

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

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

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SEPTEMBER 10, 2024
Start: 10:54 A.M.
Recess: 1:56 P.M.

HELD AT: COMMITTEE ROOM - CITY HALL

B E F O R E: Amanda Farias,
Chairperson for the Committee on
Economic Development

Selvena Brooks-Powers,
Chairperson for the Committee on
Transportation and Infrastructure

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

- Joann Ariola
- Alexa Avilés
- Chris Banks
- Erik D. Bottcher
- Justin Brannan
- De La Rosa
- Selvena Brooks-Powers
- Jennifer Gutiérrez
- Farah N. Louis
- Mercedes Narcisse
- Lincoln Restler
- Kevin C. Riley
- Rafael Salamanca, Jr.

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Althea Stevens

Inna Vernikov

Julie Won

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

James Wong
Executive Director of NYC Ferry

Franny Civitano
Deputy Director from the NYC Ferry Team

Michele Lamberti
Vice President of Legislative Affairs

John Regan
DOT

Rick Rodriguez
DOT

Dominick Recchia
Former Council Member

Robert Cornegie
Former Council Member

Rose Uscianowski
Transportation Alternatives

Fred Rodriguez
Maritime Historian

Sean Campio
Citizens Budget Commission

Tyler Taba
Director of Resilience at the Waterfront Alliance

Glen Bolofsky
Parking Ticket

Alexander Stein

Sharon Brown Jeter
Rose of Sharon Enterprises

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Randy Peers
Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce

Wayne Richards

April Jackson

Alexander Pertsovssky

Linda Baran
President of the Staten Island Chamber of
Commerce

John Doyle
Resident of City Island

Jack Epter
Community Board and Civic Association

Marie Mirville-Shahzada
Alfadila Community Services

Michael Harwood
St. George Civic Association

Anthony Batista
Community Organizer and Advocate for Coney Island

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1
2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: This is a microphone check for
3 the Committee on Transportation jointly with Economic
4 Development. Today's date is September 10, 2024
5 located in the Committee Room. Recording done by
6 Rocco Masiti (SP?).

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning and welcome to
8 the New York City Council Hearing of the Committee on
9 Transportation jointly with Economic Development. At
10 this time, can everybody please silence your cell
11 phones. If you wish to testify, please go up to the
12 Sergeant at Arms desk to fill out a testimony slip.
13 Written testimony can be emailed to
14 testimony@council.nyc.gov. Once again, that is
15 testimony@council.nyc.gov. At this time and going
16 forward, no one is to approach the dais. I repeat,
17 no one is to approach the dais.

18 Thank you for your cooperation. Chairs, we are
19 ready to begin.

20 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: [GAVEL] Good morning.
21 Today is September 10, 2024. My name is Amanda
22 Farias. I'm the Majority Leader of the New York City
23 Council and I have the privilege of Chairing the
24 Council's Committee on Economic Development. I would
25 like to extend my thanks to my Co-Chair Majority Whip

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1
2 and Chair Selvena Brooks-Powers, as well as well as
3 the members of both Committee's for coming together
4 to hold this hearing. We've been joined by Council
5 Members Ariola, Narcisse, Louis, Banks, Bottcher, De
6 La Rosa and Avilés.

7 I'd like to start off by saying that I enjoy the
8 Ferry. I ride it myself, recommend it to my
9 constituents, and find it a convenient way to get
10 from my district to Manhattan and other parts of the
11 city. The purpose of today's hearing is to take a
12 deep dive into New York City Ferries finances and
13 operations and to better understand the progress made
14 since our last oversight hearing in 2022.

15 We want to examine the implementation of NYC
16 Ferry forward, assess the projected impact of the new
17 discounted fare structure for students, and discuss
18 the recent developments of Hornblowers contract in
19 light of their bankruptcy.

20 We would like to use this hearing as an
21 opportunity to evaluate the progress made and
22 addressing the concerns raised in the 2022
23 Comptrollers audit, particularly regarding financial
24 transparency and cost reporting. We aim to
25 understand how EDC plans to further expand and

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1
2 improve NYC Ferry service while ensuring fiscal
3 responsibility. Specifically, we want to examine the
4 contract with city experiences and its implication
5 for NYC's Ferry operations and finances. We're
6 interested in understanding how EDC is working to
7 increase ridership, reduce pro-rider subsidies and
8 integrate the Ferry system with other city
9 transportation options.

10 We also want to explore EDC's emergency
11 preparedness measures and the Ferry systems
12 environmental impact. Furthermore, we'll discuss the
13 implementation and impact of Local Law 47 of 2023,
14 which expanded the New York City Ferry Discount
15 Program to include high school students. Local Law
16 47, which I sponsored, ensures that all of the city's
17 public high school students are eligible for the same
18 reduced price fare as seniors, disabled persons and
19 any one eligible for fair fares.

20 We're keen to hear about the program, its pilot,
21 current implementation and any challenges so far in
22 its rollout since it took effect last week on
23 September 1st. Currently, New York City Ferry
24 includes six routes and one seasonal weekend shuttle
25 with 38 ferries in 25 Ferry landings. Since our last

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1 hearing, we've seen changes in ridership patterns,
2 fare structures and operational strategies. We are
3 particularly interested in understanding how these
4 changes have affected the systems financial
5 sustainability and accessibility. EDC's current
6 contract with city experiences promised improvements
7 and ridership experience and system transparency. We
8 look forward to hearing about the progress made on
9 these fronts and any challenges encountered
10 especially in light of the operators bankruptcy.
11 Additionally, we're here to discuss three pieces of
12 legislation related to the New York City Ferry
13 System. Introduction 321 sponsored by Council Member
14 Moya would require Ferry service to Willets Point.
15

16 Introduction 864 sponsored by Chair Brooks-Powers
17 calls for a study on expanding service along the
18 Rockaway Peninsula. Resolution 400 sponsored by
19 Council Member Holden urges EDC to expand service to
20 LaGuardia Airport. We hope to explore how these
21 proposals align with EDC's current plans and the
22 overall vision for NYC Ferry, including potential job
23 creation and impacts on local businesses near Ferry
24 landings.
25

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1 Before I turn the floor over to Chair Brooks
2 Powers, I'd like to acknowledge we've also been
3 joined by Council Member Won and I would to take a
4 minute to acknowledge the Economic Development
5 Committee Staff Senior Counsel Alex Paulenoff,
6 Senior Policy Analyst William Hongach and Finance
7 Analyst Glenn Martelloni for all their hard work
8 putting this hearing together.
9

10 With that said, I will now turn it over to Chair
11 Brooks-Powers for her opening statement.

12 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. Good
13 morning and welcome to this joint oversight hearing.
14 My name again is Selvena Brooks-Powers. I am the
15 Chair of the Committee on Transportation and
16 Infrastructure. Today, I am pleased to be with my
17 colleague and fellow Co-Chair Majority Leader Farias
18 to conduct this hearing on the New York City Ferry
19 System.

20 In addition, as my Co-Chair stated, we will be
21 hearing four pieces of legislation related to
22 expanding ferry service. Intro. Number 321 sponsored
23 by Council Member Moya would require the New York
24 City Department of Transportation to provide regular
25

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1 Ferry Services from Willets Point in Queens to the
2 Borough of Manhattan.
3

4 Intro. Number 864 sponsored by myself, would
5 require a study and report on the expansion of ferry
6 services along the Rockaway Peninsula. Proposed
7 Reso. Number 400A sponsored by Council Member Holden
8 would call on the New York City Economic Development
9 Corporation to expand NYC Ferry Service to LaGuardia
10 Airport and the Preconsidered Intro. sponsored by
11 Council Member Brannan, which would require a study
12 and report on the feasibility on direct ferry service
13 to Coney Island.

14 In 2015, then New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio
15 announced plans to create a citywide ferry system
16 within New York City that would match the cost of the
17 city's buses and subways. In 2017, the de Blasio
18 administration launched the New York City Ferry
19 system. Since then, the ferry system has been an
20 innovative and efficient way to utilize New York
21 City's waterways and coastlines for mass transit,
22 particularly for those who live in isolated areas of
23 transportation deserts.

24 The New York City Ferry System has six routes
25 that span over 60 nautical miles of water ways within

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1 New York City and now carried millions of riders
2 annually. The system also includes a number of
3 discounted ticket options for senior citizens,
4 students, persons with disabilities and low income
5 riders. Although the New York City Ferry System has
6 proven to be an important mode of transit on our
7 waterways, I have some fundamental concerns. Since
8 its launch, New York City Ferry has been criticized
9 for heavily subsidizing its rides.
10

11 A 2019 report issued by the Citizens Budget
12 Commission estimated that the city subsidizes the
13 Ferry system at a rate of \$10.73 per ride, which was
14 ten times higher than the subsidies for subway or bus
15 rides. In addition, the City Comptroller's Office
16 found in a 2022 report, that the net losses of the
17 Ferry operations was \$30 million in Fiscal Year 2017,
18 \$44 million in Fiscal Year 2018, \$53 million in
19 Fiscal Year 2019, \$53 million in Fiscal Year 2020,
20 and \$33 million in Fiscal Year 2021.

21 The Comptrollers audit also found that EDC had
22 failed to disclose over \$224 million in New York City
23 Ferry expenditures and that the agency had
24 significantly understated public subsidies for the
25 Ferry system. In addition to cost effectiveness

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1 concerns, a 2021 Ferry Survey conducted by EDC found
2 that only 32 percent of Ferry riders were BIPOC and
3 that the median income of all riders were between
4 \$100,000 and \$149,000. These findings revealed that
5 our Ferries were not serving all New Yorkers
6 equitably. I am pleased that based on EDC's 2023
7 Ferry service; we are seeing some improvement in
8 terms of diverse ridership. For example, in 2023,
9 frequent riders who use the Ferry three or more days
10 per week were a more diverse group than nonfrequent
11 riders. 44 percent of frequent riders are BIPOC
12 while just 30 percent of infrequent riders are BIPOC.

14 In addition, the 2023 survey shows that 35
15 percent of all riders systemwide are BIPOC.

16 Nevertheless, the median household income for riders
17 remains at \$100,000 to \$149,000. While there has
18 been progress in terms of inclusive and equitable
19 ridership, there is still more work to do. Today, I
20 am looking forward to hearing from the Administration
21 on their ongoing efforts to make the Ferry system
22 more equitable, fiscally sound, and environmentally
23 sustainable for New Yorkers.

24 I am also looking forward to hearing the
25 Administration's plans regarding further expansion of

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13

1 the Ferry system, particularly focusing on the
2 legislation being heard, safeguard against further
3 fiscal management issues, implementation of the New
4 York City Ferry Forward Plan and more. Before we
5 begin, I would like to thank my staff and Committee
6 Staff for their hard work, Kevin Kotowski, Senior
7 Policy Analyst, John Basile, Senior Policy Analyst,
8 Mark Chen, Senior Counsel to the Committee, Connor
9 Mealey, Counsel to the Committee, Adrian Drepaul,
10 Senior Policy Analyst, Julian Martin, my Policy and
11 Budget Director and Renee Taylor, my Chief of Staff.

12 I will now turn it back over to my Co-Chair,
13 Majority Leader Farias.

14 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: I will not kick it over to
15 Committee Counsel to swear in the folks from EDC and
16 DOT.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Good morning, Alex Paulenoff,
18 Senior Counsel. Will all members of the
19 Administration testifying today, please raise your
20 right hands. Do you swear or affirm to tell the
21 truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth in
22 your testimony and to respond honestly to Council
23 Member questions? Great, you may begin when ready.
24

25

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1 JAMES WONG: Good morning Chairs Farias and
2 Brooks-Powers and members of the Economic Development
3 and Transportation and Infrastructure Committees. My
4 name is James Wong and I serve as an Executive Vice
5 President for the New York City Economic Development
6 Corporation and as Executive Director of NYC Ferry.
7 I'm joined by my colleagues Franny Civitano, Deputy
8 Director from the NYC Ferry Team and Michelle
9 Lamberti, Vice President of Legislative Affairs in
10 our Government and Community Relations Department,
11 along with Ricardo Rodriguez, Assistant Commissioner
12 of Intergovernmental Affairs at the New York City
13 Department of Transportation.
14

15 The New York City Economic Development
16 Corporation works to create a vibrant, inclusive and
17 globally competitive economy for all New Yorkers.
18 Our work is guided by four strategic priorities,
19 strengthening business confidence, growing innovation
20 industry is the focus on equity, building
21 neighborhoods as places to live, learn, work and play
22 and delivering sustainable infrastructure.

23 As part of this mission, EDC oversees the city's
24 passenger Ferry system, NYC Ferry, which provides New
25 Yorkers and visitors alike with a convenient and

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15

1 affordable transit option connecting communities to
2 jobs, recreation and each other.

3
4 The NYC Ferry system provides more than seven
5 million riders annually with safe, dependable,
6 affordable and accessible transit across the five
7 boroughs with six routes that touch every borough, 25
8 landings and 38 vessels, the system spans over 70
9 nautical miles and is the largest passenger only
10 fleet in the nation based on hours of service and
11 fleet size.

12 We value the Council's partnership and support of
13 NYC Ferry and thank you for the opportunity to
14 testify about our work.

15 In 2022, Mayor Adams and EDC unveiled NYC Ferry
16 Forward, a plan to make NYC Ferry more equitable,
17 accessible and fiscally sustainable citywide. The
18 plans main strategies included an expanded discount
19 program for NYC Ferry, expanded outreach to NYCHA
20 residents, and easier access for New Yorkers who will
21 be taken by schools onto Ferry's, a competitive
22 procurement process for a new Ferry operating
23 contract, increase public engagement to improve
24 equity and creative opportunities for revenue
25 generation to improve financial sustainability. NYC

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1 Ferry is pleased to now provide a brief update on the
2 plans implementation to date.
3

4 In the two years since the NYC Ferry Forward Plan
5 was announced, the program has successfully
6 introduced and expanded the discount program to make
7 NYC Ferry more accessible to New Yorkers. The NYC
8 Ferry Discount Program offers reduced fare rides for
9 seniors and people with disabilities. Additionally,
10 any rider that participates in Fair Fares NYC, a
11 program supporting low income residents, is also
12 eligible for the NYC Ferry Discount program.

13 Since the programs expansion in 2022, nearly
14 18,000 New Yorkers have enrolled and we have seen a
15 600 percent increase in the use of discounted tickets
16 since we introduced the single trip discount option.
17 Our fare analysis has shown that lowering the upfront
18 costs of participating in the discount program and
19 introducing a ten trip pack, has led to increased
20 trip frequency among our returning customers,
21 including Minority and discount riders.

22 The student discount program has been a critical
23 component of our equity and accessibility efforts and
24 expanded discount program. Before I go any further,
25 I want to take this opportunity to public thank you

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1 Chair Farias for your leadership and commitment to
2 NYC Ferry. We greatly appreciate your collaboration
3 on a variety of issues, most notably, expanding NYC
4 Ferries discount program to include New York City's
5 high school students. We are excited about this
6 program and have been promoting this new affordable
7 week day commuting option to high schoolers living or
8 going to school near the New York City waterfront.
9

10 Since enrollment in the program opened on August
11 1, 2024, NYC Ferry has worked diligently to make
12 students and their families aware of the program. To
13 date, 535 students have registered for the program
14 and over 400 student discount tickets have been
15 purchased since the program went live just last week.

16 We have implemented an extensive engagement
17 strategy to boost participation. Just last week, NYC
18 Ferry was pleased to join Chair Farias and her team
19 and New York City high schoolers at the Soundview
20 landing for an NYC Ferry student discount launch
21 event. We appreciate Council's enthusiasm and
22 support and look forward to enrolling students for
23 whom the Ferry is a convenient means of
24 transportation to and from school.
25

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1
2 Additionally, to advance this effort, in the
3 month of August alone, NYC Ferry held 11 in person
4 tabling events about the student discount program
5 across New York, including at Council Member Rivera's
6 Office, libraries and CBO back to school events. We
7 are happy to partner with the Council on future
8 events and activities to help spread the word to our
9 young constituents and their families. These events
10 are in addition to NYC Ferry canvassing around our
11 landings to provide information to local communities
12 about the Ferry system.

