



## TRAFFIC IMPACT AND ACCESS ASSESSMENT

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# TRAFFIC IMPACT and ACCESS ASSESSMENT

OYSTER BAR & GRILL  
57 Circuit Avenue, Oak Bluffs

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- The Oyster Bar & Grill is an existing popular restaurant located on Circuit Avenue in Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts.
- The owners of the Oyster Bar & Grill restaurant are seeking to vertically expand their business by two floors, adding space for a function hall (to be rented for special events) and residential space to be dedicated for use by employees.
- The location of the proposed development is within an established business district, and is consistent with regional planning objectives with respect to encouraging business development within the existing town centers, rather than contributing to suburban sprawl.
- The proposed function hall will be used for social gatherings and events, with an occupancy of 250 persons. Another business on the same street, formerly known as the Atlantic Connection, served this type of use until closing and being converted to a game room last year.
- The size of the project site does not allow for dedicated off-street parking. The majority of businesses in downtown Oak Bluffs share public parking spaces, which are regulated and policed by the Town of Oak Bluffs. The Atlantic Connection also did not offer dedicated on-site parking.
- Compared to other Island towns, the Oak Bluffs road network and parking capacity are best suited for absorbing additional development within the traditional village center.
- The close proximity of water-based transportation terminals, public transit, taxi services, overnight lodging and docking of private vessels in the harbor can be expected to contribute to a lesser number of vehicle trips for this land use, as compared to if this development were to be built elsewhere. Awareness of the parking situation in town also will contribute to a higher rate of car-pooling, further reducing the vehicle trip generation.
- In cooperation with on-going efforts in Oak Bluffs, the owners of the Oyster Bar & Grill are developing a mitigation plan to address the issues of traffic impact and parking mitigation.

## **PROJECT BACKGROUND**

This Traffic Impact and Access Assessment has been prepared to support the permitting applications for the Oyster Bar & Grill expansion at 57 Circuit Avenue in Oak Bluffs. The project is currently subject to review by the Martha's Vineyard Commission (MVC) as a Development of Regional Impact (DRI). This assessment has been prepared for the project applicant, Mad Corp., LLC.

The existing Oyster Bar & Grill ("Oyster Bar") restaurant property is located on Assessor Parcel 11-35 in Oak Bluffs. Similar to many of the other properties in the downtown business district, the existing building occupies a large majority of the total lot area. The proposed expansion will be a vertical expansion, adding two floors above the existing single story and a basement.

The proposed second floor, comprising 2,950± square feet, will be used as a function hall. The proposed occupancy for the second floor is 250 persons. An added third floor, comprising 2,880± square feet, will be used for residential use. The project plans also include a roof deck. The existing first floor will continue its long-time use as a restaurant, maintaining an occupancy of 197 persons.

Although the Oyster Bar is an existing commercial use, the additional proposed uses within the building are subject to both regional and local review. The purpose of this document is to provide an assessment of the traffic-related impacts from the new uses, and offer recommendations for appropriate mitigation measures.

The scope of this traffic impact assessment follows the outline agreed upon with the Land Use Planning Committee (LUPC) at a meeting held on December 11, 2006 to outline the upcoming project review. Following the standard guidelines, the surrounding area and the existing traffic generation from the site have been described in this assessment, and the new trip generation of the proposed additions have been estimated.

Due to the existing conditions of the downtown district, the proposal does not call for an on-site parking lot. Without a "single-point source" for vehicle trips, the dynamic of the transportation to and from the site will be different from typical developments in suburban settings. Trips that are made by private vehicle may be dispersed over a large area of shared public parking. Given

that dedicated on-site parking cannot be offered by the business, a larger portion of trips can be expected to be made via alternative modes to the automobile. This business decision takes advantage of its prime location within the business district. The advantageous characteristics that exist include a close proximity to public transit and water-based transportation services, availability of taxi services to the downtown area, and numerous places of lodging within a reasonable walking distance.

Taking the downtown location into consideration, a standard traffic distribution and level of service analysis was not performed. Specific roadway intersections were not analyzed, as would be done in a typical traffic impact assessment. Downtown traffic conditions during peak hours of the peak season are assumed to not exhibit free-flow conditions, which is generally acceptable and even desirable, to a certain extent, within a vibrant downtown district. The liveliness of Circuit Avenue is related to accessibility and pedestrian flows much more than vehicle speed and efficiency.

To compensate for the lack of a quantitative level of service analysis to compare existing and proposed conditions, other qualitative arguments have been employed to demonstrate that the project, as proposed, offers more overall benefits than detriments to the Town of Oak Bluffs as a whole. Further, this assessment demonstrates how this proposed project complies with key elements of the current Regional Transportation Plan.

In the end, the central issue of the Oyster Bar development traffic review will likely be that of vehicle parking. To address this issue, this assessment suggests transportation management strategies for the Oyster Bar restaurant, function hall and residences.



*Angled parking stalls on  
Circuit Avenue, Oak Bluffs.*



Project locus shown on U.S.G.S. quadrangle map of Martha's Vineyard.

## **SURROUNDING AREA**

The Oak Bluffs Business District is centered on Circuit Avenue. The Oyster Bar is located at the “end” of Circuit Avenue, where the one-way traffic flow on Circuit Avenue ends. The proposed three-story Oyster Bar is intended to create a “book-end” for Circuit Avenue, generally considered the social centerpiece street in Oak Bluffs.

A variety of businesses, both year-round and seasonal, occupy the Oak Bluffs Business District along Circuit Avenue. The seasonal businesses primarily cater to day-tripping tourists and seasonal visitors, but an association of year-round businesses help sustain a level of activity throughout the year.

Circuit Avenue (along with a few nearby streets that make up what is generally considered the downtown area) hosts nearly all of the mainstays one would expect to find in a small New England town. A resident living on or near Circuit Avenue would be within comfortable walking distance (one quarter mile or less) of a post office, grocery store, hardware store, general stores,

clothing and jewelry stores, package stores, movie theater (seasonal), restaurants, bars and coffee shops.

What is missing? The most notable type of business missing from downtown Oak Bluffs is a pharmacy. However, now that the building space formerly used for the Atlantic Connection nightclub has been converted for use as a game room, the downtown area also lacks a space well suited to social gatherings and functions of more than a hundred people. In the recent past, the Atlantic Connection hosted such events as the popular Chili Fest and the award ceremony for the Martha's Vineyard Striped Bass & Bluefish Derby.

