decade. Most of these new residents are relocating to the I95 corridor which is at the doorstep of our refuges. The Potomac river staff has always been aware that complex's the nation's capital

could provide us with a unique opportunity to offer a place to engage in wildlife environmental activities for the nearby urban areas. And we have seen the need to remove barriers and improve access to our ever growing population around the refuges and to create alternative connections between our neighboring public natural resource sites. Like other refuges with small staff that can be difficult to jump start and maintain new projects and formal partnerships when the day to day duties of managing trails, roads, facilities and habitats are always calling loudly.

Luckily Occoquan Bay refuge was born to participate in the U.S. fish and wildlife service urban transportation connection study. One of the project contractors organized the two day stakeholder meeting and a site visit to Occoquan Bay. And just like our past, we still have the large contingency within our local communities interested in accessing and connecting to our refuges. Using feedback gathered from the site visits, stakeholder input and refuge staff insight, they organized a list of recommended access and transportation projects. This study helped by giving the refuge staff a focus list of projects to pursue that were wanted and needed by our community. But we still needed a -- to get the ball rolling and we were fortunate enough to be selected to join the public lands transportation program and a host of fellow at our nation. Naomi Fireman was selected to fill our fellowship position. Naomi brought well needed positivity and enthusiasm to the job. The amount of work that Naomi has put in to realizing our refuge projects has been incredible to watch. I have to say, Naomi, I enjoyed watching your professional confidence grow and can't thank you enough for helping us for realizing our vision. This program has change and you changed the way I've looked at my surroundings. I'm a former wildlife biologist and definitely a bird nerd, and now I get excited and a little geeked out about transportation modes and pavement markings. So you really have changed I think the way I look at connecting refuges to our community.

I don't want to steal any of Naomi's thunder so I will turn over the presentation to her so she can speak about our project and her accomplishment. Thank you.

>> Thank you so much, Amanda. Can everyone hear me?

>> Yup, you sound great.

>> Awesome. Good morning, everybody. Thank you for listening in today. So, yeah, I will be talking about my time as a fellow at the Potomac river national wildlife refuge this year and some of the

projects I completed and mainly the lessons I learned from those projects. So here is a little bit about me. I started back in July at Potomac and it was just such an amazing kind of first entry way into the world of jobs. I'm going to say that. I was born in Chicago. My educational background is that I went to Oberlin College and got majors in biology and environmental studies with a concentration in urban sustainability. And my specific academic focus are sustainable urban planning, climate change mitigation and ecology. So this combination of things really led me to wanting to work for fish and wildlife.

Then a fun fact about me is that I actually conducted my honors thesis on hybrid hazelnut as a sustainable food crop for the Mid West.

So I'm going to jump right in. When I started in July, I was mostly in the research and information gathering phase. So I think that fellows should spend the first one to two months reviewing the refuge documents that they have. The comprehensive conservation plan documents in the p-drive and other plans that the refuge might have. Exploring the area. Getting to know their co-workers and becoming familiar with the county or city's planning documents. So like Amanda mentioned, I was lucky enough to have refuge access plan to work from. It supplied me with ideas for partnership opportunities and transportation projects that would improve access to Occoquan Bay. And then I got to work with the other refuges as well. You can see that here in these two figures. If I call Occoquan Bay O.B., you know what that is. We call it O.B.

The refuge access plan provided an analysis of local demographics which was a helpful start to understanding access needs in the area. They chose five socioeconomic indicators that when aggregated could identify under-served communities and bettering need access to the refuge. A population is underserved when they have historically and traditionally lacked access to federal lands. So one of my projects ended up being updating these maps with more current data because the data comes from 2010, 2014, American community survey. And so I didn't need index analysis for all three of the refuges and I will explain this more in-depth later in the project section.

Another helpful document that guided my projects especially at O.B. was Prince William county's north Woodbridge small area plan. The plan lays out a long range vision for north wood bridge and addresses different things like land use, mobility, green infrastructure, cultural resources and economic development. Along

public participation processes conducted and they expect this document to guide projects into the future for at least the next ten years. So many cities and counties will have similar long range plans like this. And fellows should look into those right off the bat.