13 In August, NYC Ferry canvased in 15
14 neighborhoods, sharing information on the discount
15 program. These efforts have been bolstered by our
16 promotion of the program across NYC Ferries social
17 media channels. There are nearly 50 public, private
18 and charter schools within a half mile of an NYC
19 Ferry landing and we have begun outreach for tabling
20 and presentation opportunities to reach eligible
21 students. To further these efforts, we have worked
22 collaboratively with our colleagues at the Department
23 of Education to reach students and families. We've
24 ensured that each parent of an eligible student
25 received a banner message in their New York City's

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1 schools account on portal, notifying them of their
2 child's eligibility for the program. We posted
3 fliers on how to apply for the program in ten
4 different languages on the DOE web page and pushed
5 out an email blast on the program to all New York
6 City high school parents. As the school year begins,
7 we look forward to increased engagement with high
8 schools, local community education council's and
9 school based parent organizations, and we'll continue
10 exploring additional avenues of engagement to promote
11 the student discount program.
12

13 To expand our ridership base to be more racially
14 and economically diverse, NYC Ferry has developed a
15 robust community outreach campaign. In the last
16 year, NYC Ferries community outreach teams engaged
17 over 19,000 New Yorkers throughout 100 canvassing
18 sessions, 20 career fairs and almost 200
19 presentations, sponsorships and tabling events. As
20 part of our new operating agreement with Hornblower,
21 NYC Ferry Now has a full time employee solely
22 dedicated to NYCHA outreach, including meetings with
23 tenants associations and residents promoting the NYC
24 Ferry at family days and other NYCHA related events.
25

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1
2 Canvassing at New York developments promoting NYC
3 Ferry as a service and as a career opportunity and
4 volunteering with tenant associations and related
5 organizations.

6 To reduce impediments for New Yorkers looking to
7 take their bicycles on the Ferry, NYC Ferry
8 eliminated the dollar bike fee in September of 2022.
9 While bike capacity is still limited on vessels, we
10 instituted this change to better connect NYC Ferry
11 with other environmentally sustainable modes of
12 transit and encourage ridership among New Yorkers who
13 want to use bicycles as a last mile transportation
14 option.

15 When we last testified before your Committees in
16 September 2022, we had just released an RFP for a new
17 Ferry operator. After a successful and highly
18 competitive process, we entered into a new five year
19 operating agreement with Hornblower in October 2023
20 and reached our achievement for the system. The new
21 contract includes major business improvements
22 including a framework to partner with a corporate
23 name sponsor to rebrand the system and further drive
24 down the subsidy. Upgraded ridership experiences
25 like free onboard Wi-Fi and behind the scene system

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1 upgrades to increase transparency and efficiency.

2 The contract has an initial five year term with two
3 three year expansion options, furthering the system
4 to remain a permanent fixture of the New York City
5 landscape.
6

7 NYC Ferry has undertaken an expanded public
8 information campaign through digital and in person
9 outreach to familiarize New Yorkers with the benefits
10 of the system and encourage them to experience and
11 ride NYC Ferry. In addition to our community
12 engagement efforts, a key strategy for this has been
13 our social media outreach. We've seen NYC Ferry grow
14 with creative and sometimes viral social media
15 moments. NYC Ferry social media engagement has grown
16 organically with an over 500 percent year over year
17 social media growth without spending any money on
18 ads.

19 NYC Ferry has successfully implemented creative
20 revenue generation to improve the systems financial
21 stability. NYC Ferry has been committed to
22 creatively engaging advertisers and passengers alike
23 improving their ridership experience and generating
24 positive financial returns to the system. In just
25 the past year, NYC Ferry launched exciting new

1
2 partnerships and activations to generate additional
3 revenue and engage audiences including a
4 collaboration of Spotify, partnering with the Harry
5 Potter Play for Hogwarts branded ferries and a
6 collaboration with gay pride apparel for a capsule
7 collection and merchandize for pride month. We've
8 also opened up advertising space on digital tickets
9 by our app opening an additional advertising market
10 to the over two million people who have the NYC Ferry
11 app.

12 To further boost revenue this summer, EDC
13 released an RFP to find a sponsorship agency that can
14 help NYC Ferry secure a naming rights and sponsorship
15 partner that we hope will lead to a multimillion
16 dollar deal for NYC Ferry, helping to reduce the
17 systems overall operating costs.

18 As part of NYC Ferries new operating agreement
19 with Hornblower, we've rolled out a series of rider
20 improvements, many of which make system information
21 more accessible to riders, including expanded
22 language access in the NYC Ferry app and on the NYC
23 Ferry website. Automated onboard audio and visual
24 announcements to expand rider accessibility and
25 alerting riders of the next stop, free Wi-Fi across

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1
2 all NYC Ferry vessels, the ability to text or call to
3 get real time schedule information for each Ferry
4 landing. In app views of real time seat and bike
5 spot availability for every vessel.

6 EDC and NYC Ferry are dedicated to improving the
7 long term financial sustainability of the system.
8 Increased ridership supported by improved rider
9 experience and additional revenue opportunities have
10 driven down the systems per passenger subsidy. NYC
11 Ferry has the lowest subsidy of any publicly funded
12 passenger Ferry system in the country. In Fiscal
13 Year 2023, NYC Ferry saw its lowest per passenger
14 subsidy at \$8.55, down 30 percent from its peak. We
15 have reduced the cost of the ferry system and have
16 improved our efficiency per hour and provider as a
17 system. Of the major transit systems in the New York
18 City region, NYC Ferry has the third lowest subsidy
19 behind MTA's local bus and subway system.

20 A head of the Long Island Railroad, commuter and
21 express buses and Metro North and it is the only
22 transit system to lower its passenger subsidy since
23 the pandemic. To continue the growth of NYC Ferry
24 ridership while also remaining sound financial
25 stewards of the system, NYC Ferry announced a new

1 fare policy in August which went into effect
2 yesterday. Under the new fare policy, there's a
3 modest increase in the single ticket base fare from
4 \$4.00 to \$4.50 and a slight increase to the ten trip
5 pack and discount tickets to match MTA subway and bus
6 per trip fares at \$2.90. In this fare structure,
7 tourists and occasional riders pay a little bit more
8 while the ten trip pack and discounted fares remain
9 accessible to our frequent riders.
10

11 NYC Ferry is dedicated to not just making its
12 system more equitable and accessible to riders but
13 also driving employment in the maritime industry and
14 serving as a critical component of the city's
15 maritime employment pipeline. As of June 2024, NYC
16 Ferry employed 450 individuals, 75 percent of whom
17 are people of color and 21 percent of whom are women
18 or gender nonconforming. More than 90 percent of
19 employees are New York City residents.

20 One of the reasons Hornblower was selected as our
21 operator in 2023 is their commitment to nurturing
22 maritime careers. Hornblower invest in their
23 employees providing job growth opportunities and
24 creating good jobs that have competitive salaries and
25 benefits to similar outfits in the harbor. They are

1 also deeply committed to internal promotions and
2 career growth. More than half of our currently
3 trained and licensed captains started as deck hands.
4

5 In 2024, NYC Ferry completed the first ever NYC
6 Ferry Career Fair in partnership with NYCHA and this
7 fall, we are launching our first ever apprenticeship
8 program to attract more talent to careers in
9 maritime. We are excited to continue and broaden
10 these initiatives to bring more New Yorkers into the
11 maritime industry. One of our key strategies of the
12 Ferry Forward plan was to drive ridership by
13 improving our operations and service. We are proud
14 to say that NYC Ferry has continuously hit ridership
15 records over the past year with over seven million
16 riders in fiscal year 2024. An eight percent
17 increase in ridership from the prior fiscal year, and
18 those who rely on NYC Ferry the most our five day a
19 week riders, are 47 percent non-White.

20 Since 2022, NYC Ferry has worked to enhance the
21 NYC Ferry experience during peak seasons by
22 introducing new services such as the Rockaway Rocket,
23 Rockaway Reserve and South Brooklyn's Faster
24 Connections. This past summer, ridership has been
25 particularly robust with the return of the Rockaway

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1 Reserve and the launch of the Rockaway Rocket from
2 Greenpoint and Long Island City.
3

4 NYC Ferry set some ridership records across the
5 system with more than 3.1 million boardings between
6 Memorial Day and Labor Day, a seven percent increase
7 from summer of '23. Summer weekend travel to
8 Rockaway Beach remains popular and premium ticketing
9 programs brought additional revenue back into the
10 system. In July alone, the Rockaway Reserve and
11 Rocket generated approximately over \$300,000 in
12 revenue back to the system. We will have data on
13 August ridership and revenue in the coming days and
14 expect these numbers to be consistent if not higher.

15 As you've heard today, NYC Ferry is always
16 looking for ways to improve the system. We have been
17 focused on shoring up the NYC Ferry system by
18 increasing ridership, driving fare box revenue,
19 making our operations more efficient and finding ways
20 to ensure our fiscal sustainability. While we do not
21 currently have plans for expansion, we greatly
22 appreciate the enthusiasm and interest in the system
23 and we continue to look for ways to optimize our
24 system, such as through improved schedules and route
25 configurations to efficiently and quickly get riders

1 to their destinations. With respect to Introduction
2 321 and the proposed expansion of Ferry service to
3 Willets Point, as I just outlined, NYC Ferry does not
4 have any current plans for system expansion.
5

6 However, as part of the comprehensive Willets Point
7 development process, EDC committed to the Queens
8 Borough President that we would undertake a study to
9 evaluate a potential landing at this site. With
10 respect to Introduction 864, and it's proposed study
11 and report on the expansion of Ferry service along
12 the Rockaway Peninsula, EDC has previously evaluated
13 the expansion of Ferry service to this area and has
14 determined that system expansion further into the
15 Rockaways was not viable for NYC Ferry.

16 NYC Ferry vessels are unable to safely and
17 reliably pass under the A-Train bridge that crosses
18 Broad Channel as there is insufficient clearance.
19 While the Swing Bridge could open from traffic, this
20 would significantly disrupt subway service to the
21 Rockaways. As for alternative Ferry sites on the
22 ocean side of the Peninsula, such locations cannot be
23 safely utilized as they are extremely challenging to
24 water depths, high winds and ocean swells.
25

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1
2 With respect to Preconsidered legislation 2438,
3 seeking a study and a report on the feasibility of a
4 direct Ferry to Coney Island, EDC conducted
5 significant work related to Coney Island Ferry
6 Service. In 2019, we began work to launch a Coney
7 Island route but in late 2021, EDC paused work on its
8 Coney Island Creek Ferry landing due to navigational
9 and safety concerns related to sand build up in the
10 creek.

11 In 2022, we conducted a feasibility analysis to
12 assess other landing options to serve Coney Island.
13 For any proposed Ferry landings on the ocean facing
14 shoreline, there are serious concerns that exposure
15 to ocean swells and strong southeast winds would make
16 any service unreliable as a landing there would be
17 inoperable under many weather and ocean conditions.
18 Although protection could be provided by an offshore
19 wave attenuating structure, such a project had
20 projected capital costs that were estimated to be as
21 high as \$250 million.

22 After an exhaustive look at a different location
23 at different location options for a Coney Island
24 Ferry landing, we could not find an operationally
25 reliable or financially responsible location to

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1 deliver the service. Finally, with respect to
2 Resolution 400, proposing Ferry service to LaGuardia
3 Airport. EDC and the Port Authority of New York and
4 New Jersey, both previously studied the viability of
5 a ferry lane to go get to the airport. In 2023, the
6 Port Authority study to which EDC and NYC Ferry
7 contributed data did not recommend the Ferry option
8 at Bowery Bay or Flushing Bay as the study concluded
9 that both sites would attract a very low level of
10 ridership and were not an effective means of
11 transportation to the airport.
12

13 EDC has previously stated that any considerations
14 for airport service would need to be considered at
15 market rate costs, but even then the finances are
16 unlikely to pencil out.

17 In closing, we are very proud of our work to
18 implement Mayor Adams NYC Ferry Forward plans and are
19 excited to continue to provide a safe, affordable and
20 accessible transit system to New Yorkers. We welcome
21 the opportunity to work with the Council and all
22 partners to further advance the accessibility and
23 fiscal sustainability of the system. Thank you for
24 the opportunity to speak with you today. My team and
25

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I am happy to answer any questions you may have related to NYC Ferry.

CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you so much for your testimony this morning and all the great responses that's within it. Bless you. Oh, I'd like to acknowledge Council Member Vernikov has joined us. Just to start off, I know you gave us the vessel count. Do we still own all of our Ferries that are currently in the fleet and are there any additions on the routes that we have that we do not own?

JAMES WONG: NYC Ferry has 38 purpose built vessels that EDC owns and there are - I'm sorry, what was the second part of your question?

CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: So, we only have 38?

JAMES WONG: Yes, we only have 38 vessels.

CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Okay great and all of those, are they all fully operational on a daily basis?

JAMES WONG: On any given day, there are vessels that are under maintenance. There are vessels that are being used for training and different things. There are no current sort of extended or long term averages that would prevent a vessel from being used.

CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Okay and do we happen to know how many on a daily basis are operational?

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2 Maybe is it two or three or five or seven or getting
3 maintenance and-

4 JAMES WONG: At our peak in the summer, we use up
5 to 27 vessels in maximum service. So, at any given
6 point you might see 27 vessels out there. This
7 allows us to have a spare ratio, so if something does
8 happen, we are able to address that and also allows
9 for regular maintenance and upkeep.

10 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Great thank you and can you
11 give us the total capacity of passengers that each of
12 the vessels can carry on a daily basis?

13 JAMES WONG: We have two classes of vessels; some
14 Chapter T vessels hold 150 passengers and our
15 Subchapter K vessels hold up to 350 passengers.

16 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Okay and do you folks happen
17 to have the breakdown of the current number of daily,
18 weekly, weekends and annual ridership totals across
19 the NYC Ferry system?

20 FRANNY CIVITANO: Not off the top of my head now
21 but we can certainly send that over.

22 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Yeah, if you can send that,
23 that would be great. Do you folks happen to have on
24 average the amount of people with bikes who used the
25

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2 NYC Ferry system on daily, weekly, or weekend annual
3 basis?

4 FRANNY CIVITANO: We don't track bikes right now
5 individually. There are about eight to ten bike
6 slots available onboard, so we see those - oh thank
7 you. Oh great perfect.

8 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Okay great and so, you
9 explained a little bit about how has ridership
10 trended over the, since our last 2022 hearing on the
11 Ferries. Do you happen to have - I know you give us
12 an annual percentage but do you know by the last two
13 years if we've seen an increase? I know we just have
14 annual.

15 JAMES WONG: It was about eight percent from '22
16 to '23 and about between seven and eight percent from
17 '23 to '24 for fiscal years.

18 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Okay, so pretty consistent
19 increasing.

20 JAMES WONG: Yeah, I think since uhm, we've
21 served gotten to the tail end of COVID, we've seen a
22 more consistent growth rate.

23 FRANNY CIVITANO: Sorry, from Fiscal Year 2022 to
24 2023 is a 23 percent growth and that was kind of the
25 remnants of COVID coming out and from Fiscal Year

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2 2023 to 2024, that's where the seven to eight percent
3 growth happened.

4 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Great, thank you and can you
5 folks provide the Committee with a detailed summary
6 of the 2023 Ferry survey results? What were the
7 biggest complaints, concerns, expressed by riders and
8 how did you folks potentially address either yourself
9 at EDC or the NYC Ferry folks address the customer
10 complaints or concerns?

11 FRANNY CIVITANO: So, in our annual survey, we
12 give people an opportunity at the end to leave any
13 kind of comment that they want. A lot of that is we
14 love the Ferry, you know. We want to see more of it.
15 Uhm, sometimes we get feedback but mostly complaints
16 or questions come in through the NYC Ferry website or
17 email address and those are handled by our operator
18 as they are functioning in managing customer service.
19 They are very fast at getting back to people, so
20 usually within 48 hours. We get a range of different
21 things. People have questions or complaints about
22 the schedule. Uhm, you know the app.

23 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Are we aggregating those
24 complaints in a way, categorizing them and kind of
25 looking at a given point throughout the year? How do

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1
2 we address some of those concerns and to check in to
3 see if they're larger?

4 JAMES WONG: I would say that the thing that we
5 are tracking a little bit more closely than
6 individual complaints is that actually through the
7 new contract, we have a customer service score that
8 the operator is held to and has to achieve certain
9 targets in order to maintain their ability to receive
10 certain payments. So, the operator is really held to
11 high standards and it is revealed through customer
12 response interviews that people do after they ride.

13 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: And do we know if we're
14 seeing any large like trends or yeah, like any larger
15 trends throughout the complaints or the surveys that
16 we're taking?

17 FRANNY CIVITANO: We certainly have you know
18 buckets of complaints or questions that come in by
19 topic and so we see what percentages those are. I
20 would say that largely the trends that we see are
21 often related to service. So, uhm, for example, I
22 think it was in 20- it was maybe last year, we were
23 seeing that the sound - like p.m. ridership on the
24 Soundview route was really picking up. And so, there
25 were people who were not able to get on the boat at

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2 34th street, so we would hear a lot about a specific
3 departure time.

