

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT 1
CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE JOINTLY WITH
COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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September 22, 2022

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HELD AT: COUNCIL CHAMBERS - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Selvena N. Brooks-Powers,
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Joann Ariola
David M. Carr
Amanda Farias
Ari Kagan
Farah N. Louis
Mercedes Narcisse
Lincoln Restler
Carlina Rivera
Althea V. Stevens
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Kamillah Hanks
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Alexa Aviles
Oswald Feliz
Rafael Salamanca, Jr.

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT 2

A P P E A R A N C E S

Josh Kraus, EDC Chief of Infrastructure
James Wong, EDC Executive Director of NYC Ferry
Mikelle Adgate, EDC Senior Vice President of
Government and Community Relations
Jean Ryan
David Jones
Sean Campion
Richenda Kramer
Dominique Bernucca-Hood
Tatyana Goloborodki
Robert Markuske
Brianna Seymour
Liana Martin Peterson
Lina Lajqi
Brendon Kong
Amin Asaad
Ciara Lyver
Nelson Perez
Theodore Dorian
Michael Harwood
Andrew Glass
Anne Richardson
Mary Bullock
Rose Uscianowski
Linda Cohen

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: This is a microphone
3 test for the Committee on Transportation jointly with
4 the Committee on Economic Development. Today's date
5 is September 22, 2022. Location at the Chambers.
6 Recorded by (INAUDIBLE) Gonzalez Rodriguez.

7 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning and
8 welcome to New York City Council hybrid hearing with
9 the Committee on Transportation jointly with the
10 Committee on Economic Development.

11 At this time, please silence all
12 electronic devices to vibrate or silent mode.

13 If you wish to submit testimony, you may
14 do so at testimony@council.nyc.gov. I repeat,
15 testimony@council.nyc.gov.

16 Chair, we are ready to begin.

17 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: [GAVEL] Good
18 morning and welcome to this joint oversight hearing
19 of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
20 and the Committee on Economic Development.

21 Today, we will be focusing on the New
22 York City Ferry System. We will also hear testimony
23 on Introduction 236, a bill in the Economic
24 Development Committee sponsored by co-Chair Farias in
25 relation to providing ferry service at reduced cost

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3 to individuals under the age of 18 or enrolled in a
4 high school located within New York City. I will let
5 co-Chair Farias make comments on this piece of
6 legislation during her opening remarks.

7 For many years, our waterways and
8 coastlines were an untapped and underutilized
9 resource for transportation purposes. The New York
10 City Ferry System was launched in 2017 as a way to
11 provide additional transportation options to New
12 Yorkers living in isolated areas or transportation
13 deserts. While I believe that the New York City Ferry
14 System does provide a valuable transportation option
15 in the city, it is also the Committee's
16 responsibility to explore how well the system is
17 serving all New Yorkers. Since New York City Ferry
18 was first launched, several reports have indicated
19 that the city has had to heavily subsidize the ferry
20 rides. A 2019 report issued by the Citizens Budget
21 Committee pegged the subsidy at the time at \$10.73
22 per ride, which was 10 times higher than subway or
23 bus rides. Additionally, an audit report released
24 this past June by the City Comptroller's Office found
25 that the net losses of the ferry operations were 30
million dollars in Fiscal Year 2017, 44 million

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2 dollars in Fiscal Year 2018, 53 million dollars in
3 Fiscal Year 2019, 53 million dollars in Fiscal Year
4 2020, and 33 million in Fiscal Year 2021. The
5 Comptroller's audit also found that the Economic
6 Development Corporation, or EDC, had failed to
7 disclose over 224 million dollars in New York City
8 Ferry expenditures and that they had significantly
9 understated the amount the city was subsidizing for
10 rides since the New York City Ferry began operating.
11 If these findings are accurate, I consider this is a
12 serious breach of the trust that we place on city
13 agencies and authorities when it comes to
14 accountability and transparency. Since becoming Chair
15 of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee,
16 one of my main focuses has been to look at city
17 policies, legislation, and services through a
18 transportation equity lens to ensure that our
19 transportation system meets the needs of all New
20 Yorkers. That is why it concerns me that according to
21 EDC's 2021 ferry survey, only 32 percent of ferry
22 riders were non-white or multiracial and that system-
23 wide the median income of those riders was between
24 100,000 and 150,000 dollars. These stats reveal that
25 a large segment of our population has been left

1 behind when it comes to the utilization of the ferry
2 service. To me, that is unacceptable, and I know we
3 as a city can do better. I believe that the city's
4 recent New York City Ferry Forward plan which seeks
5 to make the ferry service a more equitable,
6 accessible, and financially sustainable system is a
7 start. I'm looking forward to hearing from the
8 administration, particularly EDC, on their ongoing
9 efforts and plans to make the ferry system a viable
10 and equitable transportation alternative for many
11 more New Yorkers. I'm also looking forward to hearing
12 from the administration regarding their plans to
13 further expand the New York City Ferry System and
14 receiving a status update on the implementation of
15 the New York City Ferry Forward Plan including the
16 new fare structure, the Rockaway Rocket Shuttle
17 Pilot, and the new operating contract RFP.

18
19 I will now turn it over to my fellow co-
20 Chair for her opening statement. Chair Farias.

21 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you, Chair
22 Brooks-Powers. My name is Amanda Farias, and I have
23 the privilege of Chairing the Council's Economic
24 Development Committee. I would like to extend my
25

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3 thanks to my co-Chair as well as the Members of both
4 Committees for coming together to hold this hearing.

5 I represent District 18 in the Bronx,
6 which is home to the Soundview Ferry stop. Every day,
7 I see my neighbors using the ferry to commute to
8 work, get to doctors' appointments, or even for a
9 leisurely trip into Manhattan. My predominantly black
10 and brown community, which has limited transit
11 options, has embraced the ferry system and has some
12 of the highest ridership in the city. Even throughout
13 COVID, the Soundview Ferry Landing saw a high usage
14 due to the number of healthcare and essential workers
15 that reside within my District. The ferry has been a
16 transformative mode of transportation for the
17 Southeast Bronx connecting resident to Manhattan in a
18 fraction of the time. However, as Chair Brooks-Powers
19 mentioned, the purpose of today's hearing is to take
20 a deep dive into the New York City Ferry's finances
21 and to better understand some of the numerical
22 discrepancies between the recent Comptroller audit
23 and the EDC's own reporting. We would like to use
24 this hearing as an opportunity to unpack some of the
25 details of the Comptroller's audit of the NYC Ferry
System, understand how the EDC plans to expand city

ferry service, and get ahead of any problems that might arise in EDC's new operator contract after the current one expires next year.

Currently, New York City Ferry includes six routes and one seasonal weekend shuttle with 38 ferries and 25 ferry landing stops. This is the result of several expansions since 2017 when NYC Ferry offered only two lines with 10 landings. In the years since, Members of both of these Committees across the last three Council sessions have petitioned EDC to expand the ferry network to additional locations throughout the city including City Island, Willets Point, Canarsie, and LaGuardia Airport. The EDC faces concerns about how to fund such expansions when the existing system has consistently been criticized on cost. EDC's current contracts with its operator, Hornblower, offered a number of revenue sharing components, including favorable terms for Hornblower for concessions, advertising, and ticket sales as well as an options contract to purchase the Hornblower's boats before the end of the contract. EDC elected to exercise its option to purchase the boats and now it owns the majority of the ferry fleet. The exercise of this

1 option was criticized last session by the former
2 Comptroller Stringer as an ineffective way to reduce
3 costs for the ferry system. We on the Committee would
4 like to understand EDC's goals with the new contract
5 including how the revenue sharing agreements will be
6 structured, whether there might be space for multiple
7 operators to take over for or with Hornblower and if
8 there might be any similar options to purchase boats
9 in the new contract once its issued.
10

11 Additionally, we're also here to discuss
12 a bill I sponsored relating to the NYC Ferry System.
13 Introduction 236 would require EDC to offer half-
14 price fares to New York City high school students
15 similar to how the MTA offers three free rides per
16 day in its system to city students. EDC and this
17 administration have already demonstrated their
18 willingness to adjust fares in the ferry system with
19 its most recent NYC Ferry Forward campaign. We hope
20 that this legislation could be a meaningful addition
21 to that campaign to ensure city students are offered
22 the same affordable fares as the city's seniors,
23 disabled, and low-income residents.

24 Before I turn over the floor to EDC, I
25 would like to take a minute to acknowledge the

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3 Economic Development Committee staff, Senior Counsel
4 Alex Paulenoff, Senior Policy Analyst William Hongach
5 (phonetic), and Finance Analyst Glen Martinelli
6 (phonetic) for all their hard work putting this
7 hearing together. I would also like to acknowledge my
8 staff in my office for their hard work, Chief of
9 Staff Randi Malman and Legislative Director Rebecca
10 Nieves.

11 With that said, I'll turn it to the
12 Committee Counsel to swear in the administration.
13 Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I'd like to
15 also take a moment to acknowledge our Colleagues that
16 we're joined by today, which includes Council Members
17 Carr, Ariola, Louis, Kagan, and Riley.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Thank you. I am
19 Elliot Lynn, Counsel to the Transportation and
20 Infrastructure Committee of the New York City
21 Council.

22 Our first witnesses will be from the New
23 York City Economic Development Corporation, Chief of
24 Infrastructure Joshua Kraus, Executive Director of
25 New York City Ferry James Wong, and Senior Vice

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2 President of Government and Community Relations
3 Mikelle Adgate.

4 I will now administer the oath. Please
5 raise your right hands.

6 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the
7 whole truth, and nothing but the truth before these
8 Committees and to respond honestly to Council Member
9 questions?

10 ADMINISTRATION: (INAUDIBLE)

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Thank you. You
12 may begin your testimony when ready.

13 CHIEF KRAUS: Good morning, Chair Farias,
14 Chair Brooks-Powers, esteemed Members of the Economic
15 Development and Transportation and Infrastructure
16 Committees.

17 My name is Joshua Kraus, and I'm the
18 Chief Infrastructure Officer at the New York City
19 Economic Development Corporation which oversees NYC
20 Ferry. It's great to be here with you today to
21 discuss the historic progress of NYC Ferry and our
22 role in providing an essential transit system to
23 millions of New Yorkers. Today, I am joined by my
24 Colleagues, James Wong, Executive Director of NYC
25

Ferry and Mikelle Adgate, Senior Vice President of our Government and Community Relations Team.

We are proud that NYC Ferry is a safe, affordable, and accessible transit system that serves all five boroughs and a key piece of the larger New York City transit ecosystem. In just five years, NYC Ferry has grown into one of the largest ferry systems in the country. There are two reasons for this, NYC Ferry's purpose and its convenience. NYC Ferry was created to serve neighborhoods that are not well-served by subways or existing transit, and we focus on parts of the waterfront where geography or the configuration of the existing transit network leads to long commute times. In the last five years, EDC stood up an expansive and complex transit system, opening 25 landings, building a fleet of 38 vessels, exceeding our initial ridership projections, and now offering six routes that touch all five boroughs.

Before the pandemic, NYC Ferry was experiencing double digit ridership growth each year. That is remarkable rapid growth for such a young transit system. Then, during the pandemic, we provided critical transit to essential and frontline workers, and now our ridership has returned more

1 quickly than any other transit system in the city. We
2 are tracking at roughly 95 percent of our 2019 annual
3 ridership of over 6 million riders.

4
5 Today, our system's financials are on
6 stronger footing than even before the pandemic. We've
7 driven down our cost per rider by nearly 20 percent,
8 and we can now proudly say that our operating cost
9 per service hour and operating cost per rider are
10 among the very lowest of ferry operators in the
11 entire United States.

12 NYC Ferry has also proven to be essential
13 in moments of crisis. During the pandemic, NYC Ferry
14 provided one of the only open-air forms of transit.
15 More recently during the subway shutdown following
16 the attack in Sunset Park, we quickly added ferry
17 service to South Brooklyn to serve stranded New
18 Yorkers. When the Staten Island Ferry experienced
19 service interruptions in August, the NYC Ferry team
20 leapt into action, providing vessels every eight
21 minutes and even operating overnight to ensure Staten
22 Islanders got home.

23 Recently, we announced our Ferry Forward
24 Plan, turning a new page on what it means to connect
25 New Yorkers to schools, jobs, small businesses, and

1 our waterfront communities. The Ferry Forward Plan
2 was informed by ridership surveys, careful ridership
3 analysis, and the past five years of experience,
4 learning what works and what doesn't work for New
5 Yorkers. With the Ferry Forward Plan, we hope to see
6 even more riders take advantage of the ferry and
7 ensure that the system is even more accessible,
8 efficient, and financially sustainable.

10 First, we created a fare structure that
11 we expect will increase fare revenue while enhancing
12 access for lower-income New Yorkers, seniors, and
13 riders with disabilities through discounts and
14 outreach. Second, we've initiated a competitive open
15 bidding process for our next ferry operating
16 contract. Third, we have taken concrete steps to
17 ensure increased transparency about what NYC Ferry
18 costs.

19 Our new fare structure went into effect
20 last Monday, September 12th. We are now offering
21 expanded discounts to seniors, people with
22 disabilities, and the over 200,000 lower-income New
23 Yorkers who participate in the Fair Fares NYC
24 program. They'll pay a fare of just \$1.35. Combined,

1 this fare discount program could reach up to 1
2 million New Yorkers.

3
4 NYC Ferry also launched a new 10-pack
5 bundle for \$27.50 leading to the same \$2.75 per ride.
6 We've also increased the fare for single ride tickets
7 from \$2.75 to \$4 to ensure that visitors or
8 occasional riders pay a reasonable and fair price.
9 Plus, for all NYC Ferry riders, we've eliminated the
10 1-dollar bike fee to encourage multimodal connections
11 and sustainable transit.

12 To make sure our neighbors know about
13 these exciting changes, we sent out multilingual
14 mailers to tens of thousands of New Yorkers in nearly
15 60 NYCHA developments encouraging people to explore
16 NYC Ferry by providing vouchers for two free rides
17 for anyone who creates a new app account with us. We
18 are also partnering with community organizations and
19 NYCHA tenant associations to distribute information
20 on NYC Ferry, and we would welcome the opportunity to
21 join any and all Council Members at tabling events
22 and meetings with constituents to help get the word
23 out that NYC Ferry is for all New Yorkers.

24 In addition, in this administration we
25 are focused on innovation so that we can deliver the

1 best possible service for our customers and the best
2 value for New Yorkers. In this vein, earlier this
3 summer we launched a pilot service called the
4 Rockaway Rocket, a reservation-based direct service
5 to the Rockaways for 8 dollars each way. We sold over
6 16,000 tickets in the eight weeks this service
7 operated, and we are looking forward to reviewing
8 survey results from riders and incorporating that
9 feedback into next year's programming.

11 Turning now to our operating contract,
12 this is the foundation of the NYC Ferry service and
13 reflects our goals and priorities while establishing
14 important metrics that keep NYC Ferry operating as a
15 world class system. We issued a request for
16 proposals, or RFP, on September 7th, and it will
17 close on November 30, 2022. We are seeking a partner
18 that will (1) deliver a first-class ridership
19 experience, (2) generate new revenue streams, (3)
20 incorporate workforce development, and (4) do these
21 things in a transparent and accountable way. We
22 anticipate that operations under the new contract
23 will start on October 1, 2023. Just yesterday, we had
24 our first information session and are really pleased

1 with the amount of interest from potential
2 respondents.

3
4 Because our RFP is in many ways a
5 statement of our values, I'd like to walk you through
6 each of the key aspects of our RFP now.

7 First on ridership experience. According
8 to the RFP, the next contract will tie the operator's
9 incentive payments to important performance
10 indicators such as on-time performance, the number of
11 completed trips, and rider satisfaction creating
12 additional financial incentives for the operator to
13 run a high-quality service. The RFP also requests
14 plans for increased onboard accessibility and contact
15 list ticketing concepts, which we expect will lead to
16 improved accessibility and better rider experience
17 onboard. Moreover, the RFP requires respondents to
18 develop a robust community engagement plan, including
19 in-person activities and marketing efforts to promote
20 the system and its benefits and to drive ridership,
21 especially among diverse populations.

22 On revenue generation. One of the
23 beneficial aspects of a public/private partnership is
24 the private sector's ability to further drive
25 innovation. To this end, the RFP requests a new

1
2 revenue generation plan with the goal of finding new
3 revenue streams to offset costs. For example, naming
4 rights, film and television shoots on ferries, new
5 concessions, or more onboard advertising. The RFP
6 favors proposals that apportion most of these revenue
7 streams to EDC and thus lowers our per-rider subsidy.

8 On workforce development. NYC Ferry
9 currently employs over 460 people. The RFP requests
10 detailed workforce development plans that encourage
11 diversity, equity, and inclusion among the operator's
12 workforce and that promote education, internal
13 advancement, and employee retention. The RFP also
14 requires respondents to submit their plan for working
15 with Hire NYC, a free program run by NYC EDC that
16 connects New Yorkers to the city's workforce
17 development services and for partnering with New
18 York's great maritime institutions, such as the NYC
19 Harbor School, SUNY Maritime, and CUNY Kingsborough
20 among others to create a strong pipeline of maritime
21 careers for New Yorkers at all skill levels. Lastly,
22 respondents must submit a plan that demonstrates how
23 they will work with minority- and women-owned
24 business enterprises or M/WBEs.

1
2 Finally, we are committed to enhanced
3 transparency so that New Yorkers can more clearly
4 understand how much NYC Ferry costs and how it is
5 administered, and we've already taken steps towards
6 this goal. You can now find additional financial
7 information on NYC Ferry posted on EDC's website
8 including how much is paid to the operator, the
9 estimated value of EDC's staff time, the cost of
10 landing maintenance, asset depreciation, and more.
11 You can head to edc.nyc to see for yourself or go to
12 the NYC Open Data page to download years of ridership
13 history which we now publish.

14 In addition, when selecting a new
15 operator, it's important that we choose one focused
16 on public transparency and increased community
17 engagement. To that end, the RFP requires the
18 operator to comply with a number of new reporting
19 requirements.

20 As you've heard, the Ferry Forward Plan
21 will improve the system in so many ways, and we
22 understand that there are often calls to expand the
23 system to more locations. We appreciate this interest
24 and the enthusiasm. Under the de Blasio
25 administration, EDC built and grew the system. In

2021, we opened landings in Staten Island and at Ferry Point Park, and, earlier this year, we added full-time Governors Island service to the South Brooklyn route. Now, under the Adams' administration, we've entered a new phase of NYC Ferry, the Ferry Forward phase, and we are focused on cost efficiency to ensure NYC Ferry's long-term sustainability. We need to see the effects of the recent changes on the operations and economics of the system. As the system stabilizes over the next few years, we can then evaluate if further expansion makes sense and, if so, where, but we're not looking to expand the system right now.