So this plan outlines existing infrastructure as you can see here. On the left is existing bicycle network and on the right is the existing transit network. Then it goes into planned infrastructure as you can see here. These are the future plans for the same. And there are a lot of great maps in the plan and along with exploring the area, there really helped me to understand the context that O.B. is in in terms of zoning and transportation. And I also kind of understood better the hopes and dreams of Prince William county residents for what they want the area to look like in the future.

So here is a list of projects that I worked on this year. I know it's a lot and you don't need to read all of them. I will go over them in detail soon. Don't worry. This is really a good year for the Potomac river national wildlife refuge complex to bring on a fellow because many of the projects were contingent on or supported by different construction projects that were already up and running. Like the new multi-purpose building that's being built on O.B. and also the Potomac heritage national scenic trail which is a regional trail is that coming through the area and going to be adjacent to the section is being built right now adjacent to O.B. and another one will be adjacent to feather stone.

So for many of these projects I created a foundation and plan for the refuge so they can work from those as these other construction projects get built and they can further these after I'm gone. And then another reason the timing was great was because the Virginia flap cycle opens on July 1 of this year. Flap is the federal lands access program. And I was able to get Fairfax county set up with a great trail project application that we will submit in July.

For the rest of the presentation, I'm going to talk about some of these projects more in-depth, and present some lessons that future fellows can take away from my experiences. I'm going to talk about bike racks first. I planned two phases of bike racks replacement for the refuge. I did this because some sites were ready for bike racks immediately and some sites were not so ready yet as they depended on other projects to be completed. So right before the COVID outbreak, we were able to install the first rack on great marsh trail and take out the old one at wood marsh. You can see pictures here of us doing that. So I learned a lot of practical lessons like how to mix cement,

how to dig -- cement. And even how to drive a loader truck -- I'm just kidding. I didn't drive the truck, but it was a great day out in the field with the volunteers and awesome to see them using this equipment and being able to work together.

So another thing I learned was a bike rack replacement like this with the bright color that really contrasts with the greens and browns of the area can spruce up a trail head. Especially because it shows off our blue goose logo which is great branding. And now more people can lock their bikes safely to the rack and be able to walk on this trail while leaving their bikes behind.

The next project I will talk about is the needs index map. And so this is what I mentioned earlier that I created based on the demographic section and the refuge access of the refuge access plan and also some previous fellows that did this before. So one thing I learned was that even though demographics maps are in the refuge access plan, I want to recommend that every fellow take the time to explore their own census data from the neighborhood surrounding their refuges. I think there is a big difference between looking at a static map that somebody else has made and digging into the data yourself to explore patterns and spatial relationships. The first map I made looked nothing like this one, but I came back to them again and again over the course of the year and really figured out how to display them in the user friendly way possible. And it gave me good practice with GIS as well. The reason this map is useful is because it re-enforces the fact that off feather stone have high need communities right nearby. I think this will be especially useful when feather stone opens up and we can officially focus the outreach. Then it can be used as a guide when making decisions when involving limited resources and it can be used in conjunction with the transportation outreach plan that I created to identify preferred locations for outreach projects.

So I chose these five indicators on the right based on the refuge access plan. However, other fellows in the past have chosen their set of indicators by having discussions with refuge leadership and choosing from a long list of indicators with them. I want to make sure that we remember that making maps and understanding demographics are definitely important, but they are only a small part of getting to know your surrounding community. They do not replace reaching out to civic associations, attending county meetings and generally engaging with local community members and visitors and stakeholders. So I want us to keep that in mind.

And then on this scale, I did a census tract scale here because some of the data was not available on block group level. I recommend that fellows kind of figure out whether or not they want to use census tract or block group because one can be more useful based on the scale of their refuges. I think if I could find block group data, I would want to get more detailed with this analysis.

So lastly, I combined the five indicators in a way that was different from previous fellows using different specifics. I'm not going to go into that now. It's all written in my final report if you would like to see that.

So one of the biggest projects I worked on with the refuge was to create a vision for the entrance of O.B. And to begin implementing it. So the visualization you see here are just a small part of a larger document containing our vision statement, the criteria and design elements. So the process I think was give and take between Amanda and I. She came up with the broader concept of improving the entrance and we started to run with that together. So for awhile we bounced ideas off of each other and always keeping in mind the current project so we could tap into. And then the ideas coalesced into a -- coalesced with a vision that we shared with the staff and got feedback on.