4 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: That was just my mom
5 complaining.

6 FRANNY CIVITANO: Yeah, yeah, we love your mom
7 but what we are able to do with that is we saw okay,
8 we were able to take all those complaints and then
9 look at the actual ridership and say, alright, we
10 need to program this vessel to be a 299 capacity boat
11 instead of a 150.

12 So, we were able to address it that way. So,
13 that's usually what we do with the trends we see.

14 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: That's really helpful to
15 understand and I will tell my mom that the vessel -
16 uhm, and then in regards to the fleet purchase
17 option, at a previous hearing in 2022, we got that
18 the cost was around \$235 million. Have their uhm,
19 have we looked at adding any additional ferries down
20 the line and what that cost would be?

21 JAMES WONG: No, we have not looked into
22 additional vessel purchases.

23 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Okay and could you speak a
24 little bit to how the expansion of the Ferry
25 benefitted service? Obviously you just gave a great

1
2 example of having different size, a capacity of the
3 fleet, and if at all that's added to the improved
4 route times and services that we have throughout the
5 ferry landings.

6 JAMES WONG: Sure, so having the two sizes of
7 vessels and some vessels that have slightly stronger
8 engines than others, gives us a lot of flexibility to
9 ensure that we're able to operate in all weather
10 conditions and using the right size vessel. So, for
11 example, a stronger vessel that holds 150 passengers
12 is probably well suited to go to the Rockaways in the
13 winter because you have to cover a lot more open
14 water. Whereas larger vessels, like 350 passenger
15 vessels, which we do use on a variety of routes,
16 including in Soundview, uhm are ones that just you
17 know maybe they are coming less frequently but they
18 have a much higher capacity to make sure that we
19 bring people into the city per their demand.

20 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Okay. So, we all love to
21 talk about Ferry fleet expansion even though in your
22 testimony you have made clear that there is no call
23 for expansion from the EDC and at this moment. The
24 Citizen Budget Commitment recently recommended
25 considering a reduction in service and the highest

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2 subsidized routes. Which NYC Ferry routes receive
3 the highest subsidy if you folks have that on hand?

4 JAMES WONG: Uhm, so we look at the system really
5 holistically and we are not often breaking things
6 down at a subsidy per route level because the main
7 thing that we're really focused on is making sure
8 that we're supporting communities and it is very
9 possible that there are places where there is high
10 volume but maybe not quite as high ridership to
11 individuals and so, we want to make sure that we are
12 supporting New Yorkers even if they happen to live
13 further away.

14 So, for us as we think about the full system,
15 uhm, we are making sure that we are doing so with all
16 of our any sort of routing options or schedule
17 changes and trying to make sure that we're doing it
18 equitably to make sure that people are getting the
19 service that they need.

20 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Great, I'm going to ask here
21 for the sake of the record but it sounds like I
22 already know the answer, is reducing service on
23 highly subsidized routes something EDC would
24 consider?

25

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2 JAMES WONG: We are not considering reduction in
3 service strictly due to the subsidy of a specific
4 route.

5 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: And is there any plan to
6 expand to LaGuardia Airport? In the 2022 hearing we
7 held, EDC mentioned that this would be explored as a
8 market rate route.

9 JAMES WONG: Uhm, we did put into the RFP some
10 considerations around LaGuardia and ultimately when
11 we entered into negotiations and final contract,
12 that's not something that we took through to the end.

13 I would defer primarily to the Port Authorities
14 perspective on this, which you know does influence
15 how we've looked at things because their study was
16 that it was not the most effective way to get people
17 to and from the airport.

18 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: And what are the current
19 ridership statistics for the seasonal ferries around
20 Governor's Island and the Rockaway Rocket?

21 FRANNY CIVITANO: Uhm I don't have Governors
22 Island. We can get back to you on that. We do know
23 that that is a very productive route; the shuttle
24 that goes back and forth. For the Rockaway Reserve,
25 which is part of the Rockaway route but is a higher

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1 fare, we saw 37,000 tickets that were sold from
2 Memorial Day to Labor Day, which generated \$370,000.
3 Uhm and the Rockaway Rocket from July 20th to Labor
4 day sold over 10,000 tickets and generated over
5 \$100,000 in revenue. So, we think of those as two
6 very successful programs.
7

8 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Do you folks happen to have
9 the number of riders that utilize the ferry service
10 during that time period in total?

11 JAMES WONG: Over the summer, we carried about
12 3.1 million riders.

13 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: On each well - at least uhm
14 =

15 JAMES WONG: Sorry, that was systemwide.

16 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Systemwide.

17 JAMES WONG: Yeah. We can get back to you
18 certainly with more specifics on those two routes and
19 for the summer.

20 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: That would be great, thank
21 you. And are there any similar express ferries in
22 the works for any other areas in the city?

23 JAMES WONG: Uhm, there's no current plan for a
24 new you know, a new version of the Rockaway Rocket.
25 We saw what we did this year, which was a slight

1 change and was proven very successful. We will
2 consider whether we need to make additional tweaks to
3 services like that. The value of the South Brooklyn
4 faster connections which is something that we started
5 a couple years back, which allows for certain stops
6 to be skipped in the a.m. peak so that we can get
7 people from a bridge or other places into the city
8 faster to get to work has proven to drive ridership
9 from those locations. So, it is a model that we do
10 like to look at and we'll continue to look at in the
11 future.
12

13 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Great and can you provide an
14 update on the RFP that should have started October
15 1st of 2023? We know that the RFP was given to a
16 Hornblower which filed for bankruptcy earlier this
17 year as you mentioned in your testimony and we've
18 come to a conclusion on a rebrand and renaming of the
19 operations. Have there been any challenges or
20 problems with the new contract the city experiences
21 and how has that, if at all, impacted any service?

22 JAMES WONG: So, the Hornblowers did go through a
23 Chapter 11 restructuring which wrapped up in July of
24 this year. There was no impact to NYC ferry
25 operations or finances in connection with that uhm

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1 with their restructuring. I think one of the most
2 important things to draw on as part of this is that
3 through the procurement that we did last year that
4 resulted in a Hornblower getting this contract, we
5 instituted a number of elements in that contract that
6 really help protect the city and ensure that all of
7 the policy decisions remained with the city. So,
8 fare setting, service destinations, the schedules,
9 the routes, how often ferries go places. All of that
10 is retained of control within the city and the fare
11 box revenue importantly is also taken by the city.
12 So, we really have a lot more control, which means
13 that through their restructuring there was zero
14 impact to any service that we have.

16 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: That's great, thank you for
17 that. Can you explain how concession and advertising
18 agreements are currently handled under the new terms
19 of the RFP?

20 FRANNY CIVITANO: Yes, I can. So, in our old
21 contract, EDC didn't get any revenue from advertising
22 or concessions and so that was a really big thing we
23 wanted to address in this new contract. Uhm, so
24 Hornblower is able to and you know sales on our
25 behalf, onboard traditional type onboard advertising

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1 which is the electronic screens and also what we call
2 activations, so that's like when Sleepy Time Tea
3 wants to come in and give out to riders. You know
4 that kind of thing. Also, film and television and
5 photoshoot revenue if we ever did merchandizing
6 things like that. So, EDC gets 33 percent of gross
7 revenue from onboard advertising and activations.
8 Uhm, 1.9 percent gross from concessions which is
9 generally a very small margin endeavor anyway. 55
10 percent of film and television, so we are very
11 pleased that so far you know, we've generated well
12 over \$200,000 this year in advertising and we expect
13 that program to grow going forward.
14

15 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: That's great. We've
16 definitely seen different rollouts of advertising or
17 partnerships. Are those similar like for example,
18 and I recently stated this why it's top of mind, like
19 the Telly Tubbies were on the ferry. And so, how
20 does that work with what we're choosing to partner
21 with in terms of maybe a sponsorship or an
22 advertisement or maybe something that the city is
23 working on locally and having that kind of partner on
24 our ferry and promoting it on our social media?
25

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2 FRANNY CIVITANO: Yeah, I mean uhm, we've seen a
3 lot of really creative things. I also just saw the
4 Beetle Juice thing.

5 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Right.

6 FRANNY CIVITANO: That was with having just seen
7 that movie. Uhm, yes, so a lot of that is one, you
8 know how can we get those brands to promote NYC Ferry
9 because bringing eyes to the system is also really
10 important in helping you know encourage tourism, grow
11 followers, uhm things like that and so I think that
12 they are looking at it a lot from how can this brand
13 support NYC Ferry as well? And hopefully it's a
14 good, interesting partnership that engages people.
15 We're also seeing you know Hornblower. I think they
16 have a workshop coming up or a seminar later this
17 month that's specific to local businesses, so they
18 know that you know it's great to get the businesses
19 that have the really big checks but they also want to
20 support small businesses and advertising. So, there
21 are discounted rates that you know local businesses
22 can use to do that and other ways that they will
23 engage and support with those types.

24

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2 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: So, each of the cross
3 promotion opportunities are definitely attached to
4 like some sort of advertising contract?

5 FRANNY CIVITANO: That's a question I don't know
6 the answer to. We could get back to you on that.

7 JAMES WONG: I guess I'll just say a major
8 priority through their program is to create a revenue
9 stream. There are occasionally times where there's
10 sort of a you know an in kind transfer but primarily
11 we are encouraging them to look at revenue generating
12 opportunities.

13 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Right okay and are there any
14 technological improvements being considered in the
15 new RFP such as mobile ticketing enhancements or real
16 time tracking systems?

17 JAMES WONG: Yes, so we've started to rule out a
18 lot of great feature upgrades that riders are
19 starting to see out in the world and we're really
20 excited about that. So, when people are able to log
21 on with Wi-Fi onboard vessels, like that is a huge
22 upgrade, particularly if you are on a longer commute
23 that takes you all the way out to the Rockaways or to
24 St. George or to the Bronx. So, things like that are
25 really important. Also, we are beginning the rollout

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1 of technology that actually allows you to know about
2 how many seats are available on a vessel. Uhm, if
3 you are morning commuter and you are making a
4 decision about whether or not you should go towards
5 the water to get on this vessel or if you should walk
6 another direction, knowing about how many seats are
7 onboard is a really important aspect that we've been
8 really pushing.
9

10 So, that is just starting to roll out and we see
11 that these technologies are really going to be great
12 advantages in the future.

13 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: That sounds like a wonderful
14 enhancement for those folks that you don't want to
15 end up on the opposite end and not having a boat
16 there or a seat there, so that's appreciated. I'd
17 like to also acknowledge we've been joined by Council
18 Members Brannan, Salamanca and Gutiérrez. How is the
19 EDC working to integrate NYC Ferry with the other
20 public transportation options in the city, such as
21 buses, subways, or like in my district, the E-
22 scooters?

23 JAMES WONG: Uhm, so I think that a lot of what
24 we have focused on has been making sure that where
25 there are services that are nearby that we do

1
2 whatever we can to make it as easy for people to use
3 multiple things as possible. So, as we saw when we
4 were standing up there at class and point, yes those
5 scooters are right there. We also had a bus that
6 came in and made the loop and that was something that
7 we, EDC actually worked with MTA on to make sure that
8 a bus wasn't stopping four blocks away but actually
9 came into the park and made that loop, which makes it
10 a lot easier for customers to make connections like
11 that.

12 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: And how has the ferry system
13 impacted local businesses near the ferry landings?
14 Have there been any adverse effects on commercial
15 rent prices? Are we tracking any or analyzing any
16 data like that?

17 FRANNY CIVITANO: We don't track that type of
18 data. I think you know we have a lot of anecdotal
19 stories of ways that especially Hornblower has worked
20 to build out a community outreach program, support
21 and promote local businesses. We hear from them like
22 oh, we love the ferry you know. We want people to
23 come from the ferry to our business but we don't have
24 uhm really specific analysis.

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Okay, nearly two years have
3 passed since the new fare structure was implemented.
4 Has ridership increased or decreased during that
5 time?

6 FRANNY CIVITANO: We are happy to say it has
7 increased yes.

8 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: And how has the
9 Administration publicized the new fare structure
10 since 2022, particularly the discounts that are
11 offered to seniors, people with disabilities and
12 other low income riders.

13 FRANNY CIVITANO: Thank you yes. The discount
14 program has been one of my favorite things to talk
15 about. Uhm, since we made the change in 2022, I
16 think we eliminated a fairly convoluted program that
17 was the discount program before. Before the 2022
18 change, you could only get half off of the monthly
19 pass, so you had to spend \$60 and you know hopefully
20 you took it enough in that month to make it worth it.
21 Now there's the one way ticket available. So, since
22 that change especially, we've seen a 600 percent
23 increase in the use of discount tickets, so I think
24 we've really made it more accessible to use. Uhm,
25 we're excited that you know now folks who are in the

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1 Fair Fares program can also, and then of course, the
2 high school students who we're already seeing a
3 pretty good uptake for it just being you know ten
4 days into the program so far.

5
6 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Great and do we know, pardon
7 how many seniors, persons with disabilities and other
8 low income earners have applied for discounts?

9 FRANNY CIVITANO: We have nearly 18,000 people
10 total in the discount program. I don't have the
11 breakdown off the top of my head.

12 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Okay is there any intention
13 for us to track it in that way and break it down? Do
14 we have that ability?

15 FRANNY CIVITANO: We can, yeah.

16 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Okay and do we have the
17 total number, I know you broke it down into two of
18 how many high school students take the ferry as part
19 of the program?

20 FRANNY CIVITANO: When we do our annual surveys,
21 we do ask people about age. Uhm, so we have like an
22 age bucket, we don't specifically or we haven't
23 specifically asked about high school or student
24 status. Uhm and I would imagine that high schoolers
25 are not the people who are going to want to volunteer

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1 to take a demographic survey. Uhm, but so far we
2 have over 500 students who have signed up, 400
3 tickets that have already been purchased and then
4 Hornblower is starting very specific outreach. There
5 are about 50 schools, charter, private and public
6 that are within a half mile of our landings. There
7 are an estimated around 20,000 high school students
8 that live near landings. So, we're really hoping to
9 find the folks that live and go to school. That's
10 the connection that's going to be most helpful so I
11 think as we are truly in this program now, we expect
12 that 500 number to grow.

14 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: And can you kind of explain
15 how the pilot was created with DOE, it's success with
16 the harbor school students and any other additional
17 details you'd like to share?

18 FRANNY CIVITANO: Absolutely. Uhm, well thank
19 you for your guidance on this program in general.
20 Uhm, the Harbor School Pilot really was born out of
21 we knew we had this big citywide rollout. There are
22 nearly 400,000 high school students in New York City.
23 We knew that that was a very large scale. So, giving
24 ourselves the opportunity to work with Harbor School,
25 which is obviously in a very particular geographic

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1 situation, they have to get on a ferry to get to the
2 school. Uhm, we worked with them for about a year
3 and a half. Uhm, offered them the opportunity to
4 apply and we saw about one fourth of their students
5 took advantage of that and used NYC Ferry or at least
6 were enrolled in the program. For the last about
7 nine months or so we've been working weekly with DOE
8 to make sure that this roll out is successful. So,
9 it's all over their website. We've got you know
10 fliers in ten different languages. They've been
11 emailing parents and guardians. We will continue to
12 you know hit that drum beat and as we also do our own
13 outreach.

14
15 JAMES WONG: Sorry, I'll just add one other thing
16 to that is, in terms of like the learnings from that
17 pilot, we were sort of dealing with the Harbor School
18 on a one on one basis and also working with
19 individual students. That doesn't scale and so, I
20 think one of the big things that we learned that was
21 such an important lesson, which is why we really were
22 valuing the partnership that we have at DOE was the
23 importance of establishing a direct connection
24 between students Nixa accounts and their ability to
25 sign up for NYC Ferry. So pulling those two systems

1 together and you know these are complex systems but
2 making sure that they talk to each other so that
3 students can get a code, sign up for NYC Ferry and
4 then for the rest of the school year, they don't need
5 to do anything else but buy tickets when they're
6 ready. That became a really important aspect so that
7 a program like this can scale.
8

9 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: That was going to be my
10 follow up in terms of how the agencies worked on an
11 integral system that spoke to one another and is
12 there also a particular reason that the - I know when
13 we were signing some students up at Soundview Ferry
14 landing, the parents had to have access in order to
15 get the students in. Is that solely because of the
16 system that is utilized by the DOE?