Turning to the bill being heard today, we greatly appreciate the goal of Council Member Farias' bill to provide reduced ferry fares to high school students. We support the bill's intent of making NYC more accessible to high school students and New Yorkers under the age of 18. Ensuring an affordable NYC Ferry experience is also a priority for the Adams' administration. That's why we launched our new reduced fares for low-income New Yorkers, seniors, and people with disabilities. Beginning this spring, we started working with our Colleagues at the

1 Department of Education to better understand how a
2 reduced fare structure specifically for high school
3 students could work and what the administrative and
4 financial impacts might be on NYC Ferry. We'll share
5 those details and our findings with Council Member
6 Farias and any other interested Members as they
7 develop, and we look forward to working on that
8 together.
9

10 For the past five years, we have helped
11 to connect New Yorkers to employment opportunities,
12 to recreation, and to other communities. We're proud
13 of the opportunity to help New Yorkers find more ways
14 to enjoy our city. As we look ahead, we are excited
15 for the next phase of NYC Ferry, the Ferry Forward
16 era in which we will work to create a more equitable,
17 accessible, and financially sustainable ferry system.
18 We welcome the opportunity to work with the Council
19 and all partners to advance these goals, and we
20 highly value feedback from riders, communities, and
21 other stakeholders as we continually seek to improve
22 the service we provide to our fellow New Yorkers.

23 Thank you very much for this opportunity
24 to testify. Our team is here to answer questions you
25 may have, and we welcome your input and questions.

2 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Before we begin, I
3 just want to acknowledge our Colleagues, Council
4 Members Narcisse and Williams, joined us here in this
5 hearing, and Hanks virtually.

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for
7 that testimony. Just wanting to first start with
8 ridership and operations, and I wanted to know what
9 is the total capacity of passengers that these
10 vessels carry on a daily basis.

11 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: Sure. We have
12 both 150 and 350 passenger vessels so we have a full
13 fleet of 38. We have 15 of the larger vessels and the
14 rest are the 150-passenger ones.

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay. I want
16 to think about my District also and District 31, and,
17 as you know, I've been advocating for expansion into
18 the eastern portion of the Rockaway Peninsula, and
19 some of the challenges that have been shared is in
20 terms of the size of the vessel being able to clear
21 the bridge so I'm just wondering when that assessment
22 was made, was it based on the current vessels that
23 you all have and are there other alternative vessels
24 that are options for kind of charting the type of
25

1 waters it would need to but at the same time being
2 able to clear the bridge?

3
4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: Sure. Thank you
5 for that question. We definitely share the interest
6 in making sure that we're providing support to your
7 District as well as others as an organization. The
8 question of ferry service in Downtown Far Rockaway
9 has been one that's been brought up many times. We
10 have struggled as you pointed out with the A-train
11 bridge which crosses over Broad Channel and for which
12 our current ferry vessels are not able to pass under
13 safely at all tides and so this is one of the reasons
14 that we're unable to go further east of that
15 location.

16 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for
17 that. In 2017, the New York City Ferry conducted a
18 ridership survey to determine how passengers were
19 using the ferry and determined that it was largely
20 used for commuting. Have there been any additional
21 ridership surveys conducted more recently, and, if
22 so, what was the result of the most recent survey?

23 CHIEF KRAUS: We are actually right in the
24 middle of our survey period right now so we have just
25 recently finished up the administration of a rider

1 survey that finished right before the end of our
2 summer schedule, and we're in the process of
3 analyzing those results so I don't have the results
4 of the one from just a couple of weeks ago ready, but
5 I did want to point out that we did see that there
6 was about 25 percent of our total ridership was using
7 the ferry for commuting or school purposes in the
8 2021 survey from last summer. As soon as we have more
9 information on the future results, we will be sharing
10 that.
11

12 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay. Thank
13 you for that. Just also going back to the expansion
14 piece, because I know that EDC has been reaching out
15 to myself and some of my Colleagues pretty much
16 saying ferry expansion is a no go, which is obviously
17 a concern for a lot of the Members because I have
18 some Members in the Bronx, in Brooklyn as well as in
19 Queens that would love to see expansion of the ferry,
20 and, even in the beginning of your testimony, you
21 spoke about the whole rationale as to why we have
22 ferry services at all at this point, and I think
23 about the communities that currently have stops and
24 the ones that currently don't and that need other
25 modes of transportation that are far out in distance,

1 and I'm just interested in understanding the
2 administration's plans around connecting those
3 communities that meet the criteria that in the
4 beginning of your testimony outlined but yet have not
5 received any stops or any forecast for a stop to
6 come.
7

8 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: Sure. First of
9 all, we certainly appreciate the advocacy that
10 Council Members are doing on behalf of their
11 Districts and share the excitement about NYC Ferry.
12 NYC Ferry from its beginning was really a tool that
13 was found to be useful for certain parts of the city
14 where existing modes of transportation were not
15 performing as well as they do in other parts and so
16 in certain locations where people live and work near
17 the waterfront there were these opportunities.

18 As we've discussed and as part of the
19 initial rollout and growth of NYC Ferry, we've taken
20 this opportunity as part of the Ferry Forward Plan to
21 take a hard look at these policies and make a lot of
22 specific changes that we've flagged as part of the
23 testimony. High among them and really important to us
24 is making sure that NYC Ferry is being administered
25 in a cost-effective way and so right now the changes

1 in policies that we've put in place, which are some
2 very recent with fare changes and things like that
3 and the new RFP, we want to see how those land, what
4 the impact of those are going to be before we start
5 considering expansion or new options.
6

7 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for
8 that. What are the current plans for expanding the
9 ferry service to include LaGuardia's Marine Air
10 Terminal or the Main Terminal in the future
11 expansion?

12 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: We've definitely
13 heard folks are interested in LaGuardia. People have
14 brought this up in the past. One of the things that
15 we've thought is that if we're going to ever consider
16 service that goes to a place like an airport where
17 people are generally paying quite a bit more to take
18 these air services, we would want to allow a service
19 like this to be considered only if it were done at a
20 market rate and something that actually generates
21 profit for the system. To that end, we included in
22 the RFP an opportunity within the revenue-generation
23 plan that we ask respondents to provide to ask the
24 private market, who we feel is going to be well-
25 qualified to understand those sort of private market

1 conditions, whether or not they think that a ferry
2 service could be operated without public subsidy to
3 LaGuardia so this is the first step in just
4 understanding what's out there. This RFP is really
5 leaning on the private sector to help us understand
6 whether or not something like that is feasible.

8 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Will the new
9 RFP also include a new options contract to purchase
10 new ferries? If so, how would that be structured?

11 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: Our current
12 fleet is 38 purpose-built vessels. They were built
13 for NYC Ferry. They are still very much new and in
14 the early phase of their lives. Most of them are less
15 than five years old. Right now, we have no plans to
16 build new vessels. We have a fleet that works for our
17 system, we are satisfied with that and think that
18 that's the right size for us right now.

19 In terms of what the RFP holds, we did
20 include, because we know that this is a contract that
21 we intend to have for some time, we included an
22 option to basically build a framework around which
23 respondents could tell us how they would talk to us
24 if we did find the need to build a vessel in the
25 future so they will provide some structure to an

1 agreement but it's not pricing or a specific order on
2 vessels. It's just to help us understand what could
3 be in play down the road.
4

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: The Citizens
6 Budget Commission recently recommended considering a
7 reduction in service in the highest subsidized
8 routes. Which New York City Ferry routes receive the
9 highest subsidy?

10 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: Thank you for
11 that question. We appreciate the need as we've talked
12 about throughout the vision that we've been talking
13 about today and as part of the rollout for NYC Ferry
14 to be a cost-effective mode of transportation. That's
15 really important to us, and we look at it as a
16 system. We do not track subsidy on a per route basis
17 because we feel that it's really important that
18 locations that might be further away are still
19 receiving service. We think that it's important that
20 we provide the right amount of service for each
21 location. In doing that, there's a lot of factors
22 that go into the subsidies so one of them is really
23 driving ridership and so a big part of our plan is
24 doing a lot of outreach to make sure that we're
25 talking to all kinds of communities to make sure that

1 they know that NYC Ferry is for everyone and we
2 continue to invite and welcome opportunities to work
3 with Council to go to Districts and table at events
4 and find ways to get people on board.
5

6 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay. EDC
7 recently issued an RFP seeking a New York City Ferry
8 service operator with responses due to later than
9 November 30th of this year. When does EDC plan to
10 make a decision on the new contract?

11 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: We just had our
12 first info session yesterday, and, as Josh mentioned,
13 we are pleased with the interest in this system and
14 in our procurement. We're intending to have a
15 selected operator and a contract by spring of next
16 year so that if there's a need to that we have plenty
17 of time to do any sort of transition of operations in
18 an orderly way.

19 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: In the RFP,
20 one of the factors that EDC will take into
21 consideration when awarding the new contract is an
22 applicant's proposed compensation to run the service.
23 What exactly does that mean?

24 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: As part of the
25 RFP process, respondents need to provide basically

1 all the costs that they're looking to have
2 compensated as part of this so they'll fill out a pro
3 forma which basically outlines every single cost that
4 they think is involved in running a ferry system and
5 what they would require from the city in
6 compensation. That is one of the parts of the
7 selection criteria and the ranking sheets that we
8 would eventually use to select an operator.

10 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: In the RFP, I
11 believe there's some language around M/WBE
12 participation so I'd like to have a better idea as to
13 what the expectations are for M/WBE participation,
14 how does EDC plan on holding the selected entity
15 accountable to the goals that are set forward as
16 well?

17 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: Thank you for
18 that. We believe strongly in the policies of the
19 M/WBE program. We value it and think that it's really
20 important, especially for something like the maritime
21 industry which really is one of those places where we
22 need to do a lot of work to make sure that we're
23 helping to move the industry. I think that having
24 contracts like the one that's the size and scale of
25 NYC Ferry is really important and an opportunity for

us to do just that so part of our RFP includes M/WBE goals of between 5 and 15 percent of the contract value.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: What exactly is EDC committed to doing around M/WBE participation specifically?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: At this juncture of the procurement process, we are first asking the respondents to tell us what they intend and what they think is actually achievable. As part of the procurement process, we will work to understand are these things realistic, is this something that can actually be achieved and held to and so those are the sort of first steps before we talk about how to make sure that things are going to be enforced. Either way, any goal that is proposed as part of the RFP is included in the final contract language.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Will EDC provide any type of support to help facilitate the participation of M/WBEs in this space?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: Absolutely. We have an M/WBE team at EDC which does a lot of work in this area. In fact, I believe a handful of them are today at Barclay Center where there's a large affair

1 going on for M/WBE organizations, companies to
2 specifically find those partners and opportunities to
3 bid on different city contracts.
4

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. I'm
6 going to pass it to my co-Chair.

7 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you so much. We
8 have a lot of different questions in different
9 sections so we're going to try to tag team them and
10 try to stay on topic before we bounce around
11 individually. Really quickly, I'd like to go back to
12 some ridership operational questions. I know I
13 mentioned in my opening statement how many vessels
14 are currently a part of the NYC Ferry system. Can you
15 just go over how many right now the City or EDC owns
16 in the fleet that are currently there and if by
17 chance you have the total cost that it took to
18 purchase all of those vessels, so the total of the
19 fleet that we own right now out of how many we have
20 and the total cost?

21 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: Sure. We own the
22 entire fleet, all 38 vessels. This is a strategic
23 decision that is made so that at the time of re-
24 procurement, where we are, we can go to the market
25 and say that we're looking for an operating partner

1 to help run NYC Ferry. We did not want to be in a
2 position where we needed some private operator to
3 need that many different vessels because frankly
4 there are not many of those out there in the world
5 so, for us, we have the control to be able to provide
6 this opportunity for lots of bidders to come in and
7 provide competition in this procurement process so
8 purchasing the vessels was a really important
9 strategic decision that was part of that, and the
10 total cost all in for all the vessels was around 235
11 million dollars, which taken as a whole when you look
12 at the cost per vessel and, in particular, per seat,
13 these are some of the lowest cost vessels per seat
14 built in the United States over the last 15 years for
15 any public entity so we're very proud of the sort of
16 pricing that we were able to achieve with the fleet.

18 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Sure. I love the idea
19 of our municipality owning our own transit so I love
20 that. My followup question to that is what happens to
21 the vessels when the contract with Hornblower expires
22 next year? Does that mean we have full ownership,
23 they stay with us in the new contract whomever that
24 might be goes into the fleet that we own?

2 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: That's right. We
3 will have that control and so once the new operation
4 begins, we will be able to provide the full fleet of
5 vessels to them.

6 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Great. As I've
7 mentioned, I have the Soundview Ferry Landing that
8 I'm very proud of and I'm glad the Bronx has two
9 ferry landings. My mom is a consistent, every day
10 commuter on the ferry and she does not let me forget
11 any time there's a delay or anything that happens to
12 it that I am the Chair of the Committee on Economic
13 Development so when the ferry system has experienced
14 some service delays or when routes are routinely
15 affected as we saw I believe yesterday because of
16 U.N. Week, the entire Soundview stop, at least from
17 what I heard from my office, was dismissed and people
18 could not ride it so we had folks that were going to
19 the ferry stop that realized when they got there,
20 there was not going to be any ferry service that day
21 and so my question is what happens when ferry service
22 is cancelled or suspended? Other than the app of
23 notification, is there any other efforts made in
24 mitigation to make sure folks that are commuting to
25 the ferry landings are notified beforehand?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: Sure. As most forms of transit in New York, we suffer certain things that will delay us, and, as much as we would like it not to be the case, the U.N. General Assembly certainly was part of that with closures from the Coast Guard that impacted the entire East River for most of the day yesterday so I certainly apologize for those delays. That said, in terms of notifications and making sure that people know what's going on, we really value our customers and the rider experience, making sure that people have a pulse on what's happening. We do our best, as you have mentioned, with our app to get the word out to people well in advance when we know things are happening so, for example, we've done proactive messaging to make sure that people know that there may be disruptions related to the U.N., something that has happened ever since we've had ferry service. We also try to do our best to make sure that there are notifications at the landing and announcements that are being made at the landing whenever possible. This is one of the things also that as part of the new RFP we are placing a high value on. This is the customer experience part and asking that any respondent who's coming to talk

1 to us is going to bring ideas and opportunities to
2 find ways to better interact with our customers.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Great. Thank you. I
5 want to acknowledge Council Members Brewer, Won,
6 Stevens, and Aviles who all joined us here today.
7 Thank you for coming.

8 I'm just going to do some quick expansion
9 questions. We were discussing earlier about the
10 current plans for expansion. You gave a response over
11 to Chair Brooks-Powers on what the future of
12 expansion looks like, why or why not we're
13 entertaining some ferry landings. When we're thinking
14 about like the LaGuardia line or looking at these
15 lines that could be potentially expanded onto or
16 increased, are we looking at them as potentially
17 independent lines or connected to existing lines in
18 any way?

19 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: The main
20 elements that are part of the Ferry Forward Plan are
21 for us to make sure that we're implementing our
22 policies, making sure we see how they're working, and
23 then taking a beat to understand that before we
24 really consider expansion so I would just want to be
25 more clear that we're not currently sort of having an

1 expansion plan. The question about LaGuardia was
2 brought up and has been brought up many times in the
3 past. It is fairly unique that we would ever even
4 consider having a conversation about a market rate
5 service which is one that does not require public
6 subsidy and so just as an information gathering
7 exercise, as a first step to understanding this,
8 that's why we put it in the RFP as a revenue
9 generating opportunity so it is not in as part of a
10 route that would be subsidized. It's there
11 specifically and explicitly as if there's an
12 opportunity to generate revenue with this route, then
13 I think there's probably a different conversation to
14 be had, but, like I said, we want to really lean on
15 the private sector to give us those options and do so
16 in a way that does not provide risk to the city or
17 EDC to spend money and just see how it goes.

18
19 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Sure. What I will say
20 to that is I did a very small scale survey in the
21 Bronx between the two ferry landings, and a LaGuardia
22 stop outside of a City Island stop were the top two
23 requests coming from the Bronx. I'm happy to share
24 that very small, 100-person data survey that I took
25 as well with you folks.

1
2 One of the larger concerns that I've
3 heard or topics that have come up in adding
4 additional stops would be that it would increase
5 timing to the current routes and that kind of would
6 in I think in other people's eyes would defeat the
7 purpose of the fast commute with getting on the
8 ferry. I don't necessarily agree with that
9 personally, but I'd love to hear your thoughts on
10 increased timing, frequency, and maybe adding
11 additional vessels or in this new RFP like if there
12 were additional stops or we were to add more vessels
13 would that necessarily deter the fast route or would
14 that just add more to the routes themselves?

15 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: Sure. Taking a
16 step back, and this is really part of how we sell
17 ferries as an idea, as a concept, is that first and
18 foremost we intend for this to be a transit option.
19 It is a lovely transit option that you get to spend
20 time on a boat, and I think that a lot of people
21 enjoy that, but we really want to make sure that
22 these are travel time competitive with existing modes
23 of transit. If it is getting you somewhere faster
24 than you could otherwise with other modes of transit,
25 then it is being successful in that regard and so

1 travel time is just really important to us. We want
2 to make sure that if we're stopping at a location
3 that it is one that is really benefiting the
4 neighborhood, benefiting communities and getting
5 people to work and school and places that they need
6 to go in a way that's faster. While we're not, as I
7 had mentioned, contemplating expansion at this
8 juncture, even just the discussion around whether or
9 not increase service or to change travel times, we do
10 want to keep those generally as quick as possible and
11 then in terms of increasing service we will take a
12 look as we always do about ridership, volume,
13 understand whether we need to in order to satisfy the
14 ridership needs of a community.

16 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Sure. Thank you for
17 that. I just have a quick question around the RFP
18 allowing multiple operators. I'm genuinely interested
19 in if the RFP has any scope of do we want to go back
20 to just having one operator, is there room since we
21 own all of these vessels to have multiple operators
22 working within this contract to maybe add a variety
23 of service or different types of vessels that have
24 advertising and certain things or certain operators
25 on certain routes, like handling those shorter routes

1 or the longer routes? Are we entertaining that at all
2 in the RFP?
3

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: Thank you for
5 that. The RFP as written and as was put out to the
6 market really only contemplates having a single
7 operator. The thinking that went into this, and this
8 was years of experience and things that we've been
9 going through and really tackling whether or not we
10 should approach a question like that, part of that
11 was that the interoperability and codependency of the
12 routes on one another is really important to
13 acknowledge. If there's ever an issue on one route
14 where a vessel has an issue, we can quickly swap
15 vessels out to a different route. If there's a crew
16 working here that needs to catch up on travel time
17 because there's a delay on one route, we can switch a
18 vessel from a different route, and, because the fleet
19 is really stored at the city's two home port
20 facilities, one that's built and one that's about to
21 be under construction, we really think that there's a
22 lot of efficiencies by having one operator, one
23 ticketing system, one maintenance system for the
24 whole fleet and system at a time.

CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: How long will this contract be?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: The RFP has a five-year initial term and two three-year extensions.

CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: I'm sorry. Five-year initial term and two three-year extensions. Okay. A lot of our systems here in the city are monopolized and I'm just wondering, we have to make sure we diversify who we're actually reaching out to but I understand and these seem like short timeline enough for me.