The town's post office is located off a short pedestrian mall between Circuit and Kennebec Avenues. Many towns are tempted to move high traffic generators like the post office out of the downtown area, but the Oak Bluffs Post Office has remained in the center of town, serving as an informal meeting place of sorts for year-round residents. In the context of this assessment, it is noteworthy that this community centered land use exists without a dedicated parking lot.

The advantages of trip-chaining, the technical term for a person making several stops around town before returning home, is obvious in downtown Oak Bluffs. In areas off-Island that have succumbed to "suburban sprawl", trip chaining typically involves driving from one parking lot to the next for each trip destination. Along Circuit Avenue, businesses are located close enough together that the trips between destinations are typically made on foot. The business district is closely surrounded by residential areas, from which undoubtedly the residents are able to make numerous trips entirely as pedestrians, without needing to use an automobile at all.

It is very much conceivable that users of the function hall will also engage in the trip-chaining as pedestrians. Event-goers to the Oyster Bar will likely have other associated trip destinations, which can be made most conveniently on foot – trips to the card shop, clothing stores, coffee shops, bars and other restaurants.



*Aerial view of Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts.*

## **LOCAL ROAD NETWORK**

Although a quantitative analysis of the local road network was not performed as part of this traffic impact assessment, an overview of the existing traffic volumes can be helpful for generally understanding the existing demands on the transportation infrastructure and how well the existing infrastructure meets the travel demand.

Traffic data is available for the most heavily used roadways that a traveler bound for the Oyster Bar would travel over, regardless of modal choice. From Tisbury (Vineyard Haven), one would most likely travel via New York Avenue, which becomes Lake Avenue along the Oak Bluffs harbor front and leads to the beginning of Circuit Avenue. Traffic data recorded regularly on this roadway mirrors the ebb and flow of activity on the Vineyard over the course of a year. During the peak season, New York Avenue experiences an average daily traffic (ADT) of approximately



12,000 vehicles. While this road is relatively well-traveled, it is far from being one of the Island's heaviest traveled roads, and has sufficient excess capacity for future demand. Transportation improvement funds have been programmed and design efforts are currently underway to resurface New York Avenue and improve pedestrian accommodations.

From the other down-Island town of Edgartown, the direct approach to the Oak Bluffs business district is via Beach Road and Sea View Avenue. Like New York Avenue, this road is under the jurisdiction of the Massachusetts Highway Department (MHD) and is also well-traveled. In late June 2005, traffic counters on Sea View Avenue recorded an ADT of about 7,500 vehicles (total, both directions). The peak season volumes, which typically occur in August, can be expected to be approximately 15% higher.

Parallel parking along the eastern side of Sea View Avenue on the approach to Oak Bluffs center serves both the adjacent beaches and provides valuable fringe parking for the business and dense residential district.

From the southern section of Oak Bluffs, major approaches to the Oyster Bar and other downtown businesses include Wing Road, Circuit Avenue and Dukes County Avenue. These roads are narrower and carry only a fraction of the traffic carried by the busier inter-town roads, and generally operate well within travel demand capacity throughout the year.

The key locations for transportation planning concern are usually intersections where traffic congestion can occur. Traffic congestion in downtown Oak Bluffs has been associated with peak periods of summer days, with Steamship Authority ferry arrival and departures, and special events (such as the fireworks show held in August). Despite the periodic contribution of arriving vehicles via ferry, traffic congestion associated with these arrivals tends to dissipate rather quickly.

Planned improvements for the future are aimed at better management of vehicles in the vicinity of the SSA Terminal, and creating safer areas for pedestrians.



*Downtown Oak Bluffs business district, centered on Oyster Bar & Grill.*

In the context of an assessment for the proposed Oyster Bar development, the availability of public parking is more relevant than the available capacity of adjacent roadways, which is readily apparent. In Oak Bluffs, a wide variety of businesses share public parking, with different uses alternating demand depending on the time of day. A certain portion of available parking is privately controlled.

The table on the following page summarizes available public parking in the Oak Bluffs downtown area. This list is not exhaustive and includes several estimates (this assessment was prepared during the off-season and most of the spaces were vacant). The intent of presenting this information is simply to show that a great deal of public parking does exist in town. Provisions for parking have been updated in recent years, striving to meet peak demand by creating additional spaces (converting parallel parking stalls to angled stalls) and posting new regulations. Beyond the peak season months, parking demand is clearly far less than available capacity.

**Public Parking Spaces – Downtown Oak Bluffs**

<u>Location</u>	<u>Spaces</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Posted Regulations</u>
Circuit Avenue	65 (+3 hcp)	Angled	9 am – 6 pm: 1 hour 2 am – 6 am: no parking
Kennebec Avenue	19	Parallel	9 am – 6 pm: 1 hour
	12	Parallel	9 am – 5 pm: 15 minutes
Lake Avenue (east)	26	Angled	9 am – 6 pm: 2 hours
Lake Avenue (harbor)	32 (+2 hcp)	Parallel	8 am – 6 pm: 4 hours
Sea View Avenue	11 (near SSA)	Angled	9 am – 6 pm: 2 hours
Sea View Avenue (0.4 mi. Waban Park to SSA)	100 (est.)	Parallel	24 hours (no comm. vehicles)
Ocean Avenue	64 (+1 hcp)	Angled	8 am – 6 pm: 4 hours
	6	Angled	9 am – 6 pm: 15 minutes
	12	Parallel	8 am – 6 pm: 4 hours
Waban Park	15	Parallel	None
Massasoit Avenue	30 (est.)	Parallel	(One-way side street)
Niantic Park	30	Perpendicular	
Circuit Avenue Ext.	44	Angled	8 am – 6 pm: 4 hours
Sea View Ave. Ext.	10	Parallel	8 am – 6 pm:
	24	Angled	no comm. vehicles

The majority of these nearly 500 parking spaces are within a quarter mile of the Oyster Bar. This distance can be considered a reasonable walking distance in terms of parking in what resembles an urban transportation setting. It should also be noted that the parking time limits do not extend past 6 pm, which is intended to keep parking available for high turnover uses (such as the post office) during the day, but allow longer term use in the evenings.

The parking spaces identified on Massasoit Avenue were included as a representative of numerous residential side streets in the area. Similar to the downtown businesses, most of the nearby residences do not have space enough for private driveways and rely on parallel parking on town roads. Although infringement on the residential areas is not advocated, it should be

recognized in the inventory that at least a few hundred more public parking spaces exist on streets such as Hiawatha Avenue and Wamsutta Avenue near Niantic Park. These spaces are also located within the quarter mile radius of the Oyster Bar.