17 FRANNY CIVITANO: Yeah, we found with you know
18 with this large of a program, it's really important
19 that the verification of are you actually a student?
20 Are you enrolled in school? Are you eligible for
21 this program come from somewhere else and especially
22 when we consider that there are very strict and
23 rightly so restrictions on personal information
24 related to students.

25 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Absolutely.

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2 FRANNY CIVITANO: Everybody takes that very
3 seriously. It made the most sense for them to be the
4 real - for DOE to be the real verification aspect and
5 uhm you know for us to be able to implement it
6 quickly and frankly you know not to keep people
7 waiting for months and months to see if their
8 application, you know if their verification went
9 through. We came up with a system where people could
10 get the codes from DOE, which doesn't give us any
11 personal information and then we could quickly make
12 that happen on our side.

13 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: And how quickly or how
14 easily do you think it would be for down the line
15 let's say we saw wild successes over this next school
16 year with students for us utilizing the system DOE to
17 open up the opportunity for other students. Some of
18 the more recent conversations we've been having as
19 the bill is now being implemented and there's more
20 information circulating, there are parents that have
21 reached out and even Council Member Avilés I'm sure
22 will ask questions on some students that are actually
23 moving throughout the city to go to middle school on
24 the ferry system.

25

1
2 So, how likely do we see with the program that
3 we're using now that it could be expanded down the
4 line?

5 FRANNY CIVITANO: Yeah, our focus right now is to
6 make sure that this implementation goes smoothly. We
7 are always evaluating service fare policy and
8 discount policy, so that is something that we will
9 look at in the future.

10 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Great, the parents will be
11 excited to talk about it. And then at the time the
12 Administration estimated at the new fare structure
13 would generate as much as \$2 million in additional
14 annual revenue, was this estimate correct and are
15 there any other revenue generating opportunities that
16 EDC is currently looking at?

17 JAMES WONG: So the Fare change just took effect
18 yesterday, so we don't yet have sort of report out
19 numbers on what the impact of that fare change is
20 going to be on the future.

21 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: In 2022, the Comptroller
22 performed an audit report that indicated that per
23 EDC's audited financial statements, then that losses
24 of the ferry operations were \$30 million in FY 2017,
25 \$44 million in FY 2018, \$53 million in FY 2019, \$53

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1 million in FY 2020 and \$33 million in FY 2021. What
2 is the current net gain or loss for FY '22, '23, and
3 '24 and what are we doing to prevent losses in future
4 years?
5

6 JAMES WONG: So, I think one of the most
7 important things to approach as part of this
8 conversation is that what we are providing is a
9 transit service and all public transit is subsidized.
10 I would not necessarily characterize the cost of a
11 subsidy as a net loss. It's something we do want to
12 minimize because subsidies are of course a financial
13 city resource.

14 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: We'll let the Comptroller
15 know not to refer to that as a net loss.

16 JAMES WONG: Uhm, but uhm with that said, in
17 Fiscal 2022, the ferry operating deficit was \$52
18 million and in Fiscal 2023, it was \$56.5 million.
19 This information is available as we have made since
20 Ferry Forward was implemented through supplemental
21 financial information that we publish on our website,
22 which includes information about all the finances of
23 the system from subsidy ridership, capital costs and
24 things like that.
25

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2 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Sure, can you tell me the
3 '23 number again?

4 JAMES WONG: '23 was \$56.5 million.

5 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you. The Comptrollers
6 audit report also found that the EDC had in the past
7 significantly understated, again their reports words.
8 Understated the amount the city was subsidizing ferry
9 rides during each year of the New York City ferry
10 operations. Since our last hearing, what has the EDC
11 done to reduce that figure and has the city subsidy
12 increased or decreased over the past few years?

13 JAMES WONG: So, we've taken strong exception to
14 again how things were characterized in that report,
15 as EDC had always reported full information related
16 to the finances of the system. However, in order to
17 make things easier for people to access, we created
18 the financial transparency - uh excuse me, the
19 supplemental financial information document, which we
20 provide on our website. So, that has a lot more
21 information about the things that are being raised.

22 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Ferries are primarily built
23 out of aluminum, a light weight material that
24 increases fuel efficiency. In addition, the ferries
25 are equipped with efficient T3 engines to reduce

1 emissions. Could you please describe the sustainable
2 nature in which the ferries are constructed, and are
3 there any negative impacts from utilizing aluminum in
4 the construction of the vessels?
5

6 JAMES WONG: Sure uhm and I also just want to say
7 I'm sorry on the previous question, just to clarify,
8 our subsidy provider has gone down since the
9 implementation of Ferry Forward.

10 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Sure, that was in your
11 testimony.

12 JAMES WONG: Okay uhm as it relates to the
13 construction of the vessels. So, uhm these are
14 higher speed catamaran vessels that are purpose built
15 and designed with aluminum which is a lighter weight
16 metal and a specific form that is designed to reduce
17 the wake. Wake is not only disruptive to other users
18 in the water but it's also wasted energy and so our
19 passenger ferries are designed to have a pretty
20 minimum wake behind them, which is one of the ways
21 that we helped reduce the fuel burn on these vessels.
22 Uhm, yes, every vessel that was built as part of the
23 NYC Ferry program was at a minimum the Tier 3 vessel
24 standard which has since been superseded by a vessel
25 4 standard. These are EPA quality standards and we

1 have two vessels that are Tier 4 in the fleet. That
2 represents already a fairly significant jump of some
3 of the other vessels in the harbor and so, you know
4 we definitely lean hard into the fact that those are
5 a good starting place but we of course want to
6 continue to develop them.
7

8 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: And in terms like
9 operationally, so you're saying we have Tier 3 and
10 Tier 4 vessels in the fleet currently. Is the goal
11 to move the entire fleet over to Tier 4 or like is
12 that within the RFP and the contract that as vessels
13 come up or as they go out of order, we're replacing
14 with the Tier 4?

15 JAMES WONG: So, if we're ever considering new
16 vessels or replacement vessels, we will always be
17 looking at whatever the latest technology is, which
18 for diesel burning vessels at the moment is Tier 4.
19 We don't have a concrete plan but we are looking for
20 ways that we can expand Tier 4 engines into our
21 fleet. Some vessels are capable of taking that
22 engine, some are not just because of technological
23 sort of like differences within the wholes
24 themselves. And yeah, I mean we continue to look at
25

1 sustainability and have a brighter eye towards the
2 future there.
3

4 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: And is the cost comparative
5 between Tier 3 and Tier 4?

6 JAMES WONG: Uhm, I would say they're relatively
7 comparable. It's not like a huge delta when you are
8 building the vessel from scratch and because of the
9 way the regulations are written for any new vessels
10 built, if they are diesel engines that they would
11 have to comply with Tier 4.

12 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you. Lastly on
13 accessibility, how does the NYC Ferry ensure that
14 persons with disabilities can fully access the ferry
15 system and are all NYC ferries accessible?

16 FRANNY CIVITANO: Yes, all NYC Ferries were built
17 to Local Law 68 and ADA standards and all ferry
18 landings are accessible to people with wheelchairs,
19 canes, strollers, all of that.

20 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: And in terms of
21 accessibility and the ferry landings during different
22 inclement weather, how are we assuring that for
23 example with snow, high winds, that folks using -
24 that people with disabilities have the same
25 accessibility and utilization of the landing?

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2 JAMES WONG: Yeah, so uhm safety is paramount
3 within NYC Ferry. We place a great deal of
4 responsibility and trust in our captains and our crew
5 who are keeping an eye on riders and making sure that
6 vessels are berthing when it is safe to do so. So,
7 there's you know we have a lot of designs that helped
8 to make sure that the system is safe but we also have
9 operations where if there are winds that are too
10 high, we will not berth. We will not dock.

11 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: And does each vessel have an
12 adequate number of wheelchair tiedowns?

13 FRANNY CIVITANO: Yes.

14 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Great, and then I just have
15 a final question on - two final questions on
16 languages at the landings. What's the operational
17 side of ensuring that we are meeting the language
18 needs per ferry landing throughout communities.

19 FRANNY CIVITANO: Yes, so we are going through a
20 signage update right now. They should all be in
21 place either today or later this week uhm but one of
22 the things there is that I believe that there is a QR
23 Code on the signage that will direct you to where you
24 can find that information on our website in seven
25 different languages. And then there are in our app,

1 there's also if you download the app and your phone
2 is set to any - there's 40 different, I think 44
3 different languages, the app will translate into that
4 language where your phone is, same with the website.
5 So, we are trying to make sure that NYC Ferry is
6 successful in all languages.
7

8 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: So, with the signage update
9 at each of the ferry landings, are we going to have
10 comparable languages to the surrounding communities
11 that are there or are we going to do it in the top
12 three or top five?

13 FRANNY CIVITANO: We did an assessment several
14 years ago of populations not only who uhm are in the
15 service area like where the ferry landings are and
16 what languages are spoken in those neighborhoods but
17 also, you know what people respond to in our surveys.
18 So, we've identified that there are six non-English
19 languages that represent the whole system. You know
20 Spanish, Chinese, Polish, Korean, Russian, Yiddish
21 are the languages that NYC Ferry supports as critical
22 languages.

23 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Okay and then in terms of
24 the senior discount option at some of our landings,
25 so as you folks know, not every single landing has a

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1 booth that has a person. I went to a recent
2
3 community board meeting that was raised to me by one
4 of our seniors in the community that the senior
5 discount could not be - the machine they went to to
6 purchase their ticket, the senior discount was not
7 offered. Have we seen that overall within the
8 complaints and are we addressing that?

9 FRANNY CIVITANO: Yes, so the ticket machines
10 that we have are not able to verify who a specific
11 person might be and so, uhm for people who are not
12 using the app if they want to buy discount tickets,
13 those are sold at Pier 11.

14 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Right.

15 FRANNY CIVITANO: We know that this is not a
16 sufficient system and so, we are looking right now at
17 upgrading our ticket system with one of the main
18 focuses is solving this problem to make sure that at
19 every single landing, you can buy a discount ticket.

20 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Are we looking at utilizing
21 the folks that are like maybe allowing people to make
22 the purchase and having an ID verification before you
23 get on the boat or what avenues are we looking at to
24 address some of that?

25

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2 JAMES WONG: We have not solidified the exact
3 plan on sort of what each technology is available
4 from different ticketing machines. So, we will, once
5 we have a ticketing platform that we're able to dig
6 into that will allow us to understand a little better
7 what the exact logistics look like.

8 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Okay, I'd like to be kept in
9 the loop on that just because I have some folks that
10 are trying to purchase it and while they're still
11 purchasing, they are seniors that would like their
12 discount.

13 I'll now turn it over to Chair Brooks-Powers and
14 I, before so, would like to acknowledge Council
15 Members Riley and Restler as joining the Committee
16 Hearing.

17 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for that.
18 I'm going to pivot now to legislation that's under
19 consideration today. So, I'm with the Rockaway. So
20 the last time EDC was before the Council about the
21 New York City Ferry in 2022, I asked about the
22 possibility of expanding ferry service along the
23 Rockaway Peninsula and was told that it was not
24 possible due to the MTA South Channel Subway Bridge.
25 I'm concerned because as more and more housing gets

1 built in Rockaways, the people that live there need a
2 way to get around and the current transportation
3 solution just doesn't cut it. I know that Ferry
4 service is only one potential piece of the puzzle but
5 I want to make sure that nothing gets overlooked.
6 So, since 2022, have you all had the chance to give
7 ferry expansion in the Rockaways a second look? I
8 will also include that in the last hearing I have
9 requested of EDC to look at alternative solutions
10 considering the challenge with the subway bridge.

12 JAMES WONG: Thank you. Thank you Chair Brooks-
13 Powers. Uhm as it relates to the Rockaways, you
14 mentioned and remains some of the challenges that we
15 have faced in previous iterations of this, which is
16 that the fleet that we have, uhm the 38 vessels and
17 our sort of commitment since Ferry Forward to really
18 focus on managing our finances, such that we are not
19 building new types of vessels and like new types of
20 facilities that in that period, we have not you know
21 ended up with a new vessel design or anything like
22 that. We have found it to be challenging to go
23 further east as you mentioned because of the subway
24 bridge, which we have visited years ago on a ferry to
25 make sure that we really understood what that was

1 like and have found those challenges to remain as of
2 today.
3

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: But has EDC taken any
5 steps to really thoughtfully look at some alternative
6 ways of bringing Ferry service to the eastern end of
7 the peninsula?

8 JAMES WONG: So, in previous iterations, we've
9 actually done separate pilot services to try to
10 extend shuttle buses because given the physical
11 constraints that we had to go further east from where
12 we are. We found we were looking for creative ways
13 to try to make you know other places in the Rockaways
14 once further east, more accessible to NYC Ferry.

15 We found unfortunately through those one pilot
16 happened in the fall and winter, one happened in the
17 summer and in both cases, we ended up with very low
18 ridership despite a pretty extensive marketing
19 campaign in an attempt to get people aware that they
20 could use that as a service.

21 One of the challenges is that once you get to
22 where we are already at Beach 108 Street, it's
23 already about one hours journey and going even
24 further really starts to add to that and making ferry
25 and or a ferry and a shuttle bus far less competitive

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2 than some of the other admittedly limited options
3 that there are.

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: [INAUDIBLE 01:09:35]
5 about the ferry shuttle. Okay, so are there
6 technologies or improvements that we can invest in
7 that can make the ferry expansion feasible in the
8 future? Or some other approach that could more
9 efficiently connect people in the eastern Rockaway
10 communities to the ferry and again, wanting to like
11 EDC is there to be innovative. Like you all helped
12 to invest in buildings, so I'm interesting in knowing
13 if there are any technologies that you guys may be
14 aware of that we could invest in.

15 JAMES WONG: So, as in terms of uhm, it is not
16 the case that you cannot build a vessel that could
17 get under the bridge that we're talking about. At
18 this juncture, we are not expanding. We have no
19 current plans for expanding the fleet or changing the
20 vessel types that we have. The vessel types that we
21 have have been - really prioritized their ability to
22 work throughout many parts of the fleet so that we
23 have good flexibility throughout the system. It is
24 not to say that a specific purpose built vessel could
25 not be built. However, uhm what we've found in the

1 past when we've asked this question is that uhm often
2 when you get to a smaller vessel that goes under
3 bridges like that, you end up sacrificing on other
4 things. So, you might not be able to get a vessel
5 that is quite as stable when you are going out over
6 the ocean to get into lower Manhattan.
7

8 So, uhm, there are different vessels that could
9 be investigated or certain vessel hull types and
10 things like that. They're not currently on our -
11 because we don't have an expansion plan at this
12 point.

13 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: When you look into a
14 project like this, do you only look on the one side?
15 Like cost or feasibility - like do you only look on
16 the one side cost of feasibility or do you also
17 examine the potential benefit that such as project
18 could bring to the area?

19 JAMES WONG: Yeah, so whenever we've thought
20 about expansion in past iterations and would be part
21 of any sort of consideration if we were to go down th
22 is path. There are many factors that are included in
23 it, so we are looking - we would look at communities
24 in terms of where people live, where they work, what
25 their existing transit options are, how often those

1 transit options come, how long it takes to get
2 places, uhm the demographics of the neighborhood, the
3 uhm, you know the just taking a look at all aspects
4 of what is the value to riders. And that is also
5 taken into account with looking at things like the
6 cost of service. The cost of places that are you
7 know far away that have certain costs and how those -
8 all those things look together.
9

10 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And have you excuse
11 me, have you looked into what a new transportation
12 option could mean to the people living in transit
13 deserts like Far Rockaway?

14 JAMES WONG: Our 2018, 2019 study did a fairly
15 comprehensive look throughout the city about what the
16 different opportunities and needs were as it relates
17 to waterfront communities where ferry service had
18 some potential and that still remains on our website.

19 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Just going back to a
20 question that the Majority Leader had asked in terms
21 of the subsidies in the communities that get
22 subsidies. Does EDC know which ferry landing has the
23 largest subsidy?

24 JAMES WONG: So, we track ridership by individual
25 landing. It is not such a cut and dry thing on sort

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1 of how to assign individual cost to every single
2 site. We've taken a look at different things but
3 mainly I think the main part of what we are
4 evaluating when we are thinking about how the system
5 is operating is where are we seeing high ridership?
6 Where are we seeing people who are using the system?
7 Maybe not the most people but most consistently so it
8 is important to us even if it's not you know the
9 highest ridership landing in the system. If it has
10 consistent riders who are going to work every day,
11 occasionally in the summer we have some fun, you know
12 people who just want to get out on water.

14 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: No, thank you for
15 that. I get that but I just wanted to know, does EDC
16 know which of those ferry stops is receiving the
17 largest subsidy? And if so, which one is it?