Give me one second.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you, Chair. I want to ask a few questions in terms of the New York City Comptroller's report. One of the recommendations in the Comptroller's report called on EDC to recoup approximately 12 million dollars in overpayments or excessive payments to the ferry operator, a recommendation that EDC has indicated they will not do. One, why did EDC refuse to consider this recommendation, and, two, EDC has indicated that these payments were paid to the operator for services in accordance with the agreements? Can you tell us exactly what is meant by this?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: Sure. Thanks for the question. In going through the process of the audit, we certainly appreciate and understand the need for this oversight and welcome it and so part of that process was going through these responses, which we've done in fair detail as part of the actual audit report. In terms of the question about the 12 million dollars, this was part of things that we felt were paid in accordance with the contract as you had said because EDC really values the need to pay its bills, to operate in accordance with the contract, which means if there are certain payments that need to be made that we are fulfilling those. This is one of the areas that we did not see eye to eye with the Comptroller on but have recorded those in the letter that's in the audit report.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

Next, I wanted to skip to accessibility. How does New York City Ferry ensure that persons with disabilities can fully access the ferry system? Are all New York City Ferry vessels fully accessible?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: Yes, we highly value accessibility. I think it's one of the really important foundational things that we did, and the

1 reality of building a system starting in 2015 allowed
2 us to take advantage of a lot of opportunities where
3 there are codes that are written, there are
4 standards, there's opportunities to make sure that
5 everything is built the right way so all of our
6 landings, our vessels are all accessible, and this
7 doesn't just mean that we have a way for people with
8 wheelchairs, walkers, and scooters to get on board,
9 but we also focus on things like making sure there
10 are ways that you can, if you use assistive hearing
11 devices that there's an opportunity to use those on
12 the vessels as well so we're definitely focused on
13 accessibility and are proud that the system is an
14 accessible one.
15

16 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Does EDC and
17 New York City Ferry conduct any type of advertising
18 or outreach towards persons with disabilities to
19 inform them about the availability of ferry services?

20 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: Our general
21 marketing plan is definitely broad. I don't believe
22 that there's a very specific marketing effort
23 specifically to people with disabilities. However,
24 it's an idea that I definitely welcome the
25 opportunity, whether it's to work with your office or

1 MOPD to make sure that we can do more targeted
2 outreach. I think there are good opportunities there
3 for us because we do want to make sure, as is part of
4 the Ferry Forward Plan, that people know that NYC
5 Ferry really is for all New Yorkers.
6

7 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: You just went
8 into my next followup question which was going to be
9 if not, is that something EDC would consider
10 integrating into future advertising campaigns, but it
11 sounds like you are willing to do so.

12 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: Absolutely.

13 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I will pass
14 over to my co-Chair.

15 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you so much.
16 Just really quickly on the accessibility part. Really
17 important to me, consistently talking about including
18 making my District multimodal to have different
19 options. Right now, really the ferry in my District
20 is the only accessible transit option. None of my
21 train stops have elevators, and, obviously, the bus
22 is accessible, but the buses are rough when you're
23 traveling across the Bronx. When looking at our ferry
24 landings, are we working towards making sure we're
25 getting different multimodal options, ensuring

1 parking where accessible, things like that to make
2 sure our folks have ways to get there outside of the
3 other forms of less accessible transit options to
4 utilize the ferry?
5

6 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: I think that's a
7 really great question. It's really important that
8 we're thinking beyond just the vessel, and I take the
9 point seriously. In fact, in Soundview one of the
10 things that we did was working with the MTA in that
11 location specifically because, I'm not sure if you
12 recall, the bus used to stop several blocks further
13 up. We worked closely with the MTA to make sure that
14 the bus would come all the way around that circle. I
15 think we did some curb improvements actually
16 specifically because we wanted to make sure that
17 there were accessibility to the bus if people were
18 coming down that way so this is definitely part of
19 our planning considerations when we are exploring the
20 construction of the system, and, as I've mentioned
21 while we're not considering expansion right now, if
22 we ever were to, certainly accessibility is one of
23 the key things that we have to make sure is being
24 accommodated throughout the design process.

1
2 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Yeah, we still have
3 to work on MTA to get one of those buses to go all
4 the way down there, but we do have a bus that goes
5 (INAUDIBLE) I brought the Chair with me to the
6 District and we got to see some of the difficulties
7 there, but thank you for that.

8 In regards to the new ferry structures
9 and the NYC Ferry Forward Plan working with the
10 mailers and the outreach distribution you did to our
11 NYCHAs, is there a way that we can get a list of the
12 NYCHAs that you did outreach to so we can share with
13 our Colleagues and ensure that at least they know
14 their NYCHA developments or campuses have received at
15 least a first touch and, if they're willing to come
16 and reach out to you folks to do some outreach or
17 visibility?

18 SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT ADGATE: Yeah,
19 absolutely. We're happy to share the list with you
20 either this week or next week.

21 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Great. Thank you so
22 much. I see in your testimony that you are encouraged
23 by Introduction 236, which I'm really encouraged by
24 as well, and I just want to maybe hear any of the
25 administration's concerns about the bill outside of

1 cost, we understand cost is always a concern in this
2 city, and obviously you said you're supportive if
3 working with the DOE to help roll out voluntarily
4 something similar, but if there's any, off the top of
5 your heads today, any initial alarms outside of cost?
6

7 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: As you had
8 mentioned, we definitely share the interest in making
9 sure that NYC Ferry and transportation generally is
10 available and accessible to students. I think that's
11 really important to make sure because that's
12 definitely a reflection of our values here. In terms
13 of specific concerns, right now we are focused on
14 doing the analysis and so that's been our back and
15 forth with DOE, is really just understanding what
16 scale we're talking about. Are there a lot of
17 students who live near the water who could feasibly
18 use a ferry in a productive way to get to a school
19 that's near the water? What are those impacts? The
20 other element that we want to really make sure we're
21 being thoughtful about is the administration of such
22 a program. Currently, every single rider is
23 responsible for their own ticket, for their own app,
24 and that's how we operate. If we transition to a
25 system where there's a lot more engagement or

1 outreach obviously with students, there's just going
2 to be an administrative burden that comes with that
3 and we want to understand that before we really make
4 further comments.

6 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Sure. I'd be
7 interested in seeing if the app can have like student
8 access, if you had like a student email or could show
9 an ID or some sort to say that you have a pass or two
10 passes, X amount a month, so long as you download the
11 app. I feel like there's definitely ways that we can
12 work towards that, but I'm happy to keep the
13 conversation going offline.

14 My last question will be about my small
15 office survey that I did. We had about 100
16 respondents to this survey, and a lot of folks stated
17 that they either drove, took a cab, walked to make it
18 to their ferry stop, some even stated walking more
19 than 20 minutes. I even spoke to someone this past
20 weekend at an event because the ferry vessels are
21 accessible took a bus all the way from Co-Op City all
22 the way to a ferry landing to utilize it to go to
23 work down on the east side of Manhattan so I just
24 wanted to see if there was any consideration around
25 adding shuttle bus routes to transport commuters

1 within a two-mile radius of the ferry, particularly
2 interested in the Soundview stop obviously, but if
3 that's been done elsewhere and, if so, in what
4 conditions. I do know Ferry Point Park has a shuttle
5 from the parking lot to the ferry landing because of
6 the distance but in scenarios that are not in that
7 case, has it been utilized in any other way?

9 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: Thank you for
10 that. I think that in particular with the Soundview
11 Landing and locations that have been in the Bronx, we
12 see people coming from much further away. It's
13 exciting to see that ferry provides an access point
14 to the city that people are taking advantage of, and,
15 I'd have to find out the specifics of it, but I think
16 we looked briefly at one point and found that people
17 were coming from pretty far across the Bronx to use
18 the Soundview Landing even before Ferry Point Park
19 opened up so we're really encouraged by people's
20 interest in that, certainly with the example you
21 brought all the way from Co-Op City. In terms of
22 shuttle buses, as we had mentioned, a big thing for
23 us is making sure we're managing cost, managing the
24 system, and being as efficient as we can. First and
25 foremost, we are a ferry system and so we want to

1 make sure that we really emphasize our core
2 competencies. We do have a few shuttle buses where
3 there's a very unique situation. The Rockaways is one
4 location and Midtown East is actually probably the
5 best location where I can talk about. We have a ferry
6 landing that is served by almost all routes, it's
7 probably like four of the routes are served by East
8 34th Street and so we have a shuttle bus there that
9 is really designed to take people who are all coming
10 into the city through the network so that's one of
11 very few that we have. In general, we're pretty
12 cautious about shuttle buses because it can be a very
13 slippery slope on just replicating MTA service,
14 replicating other services and doing that in a lot of
15 places.
16

17 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Okay. Thank you so
18 much.

19 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Before we get
20 into Member questions, I'd like to acknowledge we've
21 been joined by our Colleague, Council Member Rivera.

22 Also, we are going to have testimony
23 provided by Assembly Member Khaleel Anderson who will
24 not be asking questions directly of EDC. We're
25 working to accommodate his time constraint, but we

1
2 thank EDC for being accommodating as well as the rest
3 of the Members. Assembly Member Anderson, if you can
4 come to the dais.

5 ASSEMBLY MEMBER ANDERSON: These are
6 fancier mics than we have in the Assembly. Good
7 morning, everyone. Thank you so much to you, Majority
8 Whip and Chair of the Committee, for being here and
9 convening this important oversight hearing. I want to
10 thank EDC as well as NYC Ferry for being here.

11 I just have a testimony points that I
12 want to put on the record in regards to the ferry and
13 the recent report that Comptroller Lander did
14 auditing the ferry service. When we look at the ferry
15 service, we see that it's helping address the issues
16 of commute times throughout the city which is a great
17 thing. We're really grateful for that opportunity,
18 but when I reference the New York State's
19 Comptroller's report, he did an economic snapshot of
20 the Rockaway Peninsula, one of the glaring things
21 that stands out to me the most is that the Rockaway
22 Peninsula has among the highest commute times in the
23 city out of all 55 communities that are here in the
24 city, 49.7 percent commute time is the longest
25 commute time that is faced by the Rockaway Peninsula

1
2 so when we think about NYC Ferry, we want to make
3 sure that this ferry is helping cut down those
4 commute times by expanding access.

5 I want to also recognize the fact that
6 over 60,000 residents on the Rockaway Peninsula do
7 not have access to the ferry because the ferry dock
8 is on the Beach 108th Street which is in the
9 geographic middle of the Peninsula, but when you
10 think about the rising and increasing populations on
11 the eastern end of the Peninsula, we have to make
12 sure that the NYC Ferry is planning for those
13 increased populations to ensure that we can get
14 people to and from and off and on the Peninsula. NYC
15 Ferry operates ferry shuttle that runs from Edgemere
16 all the way up to the actual dock. This ferry shuttle
17 is insufficient because the turnaround time is
18 actually one minute so it gets to the dock one minute
19 before the boat takes off and so if we have somebody
20 that has a disability and cannot offload or get off
21 the ferry, depart the ferry shuttle, this puts them
22 at a disadvantage from being able to catch that ferry
23 boat so that turnaround time is crucial that we have
24 to improve that.

1
2 I also would like to suggest that NYC
3 EDC, NYC Ferry can be a little bit more innovative in
4 their thinking. I understand that you mentioned to
5 the Chair and to the co-Chair that you all are not
6 purchasing any new vessels, but, with the factors
7 that I have shared with you all today about the
8 increased commute time as well as the other
9 additional factors that I mentioned including the
10 shuttle not performing in the way we need it to
11 perform, you all should be innovative in how we look
12 at the next purchase of fleets. We can do boats that
13 can go under the South Channel train bridge so that
14 it can reach the eastern end of the Peninsula or you
15 all can look into adding an additional dock on Beach
16 84th Street so that it can reach more residents on
17 the Peninsula so that we can help address those
18 issues.

19 When we think about NYC Ferry, as I
20 close, we're thinking about additional transportation
21 that's equitable for all New Yorkers so when I think
22 of communities like Edgemere, Arverne that have among
23 the lowest median incomes in the city at 34,000
24 dollars a year, this ferry service really truly can
25 provide true equity, but right now, as the City's

1 Comptroller's report has pointed out, it's serving
2 among the wealthiest communities in the City of New
3 York, and that can be changed with a little bit more
4 innovation from New York City EDC as well as NYC
5 Ferry so adding that additional dock on Beach 84th
6 Street would only increase the ferry service by an
7 additional two to three minutes, which is critical
8 because now that gives access to additional 10,000 to
9 20,000 people who live in the Rockaway Beach and
10 Edgemere communities.
11

12 That's my testimony. I want to thank
13 again the Committee for calling this very important
14 hearing, to our Majority Whip and Chair, thank you so
15 much for convening, and to the co-Chair, thank you so
16 much for being here. Thank you, EDC and NYC Ferry.

17 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you so
18 much and thank you, EDC, once again for the
19 accommodation. We appreciate it.

20 First up for Member questions will be
21 Council Member Carr.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Thank you so much,
23 Majority Whip Brooks-Powers and Chair Farias, for
24 convening and presiding over this very important
25 hearing. I also want to thank EDC for the role that

1 the NYC Ferry system played in mitigating the service
2 disruption impacts of the Staten Island Ferry back in
3 August. I don't know what commuters would have done
4 without that backfill that the system played on that
5 couple of days, and I also want to thank former
6 Borough President James Oddo who was crucial in
7 making sure the de Blasio administration actually had
8 a five-borough Fast Ferry system that served all five
9 boroughs and so I think he deserves enormous credit
10 for that push at that time.
11

12 I'm extremely disappointed that nobody
13 from New York City Department of Transportation is
14 here to talk about the Staten Island Ferry component
15 of our city's ferry system. I think that what
16 happened in August was probably one of the worst
17 transit failures that we've seen in this city in a
18 long time, and it hasn't gone away or gotten better.
19 I don't think a week has gone by where I haven't seen
20 ferry service disruption notices since that happened,
21 and they were going on for more than 24 months prior
22 to that. Certainly nothing of the magnitude we saw in
23 August, but it's been ongoing, it's been recurring,
24 it's been regular, and for most of that time DOT
25 basically said oh, it's a COVID-related shortage and

2 staff, but that wasn't the whole truth. There's a
3 reason why the ferry workforce was particularly
4 vulnerable to call-outs from members of their team.

5 It's because they were able to hire or retain enough
6 individuals in crucial titles in the ferry system for
7 a significant period of time and that's because it's
8 been over a decade without any kind of a contract
9 with the folks who work the ferry day in and day out.

10 It's because they don't have a rate of pay or
11 benefits that are competitive with peer titles in
12 other parts of the maritime industry and so there's
13 no one here from DOT or from the Office of Labor
14 Relations to talk about that. DOT loves to punt it to
15 the OLR, but they have an agency staff member who's
16 dedicated to liaising with OLR so presumably they
17 could've been here today to answer basic questions,
18 questions that I'm sure you good folks will be happy
19 to take back from me to them which are what are the
20 current operations of the ferry system, how are they
21 being impacted by these staffing issues, has the
22 situation improved any, what is the state of
23 negotiations that are currently going on with the
24 union about resolving these long-term issues, what's
25 the status of the training of the existing workforce

1 for the three Ollis-class ferries that have come
2 online this year, the most recent of which just
3 arrived about a week to two weeks ago? There not here
4 to say any of those questions, and, again, I know the
5 folks from EDC will take that back and maybe
6 eventually we'll get answers from them, but they
7 should be here today to answer those questions,
8 particularly considering the head of the agency is
9 not only a former Member of the Council but a former
10 Chair of the Transportation and Infrastructure
11 Committee. I'm sure he wouldn't have appreciated it
12 if DOT did to him what he's doing to us as a Body
13 today. I think that DOT, once again, leaves us with
14 more questions than answers on this. It's been radio
15 silence, and there's been no improvement. Ferry
16 disruptions continue to happen. It's unacceptable.
17 It's a violation of Local Law, even when it's off-
18 peak and overnight and it absolutely needs to change
19 so this Committee, this Council, and Staten Islanders
20 and New York commuters in general need answers and
21 DOT needs to provide them. Thank you.

23 SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT ADGATE: Thank you,
24 Council Member. We certainly appreciate your kind
25 words about the work of NYC Ferry during those days

1 in August and, as you said, while I certainly can't
2 speak on behalf of my Colleagues at DOT and OLR, we
3 can certainly take your comments and your feedback
4 back to them.
5

6 I do think that you raise a very
7 important point about the criticality of NYC Ferry
8 serving as a redundant transportation mode, not just
9 for the Staten Island Ferry system but for our
10 Colleagues at MTA and how important it is that NYC
11 Ferry continues to operate well so that we can step
12 in for New Yorkers when they're trying to get home,
13 to school, or to other locations so we thank you for
14 recognizing that and we will ensure that DOT follows
15 up with you.

16 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for
17 that. Next, we will hear from Council Member Kagan.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER KAGAN: Thank you so much,
19 Chair Farias and Chair Brooks-Powers, and, of course,
20 Joshua Kraus, for your testimony and all members of
21 NYC Ferry.

22 As you know, I represent Southern
23 Brooklyn and Coney Island in particular and for many,
24 many years residents of Coney Island and surrounding
25 neighborhoods, entire Southern Brooklyn I would say,

1 have been asking and continue to ask to expand New
2 York City Ferry system towards Coney Island and our
3 peninsula. Right now, if you're a resident of West
4 36th Street or 37th Street in Coney Island, in order
5 just to get to Manhattan, usually it's around two
6 hours. Also, as you know, we have a lot of visitors,
7 especially during the summer season because we are
8 America's playground, and we definitely don't want
9 everyone to come to Coney Island by cars because it
10 will be an absolute disaster and it's already like
11 our roads are very, very congested. Sometimes during
12 the summertime it's impossible to drive sometimes
13 even to work all over Surf Avenue and Mermaid Avenue
14 and Neptune Avenue so a ferry in Coney Island is a
15 necessity, it's a livelihood, it's economic
16 development, it's (INAUDIBLE) I would say of the
17 neighborhood from so many angles. I'm very well
18 aware, I'm not a child about logistical difficulties,
19 and I know what happened with sand and mother nature
20 always bringing a lot of surprises. At the same time,
21 I believe there should be some kind of reasonable
22 time for all of these studies eventually to conclude.
23 I know already that in Coney Island Creek, at this
24 point it's practically impossible for a ferry to
25

1
2 operate due to excessive sand, growth in the area so
3 the only possible option at this point I believe
4 should be studied even more quickly is an oceanside
5 ferry terminal, but, in any case, it looks like we
6 are neglected all over again. It's almost October.
7 We're still waiting for a study. The last
8 conversation was now end of October, the results of
9 the study. Hopefully, it's October 2022, not more,
10 but the whole community is suffering, businesses,
11 residents, and tourists as well, everybody. It will
12 benefit the whole city. It could be a crown jewel of
13 Southern Brooklyn and New York City and right now
14 it's basically (INAUDIBLE) in terms of New York City
15 Ferry system. I just can't smile every time when
16 you're talking about how great this is for Rockaway,
17 how great this in this neighborhood, let's celebrate
18 another press release, so I'm eagerly awaiting for a
19 celebration of grand opening of New York City Ferry
20 terminal in Coney Island.

21 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: Thank you,
22 Council Member. I really want to say that I
23 appreciate your advocacy and the enthusiasm and your
24 willingness to work with us as we've had a number of
25 conversations on the subject. First and foremost, we

1 want to make sure that we lead with safety, which I
2 know that you share the same values here and
3 understand why we've had to take this moment to
4 reevaluate how we're going to be delivering service
5 so right now, as you pointed out, we are looking
6 forward to being able to share results of our ongoing
7 study, yes, October of this year, and so we intend to
8 do that with the community and we will certainly be
9 in touch with your office once we have results to be
10 able to share.
11

12 COUNCIL MEMBER KAGAN: I would like to
13 hear a commitment, in October of 2022, the final
14 study will tell us when and how New York City Ferry
15 terminal will be opened in Coney Island, like October
16 of this year.