*Typical parallel parking in downtown Oak Bluffs (Kennebec Avenue).*

A citizens group known as the Oak Bluffs Parking and Traffic Committee actively works to improve accessibility and safety in town. The Oak Bluffs Board of Selectmen recently approved a new layout for the North Bluff area, which was prepared through the work of the committee. The plan calls for widening the pedestrian promenade along the harbor and adjusting the vehicle parking layout. Additional plans are also in development to create additional fringe parking, to allow for park-and-walk scenarios during the peak season. (*Reference: Letter from Renee Balter, Oak Bluffs Parking and Traffic Committee, regarding Balance Restaurant project, dated December 18, 2006*).

The Oak Bluffs Steamship Authority operates seasonally. Thanks to geography and the layout of the road network, Oak Bluffs can offer more alternate routes for vehicles to travel, which probably helps dissipate the combined traffic impacts of the ferry terminal and attractions in the adjacent business district. Based on purely anecdotal information, of the three down-Island

towns – Tisbury, Oak Bluffs and Edgartown – Oak Bluffs has the “best” parking situation in terms of demand and capacity.



*Expansive roadside parking in Oak Bluffs, vacant until the shoulder and peak seasons.*

Park-and-ride lots and accompanying transit services exist in Tisbury (Vineyard Haven) and Edgartown, but not formally in Oak Bluffs. The Vineyard Haven Park-and-Ride is needed to serve both the Steamship Authority Terminal and the downtown business district. The Edgartown park-and-ride lot is serviced by public transit, and was one of the Island’s first publicly run fixed routes, dating back to the 1980’s.

To date, sufficient parking demand has yet to exist in Oak Bluffs to create a full-fledged park-and-ride lot. The establishment of fixed public transit routes Island-wide in the late 1990’s, particularly three routes in Oak Bluffs described in the next section, helped reduce this need. However, continued economic development will likely eventually benefit from the creation of a park-and-ride lot that can be served by existing public transit routes. Long-term parking for commercial vehicles, which currently occurs within the downtown area despite posted parking restrictions, would be an obvious primary user group of such a facility.

The Oak Bluffs Planning Board administers the Oak Bluffs Parking Mitigation Fund, which has been set up to collect impact fees from new development projects and fund future improvements. Capital funding for a park-and-ride lot, probably in the area of the town’s former landfill and wastewater plan, is a likely future use of the funds.

## **PUBLIC GROUND TRANSPORTATION**

The Martha's Vineyard Transit Authority (VTA) provides year-round public ground transportation Island-wide. The VTA's transportation services consist of both fixed route and paratransit services. The frequency of the VTA's fixed route services varies as the level of activity on the Island varies over the course of the year.

Three routes serve the Town of Oak Bluffs, all making scheduled stops at Ocean Park:

Route # 7 Oak Bluffs – Airport – Hospital via County Road and Barnes Road

Route # 9 Oak Bluffs – Hospital – Airport via Barnes Road and County Road

Route # 13 Edgartown – Oak Bluffs – Vineyard Haven via Beach Roads

All three routes operate year-round. During the peak season, Routes # 7 and # 9 operate hourly and provide transportation service to the community hospital, regional airport, and the residential areas along Barnes Road and County Road.

Route # 13 is the VTA's most heavily traveled route, connecting the three down-Island towns of Edgartown, Oak Bluffs and Vineyard Haven. Peak season service on this route is provided at 15 minute frequency through the peak travel periods of the day, and at 30 minute frequency for the rest of the transit day (extending past midnight). Off-season frequency is hourly, with additional service during the shoulder seasons.

Unlimited use transit passes are sold in increments of 1-day, 3-day, 7-day, 30-day and annual time periods, ranging from \$6 to \$100. Cash fares are zone or town based, with current fares at \$1 per fare zone, including town of origin.

Transit trips almost always inherently involve some sort of walking trip. In the case of the Oyster Bar, the public transit stop at Ocean Park is nearly as close as the public parking spaces that will be used for business patrons. Improvement plans are currently underway to address some pedestrian accessibility and safety issues in the Town of Oak Bluffs.



*Example of on-going pedestrian sidewalk improvements in downtown Oak Bluffs.*

Private taxi services that offer door-to-door service also provide transportation services to Oyster Bar patrons. For events such as wedding receptions, taxi services offer a safe alternative to driving for party-goers. There are approximately 15 taxi companies currently operating on Martha's Vineyard, comprising a fleet of about 70 vehicles. By regulation, passengers can only be picked up by taxis licensed within each town.

## **PUBLIC FERRIES**

Water-based transportation plays a major factor in the economic activity in Oak Bluffs. The numerous ferries listed below all dock within walking distance of the proposed Oyster Bar development.

The Steamship Authority operates a ferry for vehicles, passengers and freight seasonally to and from Woods Hole. The Island Queen (Falmouth) operates 7 daily round trips from mid-June to mid-September, with a capacity of 594 passengers. The Patriot, also linked to Falmouth, operates 6 round trips daily for about 40 passengers.

The Hy-Line (Hyannis) has two vessels, one with a capacity of 520 passengers and another with a capacity of 450. The Hy-Line operates 4 daily trips peak season.

The Martha's Vineyard Fast Ferry uses a 150 passenger vessel to connect Oak Bluffs with New Bedford, while the Vineyard Fast Ferry provides transport to Quonset Point, Rhode Island.

An estimated 30,000 visitors are associated with cruise ships. These visitors may or may not factor into future use of the expanded Oyster Bar facilities.

The above statistics are accurate in portraying the town of Oak Bluffs (and particularly its downtown business district) as an area easily accessible to off-Island visitors without the need for an automobile. This can be expected to hold true for visitors coming to the Vineyard for the purpose of attending an event held at the proposed Oyster Bar function room.



## **COMPLIANCE WITH OBJECTIVES OF THE MARTHA’S VINEYARD REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN**

It has been established that a typical Level of Service (LOS) analysis of the local road network is not appropriate for assessing the potential impacts of the proposed Oyster Bar expansion. A LOS analysis cannot be expected to be particularly meaningful in the context of a downtown business district, where speed and efficiency of vehicle movement are not necessarily the primary goals.

Instead, this traffic impact assessment can be performed by relating the proposed development to the goals stated in the Martha’s Vineyard Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). Within this document, facts, objectives and guidelines for desirable future development on the Island have been outlined.

A working draft of the RTP dated January 13, 2007 is referenced in this assessment. Updated regularly every three years, the comprehensiveness of recent versions of this and various local “master” plan documents have made them more practical and useful documents than ever before because stated objectives are supported by specific actions.