18 JAMES WONG: Yeah, so we have looked at the costs
19 of different routes and different ridership's. It is
20 hard to assign to a very single number uhm without
21 sort of like question at it whether or not you can
22 say like, a subsidy for an individual landing is
23 this. There are many different ways to look at it.

24 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I would imagine that
25 there is some - in the agency, there is some type of

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2 analysis of these different ferry - they just know
3 which one is most successful even if you're looking
4 at the ridership and what an individual ride subsidy
5 would be anyway. I think we could figure that out,
6 so I would like to have that information and in
7 addition to that, I'd like to also have information
8 of that average household income for that neighboring
9 community there because I'm trying to understand
10 uhm,, where we're investing public dollars in terms
11 of subsidies versus where we have a need for it. I'm
12 not seeing that happen so that we can course correct
13 with EDC on that.

14 JAMES WONG: Sure, we'd have to follow up on
15 that.

16 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for that.
17 Next, I'm going to talk about Coney Island. I'm
18 going to allow Council Member Brannan to go into the
19 weeds of it but I did want to ask a couple of
20 questions around this piece of legislation as well.
21 As I know DOT is aware, I did a visit out there
22 during a past transportation and infrastructure tour
23 and learned about the dynamic with the ferry there
24 and I wanted to know, have you conducted any internal
25

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1 studies about the feasibility of an expansion of a
2 ferry in Coney Island?
3

4 JAMES WONG: Yes, so we actually - the Coney
5 Island has kind of a long history in terms of what
6 we've looked at in connection with NYC Ferry. We
7 actually started building a ferry landing in Coney
8 Island Creek and paused that work in 2021 because we
9 found that you know despite the upfront work that we
10 had done in design and planning for it, the remain
11 unknown factors like shifts and sands that really
12 cause navigational and safety concerns that would
13 cause real issues if we were to proceed with it. So,
14 we did pause work on the Coney Island Ferry landing
15 in 2021. We also did follow up with the community in
16 the year and years following evaluating whether or
17 not there were other opportunities to provide ferry
18 service to Coney Island, whether it's in the creek or
19 even on the oceanside. We, we shared that study with
20 the community and talked about the reality that we
21 had found real challenges both on the creek side in
22 and outside the sands bed, which is a sand feature in
23 Coney Island Creek as well as on the ocean facing
24 side because the costs and the feasibility of
25 building brake waters to attenuate waves from the

1 Atlantic Ocean was just so high that it was not uhm
2 financially responsible for us to proceed.
3

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Also, looking at
5 Willets Point, in your testimony you mentioned you
6 would be examining the possibility of a ferry to
7 Willets Point as a part of the redevelopment project
8 there. Is studying increased ferry service going to
9 be a part of future EDC project development?

10 JAMES WONG: I think that broadly what we want to
11 be doing with Willets Point in terms of studying for
12 ferry services, understanding what the costs would be
13 for something like that, what the potential for
14 ridership development is and understanding that in
15 the context of the broader system. We haven't tied
16 that study to any specific actions related to the
17 Willets Point development for additional development.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: I'm going to move on
19 to the fare increase. So ticket prices in New York
20 City Ferry increased yesterday with regular ticket
21 prices rising from \$4 to \$4.50. Bundles of ten
22 tickets rising from \$27.50 to \$29.00 and discounted
23 prices increasing from \$1.35 to \$1.45. Can you
24 please walk the Committee through how you determine
25 ferry prices?

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2 JAMES WONG: Absolutely. So, uhm we take fares
3 really seriously because this is one of the most
4 important things that people experience when they are
5 riding, deciding to ride NYC Ferry. What we saw in
6 our previous fare change was that by increasing the
7 single ticket price, we were able to - and allowing
8 there to be a ten trip bundle, it really allowed us
9 to create some differentiation between those who are
10 commuters, those who are using NYC Ferry on a regular
11 basis and people who are just you know maybe going
12 out for an occasional ride. Having those two
13 different fare products really helps us target our
14 drive towards affordability to make sure that
15 commuters for example are paying the same as they pay
16 on the subway or bus and that if you are riding you
17 know that once in a while ride, that you are able and
18 willing to pay a little bit more.

19 So, when we did our fare analysis based on the
20 last year and a half to two years of data, we really
21 looked at who was riding more frequently. How did
22 this impact ridership? And there were - while we saw
23 overall ridership growth, there was information sort
24 of in between that we had to take a look at where we
25 learned that people who were using the ten pack, they

1
2 are riding more often. People who are riding - who
3 are using the single trip, they are riding a little
4 less often but they were paying more. And so, all
5 these factors really went into the analysis where we
6 had set forth an objective to increase fare revenue
7 without negatively impacting the overall ridership of
8 the system.

9 So, we got to our levels at \$4.50 and \$2.90 by
10 really targeting how we can allow people, those
11 occasional riders and tourists to pay a little bit
12 more while holding the costs fairly consistent for
13 our regular riders.

14 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: So, EDC's President
15 Andrew Kimble noted that along with fare increases,
16 service and vessel upgrades would also be
17 forthcoming. Can you provide us with more details
18 about these plan upgrades and improvements?

19 JAMES WONG: Absolutely, so we talked a little
20 bit earlier about some of the feature upgrades, so
21 things like Wi-Fi, seat availability, translations,
22 increased access to languages in the app and on the
23 website. All of these are part of what riders are
24 experiencing. So, I think that's one of the things
25 that we really focus there.

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1 In terms of the yeah, so pardon me, I'll leave it
2
3 there.

4 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Were you finished?

5 JAMES WONG: Sorry, the other half of your
6 question was?

7 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Just wanted to have
8 the details in terms of the plan upgrades and
9 improvements.

10 JAMES WONG: The - thank you. You had mentioned
11 services and that was the other thing. In previous
12 testimony we had talked about a future where we would
13 be doing things with our service plan. So, when we
14 introduced something like South Brooklyn's Faster
15 Connections pilot, this cut the travel time for
16 riders from Bay Ridge significantly allowing for real
17 improvement. So, we continue to do as much as we can
18 to be creative and flexible with the system that we
19 have and the landings that we have and to innovate so
20 that they are most efficient for us and for riders.

21 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Uhm thank you for
22 that. Now with inflation and rent increases over the
23 past four years. Does EDC find that now is the best
24 time to increase ferry prices, particularly to those
25 who qualify for the discounted program, especially as

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1
2 you're working on increasing like the diversity in
3 terms of your ridership and how much additional
4 revenue does EDC anticipate the fare increase will
5 result in?

6 JAMES WONG: So, we took - we always take, as I
7 mentioned fare changes seriously. It's an important
8 thing that we want to do with a lot of thought and
9 assessment for it before we make any changes like
10 that.

11 And so, for something like the discount program,
12 a lot of our energy in the last two years has been
13 making more and more people aware of it. As Franny
14 had mentioned, having up to you know thousands and
15 thousands of people who are part of that program is a
16 big increase from the past and the fivefold increase
17 in ticket usage is really important. Pardon me, a
18 sixfold increase in ticket usage has been one of our
19 central points is like making sure people who do
20 qualify for that program are aware.

21 In terms of the actual change in the fares uhm,
22 bringing it to \$2.90 and \$1.45 for discount riders,
23 that was meeting and kind of becoming more consistent
24 with what costs are for uh on the MTA and allowing us
25 to say that for those who are able to spend more

1
2 money, we're able to offer them products at \$4.50 as
3 one of those options. I'd also like to just offer
4 that over the summer, we introduced more and more
5 options for people who were willing to spend more.
6 So, for those people who are willing to spend more
7 money for a reserved seat or for a one seat ride from
8 places like Long Island City or Green Point to the
9 Rockaways, we actually created new services that are
10 catered with \$10.00 tickets, a much higher price
11 point but if people are interested in paying for
12 that, they are allowed to and that helps generate
13 additional revenue for the system.

14 For the Rockaway route, while we do offer those
15 premium services, we always make sure that at least
16 half of our seats are available at our existing fare
17 rate. So, if you are using any other fare product,
18 there's always a seat going out to the Rockaways.

19 FRANNY CIVITANO: And to answer your question
20 about anticipated revenue, we anticipate that this
21 fare change will bring in \$2 million in additional
22 revenue per year. About half of that, we anticipate
23 from organic ridership growth and half because of the
24 fare change.

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1 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for that.

2
3 And then for DOT, I just wanted to take it back to
4 the studies. I just wanted to ask, does DOT have any
5 active studies right now that we should be aware of
6 in terms of exploring ferry expansions, globally
7 speaking?

8 RICK RODRIGUEZ: Uhm, there are no studies that
9 are reflecting anything out of step with what the
10 ferries team at EDC send.

11 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Can you just bring
12 the mic closer?

13 RICK RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, there are no studies that
14 DOT is taking on separate from the work that is being
15 done at NYC or New York City Ferries.

16 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: And do you have any
17 concerns with the legislation that's sponsored by me
18 calling on you to do a study for Ferry feasibility
19 for Rockaway?

20 RICK RODRIGUEZ: Of course we would recommend it
21 to reflect the current nature of how expansion is
22 being done. That it's being led through the ferries
23 team at EDC but that's something we feel we would
24 address in you know the back and forth after a
25 hearing.

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2 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for that.
3 I'm passing it back over to my Co-Chair.

4 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: I just have two small
5 questions, one for EDC. In terms of the ridership,
6 are we seeing higher ridership for the one's with a
7 price point like a \$10.00 ride?

8 JAMES WONG: We saw - uh yes, we saw an increase
9 in ridership for those kind of premium prices
10 services this past summer, which has been really
11 great. Some of those services are actually creating
12 a revenue positive service, so that's really great
13 because it helps drive down subsidy for the rest of
14 the system.

15 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Okay.

16 FRANNY CIVITANO: But ten pack users, we are
17 seeing that more - people who use the ten pack are
18 taking the ferry more frequently. Uhm and even those
19 same types of riders who were taking the ferry at
20 \$2.75 before, we've induced them to ride more often.
21 So, we found that ridership among ten pack users is
22 increased.

23 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Great, thank you and then
24 for DOT, just a very pointed question. Does DOT have
25 a desire or envision themselves being expanding their

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2 role as operating additional ferries on throughout
3 New York City?

4 RICK RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, I'm not aware of any
5 conversations currently, so none planned.

6 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Great, thank you. Chair?

7 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: That was one of the
8 questions I was going to ask, so we're on the same
9 wave with that. And then second and last, I know in
10 your testimony you said that the Borough President I
11 think is in support of a study to be done for Willets
12 Point, as a part of that development. With the
13 Downtown Far Rockaway rezoning, was there a study
14 ever connected to that for a ferry services at all?

15 MICHELE LAMBERTI: Thank you for the question
16 Council Member. I don't believe so but we can check
17 on that for you.

18 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you. Okay, we
19 are now going to turn over time to time to our
20 members. I appreciate my colleagues for
21 understanding some time constraints from other
22 members of the Committee, so I will now turn it over
23 to Council Member Avilés followed by Narcisse and
24 Ariola.

25

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Thank you Chair. Thank
3 you EDC team and DOT team for being here and all your
4 work. Certainly there have been a lot of
5 improvements and I have seen you know on the ground
6 your outreach efforts to the community and I know
7 it's a long slog but I think you all mentioned one
8 thing really important. Uhm, eyes to the system as a
9 really important way of growing the system and
10 certainly growing New Yorkers understanding that the
11 system is there for them regardless and getting over
12 this hump of like, this is kind of the new thing for
13 the rich people over there and we just go to the
14 subway. One way to do that is through our students.
15 And so, congrats certainly on the Chairs legislation
16 enrolling out the high school program.

17 I think the thing I want to flag for you and
18 we've talked about this before is Red Hook is a
19 transportation desert. You know Home of Homeport.
20 Harbor Middle School is there and the school uses the
21 ferry a lot but it is a financial burden to take
22 classes to use the ferry. It costs them several
23 hundred dollars for Title 1 school. We have to do
24 better and we can do better. If we teach students
25 that this is a real viable way, we grow that system

1 tremendously. So, I just want to absolutely
2 encourage. Our students have been advocating the
3 Harbor Middle School in particular to be included in
4 this pilot. It's only 177 students. They have been
5 at this for two years to say don't forget us. So, I
6 have to remind you all that we cannot forget our
7 Harbor School students, certainly our Red Hook
8 community which I know there's been a lot of work in.

9
10 So, putting the plug in for finding a way to
11 include those 177 students sooner than later but the
12 class trip, the use of the ferry is an important one.
13 We pay exorbitant - we pay \$30 or more to cross on a
14 bridge. There are resources there. Our students
15 should be able to class trips, be able to use the
16 ferry at not an exorbitant price. It costs anywhere
17 - I was doing the calculations you know, \$6, \$5.8 to
18 \$6 per ticket additional per student. That's a lot.
19 That's just transportation, so I encourage that. I'd
20 like to hear an update about Homeport 2 and what is
21 happening there, so if you could just talk to me
22 about where it is. We haven't been seeing any
23 activity and I'd love to know what's going on.

24 JAMES WONG: Sure. Uhm, thank you for those
25 comments and really appreciate the advocacy that you

1 provided here. As it relates to Homeport 2, so there
2 have been sort of - the project is broken up into two
3 main components, an in water component and then an
4 upland component. The in water component, as you may
5 have seen or noticed is largely completed, so the
6 piles where the vessels would get tied up including
7 the travel lift area where a vessel would eventually
8 be pulled out of the water, those have actually been
9 completed. That was leading because we had gone
10 through some additional design and permitting and
11 coordination with all the different players in this
12 area for the warehouse and the utilities that are
13 happening.

14 We do hope to be breaking ground on that later,
15 either later this year or early next year and we're
16 happy to provide more follow up with your office as
17 soon as we have a more tight schedule there.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: And in terms of you
19 mentioned I guess the, where are the vessels for the
20 ferry system being constructed currently?

21 JAMES WONG: Yeah, so all 38 vessels were built
22 somewhere in the golf, so there were three or four
23 different ship yards that were utilized at the time.
24 They were built largely between 2015 and 20- I think
25

1
2 about 21. And so we spread out over multiple ship
3 yards but they were all built in the south.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: In the south and in terms
5 of maintenance and repair, where does that happen?

6 JAMES WONG: So, maintenance current and repair
7 currently is mostly handled at our facility at Pier C
8 in the Brooklyn Navy Yard. It's been a really
9 incredible opportunity to not just launch a ferry
10 system but basically build a small ship yard right
11 there in the navy yard, which brings back of course
12 all of these maritime routes and the ability to
13 create a maritime pipeline for jobs, which we've been
14 really proud of through the operator.

15 Similar facilities are going to be built in Red
16 Hook, so at Homeport 2, the ability to pull a vessel
17 out of the water that travel lift, is one of the
18 major assets that allows our operator to do that
19 maintenance right there in the place. So, we're
20 looking forward because at Homeport 2 there will be
21 maintenance opportunities, job opportunities and lots
22 of ways for people to engage with the system.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: And lastly Chair because
24 I also have to run, for the travel lift and Homeport
25 2, what's the situation there?

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2 JAMES WONG: Uhm, it will be similar to the one
3 that we have at Pier C.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Okay.

5 JAMES WONG: I don't know the exact details of it
6 but the same intention is that it is basically a
7 mobile crane that lifts the vessel up and pulls it up
8 onto dry land.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Is that part yet built
10 out or is that something -

11 JAMES WONG: The track for it is. I don't know
12 about the machinery.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Okay, I'll follow up on
14 this. I have very specific questions around Homeport
15 2. I guess one last question. Thank you Chairs. Is
16 uhm, I also have the benefit of having Brooklyn Army
17 Terminal there and my daughter insisted that we use
18 the Rockaway and she didn't want to do the Rockaway
19 Reserve, which I was cool with, to see what the
20 regular people deal with. We waited five boats,
21 three hours in the hot sun because every boat that
22 came to BAT from Manhattan, if you had Rockaway
23 Reserve you got on. If you were regular folks, you
24 didn't because they were all packed, which I was
25 delighted to see by the way. So, filling mystified

1 and a little bit upset by it. They were all really
2 crowded by the time they got to South Brooklyn, so
3 many, many people waited and many people left
4 actually. We ended up not going on. I went another
5 time.
6

7 JAMES WONG: Yeah.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: But you know it does you
9 know beg the situation. Like, how do we rebalance at
10 the peak and make sure that people in the southern
11 part of the route don't have to wait four hours in
12 the hot sun with no shade?