17 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: Yes, in October
18 of this year we are going to the community, we are
19 sharing the results of our analysis, which as we've
20 talked to you and your office about, is really the
21 first step in understanding what it takes to either
22 figure out a way to deliver on the creek side or what
23 it would take if we were to consider the ocean side
24 so this is really the first step in understanding how
25 we do that, if we were to go down that path and so

1 that's what we intend to talk about in the Community
2 Board meeting in October.

3
4 COUNCIL MEMBER KAGAN: So it is a firm
5 commitment, October 26, all studies will be finished
6 and will be presented to the community?

7 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: We will be
8 presenting to the community on this study, which is
9 analyzing what it takes to build a ferry landing or
10 what the costs or structure elements and operational
11 consideration.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER KAGAN: Everyone is eager
13 to see it. Okay.

14 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: I'd like to
15 acknowledge our Colleague, Council Member Restler,
16 has joined us today, and next up is Council Member
17 Narcisse.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Good morning.
19 Thank you for being here. Thank you to Chair Brooks-
20 Powers and Farias for putting this together, NYC
21 Ferry and EDC and thank you, and thank you to the
22 Assembly Member that came to give the testimony.

23 Following my partner next to me, I was
24 going to ask about the expansion because I live in a
25 transportation desert too so my question would be do

1 you have an expansion list right now pending to visit
2 for the coming year because transportation, we
3 increase in population, and where I'm coming from, we
4 have a big increase in population, going through
5 redistricting process as we speak, so I want to know
6 if you have a list pending and where are they located
7 in the five boroughs.
8

9 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: Sure. Thank you,
10 Council Member. As I mentioned earlier, we always
11 appreciate the advocacy and the interest in what NYC
12 Ferry can do because as you've pointed out in places
13 where subways and buses aren't serving people, these
14 are opportunities where NYC Ferry has become really
15 important in many communities. A major theme as I've
16 shared earlier is that as part of the Ferry Forward
17 Plan, really what we are doing right now is
18 implementing the policy vision that the Mayor was
19 delivering with us earlier this year including things
20 like fare changes, including things like releasing
21 this RFP and really keeping our team focused on
22 ensuring that we are creating a long-term and
23 sustainable system for New Yorkers. We do not have,
24 as I had mentioned, any immediate plans for
25 expansion, but I do want to point you to, we have

1 studied in the past things which are also part of the
2 2018 and '19 citywide ferry study that have some of
3 the past places that we have looked at as well.

4
5 SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT ADGATE: I will just
6 add to that that we're happy to sit with your office
7 and have a better understanding of your constituents'
8 needs for the ferry service and talk a little bit if
9 a location that you have in mind is one that we've
10 studied in the past, but, to reinforce James' point,
11 really the focus with Ferry Forward at this moment is
12 ensuring the financial sustainability of the current
13 system and ensuring that we have a good understanding
14 of that first before we get into the next steps on
15 expansion.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: I think under
17 Mayor Bill de Blasio, that's one of the things,
18 Canarsie was in the forefront to get ferry
19 transportation because, like I said, we increased in
20 population. When we're talking about addressing the
21 inequities, those are all (INAUDIBLE) Another
22 question that I have, right now does high school get
23 a discount for the ferry? I don't know if anybody has
24 asked that. High school students that register in New
25 York City, do they get a discount?

2 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: We do not
3 currently have one, but, as part of the testimony
4 that we gave, we're definitely interested in
5 understanding more about what it would take for the
6 Chair's bill which does speak to discounts for
7 students, to better understand what that impact looks
8 like.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: In addition, I'm
10 hoping that every station has in mind for ADA
11 compliance to make sure that we have all disabled can
12 access freely.

13 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: Yes.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: I'm hoping all
15 of them, right?

16 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: Yes.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: All right, so
18 thank you for your time. I'm looking forward to
19 working with you because we had released over 2,000
20 or 3,000 signatures before, and we can bring much
21 more because we have an increase in population and
22 congestion around our neighborhoods, especially in
23 the 46th District, Canarsie part is the worst of it,
24 so I'm looking forward to address the inequities
25 there in transportation so thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you so much,
3 Council Member. Next up we have Council Member
4 Stevens.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Good morning,
6 everyone. I have been a big advocate around the ferry
7 expansion. I had a meeting with EDC a few weeks ago
8 so some of my questions are regarding some of the
9 things that I got from that conversation, but I know
10 it's been repeated a couple of times around like
11 currently EDC is not looking to expand ferries.
12 However, I'm a person who believes just because we're
13 not doing something at the moment doesn't mean that
14 we shouldn't be planning and thinking about what that
15 expansion looks like and, in the conversation, I
16 didn't necessarily get that, that I had so could you
17 talk about what does that look like, the plan that
18 you're planning for it because obviously it is a need
19 and there's a lot of places throughout the city that
20 could benefit from this additional mode of
21 transportation, especially when we have a city that
22 has so many transit deserts so could you talk a
23 little bit about what does this plan look like moving
24 forward because one of the points that the Assembly
25 Member made that I wanted to just bring up also, it

1 does seem like some of the places that the ferries
2 are at, it's more affluent neighborhoods, and the
3 underserved communities I feel like are being left
4 out of this conversation and my community is one of
5 them that is being left out so I'd love to hear more
6 information regarding what the plan looks like.
7

8 SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT ADGATE: Thank you,
9 Council Member, and thank you for the opportunity to
10 meet with your team a couple of weeks ago. I think
11 all of your points and the points that the Chairs
12 raised around expansion are well-founded and is a
13 main reason why we're taking the Ferry Forward Plan
14 so seriously, because before we can think about
15 specific locations to expand to, we have to ensure
16 that we have the financial viability to do that. As
17 the Chair shared, whether it was findings from the
18 Comptroller's report or other assessments like CBC
19 and others of NYC Ferry and our financials, we're
20 taking those comments very seriously and ensuring
21 that as we think about revenue generation, reducing
22 the subsidy that we have a very solid financial
23 standing before we think about where those next steps
24 are for expansion. We certainly have all of the
25 locations that your office and others have shared

1 with us, and we will continue to be transparent and
2 open with the Council because we see opportunities
3 for expansion in the future as a real partnership
4 between us and the constituents of New York City, but
5 I do want to sort of reinforce that before we have
6 those sort of concrete plans that you're looking for,
7 it's critical that we have that first step of the
8 financial sustainability of NYC Ferry.
9

10 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Absolutely, and I
11 think that that's part of the reason why I was a
12 little disheartened when it was like well, that's not
13 what we're doing right now, we're talking about what
14 we currently have, and I'm like I get that but you
15 can walk and chew gum at the same time and sometimes
16 that doesn't happen in government so just want to
17 make sure that that is something that's being done
18 currently, like how are we looking at expansion, what
19 does that look like, and even with like boat size, I
20 understand the fleet because that was one of the
21 pushbacks that I got was because of the boats and the
22 bridge and the boats are too big or whatever and just
23 thinking about even what the Assembly Member how are
24 we diversifying the fleet and what does that look
25

1 like and how are we making sure that it is able to be
2 available to as many people as possible.

3
4 Another question I had was what is taken
5 in consideration when completing a feasibility study
6 because that was one of the things that I was told
7 when they were looking at expansion in the first
8 round, there was a feasibility study that was done
9 and that is how my community got knocked off the list
10 because the feasibility study so what does the
11 feasibility study look like and is there a scoring
12 rubric, are there standard evaluations, and could
13 that be provided to us to take a look at as well.

14 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: Sure. I can
15 speak a little bit to the sort of planning process
16 generally and I think that might address some of the
17 questions that you had. When we've done planning
18 studies in the past, a couple of the key things we're
19 looking at are where do people live, where do they
20 work, what are the existing transit modes, and would
21 ferries provide a faster mode of transit for people
22 who are going to work or school or accessing city
23 services, things like that, so just as a starting
24 point that is one of the things we look at just to
25 understand whether or not ferry is the right kind of

1 solution because, as you know, the transportation
2 system has lots of different pieces to it. In
3 addition, we also look at physical constraints so
4 looking at whether or not there's the right depth of
5 water for the standardized fleet that we do maintain,
6 which is one of the things that helps us run an
7 efficient system is having that standard fleet size,
8 do we have the right water depth, are we in the right
9 places in terms of the currents and tides, do we have
10 public sites that we have access to. It's important
11 that the city has access to different sites to be
12 able to build a ferry landing if we were going to.
13 Then there's a lot of other conditions that are
14 really built in that come with operational expertise.
15 We lean on working with private operators to weigh in
16 and think about things like that so there's really a
17 broad array of things that we look at. It's not a
18 single standard that says if you meet X criteria that
19 qualifies for a ferry landing, but it's really taken
20 in total across the many different dimensions.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Okay. I just have
23 one more question. Another thing that I was told was
24 that the ferry stop in my District in the West Bronx
25 was not, one of the reasons that it was knocked out

1 from the feasibility study because not enough local
2 residents would use it and, to me, that actually
3 didn't make sense because I was like did we speak to
4 the residents, but also too I have Yankee Stadium in
5 my District so I have hundreds of people traveling in
6 my District during baseball season so I'm like was
7 that taken in consideration so how are we looking at
8 potential sustainable revenue on game days, it's like
9 a missed opportunity, I know we would have people
10 using this ferry because I have hundreds and
11 thousands of people who jam up traffic in my District
12 and this could help relieve some of those things so
13 how is that taken into consideration as well?

15 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: Sure. One of the
16 things that we look at when we're looking at the
17 broader transit network is what is the right tool and
18 the right solution for each of our different
19 challenges that we face. One of the things about
20 ferries is that compared to subways or even buses,
21 sometimes it's not the highest capacity mode. We have
22 150- or 350-passenger vessels, and so that is much
23 smaller than a subway train so subways in places like
24 game day events and things like that are far more
25 effective in moving big quantities of people.

1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: But it would
3 help. That would not be the main source of
4 transportation obviously, but it would help relieve
5 the traffic, the congestion on the trains, and it
6 would help. Obviously, it wouldn't just be the only
7 mode of transportation, like it would help relieve
8 some of it. When we talk about the Bronx and having
9 high asthma rates and these things, it would help
10 relieve some of these things.

11 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: I agree, and,
12 like I said, I very much appreciate the advocacy
13 because I think that it's important to understand the
14 balance of these many different modes that we have.
15 Certainly, as you're pointing out, it wouldn't be the
16 only one, but those were just some of the limitations
17 that we have faced in the past.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Yeah. I would
19 just say I think when we're thinking about the next
20 round and where we're going we need to really be
21 looking at communities that are suffering and that
22 are transit deserts and often are left out of these
23 conversations because one of the things I've heard is
24 ferries are for elites and things like that, and
25 that's inappropriate. It's about transportation and

1 making sure that people have options, and my
2 community should have this option. Thank you.

3
4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you so
5 much for that, Council Member Stevens, and I just
6 want to add my voice to her. I think the next hearing
7 that we have, we're looking forward to EDC coming
8 with a plan of action on how do we reach the
9 communities that need the most, the true
10 transportation deserts, the communities that are
11 black and brown, so that it is something that in the
12 next hearing we're looking for an action plan and if
13 you can send it beforehand that's even better, but
14 that's the conversation that we should be working
15 towards at this point.

16 Next, we will hear from Council Member
17 Williams.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Thank you,
19 Chairs. Hello. I wanted to revisit something that
20 Chair Brooks-Powers actually brought up about the
21 Comptroller's audit. I know you mentioned that you
22 were just honoring the contract or the agreement so I
23 just kind of wanted to know were there any additional
24 services that were provided for the additional 12
25 million that was paid out?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: Going back to the audit and some of the responses that we talked about. We disagreed with how the Comptroller characterized the amount that you're talking about, the 12 million dollars, things that were said to be overpaid, we believe that we paid the right amount for the services that we got. One example that was brought up that's reflected in audit report was the operational choice that EDC makes to run certain boats at certain times. The Comptroller's Office felt that we should run cheaper, smaller boats when we have them available when we are making long-term decisions about how to make the best use of our fleet. It's not always about just what is the cheapest thing to do today. We have a long-term view. We want to balance the usage of our fleet, balance the usage of that, and so things like that which are brought up and said to be poor choices or inappropriately paid, we do take exception to how some of those are characterized.

COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, so can you be a little bit more detailed around what you feel is the discrepancy between the Comptroller's report and your assessment of the payments? I know you just made

1 the one example about how he felt that you should
2 have different types of fleet and the cadence of the
3 fleet so do you have other examples that you can
4 detail for us in terms of your viewpoint of the
5 payments versus the Comptroller's viewpoints and how
6 you reconcile the differences?
7

8 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: I would say one
9 other example that we have was that we don't feel
10 that Comptroller understands the contract that we
11 have with our operator and the responsibility that we
12 have for certain payments. For example, when we
13 implement fare discount policies, we have certain
14 payments that are associated with that. The
15 Comptroller's Office did not feel that we should have
16 to do that, but that is not how our contract works. I
17 would you point you to, for more specifics, I would
18 actually say that the letter that we've included in
19 the appendix of the audit is probably the most
20 specific and clear place, and certainly if you have
21 more specific questions, we're happy to talk to you
22 about those.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: How long is the
24 agreement? When is the agreement over?

2 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: Our current
3 agreement ends in September of next year, and so
4 we're currently in a procurement process that we
5 expect to wrap up by around spring of next year so
6 that we have time, if needed, to transition services.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, so outside
8 of the discrepancies, is it fair, are you guys
9 thinking about ways to reduce costs because maybe
10 your sort of plan for the ferry system versus the
11 Comptroller's plan, I know you said he doesn't
12 understand the ferry service, but I'm just trying to
13 assess whether or not you are looking at his audit
14 because the purpose of his office is to audit and to
15 provide better government efficiency and so while he
16 is not running the ferry service, I do hope that the
17 audit is being looked at as a way to negotiate a
18 better contract in the future.

19 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: Sure. I
20 certainly don't want to be misunderstood. We
21 appreciate and value the role that the Comptroller
22 has and the auditing that was done. It was a two-
23 year, fairly extensive process, and there are a lot
24 of things that are part of the Ferry Forward Plan
25 that are specifically referencing and reacting to

1 parts of that. I think chief among them is making
2 sure that we're running a cost-effective service and
3 so, for us, that's things like making sure that if we
4 make fare changes, those are things that could
5 actually generate revenue. If we're looking an RFP
6 for new services, that we do so in a way that invites
7 revenue generating opportunities. We know that we
8 need to bring the cost of NYC Ferry to really work on
9 managing that and so, for us, that's been a real
10 centerpiece as we've gone into this new
11 administration and as we are focused forward. The
12 other thing, the Comptroller had concerns around sort
13 of being able to see some of the costs. We understood
14 that, had a healthy discussion about it, and now you
15 can see it as part of the edc.nyc, there's a
16 financial disclosure section. There's a whole page on
17 NYC Ferry that goes all the way back to Fiscal '18
18 that shows line by line where the money that is part
19 of NYC Ferry is going so we certainly take his role
20 seriously and value the input that was provided.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay. You
23 mentioned the Ferry Forward service, and so I know
24 that there was a shuttle pilot, the Rockaway Rocket,
25 that operated on the summer weekends and I guess the

1 goal of this was to avert some of the recreational
2 travelers, but just wanted to understand what the
3 real incentive is because the recreational travelers
4 are paying twice the price and so why would I as a
5 recreational user use this particular service if I
6 can just use the regular ferry service for 4 dollars?
7

8 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: Yeah,
9 absolutely. The Rockaway Rocket is an exciting pilot
10 that we did this year, which is the first time we've
11 sort of played around with fares or with services,
12 and it's really our interest in being innovating and
13 understanding what role NYC Ferry can play in
14 different situations. A couple of things I wanted to
15 just bring your attention to as part of this is that
16 first of all, we did not reduce the Rockaway service
17 so anyone who is using the existing service at 2.75,
18 that was available, there was no reduction in service
19 that was part of the pilot. What we did was we added
20 one more boat, but this one charged 8 dollars a ride.
21 There was a premium on the service, and we offered
22 what we called the Premium Product was reserving a
23 seat. For some people, their interest in having a
24 specific reserved seat had value, and we wanted to
25 see what that was like because we think if people are

1 willing to spend more for something like a reserved
2 seat, we should find ways to generate that revenue as
3 part of the system. This goes to our interest in
4 making sure that NYC Ferry is operating in a cost-
5 sustainable way.
6

7 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Did you yield
8 good results from the pilot?

9 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: Yeah, we did. We
10 had about 16,000 riders who took that service in
11 just, I think it was six weekends, I will find out, I
12 think it was six weekends' worth of service, and so
13 for that kind of ridership, selling out vessels along
14 the way, making sure people were riding it, I
15 certainly heard from people I spoke to and Rockaway
16 riders that they were really excited to be able to
17 make use of it.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Awesome, so I
19 think as you all pilot programs with your new Ferry
20 Forward and perhaps look at better ways to reduce
21 pricing for other vendors, perhaps we can use
22 recouped money to expand the ferry service that so
23 many of my Colleagues have been talking about today
24 so thank you for answering my questions.
25

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: Thank you for that. I do also just want to correct, I'm sorry I misspoke, it was eight weekends' worth of service. Pardon me.

CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: I just want to acknowledge Council Member Rafael Salamanca who has joined us, and I want to ask a quick question. Council Member Julie Won was present but she had to run into another hearing, and I just want to ask two short questions on her behalf. Queensbridge Houses waterfront access and/or a ferry landing potentiality right now when the stops were drafted, the current map goes from Astoria to Roosevelt Island to Long Island City or vice versa depending on how you're traveling, so have we looked at a stop in between for where Queensbridge Houses is despite the distance because I do understand that it's a short distance while these stops are being drafted?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: I'm going to ask if we can get back to her office on that. I want to check because I don't recall in the 2018-2019 studies so let me find out.

CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: That would be great. If you could also with a followup, get back to us on

1 when I look at the map I can it's a short distance,
2 right, so maybe that's why, and we'll get the better
3 answer when you look into it. Have we looked at,
4 especially now since we're reframing how we want to
5 get people on to our vessels and how we want to give
6 people better access, looking at if there's
7 potentiality to have maybe from Queensbridge Houses
8 waterfront to Roosevelt Island like a shuttle boat or
9 something to bring people there because coming from
10 the perspective of just, and I'm not great at math
11 for everyone in this room, but just like looking at
12 distance, it is a short stop and might add a lot of
13 boats in the waterway at the same time, but could we
14 look at a (INAUDIBLE) in between to maybe move NYCHA
15 residents to Roosevelt Island or to Long Island City
16 or Astoria despite the 20-30 minute that they may
17 have so if you could get back to us on that answer,
18 that'd be great too.

19
20 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: Absolutely.