The purpose of this section is to demonstrate how the proposed expansion of the Oyster Bar complies with stated objectives and actions in the planning documents. This is important because these planning efforts are validated by a high level of public input. The proposed development, through mitigation measures and impact fees, can support the specific action items listed.

***RTP Objective: “Reduce dependence on private automobiles by promoting alternate modes of travel (bus, bicycle, shuttles to town centers from park-and-rides, etc.) Continue to encourage visitors ... to come to the Vineyard without their cars.”***

It is readily apparent that Americans, in general, continue to hold onto a long-term love affair with the automobile. Despite rising vehicle and fuel costs, the convenience of a private vehicle makes it difficult for alternative transportation modes to compete effectively for modal share in segments of the population that have multiple transportation choices available. In this climate, it should also be clear that expanding accommodations to make it still easier and more convenient

to use single occupancy vehicles will not achieve lofty goals of lessening the automobile and gasoline dependence.

In short, making more parking spaces will not solve parking problems, if there are ones (which tends to be a matter of perspective in Oak Bluffs). Regardless of changes in parking capacity (and barring a collapse of the local economy), there remains a balance between the convenience of parking and the decision to consider alternative transportation modes. As long as it is easy to drive and park, a majority of Americans can be expected to do exactly that.

The proposed Oyster Bar development will not offer dedicated private parking. Vehicle parking will be limited to the less certain shared public parking throughout the downtown area. As a result, a greater portion of users (provided that they are aware of these conditions prior to traveling) can be expected to choose alternative modes of transportation, or alter their travel behavior by car-pooling. This expectation is based simply on the assumption that only when the convenience of the private automobile is challenged sufficiently will the balance tip more toward the alternatives.

***RTP Objective: “Coordinate regional land use and transportation planning policies in order to encourage development patterns that complement these transportation goals...”***

The density of the business district warrants frequent service by public transit, ferries and taxis. By proposing to develop within the district, the owners of the Oyster Bar are inviting their future patrons to take advantage of these services. By contrast, similar facilities located out of downtown (with dedicated parking) essentially keep the balance of transportation modal choice solidly tipped in favor of the automobile.

For event organizers that feel they require dedicated parking, then the Oyster Bar function hall will not serve their purpose and they will have to go to a competitor, such as the Island Inn, P.A. Club, VFW or Harborview (Edgartown). It is likely that there will be a viable market segment that would prefer an event location to be downtown, with its adjacent businesses and variety of transportation choices, despite the lack of guaranteed parking immediately next to the site.

***RTP Objective: “Favor land use decisions that reinforce the other objectives such as consolidation of mixed-use, pedestrian friendly, village areas within the limits of already developed areas, where people can meet many of their daily needs by walking or biking, rather than taking a car.”***

The recent land use decision making in Oak Bluffs has been clear. A large commercial building, built on the site of an existing private parking lot, was approved on Kennebec Avenue. A new restaurant, Balance, is on the way to being approved within the Oak Bluffs business district. A proposed expansion of a resort hotel and tennis club, located out of the downtown area and surrounded by residential use, was denied.

In keeping with the stated objective to restrict new development within the traditional village center, the proposed Oyster Bar expansion is located within the well-established Oak Bluffs business district. This area has been specifically zoned for exactly this type of commercial use. The only space available for expansion is vertically, which can be achieved with architectural consistency with the surrounding buildings.

If sited elsewhere, the proposed function halls and residences would require more land, particularly for vehicle parking. Such a scenario is not encouraged by current land use policies, which clearly discourage the tendency toward suburban sprawl development.



*Existing Oyster Bar & Grill,  
Circuit Avenue, Oak Bluffs.*

## **TRIP GENERATION FORECASTS**

The existing Oyster Bar restaurant and bar will continue to exist on the building's first floor under the expansion proposal. The trip generation of the 197 seat restaurant is not expected to dramatically change. The focus of the traffic impact review is on the new uses: the 250 person capacity function hall and four two-bedroom apartments.

To keep with conventional tradition, this section of the traffic impact assessment will provide trip generation forecasts for the proposed uses. These forecasts rely on recorded data published by the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE). In a break from tradition, the next section of this assessment will present a case for why the ITE rates are of limited value, and tend to overestimate future demand. The logic follows that by designing for forecasted peak period demands, excessive accommodations are built that actually encourage higher rates of motor vehicle use, in a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy.

### ***Restaurant***

The most applicable land use category defined by ITE is Quality Restaurant (931). Another land use category, High Turnover Restaurant (932), was also considered. Since restaurants can vary greatly, these figures are presented simply to complete the basic requirements of a traffic impact assessment. For reasons stated previously, these figures are not applied to the local road network for analysis, as would normally be done. Also, actual local data could not be collected due to the seasonal variation and the time of year.

The rates given by ITE are based on two variables: gross floor area (GFA) and number of seats. The trip term represents one-way trips.

<u>Time Period</u>	<u>Rate (per 1,000 GFA)</u>	<u>Restaurant Trips (est.)</u>
Weekday	90±	270
AM peak hour of adjacent traffic	0.81	3
PM peak hour of adjacent traffic	7.49	22
AM peak hour of generator	5.57	17
PM peak hour of generator	9.02	27
Saturday	94±	282
Peak hour of generator	10.82	32

<u>Time Period</u>	<u>Rate (per 1,000 GFA)</u>	<u>Restaurant Trips (est.)</u>
Sunday	72±	216
Peak hour of generator	8.38	25

<u>Time Period</u>	<u>Rate (per seat)</u>	<u>Restaurant Trips (est.)</u>
Weekday	2.86	563
AM peak hour of adjacent traffic	0.26	6
PM peak hour of adjacent traffic	0.30	59
Saturday	2.81	554
Peak hour of generator	0.33	65
Sunday	2.15	424
Peak hour of generator	0.24	47

Using the Oyster Bar's building occupancy as the number of seats variable yields far higher trip generation forecasts than when using the Oyster Bar's GFA as the variable.

During the peak season, the morning and afternoon peak hours of travel on the adjacent road network occur usually at 10:00 AM and 5:00 PM. Trip generation for the restaurant during the morning peak hour is negligible. The peak level of activity for the restaurant does not occur until after the peak hour of travel occurs, which is usually associated with the end of a "standard" work day.

