

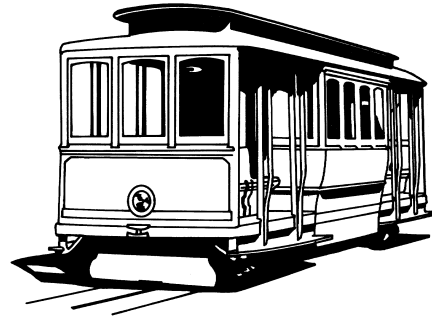
[From Summer 2002]

CNHA Reintroduces Refuge Tours

Beginning Memorial bay weekend, the CNHA initiated operation of a 15-mile interpreter-escorted refuge tour by land vehicle. Tours originate from the boat dock parking area behind the lighthouse, travel up the gravel service road to the North Wash Flats impoundment, and return to their starting point.

The tour is designed to provide visitors with an educational and entertaining program that fosters an understanding of refuge resources, programs and activities and answers questions about the wildlife and ecology of the refuge. Access to this area of the refuge is usually open only to foot traffic, so few visitors trek the length of the road.

With the demise of the "Safari Tour," that had been provided in the past under a concession arrangement, late last fall the refuge manager asked CNHA to consider offering this popular service to refuge visitors. After analyzing data from past operations, the CNHA President and I discussed operational options with knowledgeable managers of municipal transportation services in the area. Vehicle specifications were drawn up, along with a description of the services we needed, and a proposed contract document was drafted that would allow us to implement the tours on a pilot basis by contracting for vehicles and drivers.



We did not fully anticipate the difficulty we would run into in getting anyone to respond to our request for proposals. Nor did we anticipate the delays we would encounter in working out operational arrangements with the refuge and in recruiting and training volunteer interpreters.

However, we succeeded in finding a company that would enter into a short-term contract with us, and they were successful in finding a vehicle that met all of our requirements (except that of being alternatively fueled). Unfortunately, the vehicle was no longer available when we finally were in a position to sign a contract. The trolley we are using was the only vehicle available.

So, we're running a pilot program of tours until Labor bay weekend to determine the feasibility of committing to a longer term arrangement that would allow us to obtain the type of vehicle we really would like to operate, and to learn all the things we need to know to provide visitors with a first-class experience at an affordable price.

Frank V. Moore, Editor