21 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: The next person we
22 have up is Council Member Aviles.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: Hello. Good
24 afternoon. Thank you, Chairs, for this hearing and
25 the opportunity to check in on these important

1 issues. I'd like to follow up back on the issue of
2 accessibility. As you know, I represent Sunset Park
3 and Red Hook, obviously two very important sites here
4 on this ferry service. One of the things that
5 residents have noted and certainly others is
6 accessibility is the poor signage, in particular
7 highlighting the Sunset Park Brooklyn Army Terminal.
8 However, I could also include Red Hook and that
9 generally it's very difficult to find where to go
10 because there's kind of random signs so I'd love to
11 know how is signage decided, is there a specific
12 budget, and how can we ensure, particularly for our
13 disabled community members that there's an
14 appropriate level of signage to help find their ways
15 to the accessibility points?
16

17 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: Sure. Thank you
18 very much for that question and certainly for
19 bringing to us the concerns that your constituents
20 have shared. In terms of the process that we've gone
21 through in the past, when we've opened new landings,
22 and this now goes back several years when we were in
23 the planning process for both Red Hook and Sunset
24 Park, we work with DOT. We are focused on making sure
25 that we are providing the right kind of signage. I

1 think it's around half a mile out that people look
2 over the main streets that people would be coming in
3 on. I also know that we had an open discussion
4 because we specifically worked with DOT to establish
5 a type of signage that was not for cars but for
6 people and so the signs that we have are smaller,
7 they're designed sort of at the eye height rather
8 than being all the way up on the top of the sign as
9 some other signage is placed so that's the general
10 process. There was a conversation. I believe that
11 those go through the PDC process as part of a signage
12 plan when we open a new landing so that's the general
13 process that's included.

14
15 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: Okay, so you went
16 through the plan, and I guess we're noting some
17 deficits with that plan. What is the process now to
18 get those corrections in signage and what's the
19 timeframe to make those corrections?

20 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: You started to
21 raise I think certain specific areas and concerns and
22 so we're definitely interested in working with your
23 office to understand what those are. We would have to
24 go through a similar process of working with DOT and
25 others, but, first and foremost, we'd want to

1 understand sort of what the gaps are that are being
2 flagged.
3

4 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: Great. In a letter
5 addressed to the EDC by Jean Ryan and Kathleen
6 Collins, they note very specific challenges to the
7 disabled community in terms of signage. I'd be happy
8 to walk with the Chair and the EDC staff, both there
9 and Red Hook because it is a consistent challenge
10 that comes up.

11 Just shifting from signage, in terms of
12 again and in the vain of accessibility, there's also
13 been a notation around the lack of wheelchair
14 restraints on the actual ferry boats including some
15 maybe in the front but not in the back. You noted I
16 think all the boats you said were accessible;
17 however, there does not seem to be wheelchair
18 restraints on all the boats. Can you talk to me about
19 how you've monitored and assessed the boats and their
20 restraints?

21 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: Yeah, I think
22 that you're talking about the wheelchair tiedowns.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: Yes.

24 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: All of our
25 vessels do have the wheelchair tiedown points. I

1 think there's an ongoing conversation about a very
2 specific type of them, and so I'd like to get back to
3 your office on some of the specifics because I don't
4 have all of those off the top of my head.
5

6 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: Great. For the
7 record, what folks have noted is needing those
8 tiedowns both in the front and an ample amount in the
9 front and also in the back to ensure that they're
10 secure in case of sudden movement. I'd love to hear
11 the report back on what that assessment yields and
12 what's the corrective action plan and timeframe
13 around it.

14 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: Of course.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: One other question
16 before I run out of time. In terms of the workforce
17 development piece, you note in your testimony New
18 York City Ferry employs over 460 people. I would love
19 to know how many of those people come from my
20 District, I'm happy to provide ZIP codes, and also
21 would love to hear more about what is the expansion
22 and targeting plan to make sure that communities
23 obviously that are in most need of workforce
24 opportunities are able to take advantage of that and
25

2 ensure that there is an appropriate pipeline into
3 those jobs.

4 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: Yeah,
5 absolutely. We will follow up in terms of like any
6 specific stats, but I do want to say that in going
7 through the preparation for our current procurement,
8 it's been a good and honest moment for us to reflect
9 on what works, what we can do better on in terms of
10 workforce development focusing on Hire NYC, focusing
11 on the pipelines with all of the different schools in
12 the area, whether it's high schools or colleges or
13 other locations so we really want to make sure that
14 we are an opportunity for people to get into the
15 maritime industry which does hold a lot of really
16 solid paying jobs.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: Absolutely. I
18 look forward to receiving the information and seeing
19 how our schools are engaged in that and the plan and
20 also not only reporting on the number of jobs that
21 are currently held but certainly how you retain folks
22 from our community. I think that is also an important
23 indicator that we want to closely track so thank you.

24 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: Of course, and I
25 will also clarify. We were just discussing, pardon

me, I don't know that the signage is a PDC thing but it is something that we do plan and work with DOT on so I will follow up with you in general on that.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: Great. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

Next, we'll hear from Council Member Restler.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you very much, Madam Chairs. I just want to say I really appreciate you both having this hearing today, and I'm so happy that we are centering Soundview and the Rockaways in a conversation about our waterways. I think that's really important so thank you to you both for your leadership. I really want to express my most enthusiastic support for Chair Farias' bill. It is critically needed, and I'll tell you in my District we've seen a major expansion of the Harbor School on Governors Island, I've got kids who live in Brooklyn on the waterfront who can't get a reduced price ferry that would take them directly from Brooklyn to Governors Island so they have to go to Manhattan to then get the separate ferry to go to Governors Island wasting hours every week. It's absurd. I've contacted the DOE I don't know how many dozens of times. They barely respond ever to anything

2 even though the DOE had somebody who works there who
3 sponsored legislation to this effect last year, we
4 still don't get a response on it so sometimes
5 legislating is the only way to get to a solution, and
6 I really appreciate your bill and I strongly support
7 it and we're going to push it forward. I'm
8 disappointed by your response today, frankly, and
9 would've expected a more enthusiastic support from
10 EDC for this critically needed legislation. Our
11 Council District is supposed to have six ferry
12 landings, but, for the last 16 months, we've been
13 with only five because the folks in Greenpoint have
14 been without ferry service. I've been consistently
15 disappointed with EDC's approach and even more
16 disappointed with Lendlease, the developer that owns
17 this private pier. There is just no world in which we
18 should have privately owned mass transit
19 infrastructure, and, if we want the ferry to be a
20 reliable, accessible form of mass transit for New
21 Yorkers to be able to depend on, then we need to own
22 the infrastructure ourselves. I strongly believe that
23 if the City owned the Greenpoint Ferry pier, we
24 would've had service a year ago today. We have been
25 wrongly without service for all of this time, and we

1 have thousands upon thousands of people who live on
2 the Greenpoint waterfront who have a mile walk to the
3 train station and have no way to get to work via the
4 ferry, and I got a letter this week from EDC claiming
5 that service may be restored as soon as the end of
6 October or early November. Is that still your current
7 timeline?
8

9 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: That's what we
10 have from the developer and...

11 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Oh, because the
12 developer just had a fatality on site and there's a
13 stop work order in place and we have no progress
14 happening whatsoever so I don't understand how the
15 timeline isn't shifting and that you wouldn't be
16 providing direct and clear answers.

17 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: Let me start by
18 saying that we are eager to service up and running at
19 Greenpoint just like you are, and certainly because
20 we know that we've had a lot of ridership growth in
21 the Greenpoint area over the years and this is a
22 really important landing as all of them are.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: You all haven't
24 demonstrated that.

2 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: One of the
3 things that we are focused on is making sure that
4 everything that we do and are working with our
5 private partners is done in a safe and an accountable
6 way and so one of the most important things is that
7 when there were initial issues related to the ferry
8 landing, the developer was taking time to do an
9 engineering analysis to engineer and understand what
10 the issues were and what the safe alternative would
11 be to restore the landing.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: (INAUDIBLE) to
13 figure out a path forward leading exactly to the
14 point where we have a moratorium in place of work
15 being able to occur in the East River each and every
16 year. You all knew that moratorium existed from I
17 believe it's September, October through the spring
18 and didn't fast track review and approvals to try and
19 get that worked on in advance of it leading to what
20 has now been a 16-odd-month outage without service,
21 and I don't have any reason to believe that service
22 is going to come back this year, even though you're
23 not willing to say that publicly.

24

25

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: We are willing to say publicly that our expectation is that ferry service will...

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: How is that possible when there's a stop work order on the site and there's no work happening because this developer allowed for a fatality to occur at their location?

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: I can't speak to the developer's work site. What we do know is that in revising our timelines we have made sure that there is some buffer so that we, if there any sort of issues like when we go through testing and have to do things like making sure that the vessels are lining up, we aren't saying things like...

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Our office, the Assembly Member's office, have been responsible for fast tracking approvals from SBS and from DEC. We have not gotten that same partnership from city government. We certainly haven't seen prioritization from the developer in the way that I would've anticipated for what is truly a piece of mass transit infrastructure that is sitting fallow for 16-odd months, and I don't understand how your timeline

won't slip if there's no work happening on the site.
It just feels like you're lying.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: I'm not lying.
We went through a process of understanding what the
timeline was going to be for restoration of service
when there was the last delay, I think it was maybe a
month ago, and as part of that before making a public
commitment to restoring service, we made sure to
include some buffer in that schedule. Now, if the
stop work order lasts long enough that it's going to
materially impact the schedule that we understand we
will be clear about that but for right now it has not
yet...

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Let me just be
clear because I think, for those who may not be
familiar with this, we were promised and promised and
promised that work would be done by the end of August
or early September and that this would be completed
after many delays over the course of this 16-month
period. In the intervening period, there was a tragic
and horrible fatality that occurred inland at this
site, and my condolences go to the family members of
that construction worker. That has caused a stop work
order at the ferry landing for a period of weeks. The

1
2 timeline that you all had claimed after the most
3 recent delay was that service would be restored in
4 late October, early November. After we've seen a
5 delay of weeks of no working happening, I don't
6 understand how your timeline hasn't slipped and why
7 you're not being straightforward with me and my
8 community. We have seen delay after delay after delay
9 on this privately owned pier, and I don't believe
10 that you're being straightforward or direct with us
11 about when this is finally going to get restored, and
12 I am deeply and profoundly frustrated by the poor
13 communication and the lack of prioritization that we
14 have seen, and my constituents reach out to me every
15 single day about how pissed they are to not have
16 service and now you're not even being honest with us
17 about when it's going to finally come back and I'm
18 really disappointed by the ongoing way that y'all are
19 handling this situation. If we are going to have
20 ferry service that is reliable and dependable that we
21 can count on as a community and that people are going
22 to move into waterfront sites where ferry service is
23 integral to their commutes day to day, then we need
24 to have a rapid response on getting problems
25 addressed and fixed, not poor communication, delay

1 after delay, and what's going to amount to a two-year
2 outage without service and I'm really disappointed in
3 everybody involved that we have not seen better
4 partnership in getting this fixed.
5

6 SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT ADGATE: Council
7 Member, thank you for raising this issue. I think
8 that your frustration and disappointment is well-
9 understood and we've appreciated the opportunity to
10 talk with your office and talk with your team as the
11 schedule has changed historically over the last year
12 and a half. I think where we're aligned with you is
13 on ensuring that the work that proceeds and when the
14 landing does open that it's done safely, that we're
15 prioritizing the safety not just of the workers but
16 of the ferry users and New Yorkers, but also that
17 we're aligned with all of the environmental
18 regulations that have had to be complied with over
19 the last year and a half. You referenced the
20 moratorium. We have tried to be transparent with your
21 office, not just in the letters but in the meetings
22 that we've had. We can certainly revisit if there's
23 opportunities to update you more regularly from the
24 EDC side of things. We're happy to do that because we
25 do see your partnership as being very critical here

1 given the number of landings that are in the
2 District, but I think that it's important for us to
3 just remember that as we're thinking about reopening
4 that that safety priority is still clearly
5 articulated not just to you, to the constituents, and
6 we would certainly welcome any thoughts and feedback
7 on how we can as EDC can be better communicators but
8 if there's ways for the developer to be better
9 communicative as well, and I'll just echo James'
10 point that our current understanding of the schedule
11 and the timeline has not changed. We're being honest
12 with you about that, but in the event that it does we
13 will certainly come back to you the way that we have
14 during previous (INAUDIBLE)

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I apologize. I
17 don't mean to flippantly imply that somebody's lying
18 or say that somebody's lying, but then it's just not
19 doing your homework because it's impossible that we
20 were on a six- or eight-week timeline for the final
21 stretches to get this thing restored and repaired.
22 We've seen weeks of a stop work order in place and
23 the timeline doesn't shift. I'm not very good at math
24 maybe like Amanda, she said she wasn't either, but
25 I'm not that dumb that I can't add six plus three,

1 right, like this is not rocket science. I don't
2 understand why you're not being straightforward with
3 us again. We've just seen delay after delay after
4 delay and poor communication of a privately asset
5 that I do not trust this developer as properly
6 prioritizing and I don't think that EDC has done its
7 job in holding them accountable so I'm frustrated by
8 all parties and my constituents are angry to be
9 stranded with no alternative provided whatsoever over
10 the course of this period and I do not think you all
11 did the due diligence that you should've in
12 identifying alternative service and support for our
13 community during what has been a very long outage of
14 service.

16 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: The one that I
17 just want to add in response because I just want to
18 be very clear. The latest timeline that we shared
19 included some buffer time to make sure that if there
20 were issues that came up that we would have time to
21 address them. We did not think at the time that the
22 full construction would have taken us all the way to
23 early November but we wanted to be thoughtful before
24 making public commitments about when we would restore
25 service. If that amount of buffer time that we have

1 for any issue that comes up, as the one that you've
2 mentioned, exceeds our ability to do that, we will
3 share that, but at this juncture..

4
5 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: We look forward
6 to hearing more, but as far as I know the stop work
7 order hasn't been lifted and no work is happening at
8 the site so it's very hard for me to understand. I
9 don't mean to beat a dead horse here. It just doesn't
10 make any sense, and I don't appreciate that it feels
11 like we're getting the ball hidden one more time so
12 eventually maybe the ferry will come back to
13 Greenpoint. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you so much,
15 and I think offline I'd love to actually engage in
16 the conversation a bit more about what Council Member
17 Restler is discussing that's happening in Greenpoint.
18 They have been out of service for a really long time
19 and, if I can be of any assistance to my Colleague,
20 please call on me.

21 Next up is Council Member Salamanca.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Thank you,
23 Madam Chair. Good afternoon. Now that Soundview and
24 Rockaway is getting all the love with these docks, I
25 want to ask some questions about how can the Hunts

1 Point community benefit from getting these ferries in
2 Hunts Point? We have the world's largest markets. EDC
3 is the landlord in Hunts Point, and the business
4 community and my residents are eagerly interested in
5 getting a dock in Hunts Point. How do we make that a
6 reality?
7

8 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: Sure. Certainly,
9 Hunts Point is very important to EDC and to the city.
10 We've done a lot of work and have a lot of value to
11 the community and to the area. That means a lot. In
12 terms of ferry service specifically, we've shared
13 that as part of Ferry Forward the most important
14 thing that we are doing is to commit to making sure
15 that these new policies are put in place to help
16 manage costs, to help make sure that NYC Ferry
17 remains accessible to all of our riders, so really
18 right now our focus is on doing just that, ensuring
19 that this RFP, this procurement is going through and
20 that we are putting our attention in the right place.
21 At the moment, we're not exploring expansion, but, as
22 always, we're appreciative of Council advocacy and
23 would love to have a conversation offline to better
24 understand some of the ideas.
25

2 SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT ADGATE: Council
3 Member, if I can just jump in. You know that Hunts
4 Point is such a priority for EDC, not just with the
5 Hunts Point Forward Plan but opportunities in the
6 market itself and so we will continue to look at
7 intermodal transportation for Hunts Point as
8 evidenced thanks to your support for the U.S. DOT
9 grant that we just recently received and so we will
10 continue to work with you and the stakeholders to see
11 what other opportunities are there because Hunts
12 Point is such a priority for us.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Wouldn't it
14 make sense to want to bring in a ferry to eliminate
15 the amount of cars that's coming in and out of Hunts
16 Point, especially for the workers given the fact that
17 one of the biggest health disparities that I have in
18 my District in Hunts Point is asthma due to the
19 pollution of trucks that are coming in and out.
20 Wouldn't it make sense to bring in some alternative
21 means of transportation such as a ferry to Hunts
22 Point, and I have a location for you, the barge.
23 They are going to be shutting down that jail. That
24 is the right location to bring in a ferry and it has
25 parking.

2 SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT ADGATE: Yeah.

3 Obviously, we are ferry people and so you certainly
4 don't need to sell us on the benefits of NYC Ferry
5 and the way that it can continue to support and
6 engage these critical communities. What we've been
7 hoping to communicate with the Council today is that,
8 while we understand the enthusiasm for expansion, we
9 also understand the critical necessity for us to
10 implement our Ferry Forward Plan, ensure the
11 financial sustainability of NYC Ferry, and do that in
12 a sequential way so that when we are having a
13 conversation about expansion we're able to back up
14 our support for a ferry with the numbers that we need
15 to justify those opportunities and so we certainly,
16 for all of the reasons that the Council has
17 identified today, whether it's more transit options,
18 getting more cars off the road, all of the things
19 that make NYC Ferry such an important alternative for
20 New Yorkers, we will continue to highlight and to
21 celebrate those opportunities but, again, making sure
22 that we're implementing that Ferry Forward Plan,
23 ensuring the financial sustainability, and then
24 thinking about opportunities for expansion.

2 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: All right. My
3 last question is cost. What is the cost to build out
4 a dock for these ferries? What's the average cost?

5 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: The landings do
6 range. It really has to do a lot with where a landing
7 is located, is there existing infrastructure, is
8 there a pier, is it in deep water, do you need to
9 something like dredging, so there's a big range of
10 these costs. On average, the vast majority of our
11 landings have come in around the 10 million dollar
12 mark, but it really does go...

13 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: Say that again.
14 How much?

15 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: Around 10, but
16 there are many examples above and below because if
17 there are, for example, upland conditions, if you
18 need to do a lot of trenching or electrical or things
19 like that, they can really drive prices very quickly
20 so 10 is sort of a working number that we think about
21 but that is without any of the major constraints that
22 you could find, as you can imagine, in New York's
23 waters.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER SALAMANCA: I want to thank
25 you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity. Just so EDC

1 knows, you have a partner here. You are the biggest
2 landlord in Hunts Point, and the only way we're going
3 to thrive and bring resources is by working together.
4 I will not let this go. I'm going to continue to ask
5 for a ferry at Hunts Point. I think it's the right
6 thing to do, and it will help eliminate the amount of
7 vehicles that are coming in and out of the Hunts
8 Point community. Thank you, again, for your
9 presentation. Thank you, Madam Chair.

11 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you so
12 much for your testimony and participation. We ask
13 that if you can, if someone can stick around, we do
14 have testimony from the Comptroller's team as well.
15 Thank you.

16 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WONG: Thank you so
17 much.

18 SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT ADGATE: Thank you.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Before we turn to
20 other public testimony, we'll next hear from
21 representatives of the New York City Comptroller,
22 Maura Hayes-Chaffe and Sindhu Bharadwaj.

23 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: You may begin.

