REPORT ON CONSIDERATIONS: REMOVING THE VARIABLE DENSITY TUNNEL (VDT) B-582

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide certain facts and make a recommendation on a decision to remove the VDT.

Background

The VDT is a National Historic Landmark and is subject to provisions of public law. These provisions promote historic preservation in "undertakings" that have an "effect" on such properties. The State Historic Preservation Office is the federal designee and first line correspondent. The President’s Advisory Council on Historic Preservation becomes active in significant "undertakings." Both agencies are conferential and advisory and do not have enforcement authority. With proper procedures, LaRC may dispose of the VDT.

Current Situation

1. The VDT is obsolete, inoperative, and has been stripped of its original interior configuration and exterior appendages. The distinctive shell remains and is the basis for the historic status.

2. Dr. Howard Butowsky, associated with the Man in Space Study (P.L. 96-344, 1980) and the related Study of Alternatives requested by Congress, says that the VDT is the most significant historic landmark in the entire Agency. There is historical value in the VDT remaining in its original location where its historic contributions took place. This could be countered by having the VDT accessible for display. Accessibility would require relocation.

3. A meeting was held 3/27/89 in B-582 with representatives from FENGD, FPDO, MSD, EA, and Aeronautics Directorate. The majority direction was that it is desirable to remove the VDT and reclaim the space for current needs.

4. By consensus the following was agreed:

   a. Gary Price is to obtain the Director’s instructions.

   b. If VDT removal is desirable, Dick Rountree is to produce a cost estimate; John Mouring is to recommend a site(s) and architectural solution.

   c. Appropriate phases or work classification and funding sources is to be determined.

5. Since a rehab project for B-582 is to begin shortly, time is of the essence.
Recommendation

The historic merits of status quo vs removal are subjective and debatable. However, a fiscal evaluation is logical and defendable. It is recommended that the removal project estimate be outlined in four sections:

1. **Extraction**: Removal of VDT from the building and demolition/patching at B582;
2. **Transportation**: Handling and trucking the VDT to either a storage or display site;
3. **Installation**: Site preparation and improvements to display the VDT; and
4. **Maintenance**: Annualized cost of upkeep associated with the storage or display.

The estimated cost of modifying B-582 for other use should be added to the preceding estimate for VDT removal work and the resultant project estimate compared to the cost of providing the equivalent of the reclaimed space some other way. This project estimate should be made available to the Director for Aeronautics and the Center Director as an aid in making a decision.

Thus an economic basis is available for decision making.

John Mouring  
Master Planner

Addendum (3/29/89)  
Robert Swain asked that FENGD proceed with the cost estimate, then discuss the operation/costs at Roy Harris' level, then go to the Center Director.

Concur:  
Irv Hamlet  
Head, FPDO