13 JAMES WONG: So, absolutely I agree with you and
14 that is not an acceptable service level. I would ask
15 you know if you ever have an experience like that, I
16 do ask you to reach out to us. For something that
17 extreme, it really isn't acceptable. What we've done
18 in the past is that we've actually created because
19 the problem of vessels filling up at Wallstreet
20 before they get to Brooklyn Army Terminal, this goes
21 back many years and we've instituted policies to make
22 sure that we are preserving some number of seats for
23 people at Sunset Park to get onboard on every
24 Rockaway bound vessel.
25

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2 So, unfortunately I'm sorry to hear about your
3 experience but we have a plan that should be
4 implemented on that and if it's not, please let us
5 know.

6 FRANNY CIVITANO: We will follow up with the
7 operator on that for sure.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Yeah, I will follow up
9 and I think it was a combination of like high peak,
10 high demand. Rockaway, you could see the Rockaway
11 Rocket people running on and everybody else like
12 damn.

13 JAMES WONG: No it is important.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: It's a real thing and I
15 guess it speaks to the rebalancing during those time
16 because I saw a good number of people including
17 myself leave after three hours and I would like EDC
18 to really consider at these landings, it's hot and
19 there is no shade anywhere to be found. What are the
20 structures that you put there? Because we create a
21 whole different set of problems that could - that you
22 know are not one billion dollars but certainly
23 protect residents from the heat is a serious thing.
24 So, thank you Chairs. Thank you.

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you. I also want to
3 second and double down on working for our middle
4 school students in Brooklyn and throughout the city.
5 I'd like to acknowledge we've also been joined by
6 Council Member Stevens and I'd like to recognize
7 Council Member Narcisse followed by Ariola then
8 Brannan.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Thank you Chairs.
10 Thank you. Some of questions were already asked, so
11 thank you for that. So, I'm going to come down,
12 instead of citywide, coming back to my district. I
13 know that a study was done for Canarsie Pier. Any
14 information you can share, any update? But let me
15 honest, I'm very disappointed because there is no
16 plans to expand and I know there's a lot of
17 communities throughout the city. We have waterfront,
18 we can benefit from a ferry but we're not getting any
19 transportation there and we need that. So, if you
20 can share coming back to my question, any study was
21 done - I mean the study was done for Canarsie Pier,
22 so I want to know if there's any information that you
23 can share with us. Keep in mind too that uhm there's
24 maybe transportation desert like hours, like Canarsie
25 area and population are increasing, so therefore we

1 need to relieve some of the transportation problem
2 that we're facing in the City of New York,
3 overcrowding. So, please, can you answer the
4 Canarsie question for me?

5
6 JAMES WONG: Thank you Council Member. So, as I
7 mentioned in my testimony, while we don't have any
8 current plans for expansion, I do want to just make
9 sure it's clear that we have heard and really
10 appreciate the advocacy and the enthusiasm that we've
11 heard out of the Canarsie neighborhood through
12 organizations on the ground, your advocacy as well.
13 We know and acknowledge that there are places where
14 people are looking for additional service and where
15 ferry service may be able to provide opportunities
16 for different communities. While we don't have a
17 current expansion plan to talk about today, we are
18 definitely aware and Canarsie has very made itself
19 known as those who are really interested in the
20 future of ferry service.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: So, the study? I'm
22 very much interested. Do you have any information
23 you can share on that study that was done?

24 JAMES WONG: The previous formal study that was
25 done was in 2018 and 2019, which is available on the

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1 website and we can provide that to you following this
2 conversation.
3

4 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Because I want to know
5 why we were not qualified because I remember former
6 Mayor was very dedicated to make it happen and then
7 just from one second, everything just changed on us
8 and we did not get that ferry.

9 JAMES WONG: Yeah I don't have more to add to
10 sort of the prior Administration but I will say that
11 just that in the prior study there was an evaluation.
12 I talks about things like travel time and uhm you
13 know ridership opportunities from the Canarsie
14 neighborhood. If we were to look at expansion in the
15 future, we will 100 percent take another look at the
16 information that was provided there but as of right
17 now, we don't have a current plan.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER NARCISSE: Yeah, as you can see
19 [INAUDIBLE 01:39:57] and now we got to leave it alone
20 because we organize around here because we definitely
21 we could benefit from that. So, I thank you for your
22 time. Thank you Chair.

23 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you Council Member.
24 I'd like to recognize Council Member Ariola followed
25 by Brannan then Restler.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: Thank you Chair. Thank
3 you so much for coming today. I know that everyone
4 is enjoying that we have ferry transportation
5 especially to the Rockaway Peninsula which I have the
6 honor of sharing representing with Chairwoman Selvena
7 Brooks-Powers. That being said, we do need more
8 service. We do need you to identify that probably
9 the most of your income and the most ridership
10 consistently is from Manhattan to the Rockaway
11 Peninsula. So, I'd like to see some type of subsidy
12 for those who live in the 11693 to 11691 area codes.
13 So, just put that on your radar.

14 We are having a really big problem with the ferry
15 system while it's traveling from Manhattan to the
16 Rockaway Peninsula. It passes the areas of Rocks
17 Berry and Breezy Point. At the pointed passes, it is
18 going at a very high rate of speed and it is very
19 close to the shore and what's happening is it's
20 causing an acceleration of erosion for the beaches
21 that are there and a deterioration of the sea wall
22 that was there put there for the resiliency after
23 Super Storm Sandy.

24 So, we have reached out to your intergovernmental
25 office and we will be setting up a meeting to see

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1 what we can do but I wanted to put that on your radar
2 that the ferry has to slow down. It must slow down
3 and it has to go further out into the channel because
4 it is creating actual waves on a bayside where it
5 looks like it's a beach, an ocean beach and not a
6 bayside beach. So, I just want to put that on your
7 radar. The other thing is, last year you adjusted
8 the 515 ferry to be kind of like a 535 or 536 ferry,
9 which caused like havoc because there were people
10 that were commuting from downtown to the Rockaways.
11 Now the ferry was overcrowded and they had to wait
12 for a later ferry. Is this something that you're
13 going to do again this year off season or have we
14 learned from last year that it just didn't work?

16 JAMES WONG: So, one of the things that we really
17 focused on through the scheduling is to make sure
18 that we are providing consistent and reliable service
19 and what's really important to us in fact is making
20 sure that there are enough seats. Particularly as
21 you mentioned for the Rockaway riders, which has a
22 really consistent ridership base for those who are
23 commuting. What we found was that in the p.m. peak
24 we were struggling last summer. So, not this past
25 summer but the summer prior where people who were

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1 going to the beach for fun were also competing for
2 seats with people who were trying to get home. So,
3 what happened was we actually added service, which is
4 what led to a slight shift in the departure schedule
5 is that there were more ferries per hour departing to
6 go to the Rockaways than previously. So, while we
7 shifted the schedule, it's actually increasing the
8 capacity to get more and more people on.
9

10 What we did this year is just made sure that we
11 really got to people early and often, so there were
12 announcements made, emails sent, a lot of service
13 advisories to all of our Rockaway riders along with
14 everyone else to make sure that they knew the
15 schedule was changing. Uhm, this year I have not
16 heard of as many concerns about that shift and people
17 tend to, were able to get a little bit more familiar
18 with those seasonal changes but like I said, we want
19 to make sure that we are providing enough service for
20 people who want to get places.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER ARIOLA: Yeah our office got
22 innumerable complaints because that 515 that
23 commuters were dedicated to get on and there were
24 many of them were now pushed back and they were put
25 back with people who were getting out later from work

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2 and getting onto the same ferry. So, if you haven't
3 made the change yet, I would ask you not to and to
4 keep I as that 515 ferry is widely utilized by the
5 commuters from our district who are dedicated
6 commuters and ferry riders. So, thank you so much.

7 JAMES WONG: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you Council Member.
9 I'd like to recognize Council Member Brannan followed
10 by Restler, then Stevens.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Thank you Chairs. Thank
12 you for organizing this hearing. EDC it's good to
13 see you guys, appreciate your partnership on all the
14 things and I want to talk - I want to get into the
15 Coney Island Ferry but first to talk a little bit
16 about the thought that goes into the infrastructure
17 surrounding ferries, in terms of getting people to
18 the ferry right. You know, I fought really hard to
19 bring back the Bay Ridge Ferry until we sort of were
20 able to get ridership up to a decent level. It was
21 always a fight every year to sort of uhm, you know to
22 fight for its existence right, to sort of you know
23 justify its existence and part of the problem was
24 that for I think for all of my colleagues is the
25 ferries are great if you live near the ferry or if

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1 you can get to the ferry in some way whether biking
2 or whatever. Unfortunately not all of our ferries
3 are connected to the existing transportation
4 infrastructure. So, uhm you know and there's always
5 talk about doing ferry shuttle, you know shuttles to
6 the ferry, that kind of thing but without any -
7 without funding streams that are guaranteed, it's
8 hard to you know I can fund a shuttle for one year.
9 If I can get the money the following year, I'll do it
10 again but it's something - people need to rely on it.
11 So, how much thought goes into the infrastructure
12 around getting people to the ferry to make them
13 successful and to make them sustainable?

14 JAMES WONG: Of course, good to see you Council
15 Member. Thank you for your partnership on ferries
16 over the years. Uhm, so I'll talk about in kind of a
17 general sense as it relates to whenever we've had
18 prior planning studies or discussions around ferry
19 services. In general, we have looked for
20 opportunities to place ferry landings where there are
21 by sort of definitionally gaps in the existing
22 transit network. So where there are - where the
23 subway is half a mile or more inland where the bus
24 does - you know you have to you know go a long ways
25

1 before you could get to a subway. We are actually
2 looking for kind of these lease connected places as
3 opportunities where ferry service can really help
4 connect a neighborhood where they don't have great
5 access to other options. And so, where we find
6 success is where the other transit options are not
7 good. That's often of an opportunity to create a
8 ridership base if we are able to connect the ferry
9 service to where people want to go.
10

11 In terms of the upland infrastructure, ferries at
12 least through NYC Ferry in our current iteration have
13 generally been a pretty light touch in terms of like
14 physical infrastructure. It's a floating barge, a
15 gangway and a couple of piles and of course the
16 utility connections but the narrow scope of that work
17 is what allowed us to build a ferry system in the
18 sort of timeline that we did without having to you
19 know really see if we could make major investments in
20 roadways and other places that might otherwise be
21 required.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: You know as a noted
23 ferry apologist, I want them all to succeed but part
24 of the challenge is the connectivity right, is
25 getting people to the Ferry. Obviously, you have the

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1 challenge of not being able to use a metro card to
2 get you know if you're taking a bus ride, now you're
3 talking about a two fare situation. So, I'd like to
4 see EDC focus on that too because just setting up a
5 ferry uhm if any of my colleagues who are dreaming,
6 including me, who is dreaming of putting a ferry
7 somewhere else in our district or getting our first
8 ferry in our neighborhood, uhm it's hard when you
9 have to fight to justify its existence every year and
10 then EDC says well, no one is riding the ferry. It's
11 like well yeah, because no one can get to it. So, it
12 creates this sort of feedback loop that uhm and we
13 all know why because I think a lot more people would
14 use the ferries if they could get to the ferry. So,
15 that's one and so just talking about the 2022
16 feasibility study for the Coney Island Ferry, yeah,
17 I'm old enough to remember in a prior administration
18 when there was talk around you know building a Coney
19 Island Ferry, whether it was on the creek side or
20 whether it was on the oceanside, the issue that EDC
21 is now putting in our way as far as it would cost
22 \$250 million you know to do it right because of
23 challenges on the ocean side. That was never an
24 issue before. Like, when we talked about the Coney
25

1
2 Island Ferry version one, whether it was creek or
3 ocean side, it was always about viability in terms of
4 how many people were going to use the ferry. So, I
5 kind of feel like this is a new excuse that we're
6 hearing. I don't disagree that it would be a
7 challenge. I don't think the \$250 million. I think
8 that number is absurd. I don't think there's any -
9 what is the average cost to build a ferry dock?

10 JAMES WONG: Ten to fifteen -

11 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: But sir, that would mean
12 that this one would be - I mean it's absurd, absurd
13 and I'm not a marine engineer but when I hang out on
14 the beach in Coney Island and I see the Rockaway
15 Ferry going back and forth passing by Steeple Chase
16 Pier, maybe 20, 30 feet away from where a dock would
17 be, it's hard for the average person to think that
18 it's an impossibility or it's a \$250 million
19 impossibility to make that happen.

20 So, the legislation that I'm pushing is to really
21 dig back into that issue because again, knowing that
22 in the past there was a different excuse and now the
23 excuse has become that it's not feasible because of
24 the water. It's sort of - it's hard for us to
25 believe but really last thing. The Environmental

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1
2 Bond Act which authorized New York State to spend
3 about \$4 billion. I don't know if any of my
4 colleagues asked about that but it authorized the
5 state to spend about \$4 billion on critical
6 environmental infrastructure projects. Are we
7 talking about using any of that money for future
8 ferry projects?

9 JAMES WONG: I'm sorry, can you repeat the fund?

10 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: So, the Environmental
11 Bond Act, it gives New York State the authority to
12 spend \$4.2 billion. Are we fighting to try to get
13 some of that money for some of these projects?

14 JAMES WONG: Not to my knowledge.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Okay well, we should be
16 right? Okay, I don't want to take up all the time
17 but there is you know in a city of concrete and
18 asphalt, I think we forget that it's the city of
19 waterfronts, right five boroughs. Four of them are
20 islands are connected to one. You know I saw
21 bringing an express ferry to Bay Ridge has been an
22 absolute game changer. There's no quicker way to get
23 to Manhattan from southern Brooklyn than by the ferry
24 in Bay Ridge.

25

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1 You know, I think the Mayor likes to talk a lot
2 about how cool and hip these places are and like
3 Coney Island, everyone talks about Coney Island how
4 great it is. Everyone has got to come to Coney
5 Island but then when it comes to investing money in
6 Coney Island, we start getting excuses. So, we're
7 going to fight really hard on that. We want to see
8 it happen impossible for us to believe that this is
9 you know, it's just impossible to believe that it
10 would cost this much money, so we look forward to
11 working with you on that and appreciate your
12 partnership.
13

14 MICHELE LAMBERTI: And Council Member, thank you
15 for your question and also for your advocacy around
16 Coney Island. We know how interested your community
17 is and we share the passion about ferry. I just
18 wanted to specify uhm with respect to like the study
19 and the really high cost, the \$250 million. That
20 would not be - my understanding is for the ferry
21 land; I can't speak to what prior Administration had
22 done with respect to the study but our understanding
23 is that was more with respect to wave attenuation.
24 So, it's really the building a very, very long sea
25 wall. James and the team might know better, it was

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1 like three football fields I think in order to make
2 landing at that site safe to be able to bring boats
3 in. So, just wanted to clarify for you and to know
4 that we really do take it seriously. We're not
5 looking to throw -

6
7 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: I've got no problem
8 going and building a coalition and fighting to find
9 the money. I think I do that pretty well but we need
10 to land on a price that we actually can all rally
11 around and I think the \$250 million price is like if
12 you don't want to sell your house, you put it up for
13 \$250 because no one is going to buy it right. So, we
14 want to get to a spot where we can all agree on the
15 feasibility and what it would actually cost so then
16 we can go and try to access some of this money,
17 federal, state money, whatever it may be. Alright,
18 thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you for answering the
20 Council Members questions. I'd like to recognize
21 Council Member Restler followed by Stevens.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Thank you so much
23 Majority Leader and Chair and both Co-Chairs. I just
24 firstly want to commend our Majority Leader on her
25 legislation to make it more affordable for students

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1 to be able to commute by ferry. You know personally
2 I think it should be the same as our metro card
3 policy, our MTA policy, it should be free for
4 students who are commuting every day but half price
5 is a major step in the right direction. I'm very
6 proud that the 33rd district is the capital of the
7 ferry system in New York City. We have not one, not
8 two, six, six different ferry landings in District
9 33. We love the ferry and uhm, Jen is - Council
10 Member Gutiérrez and Stevens are jealous of the 33rd
11 Council District, if you couldn't hear that, if they
12 weren't on the mic, that is what they were saying.
13 But in all seriousness, uhm we appreciate the work
14 that EDC does to make the ferry system work. There
15 are some concerns though that I did want to highlight
16 today and I will just say I thought the Ferry and
17 Forward plan or whatever you called it from a couple
18 years ago, was generally quite good and responsible
19 and a thoughtful way to improve management of the
20 system.