24 MAURA HAYES-CHAFFE: Good afternoon and
25 thank you to Chairs Brooks-Powers and Farias and the

entire Transportation and Economic Development
Committees for the opportunity to testify on behalf
of New York City Comptroller Brad Lander.

My name is Maura Hayes-Chaffe, Deputy
Comptroller for Audit. I am here to testify regarding
the audit of the Economic Development Corporation's
administration of the NYC Ferry Operation, which was
issued this summer. I am also joined by my colleague,
Sindhu Bharadwaj, Senior Policy Analyst for
Transportation, Sanitation, and Infrastructure, who
will address policy considerations.

By way of background, EDC entered into an
agreement with Hornblower to operate the ferry system
on February 12, 2016. The initial period of the
agreement ran from May 1, 2017, to April 30, 2023,
and was extended for a further five months, through
September 30, 2023, in December of 2021. This
agreement was supplemented by a series of additional
agreements and various forms of official
correspondence which governed, among other things,
the acquisition of vessels, early termination and
early activation of agreements to operate the East
River route, revenue-sharing with the operator, and
various other matters.

Our audit was commenced with three objectives in mind: to determine whether EDC properly documented and disclosed all costs of the ferry operation; whether it diligently monitored the ferry operation for and on behalf of the City; and whether the operator accurately reported ferry ridership and ticket revenue and complied with the other terms of the agreement.

Audits of this nature are conducted to improve New York City's financial position, to provide transparency and reliable information about New York City government, and to assess effectiveness and efficiency.

The auditors reviewed financial records related to the period from June 2015 to December 2021 and determined that EDC did not disclose the full extent of ferry expenditures, that the extent of per-passenger subsidies was both under-estimated and under-reported, that certain costs were incurred unnecessarily, and that EDC did not adequately enforce key terms and conditions of the agreement with the operator or review documentation to ensure that payments were accurate, fully substantiated, and justified.

Specifically, the audit found that:

EDC did not disclose 224 million dollars in expenditures that were related exclusively to ferry operations as part of the ferry system's actual cost. This consisted of approximately 181 million dollars in capital expenditures and 43 million dollars in operating expenditures.

EDC underreported the net operating losses experienced by the ferry system, and therefore the true cost of the per-passenger subsidy. The auditors determined actual net operating losses, which totaled approximately 301 million between February 2016 and December 2021, and divided this amount by reported ferry ridership, to arrive at an actual subsidy that ranged from just under 12 to over 14 dollars per passenger between Fiscal Years 2018 and 2021. This is roughly double the projected subsidy of \$6.60 per passenger and between 2 and 4 dollars more than the reported subsidy levels between Fiscal Years 2018 and 2021. The variance is due in part to EDC's exclusion of landing maintenance costs, certain personnel expenses, and depreciation expenses from its calculations.

1 The auditors identified 66 million
2
3 dollars in unnecessary expenses including an
4 estimated 34 million dollars in questionable vessel
5 acquisition costs, 24 million dollars associated with
6 the early termination of Billybey's operation of the
7 East River route, 3 million dollars in unnecessary
8 vessel service hours payments, 4 million dollars in
9 inappropriate fare policy payments and 1 million
10 dollars in excessive homeport reimbursement to the
11 operator.

12 The auditors found that EDC did not
13 adequately plan for expiration of the current
14 agreement with Hornblower, and, as a result, extended
15 the current term of the contract, rather than
16 expeditiously issuing a new RFP.

17 The auditors also found that EDC did not
18 enforce certain contract terms and conditions, or
19 review documentation needed to verify Hornblower's
20 compliance with such terms and conditions prior to
21 making payment. Findings in this category include 3
22 million dollars in unsubstantiated East River early
23 activation payments, over 330,000 dollars in
24 unjustified incentive payments, and a further 540,000
25 dollars in unwarranted start-up milestone payments.

EDC did not ensure that all insurance requirements were met, did not enforce ferry and shuttle bus trip reporting requirements, or adequately review invoices and service requests prior to authorization and payment.

The audit made 11 recommendations to address the findings. EDC agreed with two of the recommendations, partially agreed with three, disagreed with four, and stated that it was already in compliance with two of the recommendations.

EDC agreed in response to the audit to expeditiously initiate an open competitive bidding process to procure and select a succeeding operator at the minimum reasonable cost, and we are pleased to note that the RFP has since been issued.

EDC also agreed to establish a protocol to ensure that "on" and "off" counts match, to account for gaps and missing ticket numbers, and to conduct continuous reviews to ensure the accuracy of reported ticket revenue.

EDC partially agreed with the recommendation to disclose all ferry-related expenditures in its financial statements. Although it agreed to increase transparency by finding another

2 mechanism for reporting all expenses, EDC declined to
3 include such expenses in its financial statements.

4 EDC partially agreed with the
5 recommendation to use true net operating losses in
6 calculating the subsidy but reiterated its intention
7 not to include depreciation expenses in such
8 calculations.

9 EDC partially agreed with the
10 recommendation to enforce certain terms and
11 conditions, such as meeting insurance and ferry and
12 shuttle trip reporting requirements, but it refused
13 to revisit payments or documentation related to early
14 activation.

15 EDC also declined to consider several
16 recommendations including the recommendation that it
17 recoup approximately 12 million dollars from
18 Hornblower for overpayments identified in the audit.

19 We believe the audit and its
20 recommendations have the potential to improve
21 transparency, promote integrity, strengthen trust,
22 and identify opportunities for improvement, and it is
23 to be hoped that EDC will ultimately hold Hornblower,
24 and any successor operator, accountable for all
25 contract terms and conditions, and improve its fiscal

2 oversight over the ferry operation. We encourage EDC
3 to revisit each of the recommendations and to
4 reconsider implementation across the board.

5 While much work remains to be done, we
6 appreciate EDC's recent issuance of a new RFP and its
7 willingness to increase transparency of its fiscal
8 reporting, albeit outside of its financial
9 statements. The fare changes announced by Mayor Adams
10 following our audit report and implemented earlier
11 this week also represent a step in the right
12 direction.

13 Thank you once again, Chair Brooks-Powers
14 and Chair Farias, for the opportunity to testify
15 today and for your attention to this matter. I now
16 turn this over to Sindhu to provide additional
17 testimony.

18 SINDHU BHARADWAJ: Thank you, Maura.

19 My name is Sindhu Bharadwaj. I joined the
20 New York City Comptroller's Office last week as
21 Senior Policy Analyst for Transportation, Sanitation,
22 and Infrastructure. Thank you for the opportunity to
23 testify here today.

24 The findings Maura shared raise important
25 policy questions about the NYC Ferry Operation. We

are pleased to support the reduced fare program proposed in Council Member and Chair Amanda Farias' Intro 0236 to ensure the ferry system serves as an affordable means of transportation for New York City students relying on it as an essential connection to school.

Ensuring the long-term viability of the NYC Ferry and supporting reduced fare options for those who need them requires revisiting the current fare structure. The Comptroller was pleased to see EDC swiftly enact a modest fare increase in response to our office's audit, raising fares from \$2.75 per trip to \$4 and offering additional discounts to seniors, people with disabilities, and Fair Fare participants. However, we believe that the steep per-ride cost of ferry subsidies calls for consideration of a more dynamic pricing model potentially featuring higher fares on weekends and for noncommuters in order to better support lower prices for low-income households and the students who need them the most.

As of 2021, rides to school or work accounted for just one out of every four trips taken on the system. EDC's own data on rider demographics shows that ferry riders' median income is 95,000

dollars systemwide and even higher on the most utilized routes. This is more than double that for subway and bus riders which stand at 40,000 dollars and 28,000 dollars respectively. The per-ride subsidy is even higher than it is for express bus or commuter rail trips. Indefinitely subsidizing ferry trips for all riders, a cost that totaled approximately 301 million dollars between 2016 and 2021, without attention to need or capacity to pay is not the most effective use of public resources.

The City should consider a tiered or dynamic fare pricing model where ticket prices could vary based on trip purpose, time of day, distance traveled, and differentiate between city residents and visitors. Similar policies are already in place in other large cities offering ferry service, including San Francisco and Seattle. Under such a structure, the City could set higher fares for lines that serve populations with higher median incomes than the system average. Fares for the Rockaway route, where average weekend ridership is nearly triple that of weekdays, could also vary by day of the week. Deploying larger City subsidies for working-class commuters who live in the Rockaways but

1 commute to Manhattan on a daily basis makes more
2 sense than for New Yorkers, of whom the Comptroller
3 is proud to be one, who love to take the ferry to the
4 beach a couple of times each summer.

5
6 A revised fare structure would align with
7 other premium transit options, better match operating
8 costs, and help preserve affordability for those
9 relying on the ferry system as an essential
10 transportation service.

11 We are now happy to answer any questions
12 from the Committee about our testimony. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you for your
14 testimony. You didn't provide us a written testimony
15 so I couldn't refer back to it yet. I look forward to
16 receiving that, but just to clarify something that
17 I'm unsure if I heard. When you were giving
18 recommendations based off of a tiered system or
19 multiprong system based off of distance like some
20 similar other cities have done in the past with their
21 transit options, were you stating that reducing fares
22 for students wasn't economically sound?

23 SINDHU BHARADWAJ: I'm sorry. Could you
24 repeat the end part of that?

2 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: If reducing fares for
3 students weren't economically sound? Is that what
4 you're stating?

5 SINDHU BHARADWAJ: We support the proposal
6 to provide students with discounted fares. It's our
7 position that it's necessary to consider higher fare
8 prices for other riders to support the cost of a
9 program like that.

10 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Do we do that in the
11 MTA right now for the reduced passes for students?

12 SINDHU BHARADWAJ: I think a discounted
13 ferry pass for students is modeled off of the free
14 trips that students already receive to ride the
15 subway, and, of course, there's a Fair Fare Program
16 in place for riders who need that so we support a
17 similar program for the ferry while also revisiting
18 the fare structure and thinking about how we want to
19 put public resources to use when it comes to
20 subsidizing those fares.

21 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Okay, so to be clear,
22 we do not do that in any other form of transit right
23 now from the Comptroller's Office in varying costs to
24 offset the cost for reduction in student fares, but
25 you're interested in looking at the current structure

2 in offsetting that cost. Thank you. Thank you so much
3 for your testimony today.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Thank you for
5 your testimony. We will now turn to public testimony.
6 Each panelist will be given two minutes to speak. For
7 panelists who are testifying in person, please come
8 to the dais as your name is called and wait for your
9 turn.

10 For panelists who are testifying
11 remotely, once your name is called a member of our
12 staff will unmute you and the Sergeant-at-Arms will
13 give you the go ahead to begin.

14 Please wait for the Sergeant to announce
15 that you may begin before delivering your testimony.

16 I would now like to welcome Jean Ryan and
17 David Jones.

18 JEAN RYAN: Hello. Good afternoon. I'm
19 Jean Ryan. I'm President of Disabled In Action of
20 Metropolitan of New York, DIA for short. In 2005
21 after at least three years of continuous work, DIA
22 got the Accessible Ferry Bill passed in the City
23 Council. The Accessible Ferry Bill, which is
24 officially known as the Accessible Water Borne
25 Commuter Services Facilities Transportation Act,

2 applies to commuter ferries. In the early 2000s,
3 there were not many commuter ferries, and they were
4 inaccessible to people with mobility disabilities.
5 Access to and from the ferries was almost or actually
6 impossible. There were steps and steep ramps with
7 strips of wood across them. The doors into the
8 ferries were blocked by a board across the bottom so,
9 if we could get onto the ferry, we could not go
10 inside. We had to ride on the outside of it. The
11 bathroom doors were elevated way off the floor. One
12 time at my destination in Manhattan, the ferry
13 workers wanted me to jump an 18-inch vertical gap to
14 get to the land. Of course, I could not that because
15 it was way too dangerous, and I insisted on a more
16 accessible disembarking. The Ferry Bill was supposed
17 to change all that, but it took time and is still
18 taking time to reach full accessibility, even though
19 the deadlines in the law are long passed. What are
20 the problems? There are two main ones, accessibility
21 and safety. The ferries themselves are now mostly
22 accessible, but, as I mentioned in my September 6,
23 2022, letter to the EDC and DOT and Mayor Adams'
24 administration, the areas leading to and from the
25 ferries can be inaccessible with (1) lack of good and

2 accessible way-finding signs, (2) unclear routes, (3)
3 physical barriers like curbs or steps, or (4) narrow
4 sidewalks with poles in the way. How can you take the
5 ferry if you can't get to it or if you can't leave
6 the immediate area and are immediately lost, I need
7 more time, or if you encounter stairs? Has the EDC or
8 DOT done an accessibility assessment of the New York
9 City Ferries as well as the piers, floating docks,
10 ticketing areas, and immediate area that leads NYC
11 Ferry user to and from the ferries? For example,
12 Brooklyn Army Terminal has many inaccessible elements
13 such as I just mentioned in the four points above
14 including steps. Has the Brooklyn Army Terminal area
15 been assessed for accessibility as required by law?
16 Have other areas near other NYC Ferry landings also
17 been assessed for accessibility. The law requires an
18 expert assessment and a plan for accessibility.

19 Safety is another big issue. The Ferry
20 Bill requires a four-point securement of passengers
21 in wheelchairs. That means that our wheelchairs have
22 to be strongly and safely secured to the floor with
23 securements attached to the four corners of our
24 wheelchairs with two securements attached to the
25 front and two securements to the back of our

1 wheelchairs. Now, as I pointed out to the EDC in a
2 Teams meeting on June 17, 2021, and in a letter to
3 the EDC and DOT on September 6, 2022, there are only
4 two securements for the front of our wheelchairs, and
5 that is insufficient to secure us. It won't hold us
6 at all. We could slide and slip all over the place.
7 The current securements are so inadequate and useless
8 that the NYC Ferry workers never bother to secure us
9 and have never secured me in any of the dozens of
10 times I've ridden NYC Ferry boats. Recently, on July
11 17, 2022, I rode a crowded ferry. Someone wanted to
12 sit directly in back of me, but I nicely warned him
13 that if my wheelchair slid, it might injure his legs.
14 There was someone sitting on the seat immediately in
15 front of me and facing me with her legs in front of
16 my chair. It was scary. Her legs could have been
17 injured too had my chair moved. This is a huge safety
18 issue. DIA knows someone who was badly injured in a
19 ferry accident. We don't need that to happen to more
20 of us or to the general public either. I wonder if
21 the ferry should be administered by a separate
22 Division of Ferries or if they should exclusively be
23 placed under the DOT and not be part of the EDC. Is
24 one of the problems that there is no clear oversight
25

2 of the ferries and the (INAUDIBLE) of them? Is
3 responsibility divided up between the two agencies?
4 Is there informal oversight that is insufficient?
5 Whatever is decided, it should not be a political
6 decision; it should be based on safety and
7 accessibility. I've heard complaints that not many
8 people use the NYC Ferries. I know it has been a good
9 thing for me because it gives me freedom to come and
10 go when I am ready and I do not have to book an
11 Access-A-Ride trip the day before and try to guess
12 when I will be finished with my meetings, seeing my
13 friends, or doing something else. I can leave when
14 it's convenient for me, but, from what I have seen,
15 there is very little signage advertising where the
16 ferry is located. For example, on Second Avenue and
17 Sunset Part, I've been there hundreds of times on
18 Second Avenue. The Brooklyn Army Terminal has zero
19 signs on Second Avenue telling people there is a
20 ferry and how to get to it. If signage were improved,
21 people would probably be more likely to try out the
22 ferry and not have any trouble locating it.

23 DIA looks forward to a day when the NYC
24 Ferries will be fully accessible and safe. We look
25 forward to good accessibility and good signage at

2 every stop for the ferries. Thank you for the
3 opportunity to speak.

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you so
5 much, Miss Ryan, for participating and for your
6 guidance on the topic. We really appreciate it.

7 JEAN RYAN: Thank you. I live more than a
8 mile from a ferry, and still I take it because once I
9 get there I can get on, at least in Bay Ridge I can,
10 but in Sunset Park it's a whole other story. Despite
11 going on Second Avenue hundreds of times right in
12 front of the Brooklyn Army Terminal, I had no idea
13 how to get to the ferry because of the lack of
14 signages and then the poles and the curb cuts...

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Absolutely and
16 thank you for bringing this up in your testimony. You
17 have my commitment to follow up with the EDC to
18 ensure that we look at the pier oversight and signage
19 improvements and what minimum requirements are to
20 make improvements where we can.

21 JEAN RYAN: We don't know what it is,
22 there are many stops, and I've only been to four or
23 five of them so it might be similar in other places
24 too.

1 COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT 120

2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you,
3 Miss Ryan.

4 JEAN RYAN: Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Next, we will
6 hear from David Jones.

7 DAVID JONES: Thank you to the Committee.

8 I'm David Jones. I'm President of the Community
9 Service Society and a Board Member of the MTA for the
10 last six years.

11 I'm coming to you based on work we've
12 done and research we've done that originally started
13 almost six years ago where we looked into the
14 affordability of transit in the City of New York,
15 discovering that for low-income people nearly 34
16 percent were unable to meet the basic cost of
17 transportation of all sorts in the City of New York.
18 Particularly, it wasn't equal opportunity. Those
19 communities, particularly the Latinos and African
20 American community were hardest hit by this problem.
21 We, at that point, launched a crusade along with help
22 from the City Council which ended up to be the
23 critical part of the program called Fair Fares. Fair
24 Fares currently serves 270,000 people who have been
25 signed up, and we think that's just a fraction of

2 those who should be eligible if they knew about it
3 and the City Council and the City were willing to
4 come up with additional resources to fund Fair Fares.
5 It is, as far as we know, the largest such program in
6 the country.

7 The reason I came here talking about
8 ferries is I'm afraid I used the question of ferries
9 and the subsidies to ferries as a counterpoint to the
10 prior administration's resistance to Fair Fares. At
11 the time, the subsidy estimates ranged from 10 to 15
12 dollars per ride with 2.75 as the price. I think in
13 subsequent reports by the Comptroller and others that
14 issue has come to the floor and clearly the movement
15 by the Adams' administration to change the, I'll stop
16 in a second and I'll submit, but to come up with a 4-
17 dollar ride for some but keeping it 2.75 for the
18 others. I raise this issue basically to say that we
19 have to look financially which groups do we want to
20 serve first. I'm very pleased that the ferry will
21 have a half-price system. I'm also pleased that with
22 Intro 236 we'll have the opportunity to have young
23 people coming on these boats and affordably, but
24 frankly I want this Council to focus on the fact that
25 the real intense issue is getting working poor people

1 to their jobs, medical appointments, and the rest. I
2 do love ferries. I've taken my grandchild on it. I
3 think it's wonderful, but I want it to be cost-
4 effective. I do not want it to be a drain on the
5 city's coffers, and I want our money to go where the
6 urgent crisis is, and that's working poor people who
7 can't afford the transportation they need. I'll stop.
8 Thank you for letting me go over.

10 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Okay, next we
12 will hear from Sean Champion.

13 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

14 SEAN CAMPION: Thank you, Chairs. My name
15 is Sean Champion. I'm the Director of Housing and
16 Economic Development Studies at the Citizens Budget
17 Commission.