An important lesson from this project is that I thinking about in this role brought out my creative thinking and process, but before that could happen it was crucial to get to know the staff and refuge dynamics so I could understand their wants and needs and begin collaborating with them. We fellows come to the refuge from outside and of course we bring great knowledge and ideas and creativity, but the people who really know the refuge best is the staff. That's why it's really important for -- to spend time with your refuge staff, get to know them, explore what their roles are out in the field and in the office and understand their ideas for improving the refuge. I think this will not only help you develop and move projects forward, but it will establish a happy and healthy working environment for you. And maybe even make you some new friends.

On the more technical side of this, if you are going to be purchasing items for your refuge like I did for this project like I purchased a bike fixing station, bike racks, and more, it's really important to take time to go over the purchasing procedures with your manager and admin staff in the beginning. I learned about the numbers, tax exemption forms, tax forms and purchase requests and all of that and this caused minor complications that I could have avoided. I think it just would have saved me time to sit down and watched a

webinar or two if they exist or got an lesson from Stacy our admin staff.

So next this project is actually one that grew out of the previous one. This is the urban wildlife refuge DecoMark project. It started as part of our branding effort. We were hoping to place pavement markings of the urban wildlife refuge and Potomac heritage logos near the refuge entrance or near our new multi-purpose building. During my research I found out about DecoMark which are the surface applied pre-formed thermal plastic custom logos instead of buying one for our refuge, it seemed like a better idea to purchase multiple because the price drastically decreases after five purchases of the same logo. With advice from my TLTF monthly call and Amanda, I reached out to headquarters and offered to put my idea in the visitor services newsletter and invited me to speak on a national call to garner interest. So far six refuges are excited to order these logos and more may join in later.

An important lesson to come from this is this project is not specifically on my scope of work, but it developed because of a particular refuge desire and also a gap in branding. So I had multiple projects like this including the electric tricycle project I will talk about later. And I think as a fellow it's important to stick to your scope of work but know that it is a live document. So your projects may change and shift and produce other projects. And I think there is a fine balance to strike between being open to new ideas and also fill the creak on the other side. To retain this balance, I think it's important to keep your scope at the forefront of your mind and stay in regular communication with your mentor and your PLTF team.

To prepare the refuge for the new bike hike infrastructure that is Potomac heritage national trail. I documented the existing signage on all of the areas that would be effected and suggested new signage. I think that clear signage will be important at the refuge entrances where allowable visitor activities are different, for example, dog walking will be allowed on the Potomac heritage national trail but not in the refuge. Here you can see that if you click on one of the pins, it will give you a sign type and image. Were of were of so lessons I learned are that fellows should document everything they do for the refuge. This gives you something to work off of even if the needs change in the future. They have something that they can move forward with. And documentation can come in many forms. Reports and technical are great and sometimes they need to be accompanied by different ways of displaying information. For example, the plan here has a lot of spatial information and so that

made the most sense to me to display it in map form. And there are other creative methods of displaying information that include videos, applications, websites, rendering. I think fellows can be creative with that.

And then finally when working on any kind of signage for or around a national wildlife refuge, I definitely would consult the fish and wildlife sign handbook that came out last year and the guidelines. I also think if you are going to go out and analyze a space for signage, to bring a couple of people with you to bring different perspectives on that space.

So this is the electric trike project, which I talked about earlier. This is another project borne out of another particular situation and set of opportunities. Started with another idea from Amanda because she is full of ideas, and was bolstered by the secretary of order of e-vites that came out in August of last year. I with as in the midst of doing some research and trying to figure out what a fleet of etrikes for our staff, interns and volunteers when we fellows traveled to Montana for the mid-year meeting. 8840 is named something else, but it's the transportation research board committee on transportation needs of national parks and public lands. So during the meeting, E-bikes and the secretary order came up frequently and it was decided to be a good top tock create a session around during TRB's annual meeting in 2020. That's how I came to be standing up at the podium presenting on the possibility of using E-bikes or trikes as a mode of transportation for staff on national wildlife refuges.