21
22 So, I just want to broadly commend your policies
23 there. There are a few things though that I am
24 concerned about. I'll start with uhm the private

25

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1 pier. So, how many of the piers in our ferry system
2 are privately owned?
3

4 JAMES WONG: I believe Industry is the only one.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: The only one and do you
6 evaluate the operational - do you evaluate how many
7 days per year each ferry is open?

8 JAMES WONG: Uh yes, we do track that.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: And which ferry site has
10 been closed the most?

11 JAMES WONG: I don't have the last year's numbers
12 right in front of me but I can provide that.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Over time, over time,
14 have you looked at that and analyzed which ferry pier
15 is closed most frequently?

16 JAMES WONG: We have not done a like single
17 analysis for that but we do track when there are
18 outages and so, we do have that information.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I mean dollars to
20 donuts; I would tell you that the one privately owned
21 pier in our whole system is the one that's been shut
22 down the most. Where we've had multiple,
23 significant, sustained outages and serious problems
24 and I just want to come back and ask, is EDC looking
25

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1
2 at a way to have a publicly owned pier in our
3 community?

4 JAMES WONG: So, as it relates to Greenpoint and
5 first of all, thank you for your comments earlier and
6 hopefully not getting me in trouble with your
7 counterparts for having as many landings but as it
8 relates to -

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: We can't all represent
10 the 33rd district, you know.

11 JAMES WONG: As it relates to the Greenpoint
12 landing, so we - there was a sustained outages.
13 There was a safety concern and a real issue that
14 needed to be addressed and one of the things that we
15 took very seriously was working closely with the
16 owners who there had been a transition at the time.
17 It then became Lin Leese (SP) to make sure that we
18 were giving them close advice, counseling guidance on
19 everything that we know about building ferry landings
20 and building them with the sort of right levels of
21 safety and protection.

22 So, what did take a long time because there are
23 you know there are challenges that anyone would face
24 on permitting and getting all these materials. What
25 we saw through that work was an entity that was

1 largely acting responsibly to create a safe and
2 renewed ferry landing. So, since then there are I
3 would say kind of the regular amount of outages that
4 do happen for time to time at other landings. We
5 have not seen any sustained outages in the way that
6 we had seen when the landing needed to be pulled out
7 of service and based on the things we asked -

9 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I hear you. We had a
10 number of outages prior to that but I do want to just
11 ask, repeat my question. Are you considering any
12 potential publicly owned ferry site for the
13 Greenpoint community?

14 JAMES WONG: We're not currently considering a
15 change in ownership.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: I just want to
17 underscore; I think it's critically important that
18 this is a part of our mass transit infrastructure.
19 That's what our ferry system has become. We need to
20 ensure that the city has control of our mass transit
21 infrastructure and this one pier being privately
22 owned is a concern for me. A concern that we'll
23 always have the access that we need through a
24 reliable service that we deserve and I do think that
25 EDC should continue to look at alternative options

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1 for how we can have a publicly owned ferry pier
2 serving the Greenpoint community.
3

4 I broadly commended earlier in my remarks some of
5 your Ferry Forward plan or whatever, is that what it
6 was called? Yeah, I got it right. There you go.

7 Sorry, from a couple years ago but there were changes
8 that were implemented earlier this year that I am
9 more concerned about and really building off the
10 comments that Council Members Ariola and Brannan had
11 both made with regard to the frequency of evening
12 routes and so that the ferry is dependable for the
13 people who need it and bus service, shuttle bus
14 service to get people to and from the ferry.

15 Uhm, the evening routes that we've seen reduced
16 on the East River Ferry route make it harder for
17 commuters coming home, especially some of the late
18 night trips. We really struggle during the G-train
19 shutdown when EDC resisted, refused to add additional
20 ferry service to help make up for the lack of G-Train
21 access in our community and secondly, the loss of the
22 bus on 34th street has been a challenge for some of
23 the people who rely on the ferry commuting into
24 Manhattan. So, just wanted to ask, are you
25 reconsidering any of the reductions in evening

1 services and the elimination of the 34th Street bus
2 route? Is that something that you consider bringing
3 back to help maintain the vibrancy and high
4 utilization of the ferry system from constituents
5 certainly in the 33rd and across the city?
6

7 JAMES WONG: So, uhm as we're thinking about
8 service planning, uhm there are of course the kind of
9 tradeoffs that you're talking about. And so, when we
10 did end service a little earlier, we also added more
11 service particularly this summer, we had the most
12 number of vessels on the East River route operating
13 in any given time. So, that's more than we've ever
14 had in the past. I believe service was about every
15 20 to 22 minutes, something like that which is as
16 fast as we've ever put service out on the East River.
17 So, where we see the need and the demand for
18 capacity, that's where we really center the most of
19 our energy to make sure that we are accommodating as
20 many people as possible given the finite resources
21 that you know, that we have.

22 As it relates to the shuttle bus, the shuttle bus
23 unfortunately never rebounded after the pandemic.
24 The shuttle bus on East 34th street served four
25 different routes. It should in my mind it was always

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1 a thing that you know everyone who is coming to
2 Midtown should want to ride the shuttle bus and take
3 it and go further inland. We were seeing subsidies
4 per rider of over \$30 per trip. So, for an
5 individual person who is getting off of the ferry for
6 whom we already had a subsidy, we were talking about
7 a \$30 subsidy for that shuttle bus because it was so
8 underutilized despite our efforts to encourage people
9 to ride it to get people onboard. So, as part of
10 that, we really made a choice to right size the
11 service that we had.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Okay, you know I
14 appreciate and I'll shut up here but I appreciate
15 that there was a different times of day increase
16 service but for many of my constituents who moved
17 into waterfront developments in the north side in
18 Greenpoint, they did it with the idea that they would
19 be able to depend on a ferry service and not just
20 ferry service you know during the heart of rush hour
21 in the morning and narrowly in the evening. They
22 want to be able to take the ferry if they're coming
23 home from work at 7:30 or 8:00 and be able to access
24 a ferry reliably and the reductions in service have
25 been a real challenge. We've heard many complaints

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1 from constituents. It's an ongoing concern and we
2 really do hope that you'll consider revisiting those
3 evening schedules because they're a real important
4 lifeline for folks who live on the waterfront in the
5 North Brooklyn portion of our district. Thank you
6 very much and thank you to the Chairs for having this
7 hearing today.

9 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you Council Member.
10 I'd like to recognize Council Member Stevens.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Thank you so much.
12 Thank you Chairs for having this very important
13 hearing. I just have a couple of questions just on
14 like some of the disparities. I represent the West
15 Bronx and most folks know that in the Bronx, we don't
16 have access to our waterfront and so, it was just so
17 to kind of like just hear some of my colleagues and
18 to hear that I have a Council Member and a colleague
19 who has six landings in his district and my district
20 often isn't considered at all for a ferry and so, I'm
21 just trying to get a breakdown. What's the breakdown
22 of the ferries like throughout the boroughs? So, we
23 can start with Manhattan. How many do they have?
24 How many ferry landings do they have?

25 JAMES WONG: Six -

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Seven, just always
3 understand, I already know the answers to the
4 questions that I'm asking so- just making a point
5 here. Uhm just and in Brooklyn?

6 JAMES WONG: I don't know off the top of my head.

7 FRANNY CIVITANO: I don't know either.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Oh, you all don't know?
9 Okay so we know we already got six because Lincoln
10 had six in his district, so it's a minimum of six.
11 How many in the Bronx?

12 FRANNY CIVITANO: Two.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Two. We don't think
14 that that's already disproportionate. We're not even
15 going to go to Queens. How is that even possible?
16 We're not thinking about how things are
17 disproportionate when we're thinking about where
18 we're putting these landings. Have you ever done a
19 study on the race of the folks who are riding the
20 ferry?

21 JAMES WONG: When we do a survey each year, we do
22 look at the -

23 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: So, talk to me about
24 what that breakdown looks like.

25

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2 JAMES WONG: Sure, so when we look throughout the
3 system, it's about 35 percent of our riders identify
4 as non-White. There are higher percentages of non-
5 White riders in the Bronx.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Hmm, hmm, why do you
7 think that's the case? If you're looking at these
8 numbers because then if we're doing a study, then
9 we're you know doing a survey. What are we doing it
10 for? Why do we think that's the case?

11 JAMES WONG: Well, one of the things that we've
12 seen is that in fact, we have a greater proportion of
13 riders who identify as non-White for our most
14 consistent routes. So, places like Soundview and
15 Ferry Point Park where we've seen increased
16 diversity, we've also seen a more committed ridership
17 base. That has been one of the things that we've -

18 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Well, because some of it
19 is like, the narrative is that people of color
20 shouldn't be on here because you're not putting them
21 in their communities and maybe you don't know that
22 that's not intentionally happening but even when I've
23 had conversations with residents in there, they were
24 like, "yeah, that's not for us." Because that is the
25 narrative that you're creating.

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1 And so, I'm just a little bit frustrated because
2
3 in my district, in High Bridge where we do have
4 waterfront but we don't have access to it and there
5 is no other options because we have the bus, which is
6 the 13th. It's really terrible and it's like - I
7 think it's like eight buses on that route which
8 always get stuck in traffic and then they say oh,
9 ride city bikes and if you've ever been to High
10 Bridge, you're not riding a city bike. You got to be
11 committed. So, having a ferry is a real life option
12 for a lot of these residents who are often stranded
13 there who have to either drive and there's no parking
14 or they have to take an Uber because it's a two fare
15 zone. And so, thinking about, this could be a real
16 option for people to have real transportation and
17 it's not even being considered. And we have places
18 where there is actually options for them and they
19 could get access and we're putting additional ferry
20 landings there. Like, I think we have to get real
21 about what's happening here because I feel like I've
22 been here for two years and I've gotten things where
23 I've said, "hey we would love to have a ferry on the
24 West Bronx." And there's actually landing that you
25 could put there and it's not in my district. It's

1 actually in Deputy Speaker Ayala's district that's
2 there, that could be put there because it was put
3 there in the 80's and it could be done and it's just
4 not happening. And so, I'm really confused and so,
5 that's why I'm asking these questions because people
6 in my district deserve this. We don't have other
7 options and this needs to have a real consideration.
8 And so, even with the Yankee's being there, we would
9 actually probably bring in more revenue than a lot of
10 your other ferries just because we have so many
11 people that come into this district. So, I'm just a
12 little frustrated at this point.

14 FRANNY CIVITANO: Yeah and Council Member
15 Stevens, I definitely hear your frustration and we at
16 EDC, I never want any New Yorker to think that the
17 ferry is not an option for them, okay.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: In my district, it is
19 not.

20 FRANNY CIVITANO: And I understand that there's
21 not a ferry landing there now but I would -

22 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: There's not even a
23 consideration for it.

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2 FRANNY CIVITANO: I would say that we are really
3 committed to equity and diversity of our ridership
4 and I know that we can do better.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: I don't want diversity
6 and equity and ridership. I want equity and
7 diversity in where they are being located. So,
8 there's a difference and so I want us to make sure
9 that we're not playing word semantics and we're being
10 clear about what we're saying. Because it's not
11 about just having diversity of ridership. It's about
12 where you're putting them. That will create the
13 diversity that you're looking for. So, we have to
14 make sure that when we're thinking about where these
15 studies are happening and what we're doing that we're
16 being intentional about not leaving out communities
17 like mine. Because the reality is, there is no
18 subway line being expanded in the high bridges. It
19 ain't happening. There is no other forms of
20 transportation. Maybe we could get another bus line,
21 maybe right but the reality is, this is a real thing
22 that could help people in this community and thinking
23 about what that looks like and I feel like this has
24 to have a real look on it because you will never
25 increase the diversity of your ridership if you're

1 not increasing the diversity of where these ferry
2 landings are.
3

4 FRANNY CIVITANO: And Council Member, I
5 definitely hear you. I'm also looking at the
6 diversity of where ferry landings are. We take that
7 seriously. Uhm if and when we would decide to do
8 system expansion, I can assure that that will be one
9 of our top priorities and looking at where new
10 landings are stood up. And so, I hear you and I hear
11 the needs of your constituents.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: We need to see action,
13 so definitely want to continue to have this
14 conversation of what this looks like because the
15 Harbor Working Group has been one of the groups that
16 have been pushing really hard for this for years
17 about having access to their waterfront and the fact
18 that we have Manhattan's having seven landings,
19 Brooklyn having over six landings and then the Bronx,
20 where are we at two, one? Two, we have two and
21 that's unacceptable. That's unacceptable, the people
22 of the Bronx deserve better.

23 FRANNY CIVITANO: And we're happy to connect with
24 you and your office and continue to have this
25 conversation.

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1
2 COUNCIL MEMBER STEVENS: Absolutely.

3 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you Council Member and
4 thank you folks for testifying on both of our behalf.
5 We appreciate you coming today and ready to answer
6 questions and look uhm confidently at what we already
7 are doing for the city but also on the more expansive
8 side of where we need to work on some of the
9 challenges presented that members presented and both
10 that we know are occurring with constituency.

11 With that, you folks are good to go for today.

12 We are now opening the hearing up for public
13 testimony. I remind members of the public that this
14 is a formal government proceeding and that decorum
15 shall be observed at all times. As such, members of
16 the public shall remain silent at all times. The
17 witness table is reserved for people who wish to
18 testify. No video recording or photography is
19 allowed from the witness table. Further, members of
20 the public may not present audio or video recordings
21 as testimony but may submit transcripts of such
22 recordings to the Sergeant at Arms for inclusion in
23 the hearing. Hi folks, still a government
24 proceeding. If you would like to chat, please go out
25 into the stairway.

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2 If you wish to speak at today's hearing, please
3 fill out an appearance card with the Sergeant at Arms
4 and wait to be recognized. When recognized, you will
5 have two minutes to speak on today's hearing topic.
6 The New York City Ferry System. If you have a
7 written statement or additional written testimony you
8 wish to submit for the record, please provide a copy
9 of that testimony to the Sergeant at Arms.

10 You may also email written testimony to
11 testimony@council.nyc.gov or amended testimony from
12 today within 72 hours of this hearing. Audio and
13 video recordings will not be accepted. I will now
14 call up the first panel. Dominick Recchia, our
15 Former Council Member, please come on down. Former
16 Council Member Robert Cornegie, Tyler Taba, and Sean
17 Campio.

18 We don't need to give direction to the former
19 Council Members but whenever you are ready to begin
20 you can.

21 DOMINICK RECCHIA: Good afternoon. It's feels to
22 be back home. My name is Dominick Recchia, Jr., I'm
23 a former Councilman for Coney Island and from Finance
24 Chair of this wonderful institution and I'm here
25

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1 today to talk about accessibility to Coney Island for
2 a ferry that is greatly needed.
3

4 Back in 2009 when we did the rezoning in Coney
5 Island, there was points of agreement. I gave a copy
6 for each member. Inside the points of agreement,
7 there's the whole area dealing with ferry and it
8 clearly states that the city commits to undertaking a
9 ferry feasibility study for Coney Island within three
10 years from the date of the rezoning. Unfortunately
11 Sandy hit and we never did the ferry study.

12 As of today, as I sit here today, there has never
13 been a ferry study for Coney Island and the reason
14 why there had to be a ferry study for Coney Island
15 because it's very difficult and there was a
16 discrepancy during the rezoning whether they put it
17 on the creek or the oceanside. People in EDC wanted
18 the creek. People in the Bloomberg Administration at
19 City Hall, they didn't all agree with that and the
20 City Council, we had documentation that it could be
21 put on the oceanside and it was never done so they
22 called for an in-depth study that it was going to
23 take at least a year to do. It was never done. What
24 the city did in 2018-2019, they did a full ferry
25 study where they talk a little bit about Coney Island

1 but they give no data. They give no background.
2 They don't say who their experts in. The same
3 problem with the wave titles and the wind, that's
4 what they said back then but we had data in the City
5 Council because our Environmental Committee had the
6 research to show that they were wrong, okay. And
7 today, as it puzzles me, when they could come up here
8 and reenter their testimony that in 2022, we conduct
9 the feasibility analysis to assess other landing
10 options to serve Coney Island, which is incorrect.

12 No one asked them, "where is that study?" If
13 they had that study, it showed it was no good, they
14 would have said here it is. You know what the study
15 was? It was about, all about access - hold on, I'll
16 tell you exactly what that study was about. I pulled
17 it up on my uh hold on one second, I had it right
18 here.

19 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Council Member?

20 DOMINICK RECCHIA: Right, it was about a
21 feasibility study, all about Hurricane Sandy and the
22 way the winds and the tide destroyed Coney Island.
23 That's what it was about. There's never been a study
24 done and this must stop. The Administration, EDC,
25 must keep their word. I give you the ammunition to

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1 show that there was an agreement to say that there
2 must be a study done immediately to see where we
3 could put ferry service, how we could put it and if
4 we can't, where's the documentation and who are the
5 consultants? Where's the names and so forth?
6

7 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Yeah, thank you so much for
8 that. We will definitely work through this stock
9 pile of paperwork you just put in front of us but I
10 appreciate getting the study.