18 I'll give some highlights of our full
19 testimony which we submitted and is online at our
20 website.

21 CBC's research has documented that New
22 York City Ferry is highly subsidized, both relative
23 to other transit systems and other ferries in other
24 cities, and that subsidy is high for two reasons. Its

1 low fares and its high-cost routes, many of which
2 have low ridership.

3
4 EDC has taken some welcomed steps to
5 reducing the subsidy in recent years including
6 reducing service on redundant and low-ridership
7 routes at the start of the pandemic and increasing
8 one-trip fares to 4 dollars as part of Ferry Forward.
9 Though they might modestly improve the ferry's
10 financial footing, we think they didn't go far enough
11 to reducing the need for costly subsidies, and to
12 reduce the subsidy further, CBC is calling on the EDC
13 to eliminate its lowest-ridership and most subsidized
14 routes, avoid money-losing expansions, target
15 subsidies to those in the greatest need of affordable
16 transit options, and increase fares for other riders
17 to match those of comparable premium transit
18 services, like the MTA's express bus service which
19 charges 6.75 a trip. Of note, we also support the
20 EDC's (INAUDIBLE) to increase transparency through
21 its finances. We think they should also include debt
22 service on city capital spending on the ferry system.
23 I also want to note that reducing the ferry subsidy
24 is vitally important to ensuring the can fulfill its
25 core economic development mission. Before the

1 pandemic, in 2019, fare revenues covered just 20
2 percent of the ferry's operating cost and that
3 required EDC to divert 40 million in its own revenue
4 and 25 million in cash reserves to fill the gap. As a
5 result, EDC operated at a loss perhaps for the first
6 time in its history. Last fiscal year, the City used
7 30 million of federal COVID-related aid to support
8 ferry, which temporarily reduced the cost to EDC but
9 didn't address the high subsidy level and only
10 temporarily reduced the burden on EDC's budget.

11
12 Ultimately, we think the success...

13 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

14 SEAN CAMPION: Of efforts to stabilize
15 ferry finances to be evaluated by whether and how
16 much the subsidy is reduced with evidence that the
17 remaining subsidy goes to those in greatest need of
18 affordable transit options and reducing subsidy can
19 also free up funds that can be put to better use to
20 achieve EDC's core mission of creating well-paying
21 jobs and growing the economy which is perhaps more
22 needed than ever, and the choice to subsidize the
23 ferry system at the expense of other economic
24 development programs has had significant negative
25 effects on EDC's bottom line and could hinder its

1 ability to contribute to New York City's economic
2 recovery. Thank you and I'd be happy to answer any
3 questions you have.
4

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

6 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Thank you for
7 your testimony. Next, we'll hear from Richenda
8 Kramer, Dominique Bernucca-Hood, Tatyana Goloborodko
9 (phonetic), Robert Markuske, Brianna Seymour, and
10 Leona Martin-Peterson (phonetic).

11 If panelists can do their best to adhere
12 to the two-minute timer, thanks.

13 RICHENDA KRAMER: My name is Richenda
14 Kramer. I live on Staten Island, and I've been part
15 of the Ferry Riders Committee for the last 15 years
16 or so. The Fast Ferry is something we've wanted for a
17 long time and are delighted to have. Ridership is
18 growing and would probably increase faster with ferry
19 terminals that were friendlier to passengers with
20 easier access by bus or car, a posted schedule, a
21 quicker way to buy tickets, and some way to get help.
22 The 40th Street Terminal is a perfect example of a
23 desert really. Fortunately, there's somebody for the
24 Hoboken ferries who is able to direct one to finding
25 the right place you're supposed to be going. The cost

2 of public transportation is enormous, but the value
3 of it far out-balances the cost, and I think a better
4 way the cost could be improved as we heard about all
5 the problems with EDC that they were minimizing.

6 Millions of dollars are wasted by accepting incorrect
7 and inadequate services and equipment. The New York

8 Times had an article pointing out that they had

9 accepted a fleet of one-end access catamarans instead
10 of double-access catamarans. The double-access means

11 back and front like the DOT ferry, can go in and out,
12 so a lot of time is wasted in the boats turning

13 around, which uses more gas and takes more time and

14 apparently they just accepted these and they haven't

15 switched them for the ones that they had ordered. As

16 one looks to the unending traffic on BQE and bridges

17 and in Manhattan and Brooklyn with the heavy toll in

18 air quality, the move to ferries, especially Fast

19 Ferries, is especially important now. Saving money by

20 reducing service as people are beginning to accept

21 this form of transport and asking for more is short-

22 sighted and will be devastating for the limited

23 attempts we're making to fend off climate change.

24 When Fast Ferry to Staten Island started, its

25 schedule was very close to the DOT ferry schedule,

1 but Hornblower changed it so that it now runs about
2 14 minutes past the hour and half hour, which means
3 on St. George, the Staten Island (INAUDIBLE), if one
4 misses the DOT ferry they have time to get to the
5 Fast Ferry which is happening with increasing
6 frequency. This is more difficult at the two
7 different locations in Manhattan but would be
8 possible if the Governors Island slip, which the NYC
9 Ferry owns, and was adjusted for the catamarans was
10 used more frequently. In New York, our future is our
11 waterways, not our roads.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Thank you for
14 your testimony.

15 DOMINIQUE BERNUCCA-HOOD: Hello. My name
16 is Dominique. I would like to thank the co-Chairs for
17 letting us speak today and thank all of the friends
18 and fellow New Yorkers here to have chosen this
19 dreary Thursday morning to come together and talk
20 about a very important issue.

21 I am testifying on behalf of the St.
22 George Civic Association's Ferry Riders Committee on
23 Staten Island, a borough plagued by some of the
24 longest commutes in the entire country. We support
25 the Fast Ferries expansion to connect outer boroughs

1 with the inner city and the efforts towards equity
2 regarding reduced fares for NYC students. The
3 relatively new route connecting St. George to
4 Manhattan has offered vital new possibilities for
5 sustainable, affordable, rapid public transit to and
6 from our borough. We hold criticisms regarding its
7 subsidization unconvincing. All investment in transit
8 infrastructure proceeds its widespread use, including
9 New York subway lines. For example, Port Authority's
10 recent 8-billion dollar investment is not held to
11 this standard of per-passenger subsidy nor are our
12 highway upgrades or any of our maintenance projects
13 so we urge the Council to view ferry service as an
14 investment in sustainable and safe transportation as
15 community development is sure to grow with ridership
16 once these routes become stable enough for normal
17 working-class people to build their lives around
18 them. In that spirit, we would just like to offer a
19 few quick recommendations. Please pass provisions
20 into law ensuring that all New Yorkers can reasonably
21 afford to use the service similar to the Fair Fares
22 program for MTA service. Also establish Fast Ferry
23 service between Staten Island and Brooklyn allowing
24 for easy transfer to the East River line and
25

2 connecting Staten Island with the rest of New York
3 City. Build more routes connecting outer boroughs to
4 each other. Our current Manhattan-centric service
5 reflects an outdated model of how New Yorkers live,
6 work, travel, shop, and play. Ensure that riders can
7 easily between ferry routes and to other forms of
8 transportation including subways, buses, and, of
9 course, city bikes. Increase the frequency and the
10 volume of service. A 30-second delay should not
11 result in a 29-minute wait. Finally, please focus new
12 route choices on serving New Yorkers who are least
13 served rather than those who currently have the most
14 transportation options. New transit routes need to be
15 distributed with equity as a primary goal, and I
16 encourage the folks here to continue listening to my
17 fellow committee members who are both here in person
18 and awaiting to give testimony to go further into
19 some of these points on Zoom. I want to thank the St.
20 George Civic Association for supporting our committee
21 and thank you all for being here.

22 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you so
23 much.

24 TATYANA GOLOBORODKO: Thank you for this
25 opportunity to speak. My name is Tatyana, and I'm

1 speaking on behalf of a Harbor student and as a
2 parent so my major focus here is, of course, free
3 ferries for students. We all know how sophisticated
4 the big and wonderful the transportation system in
5 New York and, of course, as a parent of three
6 children I appreciate that this service is offered
7 for free and I was very excited to learn when the
8 ferries started, the ferry service, and it was very
9 disappointing that our children were left outside of
10 the system and not to be able to use it for free to
11 get to schools. I wanted to focus on that now it's
12 faster and versatile commute for residents, but not
13 everybody has 4 dollars. Even though they are talking
14 about that they are still keeping the 10 rides
15 bundle, it's still limited. People have to switch to
16 the buses or trains to get to the destination so not
17 everybody has an extra dollar even to pay extra on
18 top of that and especially the students. I wanted to
19 focus on students' rights as well that are mentioned
20 in the Chancellor's regulations, that they have the
21 right to free or discounted public transportation so
22 I was hoping that this could be expanded on the ferry
23 system as well, especially that it is so highly
24 subsidized. If it's going out of the pocket of the
25

1 city, I don't understand why it's not quite there and
2 that our students are still left behind, especially
3 students of the Harbor School are affected because,
4 as you guys know, it is on an island so we have
5 limited ways of getting to the island and we live in
6 Brooklyn Bay Ridge. We have, as someone mentioned
7 already, that we have to go all the way around to
8 Manhattan instead just living one stop away from the
9 school so it makes no sense and we definitely
10 appreciate having the ferry so it is important for us
11 to just have it more accessible and affordable. It's
12 a lifesaver. I wanted to mention just a couple of
13 examples.
14

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I need you to
16 wrap up soon. Thank you.

17 TATYANA GOLOBORODKO: Yeah. Terribly
18 sorry. Just a quick note that when the service is
19 interrupted, it's a lifesaver seriously because we
20 can just take ferry and get to school instead of
21 missing the school or being late. Thank you so much.

22 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Thank you for
24 your testimony, and you can always submit written
25 testimony at testimony@council.nyc.gov.

1
2 LEONA MARTIN-PETERSON: My name is Leona
3 Martin-Peterson. I go to the New York Harbor School.
4 This bill affects me because for some of my friends
5 and myself it's more efficient to take the ferry to
6 get to school. As a high school student, I cannot
7 afford to pay 8 dollars to get to school, even if it
8 gets me to school faster. At school, we're given
9 student metro cards, and this covers three rides
10 every weekday for students. Why can't students get
11 things like these for the NYC Ferry? We don't need
12 three rides a day either. Students could get access
13 to a number of ferry rides depending on if they meet
14 a specific criteria to get one. If this is something
15 that would help students get to school faster,
16 getting the cost taken care of by the city and the
17 school, similar to metro cards, would be beneficial
18 in many ways. The ferry is faster and more accessible
19 to direct locations. Last year, my marine policy
20 class took many trips to learn about the different
21 marine sectors. Getting to the locations of these
22 trips was more efficient when we traveled by ferry.
23 However, we had to seek funding for these trips, and
24 they would cost around 100 dollars to get a small
25 group of kids to each location. The ferry ride was

1 about 15 minutes whereas if we were to take a train
2 it would take an hour and a half. Being able to take
3 these ferries furthers my education, and reasonable
4 access for other students would help further their
5 education too. Thank you for your time and
6 consideration.
7

8 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

9 BRIANNA SEYMOUR: Hello. My name is
10 Brianna. I am a student in my senior year at the New
11 York Harbor School. I'm a part of the Marine Affairs
12 and Advocacy Program. Providing ferry service at a
13 reduced cost to individuals under the age of 18 or
14 enrolled in a high school located within New York
15 City will affect my organization, me, and others in
16 many ways. For one, it will be an easier commute,
17 more options to get to school, and it would be safer.
18 Parents wouldn't have to give their child 8 dollars
19 to get to and from school every day. Us New York City
20 students already have the privilege of riding the
21 train for free every day. Why can't we have free
22 access to both? To all transportation around the
23 city? I live in Brooklyn. I take three trains to
24 school every day. This is a free commute but awfully
25 long. On the other hand, if I were to take the New

1 York City Ferry, I would only have to take one train
2 and the ferry all the way to school. The commute
3 would only take 35 to 45 minutes, which is a 20-
4 minute difference from the commute I take now. Not to
5 mention, ferries are way safer than trains. How many
6 times have you heard of someone getting robbed or
7 hurt on a ferry? Ferries are an open space where it
8 is more hard for any crime to happen. There is one
9 way in and one way out whereas trains are closed in
10 and have more exits for criminals to get away. The
11 problems many students face now could be changed with
12 a simple deduction of a fee to ride the ferry or even
13 meeting us halfway with a half-price for us students.
14 This would make a lot of families happy to feel
15 included in this resource. On the other hand, some
16 people may think that having kids on the ferry would
17 ruin the peace and enjoyment of the ride, but, from
18 my experience of riding the ferry, because it is such
19 a quiet environment, they know how to adjust to the
20 mood. Teens can be loud and obnoxious, I agree, but
21 that doesn't mean that they shouldn't have the
22 privilege of getting to school via all modes of
23 transportation that are safe, beautiful, and more
24 efficient for them on-time and safe and sound. In
25

2 closing, providing ferry service for free will make
3 the life of students better. We should have more
4 options to get to school, not less. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you so
6 much for your testimony and, as someone who used to
7 have to take a bus and three trains, I feel your
8 pain, and we are going to work with our co-Chair here
9 to make sure we get this bill passed.

10 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: And we don't think
11 you're loud and obnoxious. I promise. Maybe
12 sometimes, but I promise we don't.

13 ROBERT MARKUSKE: Hi, everybody. My name
14 is Robert Markuske. I am these lovely students'
15 instructor for Marine Affairs, Policy, and Advocacy.

16 Yeah, I think I just want to start off,
17 but I heard something the EDC said. They said
18 offering this half-reduced fare to students would be
19 an administrative burden. I think therein lies the
20 problem, that they view offering students a way of
21 accessing, as you could hear their testimony, safer,
22 quicker is a burden so I find that problematic when
23 they view both education and the waterfront a
24 commodity for profit rather than a public trust. As
25 my lovely student peers said, our recommendation is

2 that students ride for free, a pass obtained by their
3 schools like the free metro card they receive each
4 semester, the access should be for free during
5 specific windows throughout the school day like the
6 pass. Data collected from these students show that
7 most ferry riders believe in this policy that they
8 are proposing. Of course, we know the answer is that
9 this would shorten their commute and it would be
10 safer as well as it's more pleasant. Also, I think
11 that we're forgetting about the intrinsic value of
12 access to the waterfront and that, I just made a
13 comment here and my students will make fun of me
14 because I went off script and I acted like Council
15 Member Restler, that it seems like the EDC has a
16 Ferry Forward but it sounds like more a ferry
17 reversal where they make decisions and they have to
18 kind of reverse course in correcting them, and I just
19 think constantly and constantly policies are made
20 through their organizations where they create
21 problems in the future so I think this is an
22 opportunity to offer students access to the ferry and
23 sort of look at the value ahead whereas we're
24 creating New York City residents and citizenry for
25 the future so why not provide for them now so they

2 Can provide for us later rather than cause something
3 that we're going to have to fix in the future. Sorry
4 for the ramble. I should've read my script. My
5 students will yell at me. Have a great day.

6 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you so much,
7 and we're on the same page about offering more
8 opportunity for our young people.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Thank you for
10 your testimony. Next, we will hear from Lina Lajqi,
11 Brendon Kong (phonetic), Nelson Perez, Amin Asaad
12 (phonetic), and Sierra Lever (phonetic).

13 LINA LAJQI: My name is Lina Lajqi. I'm a
14 junior at the New York Harbor School. My peers and I
15 take the ferry to Governors Island from the Battery
16 Maritime Building at no additional cost because it is
17 the default ferry to take to school. However, there
18 are multiple ferry locations around the city that are
19 more accessible and quicker for students. However,
20 many students cannot afford a weekly ferry to and
21 back from school. Trains get delayed, stations are
22 not accessible or safe, and the ferry also always
23 remains as an efficient alternative. To be able to
24 afford a roundtrip ferry ride five days a week,
25 students would need to maintain a job while also

1 juggling school and extracurriculars. With all these
2 factors coming into play, it is nearly impossible for
3 a student to be able to afford ferry rides daily.

4 Lowering the cost of the ferry or making it free
5 would be beneficial and easier for students like me
6 to get to school. For example, I can access the ferry
7 from Pier 6 in Brooklyn that goes all the way to
8 Governors Island. This (INAUDIBLE) ferry ride is not
9 something I could consistently afford or pay for
10 throughout my school years. If the prices were
11 reduced or free, I would take the ferry frequently.

12 To wrap things up, I completely think that the ferry
13 should be free or at least reduced for New York City
14 students. With things like money, school, and jobs
15 coming into play, it would be reasonable to create a
16 more inclusive ferry system. Thank you.

17
18 BRENDON KONG: Hello. As a student of the
19 New York City Harbor School, I've deeply learned to
20 enjoy my time on the ferry and my commute across the
21 water. The ferry provides a different, soothing, and
22 scenic view. Providing students under 18 who attend
23 school should be offered free rides for New York City
24 Ferry systems. It would be way more convenient and
25 timesaving. It can be beneficial to solving problems

1 on transits like the over-crowdedness, which can
2 greatly contribute to helping train delays and
3 conflicts on a train. This also really helps with
4 mental health, at least personally for me, because
5 the ferry is very therapeutic and having the soothing
6 ride over the water allows me to think in peace and
7 clear my mind. Studies find that the subway air is
8 heavily contaminated with hazardous pollutions. Air
9 quality is way better on ferries from the option of
10 being outside and being able to move around, which is
11 better for our health, and also not being on top of
12 each on trains and having more clean airflow will
13 help less sickness and disease. Increasing ferry
14 rides from 2 to 4 dollars, which adds up, and having
15 to pay every single day if kids do take it more
16 conveniently. I hope we can really make this
17 innovative bill to allow students free access to New
18 York City Ferries. Thank you.

20 NELSON PEREZ: Hello. My name is Nelson
21 Perez. I'm a current student at the New York Harbor
22 School. Bill Int. 236 providing reduced low-cost to
23 New York City students on the New York City Ferry
24 would be a great way to provide more accessible
25 access for students to commute to and from school.