Some lessons that I learned were that if the project were on a larger scale I think a pilot study would be a great way to figure out the logistics of a program like this and how to staff or feeling about the mode of transport. I think different kinds of E-bikes and trikes could be tested out and report backs from the staff could inform the larger purchasing of the fleet. Since our refuge is on the smaller side we are going to do a trial day where staff could ride around on the refuge and report back. And that's been postponed for now. And another thing is that research and planning on a topic like this is highly transferable to other national wildlife refuges and even other agencies. So I shared my work at TRB but there are other opportunities to write papers and deliver relevant information to units at many different scales. So I recommend that if you are working on a project that could be innovative and useful to other refuges or agencies, it's important to put that information out there in some way for interested folks to access.

So one project I have been working on since the very beginning is helping Fairfax county apply for federal lands access program funding for the southern segment of the Mason Neck Trail that you can see on this map. Citizens groups, trail advocates and the county have been working to get this trail completed for over 30 years. The funding has never come through for the northern or southern segments. This is a really big lesson in the importance of working with partners and stakeholders. I coordinated with fish and wildlife, Fairfax, V-dot and eastern federal lands to figure out what kind of project we would like to pursue and write the application. I also connected with a local biking advocacy group to garnish support from them. And I think some of the most important parts a fellow can play are as coordinator between stakeholders and as an aide in grant and application writing. Many times these agencies want to pursue certain projects but they don't have the capacity to do it all. The coordination, the writing and everything like that to get funding.

It's important for the FLAP specifically I would recommend to definitely get to know the program well and don't be afraid to consult the experts at HQ. I learned a lot by asking questions of Mason deyounger and reading successful applications from the past. And like I said before, we will be applying to -- at the beginning of July or whenever we can when those July to October.

Then another lesson is how important it is to get to know your local transportation network by using it. To better understand the state of the Mason Neck Trail and gaps and signage and different connections, Phil, my mentor and I biked it fully and stopped to observe and take notes. Looking back, I think I should have done this with omni ride, the local bus service in Prince William county to directly experience how long it would take to get to OB on public transit or between the refuges.

Now I'm going to talk about projects that had a heavier focus on community outreach and relationship building. So along with attending various civic association meetings, I completed a lot of planning and set up for a future community outreach. Core Rina our visitor services specialist and I sought through ways to other communities as they are the closest -- they are closest in proximity and show up as high need on the needs index. One of our methods was creating the refuge specific postcard that can be used to handwrite invitations to specific households to visit the refuge or let them know about specific events. You can see the evolution of the post card here. We went from a fox to a turkey and at one point there was a coyote in there. But we stuck with the turkey in the end because

it's very representative of O.B.

I didn't have experience with the O.B. PhotoShop before this, I learned over time with the help of my co-workers and on-line tutorials, so I want to make sure fellows are really confident in their ability to learn a new skill and stick with it because it's possible.

So in addition, I developed a plan modeled after the refuge access plan that outlines a strategy for letting urban audiences know how to access the refuge using existing and future planned infrastructure. Like a bus stop bike lane or regional trail system. I included ideas that Amanda, Corona and I came up with and sorted them into first priority, second priority and easy wins. An example of a first priority project was to make sure to include transportation access information on our new kiosks. Especially the new building and at the entrance of O.B. And an example of the second priority project was partnering with the state park and gunsten hall to replace the four panel display that is in disrepair. And include transportation information as well. And an easy win example was posting transportation access information on the refuge website. So that was how it was laid out.

A lesson that I learned when creating a plan like this is it's important that the refuge staff are excited about the potential projects and that they have buy-in and actually help to think of them. You know, I know that there is someone who is willing to work on implementing this plan when I'm gone. That's really important. I think that the it will really help guide the transportation outreach projects when I'm not able to work on them any more.

And then some other community outreach and relationship building I did for the refuge was with PRTC. The local transit agency. And the greater Prince William Trail coalition. With PRTC we collaborated the possibility of extending a bus route to or near the refuge that would benefit adjacent communities. So we talked with them about different ways to get county buy-in for a bike sharing north Woodbridge as well. We talked about a lot of different modes with them and we explored different possibilities for transportation, but we couldn't proceed passed the conversation phase because of COVID. So I'm going to be looking for creative ways to connect with them virtually if we cannot meet in person for an extended amount of time.