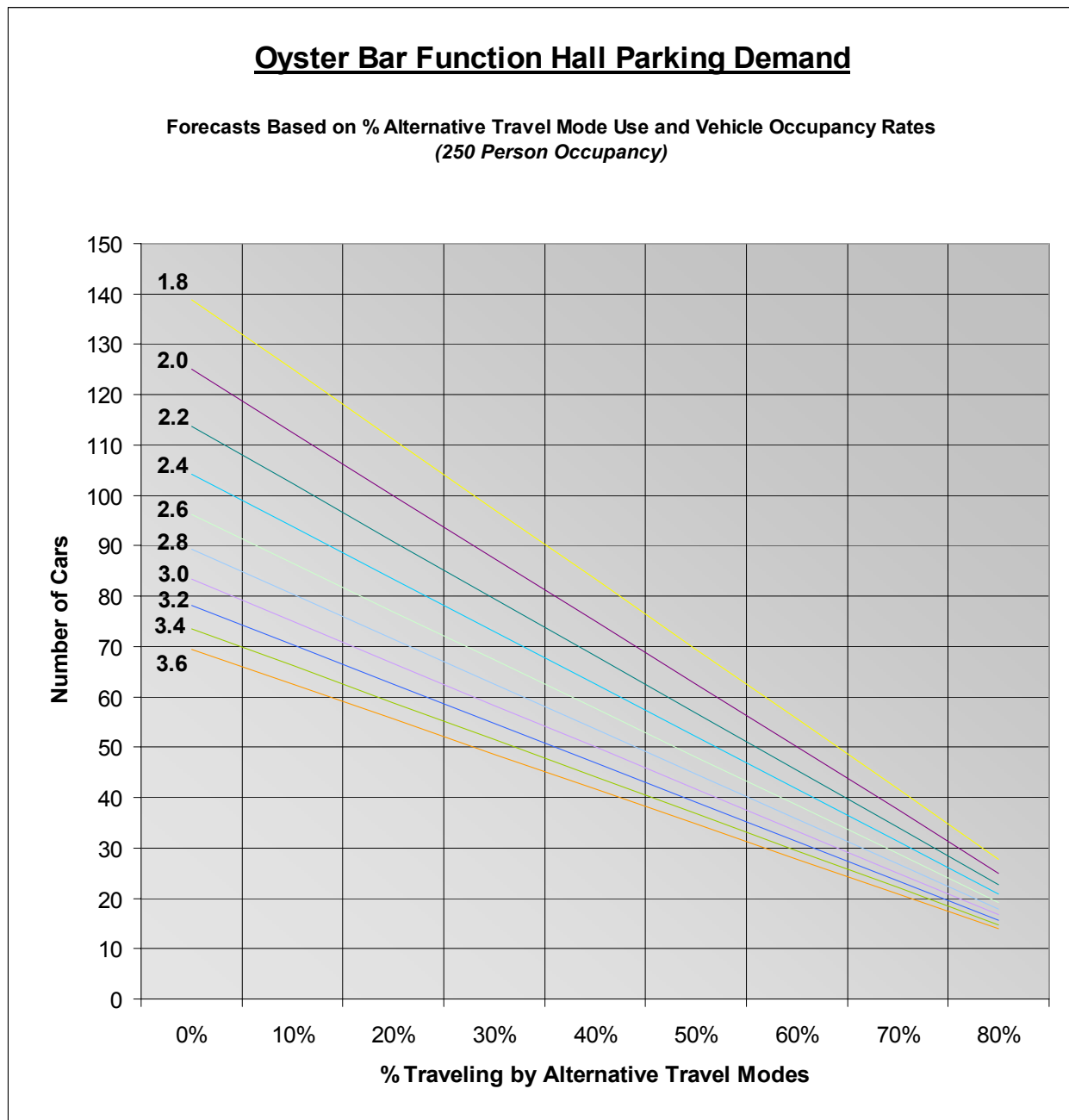
### **Function Hall**

The proposed function hall is intended for social events such as wedding receptions and Christmas parties. A typical event held at the function hall may last from two to three hours. The majority of arrivals may be expected to occur more closely to a set time than the departures.

Since the function hall will be associated with an already operational restaurant, the function hall's trip generation (in round trips) can be assumed to closely match its parking demand. The guidelines used by the Oak Bluffs Planning Board indicate that one parking space should be provided for every 4 seats. It is overly optimistic that vehicle occupancy rates will average as high as four occupants per vehicle. Instead, it may be more realistic to assume that 25% of event-goers will use alternative modes, leaving 188 persons arriving by vehicle, and the vehicle occupancy rate will be three occupants for vehicle. This takes into account the increased likelihood of carpooling by some. This would result in about 63 vehicles per event, which would then be used by the Oak Bluffs Planning Board to determine the annual parking mitigation fee.

The combination of available transportation alternatives, including car-pooling, public transit, taxi, walking and bicycling, may contribute to a vehicle trip reduction for the Oyster Bar function hall by as much as 50%. This level of trip reduction is possible due to two simultaneous factors: 1) reduced convenience of driving and parking a car downtown, and 2) increased availability of alternative modes. Consideration of the project location, more than any other factor, is the basis for the assertion that vehicle traffic and parking impacts will be less than conventional trip generation forecasting guidelines would normally indicate.

The graph on the following page attempts to demonstrate the relationship between the percent share of alternative modes, vehicle occupancy rates and the number of cars requiring parking in the downtown area for each event. It is likely that these figures will vary from event to event. Obviously, promoting alternative modes and encouraging increased vehicle occupancy (car-pooling) will directly lessen vehicular impacts for function hall events.



The proposed land use of a function hall will normally generate their highest volume of traffic and parking needs in the evenings on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. More importantly, the function hall will contribute very little traffic during the morning peak hours or during the 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM peak travel period on weekdays.

A small increase in delivery vehicle time in the loading zone immediately in front of the Oyster Bar can be attributed to the function hall addition. The delivery routine is well established in this

part of the business district, with the Oyster Bar loading zone being used while deliveries are made to several other restaurants in the immediate vicinity. During construction, this impact will have to be appropriately managed.

### **Apartments**

A standard trip generation rate of six (6) one-way trips per unit can be applied to the four two-bedroom apartment units. This rate assumes vehicle ownership, which may not necessarily be the case. Also, these 24 one-way vehicle trips would be made to and from the Oak Bluffs business district in general, not necessarily to and from the site itself. The fact that the residents also will work within the same building makes this feature of the project more of a mitigation measure to the business than an impact to the town. No reserved parking has been acquired for the apartment residents. Other residents along Circuit Avenue without dedicated parking spaces typically use the stretch of parallel parking on Sea View Avenue during the peak season.

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If standard ITE rates were applied to all of the downtown's retail businesses, it is likely that the forecasted trip generation and parking demand would appear to absolutely overwhelm the town's infrastructure. Obviously, this does not occur in practice.