1
2 Currently, New York City students have access to free
3 metro cards during the school year, but subways and
4 buses may tend to provide longer commute times to
5 students, but in certain areas of the city where the
6 New York City Ferry may be more accessible and can
7 provide faster commute times to and from school on a
8 daily basis. The New York City Ferry is managed and
9 operated by the EDC and Hornblower, which will make
10 it harder on the system to operate financially if
11 students have reduced fare, but the DOE and the City
12 can figure out a way to pay for a certain amount of
13 reduced fares for students in areas where the ferry
14 will be a new number one mode of transport for them.
15 Certain students that attend the New York Harbor
16 School live in Red Hook. Their travel time can be
17 reduced by them taking the New York City Ferry from
18 Red Hook to Governors Island, but paying 4 dollars
19 for one trip can be a lot for certain students. Even
20 though the 10-pack for 27.50 is available, students
21 may not be available to purchase that at a time.
22 Concerns on providing reduced New York City Ferry to
23 students can be resolved by the EDC, the City
24 Council, Hornblower, and DOE staff by communicating
25 and providing information in which both parties can

1 work together to come up with a plan and solution to
2 make the ferry not only a very reliable, affordable
3 way of transport but also a safe one for students. In
4 conclusion, reducing New York City Ferry for New York
5 City students will be very beneficial to students to
6 lower commute times for students across the five
7 boroughs with access to different schools across the
8 city. Passing this bill can be a major step forward
9 in hopes of finding students safer and more reliable
10 transportation than only relying on the MTA. Thank
11 you to the Council and Committee for letting me speak
12 and help bring public opinion to this matter. Have a
13 great day.
14

15 AMIN ASAAD: Hi. My name's Amin Asaad. I'm
16 a 16-year-old junior at the New York Harbor School
17 coming from Sheepshead Bay in Brooklyn. Introduction
18 236 is the beginning towards advancing an
19 accessibility that residents of the City of New York
20 have to public transportation within their
21 communities. The New York City Ferry is intended to
22 provide myself and students like myself an efficient
23 form of transportation to and from academic
24 institutions. It's a great start. The language can be
25 revised to mimic the student metro card that students

2 attending public and private high schools, middle and
3 elementary schools within the City of New York obtain
4 each semester they're attending school. New York City
5 Ferry is unique. Unlike the Staten Island Ferry, New
6 York City Ferry is not operated by the New York City
7 Department of Transportation. This represents New
8 York City Ferry as a tourist attraction or an
9 exclusive service rather than a mode of
10 transportation regularly used by residents from
11 different parts of the city and of different career
12 titles and income brackets. I don't believe the
13 operation should remain a contract between the
14 Department of Small Businesses and a local
15 development corporation. I believe that currently the
16 ferry isn't being advertised as a mode of public
17 transportation accessible to all as it was intended
18 to be. The ferry should be subsidized under either
19 the City's Department of Transportation or the
20 Metropolitan Transportation Authority. New York City
21 residents already receive benefits from the
22 Metropolitan Transportation Authority that ease the
23 cost of fare in part or in full. New York City
24 Department of Transportation does not take fares when
25 riding the Staten Island Ferry. New York City Ferry

1 was never intended to be, and is not, an exclusive
2 commodity. It's a public commodity, and it should be
3 treated as one. With being a direct subsidiary of a
4 municipal agency/department or a state
5 agency/department and expanding accessibility to
6 various criteria of residents of the City of New
7 York, which is not only students, the Ferry would
8 fulfill its purpose in successfully and efficiently
9 providing a service to the people of the city. To
10 conclude, I thank the Council for listening to me and
11 considering my recommendations and concerns. If the
12 actions I've previously mentioned were to be
13 implemented, I believe they could be positively
14 impact the city and its residents. There's always a
15 way to benefit your constituents and provide them
16 with various different resources while still
17 maintaining a steady financial intake for the City of
18 New York. Thank you.

20 CIARA LYVER: Hi. My name is Ciara Lyver,
21 and I am a senior at the New York Harbor School and
22 the Marine Affairs and Policy Advocacy Program. I get
23 to say that I have the financial privilege to use the
24 New York City Ferry system from the Bronx to
25 Manhattan Monday through Friday to get to school.

2 Considering using a form of public transportation to
3 get my education as a privilege could be viewed as a
4 false term, but, from personal experience of having
5 friends and peers who can't afford to pay the price,
6 I think it's fair to call it one. The New York City
7 Ferry provides a much safer and, for some, simpler
8 alternative route to the youth as MTA trains or buses
9 that kids 6th grade to 12th grade use every day. The
10 New York City Ferry is working to provide New Yorkers
11 with the most optimal transit ways as they are adding
12 new routes all across the city though adding costly
13 route extensions are not what most are looking for.
14 The city.nyc states that Scott Stringer, the City's
15 former Comptroller, even has tried to raise awareness
16 about spending on the ferry service to the EDC and
17 has urged reigning in the amount of money being put
18 in. In February of 2021, a 64-million-dollar boost
19 was put into the ferry and was used on size and
20 number of vessels and how often the ferry runs, which
21 was not a mandatory buy. The major argument in free
22 service for students is the lack of income the ferry
23 will make as it's a privately owned company, but
24 unnecessary spending like this is why pricing to ride
25 the ferry has increased while funding like that

2 could've been used for student fares. Free
3 transportation on the ferry Monday through Friday
4 from 5 a.m. to 7 p.m. like a regular metro card for
5 city students is a step up from paying a total of 8
6 dollars to school and back every single day. This has
7 kids like me get to school quicker, safer, and more
8 affordable. This also does not interfere the ferry's
9 attempt of raising more money from tourist by
10 increasing the price. Speaking on behalf of the
11 Harbor School and those who cannot afford to take the
12 ferry, it is morally right and socially sustainable
13 to help children in in the way of free transportation
14 when it comes to bettering their education. This
15 change would be elaborately helpful to the youth,
16 Department of Education, and families. Thank you for
17 your time.

18 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you all for
19 testifying. I really appreciate it, and we will
20 definitely continue the conversation with all of you
21 as students in the school. Thank you.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Thank you. Next,
23 we will hear from Theodore Dorian followed by Michael
24 Harwood and Andrew Glass. Theodore.

25 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Theodore, you
3 seem to be muted.

4 THEODORE DORIAN: Now can you hear me?

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Yes, we can.

6 THEODORE DORIAN: Okay, I'm sorry, but I
7 was getting the message that the host was not
8 allowing me to unmute for a moment there. I'm
9 Theodore Dorian, and I'm sorry, I'm a little bit
10 overwhelmed at the testimonies that I just heard from
11 the students from the school right down the street
12 from where I live in St. George. I'm representing the
13 Ferry Riders Committee, and, between the Assembly
14 Member who spoke earlier and made very eloquently the
15 point of how much this kind of a ferry service was
16 needed in their remote areas and now to hear the case
17 for the many programmatic changes that need to be
18 done in order to make this current service a viable
19 part of city transportation and to hear it be made by
20 young students is really quite overwhelming. Staten
21 Island already is lucky, my neighborhood in
22 particular is lucky to have ferry service already in
23 our area so we don't have to advocate for it, but I
24 submit to you that we're the test lab where the
25 success of this kind of service will live or die. At

2 the moment, I've been very much enjoying having the
3 alternative of this wonderful Fast Ferry ride to get
4 me to Midtown in half an hour and the students, those
5 who can afford it, are obviously enjoying their
6 peaceful ride to class. It's a service that the city
7 needs. The costs of it are steep at the moment and it
8 is in need of subsidy from the city, but I ask you to
9 not count the cost in money only. The benefits it
10 would accrue would include ones that have been
11 mentioned, getting cars off of the freeway is going
12 to accrue to the benefit of drivers as well as
13 commuters..

14 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

15 THEODORE DORIAN: Just quickly. I'd like
16 to make the point that working people rely upon
17 ferries for their transportation and minority
18 communities like the ones that we live in Staten
19 Island do as well and so we appreciate any help.
20 Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you so much for
22 that.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Michael Harwood.

24 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.
25

2 MICHAEL HARWOOD: My name is Michael
3 Harwood. I'm a member of the St. George Civic
4 Association and its Ferry Riders Committee. I'd like
5 to point out that Staten Island, despite our free
6 Staten Island ferry service is still effectively a
7 transportation desert in that we have no way off the
8 island other than to pay high bridge tolls, high
9 express bus fares to Manhattan, or to take the ferry
10 just to Lower Manhattan. The North Shore of Staten
11 Island, which is now a majority minority population,
12 needs more transportation options that are both
13 affordable and convenient. The New York City Ferry to
14 Battery Park and West 38th Street is a great start,
15 but we need more. In particular, we need direct
16 connections to Brooklyn that currently do not exist.
17 As the City's economic and cultural and entertainment
18 life have spread in particular to Brooklyn, Staten
19 Island deserves a fair means of participating through
20 connections that directly connect Staten Island to
21 Brooklyn. We also need a ferry route to the East Side
22 of Manhattan to connect with the other ferry rides
23 that go throughout the city. As to the issues of
24 subsidies, I would like to emphasize as Dominique
25 said earlier that the city and state subsidize the

1 area airports with billions of dollars in
2 improvements yet Staten Island has no means of public
3 transportation to get to any of those airports other
4 than to travel into Manhattan by ferry to then find
5 the other connections that are available, and the
6 subsidies and losses that have been identified here
7 pale by comparison to the amount of money that the
8 Port Authority has been providing to these other
9 methods of transportation. Also, many students on
10 Staten Island also travel to these magnet schools
11 like Stuyvesant and the School of Performing Arts,
12 both of which are convenient to the current routes
13 and these students would clearly benefit from the
14 subsidies that we've been talking about already. EDC
15 has been pushing in our neighborhood for more
16 development and adding market rate apartments in the
17 area and yet they don't do anything during the
18 approval process and the zoning process to get these
19 private developers who are reaping the profits to
20 contribute to the cost of transportation in our area
21 that will only be more needed as the population
22 density increases.
23

24 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.
25

1
2 MICHAEL HARWOOD: Finally, I'd just say
3 that Staten Island, the North Shore has a large
4 population that faces economic challenges that need
5 and deserve more transportation options like the New
6 York City Fast Ferry which should be expanded to
7 Brooklyn and the East Side of Manhattan to connect
8 with other parts of the city. Thank you.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Thank you for
10 your testimony. Next, we'll hear from Andrew Glass.
11 Andrew will be followed by Anne Richardson and Mary
12 Bullock.

13 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

14 ANDREW GLASS: Can you hear me?

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Yes, we can hear
16 you.

17 ANDREW GLASS: My name is Andrew Glass.
18 I'm a resident of Greenpoint, which is a member of
19 Lincoln Restler's District, which has been without
20 our beloved ferry stop since May of 2021. That's why
21 I came to this meeting. First and foremost, though,
22 I'd like to say that I stand with these kids who have
23 testified today. We should be subsidizing the ferry
24 for kids without any hesitation. I'm inspired by
25 their words and their activism today, and I hope that

1 they leave this also inspired and I hope that we give
2 them a fair shake in listening to them. The ferry is
3 important for everything that's been already stated
4 here today. There's been such a lack of transparency
5 in the Greenpoint situation, and I really hope that
6 we will take a look at that. Obviously, I don't know
7 too much about the ferry other than how it's affected
8 my neighborhood, but in being in this meeting today
9 I've learned a lot about the lack of transparency,
10 the issues with the auditing, the equitable access,
11 and I hope that our City Council will take all of
12 that seriously. We need more than a hand wave. I'll
13 speak just on behalf of Greenpoint residents, we're
14 upset with how it's been handled by the EDC, handled
15 by Lendlease, and I do echo Councilperson Restler's
16 frustration with it that I don't think this has been
17 fairly treated and I think that this situation needs
18 to be investigated way more thoroughly. It's one
19 thing that, great, we own the fleet, but if we don't
20 own the landings and we're at the whims of private
21 developers who are going to when and where we can
22 have stops and landings for a mass transit system,
23 that's pretty unacceptable so I hope that we'll
24

1 consider that today and thank you for your time and
2 I'm thankful to the Council for hearing us all.

3
4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Thank you for
5 your testimony. Next, we will hear from Anne
6 Richardson.

7 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

8 ANNE RICHARDSON: Hello. Good morning,
9 Council Members. Thank you for the opportunity to
10 speak. I'm the parent of two Brooklyn children with
11 learning disabilities, and I'm here to say the
12 ferries have made a huge difference in their lives
13 and their positive school experiences and I urge you
14 to support extending availability to include this
15 means of free student transportation. When my 12-
16 year-old daughter was looking at high schools, an
17 important criteria for us given her neuroatypical
18 issues was transportation. We needed a straight line
19 home to school with no transfers and then we
20 discovered the ferry and life changed and going to
21 high school was no longer a trauma but a positive
22 experience. As the past PTA President at the Harbor
23 School, I've heard many parents talk about the
24 difference the ferry has made in encouraging
25 attendance and lowering absenteeism, and the clear

1 benefit of general mental health. 30 percent of our
2 students at this school have IEPs and they're drawn
3 to the school by the promise of an experiential,
4 nontraditional education that our neurodiverse
5 children thrive in. This is a group that graduates at
6 a rate lower than other students, that take longer to
7 their diplomas, and that black and Latinx students
8 have been overrepresented in since the Office of
9 Civil Rights started to sample districts in 1968, a
10 disproportionality that speaks to inequity on
11 multiple levels. We want all of our students, of
12 course, not just those with IEPs, to have access to
13 transportation options, but I'm here to say that for
14 those with IEPs positive transportation experience
15 sets up how the day begins and how it continues.
16 These last three years have certainly shown us as New
17 Yorkers, as Americans, that mental health is a need
18 as critical as academic success and the ferry option
19 supports (INAUDIBLE) for students in ways that are
20 tangible. The kids have already covered the
21 waterfront in lots of way, but, since we're talking
22 about economics of this whole option, I want to say
23 that enforcing the sufficiency is the true business
24 of your Committees and part of the solution is also
25

1 Harbor School, because our school has graduated more
2 captains and seamen...

3
4 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

5 ANNE RICHARDSON: Any other school in New
6 York, and our students can take back the jobs, 14
7 percent of the jobs in the New York waterfront are
8 owned by New Yorkers.

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you.

10 ANNE RICHARDSON: We can change that
11 statistic. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thanks so
13 much.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Next, we will
15 hear from Mary Bullock followed by Rose Uscianowski
16 and Linda Cohen.

17 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

18 MARY BULLOCK: Hello. My name is Mary
19 Bullock. I speak for the Port Richmond North Shore
20 Alliance Civic Associations. We believe there can
21 never be too many ferries, fast or otherwise, because
22 with ferries, transportation is just the beginning.
23 Staten Island ferries helped create our nation. In
24 1756, the Mersereau brothers of Staten Island created
25 the first regular route from New York to

2 Philadelphia. By 1776, George Washington traveled it
3 by ferry from Manhattan to Paulus Hook, today's
4 Jersey City, ferried to the end of today's Port
5 Richmond Avenue, stagecoach across Staten Island to
6 the ferry to Perth Amboy and then over land to
7 Philadelphia. When you move people, you also move
8 information. This ferry service resulted in a spying
9 network that helped win the American Revolution.
10 Ferries transformed Brooklyn. In 1814 on May 10th,
11 the ferry boat Nassau carried 549 passengers, one
12 wagon, and three horses to Brooklyn. Ferries arguably
13 transformed Brooklyn Heights into the nation's first
14 suburb. Staten Island Ferry shaped our modern
15 business world. In 1817, Cornelius Vanderbilt went to
16 work for Thomas Gibbons on the new steamboat ferries
17 that ran between Brunswick, New Jersey and New York
18 City resulting in a profound and permanent impact on
19 the American economy. Vanderbilt sued to break the
20 monopoly on all steamship travel on the Hudson River
21 held by Gibbons' business rival, Aaron Ogden. In
22 1824, the case advanced all the way to the U.S.
23 Supreme Court and created the principle of interstate
24 commerce. Expanded ferry service, especially from
25 several points on Staten Island to Brooklyn and

beyond, will reap benefits we can't even imagine right now. In 2022, we can expect the going forward of a network of Fast Ferries will stimulate New York City business, culture, and tourism and benefit all our people. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Thank you for your testimony. Next, we'll hear from Rose Uscianowski.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

ROSE USCIANOWSKI: Hello, everyone. Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I'm Rose Uscianowski, the Staten Island and South Brooklyn Organizer for Transportation Alternatives. I'm also a Staten Island resident and a community organizer. I echo thousands of my neighbors, some of whom you've heard from today, in my support for sustainable, valuable, and equitable Fast Ferry service across New York City. Transit is the backbone of New York. We need to do all we can to secure and expand our public transit system, especially in ways that support our underserved shoreline communities and relieve congestion on our overtaxed streets. Fast Ferry is the answer to both. As we explore future network

1 growth, equity needs to be forefronted above
2 profitability. We need to ensure that new routes are
3 serving New Yorkers with the highest need regardless
4 of whether this will grant the highest ridership
5 growth or offer the greatest profit margins. If Fast
6 Ferry service is to serve as a part of New York
7 City's diverse and growing public transit system,
8 this trade-off needs to be acknowledged and accepted.
9 I am grateful for Staten Island's relatively recent
10 inclusion in the New York City Fast Ferry system. In
11 a relatively short time, our route, Manhattan's west
12 side, has grown in popularity as more Staten
13 Islanders use it to connect to jobs or healthcare or
14 adjust their weekend plans based on the new transit
15 option. As the Staten Island ferry has recently
16 struggled with major service disruptions, Fast Ferry
17 alternatives became invaluable to our...

18
19 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

20 ROSE USCIANOWSKI: I'll be quick.

21 Establishing a Fast Ferry route between Staten Island
22 and Brooklyn would better connect Staten Island to
23 our Fast Ferry system while serving thousands of
24 underserved residents. All it would take is
25 connecting the St. George Fast Ferry stop to any

existing stop along Brooklyn's shoreline. This would open up access to Brooklyn while enabling easy transfer to the vast...

CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: We need you to wrap up, Rose. I'm sorry.

ROSE USCIANOWSKI: I will wrap up.

CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you.

ROSE USCIANOWSKI: To the rest of the Fast Ferry system's Central East River route. I speak for thousands of Staten Islanders and Brooklynites when I call on the New York City Economic Development Corporation to expand Fast Ferry service between Staten Island and Brooklyn as well as the East River Route.

CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you so much.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Thank you for your testimony. Next, we will hear from Linda Cohen. Linda.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Linda, you seem to be muted.

LINDA COHEN: Here we go. Okay?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Yes.

2 LINDA COHEN: Okay. I'm following up on
3 what a couple of people just said. There are about
4 4,000 residents who have signed a petition so that we
5 can get a Fast Ferry from the Staten Island North
6 Shore to one of the Fast Ferry hubs in Brooklyn that
7 has routes that continue on to other areas. We used
8 to have a Brooklyn-Staten Island ferry years ago, and
9 I think it's time again that we have better
10 waterfront connections to the Brooklyn neighborhoods
11 that many of us in Staten Island came from, many of
12 us have family there, many of us frequently travel
13 there for work and for play. Many North Shore
14 residents have low incomes, many have long commutes,
15 many cyclists find our current Brooklyn-Staten Island
16 connections inconvenient especially since the
17 Verrazano Bridge doesn't allow them access. While we
18 have two ferries to Manhattan, we do not have a
19 connection to Fast Ferry hubs that connect us to the
20 different neighborhoods of Brooklyn and Queens. Our
21 North Shore waterways are used all day long to bring
22 in tremendous, massive cargo ships all the way from
23 China. It is time we use our waterways to bring
24 Staten Island North Shore to Brooklyn. We have the
25 public sites, we have the depth, we have the tides,

1 we have the parking, and all the other things that
2 EDC feasibility requires. Lastly, resident
3 communications with EDC is often very limited so I do
4 hope that we can be reassured that EDC will hear all
5 the points that we are making today in our public
6 transportation. Thank you very much.
7

8 COMMITTEE COUNSEL LYNN: Thank you for
9 your testimony. At this time, is there anyone else in
10 Chambers for public transportation?

11 Okay. Seeing none, I'll turn it back over
12 to the Chairs.

13 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for
14 all of those who took time out on this dreary day to
15 testify for this hearing on the New York City Ferry.
16 I'd like to pass it to my co-Chair and see if she has
17 any closing remarks.

18 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Just excited to keep
19 working together towards NYC Ferry Forward,
20 expansion, opportunities, and getting kids on our
21 waterways. Thank you for everyone who testified
22 today, both from the admin and the public.

23 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: [GAVEL]
24
25

C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date September 30, 2022