And then for the greater Prince William Trail coalition, I helped to represent the refuge at meetings and I joined the marketing and communications working group with Corina to help with -- Corina

to help with social media and outreach. And I did a virtual project at the regional office where I connected with the bay circuit trail alliance and the park river national wildlife refuge in Massachusetts to write a possibility of the possibility of creating a official terminus at the park river visitor center and virtually all of these partners were able to connect and give their support for this win-win solution. And I was able to be the intermediary there.

So some lessons I learned from these projects are that it's important to stay up to date with community partners and funding opportunities. So a way to do this is to subscribe to regional and local news feeds, county and non-profit newsletters, Facebook pages of different civic associations and local politicians. Keep up with the state transportation agency and other transportation or planning related authorities and commissions. And then when attending or leading stakeholder meetings, remember to bring your personality and take the initiative to get to know people. And really ask them about themselves and why they do the work. In addition, you can ask leaders how you can assist them with the projects or initiatives they are working on because you are there to help the refuge and also the partners of the refuge. You can be a really big asset and resource for them.

So some general suggestions I have. You know, these are all things -- this is not a comprehensive list because there are so many things that I learned over this time that I wanted to write down some just to get them out there. And I'm always going -- I'm here to talk to future fellows, but I will present that later. Some general suggestions are to meet regularly with refuge leadership and integrate with the refuge family. You know, this is really an amazing experience and a big part of that is because the refuge staff welcomed me into their family to do the work, and were really inclusive and embraced me as one of their own. And then definitely talk to many local meetings and events as possible related to trails, parks, transportation, planning and all of that. But also show up to community meetings even if they are not related to those things because just showing up is sometimes the most important thing for community outreach. And then don't forget to take a lot of pictures because you are going to be scouring your different resources to get pictures at the end so take a lot. And don't be afraid to follow-up on e-mail. People can take some time to get back to you, just because they are busy and I found that people really appreciate when you follow-up with them. And then make sure to build collaborative relationships with your fellow fellows and your mentor and the PLTF team. They are a big resource and they are going through a lot of the same things you

are and can really broaden your perspective on projects or different things you are working on.

And then participate in conservation related or other refuge projects. I got to participate in two different -- two or more? There were a lot -- I did a lot of deer hunts with the refuge and it was fun and I never thought that I would get to take a deer jaw out of a deer but I did and it was great. Look into things that you can do to help the refuge that -- you can do to help the refuge. Take time to explore and research different roles in fish and wildlife and other parts of the Federal Government. And definitely ask for help because you don't need to be afraid to ask for help. People are there for you and they have a lot of great information and they want to help you.

Going back to the other point, you know, taking the time to explore the roles. I think a big part of this fellowship is really about getting to know the Federal Government and seeing if you can see yourself working longer term for them. And how are you going to do that if you don't know what positions even exist out there? So it's a great time to talk to different people and get to know the structures of the agency.

So I want to take the time to thank a bunch of people. The whole refuge staff, Amanda, Carina, Chris, Chuck, Stacy, Gabby and Logan who were amazing to work with this year. Phil Shapiro, my mentor, Jaime Sullivan and all of the staff at WTI. It was great to have everybody there supporting me and the rest of the fellows. And Phil helped me figure out a lot of stuff and was a really good person to bounce ideas off of. And I want to thank my fellow fellows, Vince and Nate for hanging out and being there to talk to and generally just being good people. Especially Vince has been helping me with my transition to headquarters. So I have been appreciative of that since he was working there for a couple of months. Then I want to thank the transportation team at headquarters and the regional transportation coordinators, especially Carl. Legacy of region 5. Was always fun to talk to and was great to work with on projects. And also Meredith and Lydia because they have been helping me with my transition to HQ as well.

And then all of my partners at Prince William and Fairfax, my fellow land managers over on Mason Neck and throughout Prince William county and the local advocacy groups we worked with and folks on the eastern federal lands that helped out with the application we were doing.