This can be explained by the fact that the trip generation rates are often unreliable because this type of data collection is labor intensive and tends to be based on very few studies. Individual land uses, even within the same category, can also vary widely depending on factors beyond the control variables, such as number of employees, gross square footage, and number of seats.

The published trip and parking generation rates do provide a decent "ballpark" estimates for proposed land uses, and are preferable to outright "guess-estimates" that would have to be offered when no data at all can be found.

The trip-chaining phenomenon, which justifies the reduction of trip generation figures for individual uses, undoubtedly occurs in downtown Oak Bluffs. Instead of competing with other local businesses for parking spaces, the Oyster Bar restaurant and function hall can be expected to attract business to not only their own business, but to adjacent businesses as well.



## **COMPARISON TO OTHER BUSINESSES**

Although the Atlantic Connection's new use as a game room certainly has an associated trip generation in its own right, the new use is substantially different from a trip forecasting perspective. First, the new use can be expected to have a significantly higher pass-by rate, meaning the game room is likely one of many trip destinations when it is visited by patrons. Second, the trip generation is likely more dispersed through the day and evening, as opposed to the club, where activity was usually more intensely packed into shorter time frames.

What if the Atlantic Connection were to be proposed as a new use at the same location? One could expect that the public hearing process would reveal some concerns about available parking and traffic. In reality, the Atlantic Connection closed and the ratio of available parking capacity and demand appeared to remain essentially the same.

In other words, one might expect the positive effects (more available parking spaces) of removing a business to be of the same magnitude of the negative effects (more demand for parking spaces) of adding a business. The removal of one business, even a popular one such as the Atlantic Connection, did not have a clearly identifiable or even noticeable effect on the parking landscape.

## **TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH ON PARKING**

- \* Reference: “The Trouble with Minimum Parking Requirements”  
Donald C. Shoup  
Department of Urban Planning, University of California, Los Angeles, CA  
Transportation Research Part A 33 (1999) 549 – 574.

The above referenced research paper presents some key points that are relevant to the traffic impact review of the proposed Oyster Bar expansion.

*Abstract: “Urban planners typically set the minimum parking requirements for every land use to satisfy the peak demand for free parking. As a result, parking is free for 99% of automobile trips in the United States. Minimum parking requirements increase the supply and reduce the price - but not the cost - of parking. They bundle the cost of parking spaces into the cost of development, and thereby increase the prices of all the goods and services sold at the sites that offer free parking. Cars have many external costs, but the external cost of parking in cities may be greater than all the other external costs combined. To prevent spillover, cities could price on-street parking rather than require off-street parking. Compared with minimum parking requirements, market prices can allocate parking spaces fairly and efficiently.”*

The Town of Oak Bluffs is probably not yet ready for metered parking, but the increased regulation of public parking in recent years can be considered a definitive step in that direction.

Shoup asserts that there is little academic basis for minimum parking requirements, although they are quite prevalent in typical transportation planning practice:

*“Where do minimum parking requirements come from? No one knows. The “bible” of land use planning, F. Stuart Chapin’s Urban Land Use Planning, does not mention parking requirements in any of its four editions... This academic neglect has not prevented practicing planners from setting parking requirements for every conceivable land use. ... Without training or research, urban planners know exactly how many parking spaces to require for bingo parlors, junkyards, pet cemeteries, rifle ranges, slaughterhouses, and every other land use.”*

Shoup also points out that ITE parking generation rates are interpreted as the demand for parking, without recognizing that the data was collected from sites where ample parking was

provided free of charge and without any real availability of public transportation or other alternative transportation modes.

*“The following five steps describe the dysfunctional interaction between transportation engineers and urban planners.*

- 1. Transportation engineers survey parking occupancy at sites that offer ample free parking and lack public transit. The ITE summarizes the peak parking occupancies observed at each land use and reports the parking generation rate.*
- 2. Urban planners use the parking generation rates to set minimum parking requirements for all land uses. Because the required parking supply is so large, the market price of parking is zero, and most new developments offer free parking.*
- 3. Transportation engineers survey vehicle trips to and from sites that offer free parking. The ITE summarizes the data on vehicle trips observed at each land use and reports the trip generation rate.*
- 4. Transportation planners design the roads and highways to satisfy the trip generation rates. Therefore, the transportation system provides enough capacity to satisfy the expected demand for vehicle trips to and from land uses that provide free parking.*
- 5. Urban planners limit land use density so that new development will not generate more vehicle trips than nearby roads and highways can carry.”*

An initial reaction to the Oyster Bar expansion plans of, “where is everyone going to park?” draws a parallel to the points made in this transportation research paper. The assumption of reliance on the motor vehicle is deeply entrenched.

It is undeniable that there will be an increased demand for parking in the downtown. However, alternative travel modes can attract some of the additional demand, if facilities designed for vehicular access are not provided to such an extent that even peak vehicular demand is accommodated.

## **RECOMMENDED TRAFFIC IMPACT MITIGATION MEASURES**

The following potential mitigation measures are recommended for consideration by the project proponents. These measures can be considered to not only mitigate project-specific impacts, but also to be generally beneficial to the Town as a whole.

### ***1. Shared Parking with Adjacent Land Uses***

There are a few opportunities to arrange for shared parking with land uses adjacent to the Oyster Bar. This option can benefit patrons who have limited mobility without qualifying for handicap parking immediately in front of the building. This measure will also help lessen the number of shared public spaces used.

The Catholic Church and some nearby office buildings on Circuit Avenue have parking lots that are typically unused in the evenings. If an arrangement can be made for Oyster Bar use of these lots in the evenings, a valet type service would make the best use of these lots' capacity. A financial arrangement may be made long-term or on an event-by-event basis. The cost of this mitigation measure would depend on the specific details arranged with these property owners.

### ***2. VTA Bus Passes for Employees***

The VTA's Commuter Solution program, funded by a two-year grant, encouraged business owners to purchase bus passes for their employees by providing passes free of charge for the first two years of the program. The employees benefited from receiving the passes, which could be used for other types of trips as well as work trips. Employers benefited by ensuring their employees had a reliable means of transportation to work, freeing up parking spaces near their businesses and saving time spent by employees trying to evade parking time restrictions. Now that the grant-funded years of the program are over, it is up to individual employers to step up to the plate and fund this benefit for their employees.

Assuming a seasonal work force of 35 Oyster Bar employees, the estimated annual cost of this mitigation measure would be \$3,500.