If you are curious about what I might be doing at HQ, I want to explain that. I'm going to be advancing to another fellowship after this. I'm going to be working on a national level at HQ with the transportation department and I'm going to be also working a little bit more with Potomac river to finish up the projects and keep it going into this next year. That's why I said I'm able to work a little bit more with transit agency and other groups because I will still be here to dedicate some of my time to them. So I'm really excited to do all of this and I'm really excited to get to know fish and wildlife a little bit more because it's a great agency and I think that I could really find my place here somewhere inside of the Federal Government. I really want to explore. So some of the projects at HQ I'm doing helping with the federal lands access program, continuing Vince's work of tracking urban connection studies and accomplishments. The accomplishments. And also piloting potentially the urban connection on-line template. That's coming out. Helping push forward a kayak share. Rollout of partnership with Lyft. There is a lot of different things I could be doing next year and they are all very exciting to me. Yes, stay tuned for another webinar next year.

And then here are some resources that I found very useful during the year. If you want to look at those. Thank you so much.

>> Thank you very much, Naomi. Now we will open it up to questions. If you do have questions again because you are muted if you wouldn't mind using that chat pod on the left-hand side. And to get us started Naomi, I do have a question for you as well. Typically our public lands fellows have had a Masters Degree coming into this program and you mentioned that you had a bachelors. And very often their backgrounds are either in engineering or planning and yours was in environmental and biology. I wondered if you could share with us do you feel like that was a detriment to you? Do you feel like it was useful to you? How would you say that having a different background from many of our previous fellows has affected you in this program?

>> It's a really good question. I think that coming from a liberal arts college, you know, a lot of times liberal arts gets flak from people, but for me it was so much more than I ever thought an education could be for a bachelors because doing environmental studies it was very interdisciplinary and the sort of the program really focused on getting us to write well and be able to think critically and problem solve and honestly -- and really just learn new skills on our own. Really those three things were super helpful in this job and I felt like not having that specific transportation experience wasn't a

problem because there were all of these great people to reach out to if I needed help with the specific detailed things. I could really just teach myself that I needed to know that I learned ARCGIS and PhotoShop and it was frustrating because I didn't know what I was doing at first, but you have to keep pushing through. I think that -- and my experience with writing long reports and doing an honors thesis really helped out with the writing and communication aspect of this. And then just having a problem solving brain on all the time was definitely important and I think just the ability to connect with the refuge staff and problem solve with them was just the most important thing. I feel like the people who are passionate about this particular kind of job and working for the Federal Government, fish and wildlife should just really don't be scared to apply for things that might not seem like they are totally in your range, but you know you can do a good job on.

>> Thank you, that was an excellent answer. And I totally would echo everything you said. I am so glad we looked passed some of the things we typically would have looked at for the applicants and you have done a phenomenal job and I can't thank you enough for everything you have done and it opened our eyes from the perspective of the program itself as to how we look at applicants in the future and you have done phenomenal.

So we have had a few other questions come in for you so I'm going to read these off for you one at a time. The first one is from Ben and it says: For the needs index map did you weigh the indicators equally or did you weigh some indicators more than others? If you considered weighing these indicators, why or why not did you do this?

>> That's a great question. So I looked into potentially weighing the indicators differently, but I decided that for now since this is a sort of ongoing process and then at the last minute I decided to do the statistics a different way, I think I can leave that up to someone else in the future so now that they have a baseline for the indicators being weighed equally, you know, someone goes back in to the data they can decide which indicators they see as needing to be weighed more. I think that is an interesting question and I wanted to kind of get other people's stakes who have done this kind of thing before because other fellows in the past had not really weighed their indicators either. So, yeah, I wanted to get some people's specific advice on that. I think the refuge staff will probably know what indicators are most important to look at and weigh more heavily. That's a great question.

>> Our next question for you comes from Andrea, congratulations Naomi on a wonderful presentation. I appreciated your attention to how to access the site via sustainable transportation. Did you have any conversations about checking from the nearby end of the mountain Vernon trail. I tried this once on a bike and it was stressful.

>> Oh, man, yeah. I can imagine. I didn't look into the Mount Vernon trail specifically, but I did look into sort of the Fairfax county's bike trail plan and they have a lot of things going on that they are trying to connect and fill in the gaps. Right now it seems like because of COVID things are up in the air with funding, even funding with the segment that I was working on. So I'm a little bit worried about how trails are going to be funded into this next year in this economic downturn that we have. I think that it's a really good idea to look into that and I'm hoping that we can utilize our funds and other federal grants and just other grants in general to try to get these trail projects off the ground.

>> Our next one was a comment for you as opposed to a question. It's from Sharon. She says this is an excellent presentation. You did an incredible job during your fellowship and I'm very impressed with the work you completed.

>> Oh, thank you, Sharon.

>> We have another one from Meredith. She said: Naomi, excellent job on your presentation. I'm from the north Woodridge area and know first hand the access limitations and demographics of this region. Of the options outlined in the access plan, which do you think would be most effective in improving access and how can the refuge increase understanding of how to recreate responsibly so traditional contacts leave no trace, not the new COVID context, to the local population who do not have English as a primary language and may not be knowledgeable in low impact use of public lands?

>> Okay, yeah. I'm going to answer the first part of that question and then Jaime I may ask you to read the second half for me. The first half I think out of the refuge access plan there was a lot to do with expanding and sexting the trails. There is also other ones that people thought of like from the wood burning ones and other trail connections so I think that is a great start for north Woodbridge and could lead to other projects like a potential bike share, being used and having a lot of usage. And then the other projects were these pedestrian improvement projects that were near the intersection that was sort of like -- zero .8 miles. The station right there and the

bus stop and there were some recommendations in there of how to make that a safer intersection for pedestrians. And kind of figured out there is a lot of route one construction happening on that road and they are planning to improve pedestrian situation there. So that's good. But along with that we have to be talking to Prince William county about fulfilling their small area plan which completes the sidewalks on either side of the road going to the refuge and also put in some bike infrastructure because those are really important complete streets elements that we need there. And then Jaime, could you read the second half of the question again.

>> Absolutely. It was how can the refuge increase understanding of how to recreate responsibly to the -- recreate responsibly to the local population without English as a primary language and not knowledgeable of the low impact use of public lands and when we talk about recreate responsibly she is meaning traditional context of leave no trace and not the new COVID context.

>> Yeah, totally. That's a great question, too. I think that this direct -- because in our case we have a lot of people who live in the surrounding communities that are pretty close to the refuge, walking distance. And I didn't see a lot of those people when I went to the civic association meetings. I mostly saw the classics of the association person, older, maybe retired, has a little more time on their hands and maybe it was able to dedicate more time to the cause of being civil servant sort of. But I think that the big question I was asking myself was how do I reach the people who may not speak English who live around the area and who may not be attending their community meetings? And I think maybe the idea of sending out individual post cards to different families that are hand written and specifically communicate different things you could communicate an event or an invitation to come to the refuge or even the leave no trace principles on there, too. And I think having that in Spanish for us but in any language is really important to make sure that they are able to communicate but also let you know that you know that they need something different. And besides that, making sure that all of our new infrastructure like the kiosks and other signage we are putting up is accessible to people who speak Spanish by making sure that we have the translation there and it's big and bold.

>> Thank you very much. And it does not look like at this point we have any other questions. We will give everyone another minute here. If there are any final questions, please direct those in the chat pod in the left-hand side. As the question is coming in, I do want to thank Amanda and Naomi again for the presentation today. You did a

phenomenal job and Naomi we are very excited to have you continue with us for next year as well and see the great work that you are going to continue to do.

>> Thank you. I'm really very excited as well.

>> A reminder, yes, a reminder, there is a question about was there a presentation will be shared. It will be available within a week up on our public lands transportation lands fellows website both the PDF version as well as the streaming link for this to be watched again as well. And then Carl did mention the regional report that you did for the bay circuit trail and is a good set up for the next fellow who will be at the park river national wildlife refuge. Thank you for that too, Naomi.

>> Definitely. That's awesome. I'm very excited to be there as a support system for the incoming fellows and be there to talk and especially because it's sort of a good time to come into a new job. I'm glad to be here for people.

>> All right, thank you again to everyone who joined us today. We do appreciate you taking the time out and one last time thank you, Amanda and Naomi and everyone have a great day.

>> Thank you so much.