### **3. Transit Friendly Workplace**

In addition to being supplied with bus passes to ensure transportation to and from work, employee work schedules can be set up to coincide with available transit trips. The cost of this measure can be incorporated into the day-to-day of business activities when appropriately managed.

### **4. Dissemination of Transportation Information to the Public**

Marketing and promotional information that the Oyster Bar distributes, particularly for the function hall, should include detailed information on regional and local transportation options. This information will be particularly useful for off-Island visitors who are coming to an event, but are unfamiliar with the transportation landscape of Oak Bluffs.

Although this measure may tend to be overlooked as “too obvious” for local residents, visitors from off-Island cannot be expected to make the best travel decisions if good information is not made available in advance.

At a minimum, patrons should be made aware that there is no dedicated on-site parking, which may be assumed to exist. A package of ferry and public transit schedules will also assist transportation decision making.

### **5. Annual Payment into the Oak Bluffs Parking Mitigation Fund**

The Town of Oak Bluffs has recently established the Oak Bluffs Parking Mitigation Fund. Recognizing that each individual project may not represent a large impact on its own, but that the collective impacts of incremental development can be potentially detrimental to the Town, the Fund provides a means of collecting a “fair share” from each new development.

Since the Fund has been established only recently, there are three contributors to date and not much money has been deposited yet. Each development project is expected to begin paying into the Fund annually upon project completion. An estimated \$10,000 to \$15,000 per year may be reasonably expected to be paid into the Fund now that it is established within the next few years.

The Oak Bluffs Board of Selectmen have the decision-making authority for specific uses of the collected mitigation fees, as long as the funds are directly used to address traffic and parking mitigation.

During preliminary discussions, the Oak Bluffs Planning Board indicated that the proposed function hall expansion would be considered as a restaurant (requiring 0.25 parking spaces per seat) for the purpose of the impact fee calculation. The Oyster Bar would be responsible for an annual payment equal to the value of 63 spaces, based on the proposed occupancy of 250 persons.

This mitigation measure is generally consistent with the parking mitigation offered by the proposed Balance Restaurant on Oak Bluffs Avenue, a similar land use within the same business district as the Oyster Bar.

The estimated annual cost of this mitigation measure is \$3,780.

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In the course of preliminary discussions on the project, some Martha's Vineyard Commissioners expressed reservations with the prospect of an Applicant paying into a mitigation fund that is slated for unspecified future mitigation measures. In response, it may be more desirable to support mitigation measures that can be accomplished on a timeline that more closely matches that of the development itself.

The following recommendations are offered as alternatives to the annual payment to the Oak Bluffs Parking Mitigation Fund, if allowed by the Planning Board. Although the Planning Board will consider alternative proposals, such ideas would have to be decent enough to outweigh the collective concept that has recently been established.

#### **6. Shared Private Park-and-Ride**

Balance Restaurant, which at one time was located at the site of the Oyster Bar, is currently proceeding through the permitting process for a new location within the Oak Bluffs business district. In a business carousel of sorts, the new location was the site of the game room that moved to the site of the Atlantic Connection.

The Balance proponents have developed a plan to use the Oak Bluffs school parking lot as an employee lot during the peak summer months. A private taxi will be chartered to transport the employees to and from the restaurant.

If amenable to both parties, the Oyster Bar may consider to formally arrange to join this arrangement, to their mutual benefit. To be cost-effective, the chartered taxi will probably make scheduled pick-up and deliveries, mixed with some on-demand service. By increasing the pool of employees to be transported, additional departure times and more flexibility can be added to this private transportation sub-system.

## **7. Intelligent Transportation System Public Display**

The theme for the nation's transportation infrastructure has shifted from one of expansion to on-going maintenance. The opportunities for enhancement have begun to come from technological advances that allow the transportation system to operate more efficiently with existing resources. Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), particularly those applied in Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) for vehicle fleet management, are becoming more prevalent across the country.

A simple ITS system could be applied for the Oyster Bar's use. Restaurant-goers and employees could be alerted, in real time, to the approach of public transit or taxi vehicles. In addition to providing useful transportation information, the system would have the benefit of drawing attention to the visible technology and increasing awareness of the transportation services they serve.

The Martha's Vineyard Transit Authority (VTA) is currently installing an ITS system to monitor the fixed route and paratransit vehicle fleets. In the next few years, the Oyster Bar could take advantage of information that the ITS system collects, processes and makes available for use by the public through the Internet and public display signs.

## **8. Funding for Transit Stop Improvements**

The provision of traveler amenities is often identified as a potential method of boosting public transit use. The public transit stops at Ocean Park and the Oak Bluffs Steamship Authority in Oak Bluffs are two of the Island's busiest locations, but offer relatively few passenger amenities. The idea for shelters and additional seating at these locations has, to this point, been under consideration by the Oak Bluffs Parks Department.

The successful implementation of this mitigation measure would rely on cooperation with the Town, probably through the previously mentioned Parking Mitigation Fund. However, this alternative is worth listing because it is consistent with this assessment's theme of supporting alternative modes of transportation, rather than continuing to expand capacity in an attempt to meet growing demands.



### **9. Funding for Pedestrian Island**

The Oyster Bar is located at the three-way intersection of Circuit Avenue, Kennebec Avenue and Narragansett Avenue. The pedestrian sidewalks are linked by a painted crosswalk across Circuit Avenue and a long crosswalk that spans through the intersection across the widths of both Narragansett Avenue and Kennebec Avenue.

While still allowing for turning movements of delivery trucks from Circuit Avenue onto Kennebec Avenue, some space may be available for a small pedestrian island in the intersection. The pedestrian island could enhance pedestrian safety within the long crosswalk, as well as support highly visible signage alerting vehicle drivers that they are entering the heart of downtown Oak Bluffs and to adjust speed accordingly.

This mitigation measure would support a stated objective in the Regional Transportation Plan: *“Encourage walkers by increasing the appeal of the pedestrian environment, particularly in village and commercial areas, by providing continuous and adequately dimensioned sidewalks and well-marked crosswalks as well as services such as shelter and weather protection, comfortable places to sit, signage, information centers, water, restrooms, plantings, lighting and trash receptacles.”*

### **10. Citizen Group Participation**

The Oak Bluffs Parking and Traffic Committee has existed for years, and has been active off and on over the years seeking potential improvements within Town and contributing to public comments on larger scope projects like the Oak Bluffs Steamship Authority. Continued participation in citizen groups, similar to the business association formed to address noise issues, will play a positive role in addressing issues tied to vehicle traffic and parking.

### **11. Periodic Marketing Promotions Featuring Transportation**

During public meetings, the Balance restaurant proponents described plans to offer incentives to customers for using alternative travel modes to the automobile. If the Oyster Bar managers choose to consider a similar promotional tactic, it is recommended that the time frame be kept relatively brief (to control costs) and the promotion be made simple to administer.

The expected benefits of this mitigation measure would be simply drawing the public's attention to the transportation issue. It would not be realistic to hope that engrained travel behaviors can be changed long-term with the offer of a free dessert.

### **12. Car Sharing by Residents**

Many trips can be made by alternative travel modes. Some trips simply require the practical convenience of a private automobile. For many Americans, this reality is set against the high cost of car ownership.

This final mitigation measure listed for consideration is inspired by Flexcar, a private company that operates a national car-sharing network. Flexcar customers are given access to a fleet of vehicles located throughout cities, including Washington, D.C., Seattle, Portland, Chicago and Atlanta. Individual members reserve the vehicles for hourly use. Flexcar's business partners include environmentally friendly companies such as Starbucks, which offer extensive programs to employees for using mass transit. During the business day, Flexcar makes cars available to employees for meetings or other trips that require a vehicle.

In the context of the Oyster Bar restaurant employees and Martha's Vineyard, the concept described above may deserve some consideration in a simpler form. The possibility of car sharing among the third-floor apartment residents may be especially good. These residents are slated to be members of the Oyster Bar management team. The car sharing program could be potentially be offered as an employee benefit. This may be doubly useful in attracting new employees in the competitive Martha's Vineyard market.

In terms of vehicle trips, this mitigation measure may not help reduce total numbers of vehicle trips made by employees, but it could reduce the total parking demand for these employee-residents.

## **CONCLUSION**

This assessment has outlined some mitigation measures that have clear substance and offer real potential benefits to mitigate impacts. The owners of the Oyster Bar may choose to pursue a selection of the suggested mitigation measures which prove to be most advantageous to their business.

The Oyster Bar expansion may be among the first regional developments to be compelled to pay traffic impact fees on an annual basis. This may be inequitable in the context of developments that have occurred over the last ten years. However, this permitting setting has evolved with the growing awareness that incremental development had been allowed to occur without adequate mitigation.

This assessment supports a growing local trend that recognizes that individual projects such as the Oyster Bar expansion are appropriate and support a sustainable economic growth, but also need to give back a portion of future profits to support the local transportation infrastructure. This reinvestment, in turn, allows for continued growth at a reasonable pace without compromising the Island's sense of place.

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- Transportation Research Board, 2000 Highway Capacity Manual.
- Martha's Vineyard Commission, Martha's Vineyard Regional Transportation Plan, 2007 Update, Draft 4, January 13, 2007.
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- Donald C. Shoup, The Trouble with Minimum Parking Requirements, Department of Urban Planning, University of California, Los Angeles, CA Transportation Research Part A 33 (1999) 549 – 574.
- Martha's Vineyard Commission, LUPC meeting minutes for Balance Restaurant, December 18, 2006.
- Renee Balter (Oak Bluffs Parking and Traffic Committee), letter regarding Balance Restaurant project, dated December 18, 2006. *(copy included on following pages)*

Renee Balter  
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Phone: 508-696-7643  
Email: [rebalter@yahoo.com](mailto:rebalter@yahoo.com)

Date: December 18, 2006

To: MV Commission

**Re: Parking in Oak Bluffs downtown business district**

I would like to share some information with members of the MV Commission that might be helpful in trying to understand some of the problems/solutions regarding the parking in the downtown business district.

**Some facts:**

There are 4,500+- acres of land in Oak Bluffs. 11+- acres are zoned B1.

Unless we want to encourage commercial “sprawl”, it is important to recognize that yes, there is a parking crunch during two months of the year in the downtown area of Oak Bluffs, but that there are ways to give some kind of relief without requiring a new business or a change of use in a business location to have to provide adequate on site parking OR ELSE not be approved.

There is a fee in lieu of parking. The money collected can and will be used to develop parking solutions that will help alleviate the parking shortage and, at the same time, lessen the traffic congestion in the heart of downtown.

There is a proposed plan to convert parallel parking to diagonal parking on some of the streets in the fringe areas of downtown. These include; East Chop Drive, Tuckernuck Avenue (next to Waban Park) and Naushon Avenue (next to Viera Park). Signs on the main arteries (New York Ave, Seaview Ave. and Wing Rd) would direct drivers to these locations, “PARK & WALK”. This plan would create additional parking spaces without exercising a change of use – just a different way of parking.

The Parking and Traffic Committee is working to establish a two month Park and Ride that would be located on the VTA bus route.

There is free parking at the Oak Bluffs School for employees in the downtown area. The Oak Bluffs Association has been and will continue to promote this option to the businesses in town.

### **Why NOT encourage more parking in the heart of downtown?**

1. There are close to 30 crosswalks downtown
2. There are 5 major boatlines, buses, and taxis that deliver thousands of people (without cars) to the downtown area daily. Each time one person sets foot in a crosswalk, traffic must stop. Keeping cars on the outskirts of town is ESSENTIAL to keeping the traffic moving and easing gridlock.
3. There are well over 800 homes in the immediate downtown neighborhood (320 In the Camp Meeting, 400+ in the Cottage City Historic District and 100+ in the Circuit Ave corridor. There are several thousand people who occupy these dwellings in the summer. Most of them walk to everything downtown.
4. In addition, on Fireworks night and for Illumination, thousands of people crowd Oak Bluffs and somehow people find a suitable place to park.
5. Almost every hotel/inn/guesthouse promotes “walk to everything” and “leave your car on the mainland”. We are one of the only towns on the east coast that can offer almost 800 families the opportunity to walk to the beach, parks, shopping, dining, movies, entertainment, historic walking tour, the Flying Horses, the grocery store, post office, bike rentals, car rentals, sport fishing, Public transit, ferries to 5 off-island destinations, the fireworks, Illumination Night and the MV Campmeeting museum/events/just a stroll – NO NEED TO BRING YOUR CAR!

Walking to everything is one of the major pluses for Oak Bluffs and visitors LOVE IT!

While some new businesses will potentially increase the number of cars in downtown Oak Bluffs, it is more likely that their patrons will be on foot.

**Footnote:** (no pun intended) This year, the Atlantic Connection closed. Their capacity was around 300+-. We don't keep track of these closings. If we did, we would have to keep a kind of “balance sheet” (no pun intended) and give the # of seats being asked by Balance as a credit against the # of seats given up by the AC.