11 DOMINICK RECCHIA: Committee and attorneys if
12 anyone want to meet with me, I have tons of that,
13 tons of documentation to help out.

14 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: No, thank you for
15 providing uhm that historical context of what took
16 place. Uhm, because as I mentioned earlier, I
17 visited the area and wanted to understand how EDC
18 moves forward on building a landing that was then
19 found to be an issue locally.

20 So, just to be clear, one, we know you support
21 the study but do you feel that the ferry landing
22 should not be on the oceanside or should be on the
23 oceanside.

24 DOMINICK RECCHIA: It has to be on the oceanside.
25 That's the only place - we used to have ferries in

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1 the 1950's, 1960's. We had ferries. You're going to
2 say 2024, we can't build a ferry. We can't build a
3 landing. We have a steeple chase pier that we used
4 to have ferries landing all the time but they never -
5 oh, the other thing, it cost them \$12 million when
6 they tried to build inside the creek. They didn't
7 tell you that today and the community was so upset.
8 What did they do? In the middle of the night in
9 October, they came and dismantled the pier that they
10 built and took it out on tugboats in the middle of
11 the night. That's how upset - that's how they knew
12 they were wrong but they're not going to tell you
13 they wasted \$12 million and \$250,000 is not what it's
14 going to cost.
15

16 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: No, thank you for
17 that and that's actually what I heard when I did my
18 transportation and infrastructure tour. So, like I
19 said, it is good to have on the record the historical
20 context about what took place so that we know moving
21 forward with any type of ferry expansions. We need
22 to make sure that EDC is doing their due diligence in
23 a real way, so thank you for that.

24 ROBERT CORNEGIE: Good afternoon. I just want to
25 start by saying it's not wasted on me, the amount of

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1 work and thoughtful deliberation that was necessary
2 to put this hearing together. I want to thank the
3 Co-Chairs for allowing me to testify today and it is
4 good to be back home on this side of the table. So,
5 I just you know obviously I want to echo the
6 sentiments of my colleague who was front and center
7 during this period but I do want to add that it's
8 undeniable that New York City Ferry is a popular form
9 of transportation across New York City year around.
10 And the popularity of this form of transportation
11 shows no signs of slowing down. Just in the first
12 quarter of 2024, the coldest time of the year, New
13 York Ferry ridership hit a record high with just over
14 one million riders. This number increases
15 dramatically in the summer. Just July 2024 alone
16 brought New York City Ferry ridership up to 1.729.
17 In the past five years, New York City Ferry ridership
18 has increased by 8 percent and has surpassed
19 prepandemic levels whereas subway ridership is still
20 at only 67 percent of prepandemic levels. This
21 continue growing popularity is no surprise. Given
22 that ferries have become more accessible to New York
23 City residents providing routes between boroughs at
24 the same cost as the subway and providing an arguably
25

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1 more enjoyable ride than subways and buses. And yet,
2 despite being on the way to the Rockaway stop Coney
3 Island, one of the most overlooked communities in New
4 York City gets passed by.
5

6 A ferry stop in Coney Island just makes sense.
7 This is an area that becomes heavily populated in the
8 summer. An additional form of public transportation
9 would benefit visitors and residents alike. Based on
10 a ferry feasibility study conducted by EDC, it was
11 concluded that a ferry stop in Coney Island would
12 both serve a significant transportation population
13 and reduce commuting time. A ferry route connecting
14 Coney Island to lower Manhattan would carry an
15 additional ridership of approximately 400,000 riders.
16 By ferry, travel time to Manhattan would be between
17 25 to 35 minutes. By subway, the transit time is
18 closer to 50 minutes to an hour.

19 While the city has stated its intention to have a
20 Coney Island Ferry for decades, no one has been able
21 to make it happen. It's our hope that this
22 legislation will bring back to Coney Island the ferry
23 stop that it needs and it deserves.
24
25

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1
2 I just want to mention also that there was a time
3 in this city's history where the only way you could
4 get to Coney Island was by ferry.

5 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you so much for your
6 testimony, I appreciate it.

7 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you for your
8 testimony.

9 SEAN CAMPIO: Good morning. I'm Sean Campio, I'm
10 Director of Housing and Economic Development Studies
11 at the Citizens Budget Commission. Thank you Chairs
12 for the opportunity to testify. So, our full
13 testimony was just submitted online has a new
14 analysis from CBC on New York City Ferries finances
15 and EDC's finances and the improvements and
16 shortcomings of the system. So, I was going to give
17 a few highlights. Uhm, when the Ferry Forward was
18 first proposed, CBC testified before the Council that
19 its success should be evaluated based on weather and
20 how much a subsidy provided and the total would be
21 reduced.

22 And in its first year for which we have data,
23 it's clear the Ferry Forward has steered New York
24 City Ferries finances in the right direction. As we
25 heard today, EDC reduced the ferry subsidy both per

1 ride and total thanks to fare increases, more
2 efficient operations. And importantly it didn't
3 decrease ridership. You know the fact they had
4 record ridership levels, even accounting for the
5 addition of new roofs and also, worth noting that it
6 allowed EDC to balance its 2023 budget, so
7 replenishing reserves after having to draw down on
8 those even before the pandemic and we appreciate the
9 successes.
10

11 But while you know Ferry Forward has provided an
12 effective course correction, the financial outlook
13 isn't as buoyant as it may appear. Uhm, and the
14 ferry remains one of the most heavily subsidized
15 transit options in the city and its \$56 million
16 subsidy still diverts substantial resources from
17 EDC's core mission of you know, advancing the city's
18 economic from economic development.

19 Accordingly, CBC still recommends a higher fare
20 from the non-commuting rides, potentially matching
21 the MTA express bus service, which is \$7 a fare to
22 offset some of the high operating costs and free up
23 funds for EDC. And it's also worth noting to that
24 the official subsidy doesn't include city
25 expenditures on debt service for New York City Ferry

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1
2 Capital Costs, which add about almost \$4 a trip,
3 which make the full subsidy ride about \$12.50.

4 If debt service is on its budget, debt service
5 would be about 25 percent of its operating cost,
6 which would be considered to be an unaffordable
7 amount. And finally, I just want to say that in line
8 with CBC's recommendations to the Charter Revision
9 Commission, we believe that the Council shouldn't
10 debate legislation to expand it without a full fiscal
11 and fact statement that looks at the impacts of the
12 cost both on the city's operating capital budgets and
13 on EDC's budgets and how to accommodate those costs
14 within both their financial plans. Thank you.

15 TYLER TABA: Thank you. Good afternoon. Thank
16 you to the Co-Chairs for hosting this hearing and for
17 the opportunity to testify. My name is Tyler Taba, I
18 am the Director of Resilience at the Waterfront
19 Alliance. Before the reestablishment of the New York
20 City Ferry in 2017, Waterfront Alliance wrote the
21 plan and guide for how to bring back the five borough
22 ferry system and we are a major supporter of the New
23 York City Ferry and continue to encourage the city to
24 envision the ferry as part of its climate, its
25 transportation and its economic development goals.

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1
2 Our long testimony today is focused on what
3 waterfront alliance considers the key to success for
4 the New York City Ferry, which we refer to as the
5 five E's, Expansion, Economics, Electrification,
6 Emergency Services and Equity. We also support
7 Intro. 321, 864 and Resolution 400 on the Legislative
8 Calendar. Our testimony indicates our strong support
9 for ferry expansion across the five boroughs,
10 including the sites under legislative consideration
11 as well as areas without active legislation.

12 Starting with expansion, we envision several new
13 routes that would serve New Yorkers with newer,
14 greener, and faster transit options that would
15 reshape transportation in the region. Ferries often
16 provide an opportunity to reach neighborhoods in
17 transit deserts and many of the new ferry landings
18 have reached those communities facing this challenge.

19 The successful expansion projects serve as
20 indications of success that New York City should
21 capitalize on in waterfronts alliance against
22 widespread expansion with priority to the following
23 sites, Brooklyn to Staten Island via the Bay Ridge
24 line, City Island via the Soundview line and
25 LaGuardia via the Soundview line and the connection

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1 at East 90th Street. We also consider other
2 expansions that are listed in the testimony. There's
3 more information about all of those for the Council
4 to review.
5

6 Next, we talk about subsidies and how these
7 subsidies for the ferries provide value for people.
8 We actually feel that the New York City Ferry is
9 often under unfair criticism of the subsidy that
10 comes with its operation. The ferry last year served
11 7 million New Yorkers and we actually feel that
12 comparing the ferry subsidies to a bus or train
13 subsidy is misleded and misguiding. Instead, we
14 should actually look at other ferry services across
15 the country and if you compare the New York City
16 Ferry to ferry services in Seattle, Boston, New
17 Orleans and San Franscisco, the NYC Ferries operation
18 expenses per revenue hour are actually much lower.

19 So, we go on in our testimony to talk about
20 electrification of the ferry. The ferry is providing
21 emergency services in transportation in the event of
22 extreme weather and -

23 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Time has expired.

24 TYLER TABA: Yes, thank you so much.
25

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1
2 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you so much. We will
3 review your full testimony. I appreciate that.
4 Thank you.

5 TYLER TABA: I appreciate it. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you all folks for
7 testifying today.

8 ROBERT CORNEGIE: I would just like to on the
9 record apologize to everyone I held to a tight two
10 minute schedule when I sat on the other side of the
11 table.

12 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: You know.

13 ROBERT CORNEGIE: Two minutes goes faster than
14 you ever expected, so I apologize.

15 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: This is the first time you
16 are in front of me and I was ready to cut you off.
17 You are now taking more time, so thank you so much.
18 I will call the next panel. Jay Fred Rodriguez Jr.,
19 Linda Baran, Rose Uscianowski pardon that
20 pronunciation if it's correct, Richenda Kramer(SP?).
21 Whomever is ready to begin.

22 LINDA BARAN: It says good morning, but good
23 afternoon. I'm Linda Baran, I'm the President of the
24 Staten Island Chamber of Commerce. We have about
25 14,000 businesses that represent on Staten Island.

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1 We're one of the largest business organizations
2 there. New York City's ferry system and the need for
3 its expansion. It's a significant topic for our
4 boroughs future. Staten Island has long struggled
5 with limited transportation options and some of the
6 longest commutes in the nation. Our residents
7 primarily use their cars, they take express buses.
8 We're not connected to the subway system, so we don't
9 have access to the subway and we do have a fast
10 ferry. We actually were admitted initially and then
11 in 2021 in the summer, they put a fast ferry right
12 next to the Staten Island ferry in Staten Island.

14 I'm here today really calling for you know
15 expansion of the service because we have no
16 connection. If you look at - if you go up to the
17 map, it goes to the west side of Manhattan. So, it
18 goes to Battery Park City and it goes to Midtown West
19 Side but when you look at the other side of the map,
20 that's where all of the other routes exist. So, we
21 have no connection. We'd like to see those dots
22 connected. Primarily, we'd like to see a connection
23 to Brooklyn. We share a lot of commerce with
24 Brooklyn. You know myself and Randy Pierce is the
25 President of the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce, really

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1 see an opportunity for growth for businesses on both
2 sides of each borough. One of the other things is
3 that most people that are traveling are taking the
4 [INAUDIBLE 02:24:18] Bridge, it's just typically
5 backed up in the morning and so is the Gowanus. So,
6 this would relieve some of that congestion. We talk
7 about congestion pricing; this would be a great
8 opportunity to do that. I know it's not in the plan.
9 I know that Staten Island was looked at a number of
10 years ago when Jimmy Otto was our Borough President
11 and they, EDC toured it but we would like for them to
12 revisit this specifically for Staten Island.
13

14 Again, with you know the implementation of
15 congestion pricing it's more important now than ever
16 to have equitable transit solutions and as I said, I
17 can't reiterate enough, most people don't understand
18 what we deal with on Staten Island. It takes a
19 really long time to get different places and you know
20 when you have to travel to Queens and you get in the
21 car in the morning, it takes two and a half hours to
22 get there, it's really frustrating. So, thank you
23 for your time.

24 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: I appreciate the perspective
25 you bring. I spent a lot of weekends growing up

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1
2 traveling to see my Aunt while growing up and you
3 could put the cars on the ferries, how long ago.

4 LINDA BARAN: And that was a long time ago.

5 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Yeah but thank you.

6 ROSE USCIANOWSKI: Hello everyone and good
7 afternoon. I am Rose Uscianowski and you did quite
8 well on my last name, so I applaud you. It's not
9 easy. I'm going to go a little bit off script if
10 that's alright. I am the Staten Island and South
11 Brooklyn Organizer with Transportation Alternatives
12 and I am also a lifelong Staten Island resident.

13 I am also going to speak to connecting the Staten
14 Island disconnected ferry service to the rest of New
15 York City. I believe that Althea Stevens spoke very
16 well when she was talking about who our New York City
17 Ferry system serves, who it doesn't and what message
18 that sends. When you have a mass transit system that
19 serves those who already have the most access the
20 best, then I don't think it's a mass transit system.
21 I think it's a subsidy for the wealthy. I think
22 that's what it was from the start and the New York
23 City Ferry system is getting better but that's what
24 it still is. It's a subsidy for the wealthy.

25

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1 Staten Island's north shore has you know again,
2
3 some of the longest commutes in the nation and we,
4 you know people think that Staten Island is a car
5 borough, that's because we're forced to be. It's not
6 because we choose to be. We need more options. We
7 need more access. Don't even talk to me about city
8 bike but there is an obvious way to relieve our
9 transit issues. We are an island. We used to have
10 ferries going up and down our coastline and this is
11 also something that I know [INAUDIBLE 02:27:07] was
12 speaking to. If we could have - if we could you know
13 connect New York City by ferries in the 1950's, then
14 saying that we can't do it today, uhm seems a bit
15 backwards.

16 FRED RODRIGUEZ: My name is Fred Rodriguez. I'm
17 a maritime historian, proud U.S. Merina for 31 years
18 and a veteran of the Staten Island Ferry for eight
19 and a half years. Our city was built on the ferry
20 system. In 1885, Staten Island was building 86
21 percent of all the ferries in the tristate area.
22 Today, there are only two lines who remain from that.
23 Staten Island Ferry and the Governors Island Ferry,
24 so we need more ferries to run people around the five
25 boroughs around to Jersey all over. We can even try

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1 for a run up to Connecticut. We were built by the
2 ferry system and it would be nice to see NYC Ferry
3 run revitalized to run from Staten Island to Brooklyn
4 where they had six diesel electric car vehicles that
5 were operating for many, many years until we built a
6 bridge from Brooklyn to Staten Island. The following
7 year, those six ferries went out of business. Two of
8 them continued with the Governors Island Ferry. One
9 operated and one was for spare parts. Thank you for
10 riding the Staten Island Ferry. I say that because
11 in the fall of '89 while I was employed down there, I
12 brought that statement down there and they made it
13 law. Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you folks so much for
16 testifying today. Thank you. I'd like to call up
17 the next panel John Doyle, Jack Epter, Marie Mirville
18 Shahzada, Anthony Batista, and Michael Harwood.
19 Michael, do you mind waiting for the next panel?
20 Okay.

21 JACK EPTER: My name is Jack Epter, resident of
22 the Rockaways for 30 years, also on the Community
23 Board and Civic Association. I'm also a sailor, so
24 uhm with regard, I was going to speak on a couple of
25 different issues. I just want to correct a couple

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1 facts or statements that were made that I heard
2 before. The ferry on the route from the city to the
3 Rockaways doesn't go within 20 to 30 feet of the dock
4 in Coney Island, it's more like a half a mile.
5 That's number one.
6

7 With regards to the ferry going too fast, I think
8 that's one of the major advantages of the ferry. As
9 far as it creating a wake because its proximity to
10 the Rockaway Peninsula is too close, uhm I invite
11 anyone to join me on my sail boat any weekend and
12 I'll show you that the ferry is not creating the
13 wake, it's the big fishing boats going as fast.
14 Okay, uhm, a number that wasn't mentioned with
15 regards to the south channel bridge, the maximum
16 height of any boat passing under the bridge allowing
17 for high tides, maximum high tides during the month
18 is 21 feet. That was mentioned.

19 The ferry I believe is a 300 capacity ferry that
20 goes out to the Rockaways. Currently, I asked the
21 captain what the height for the waterline was. He
22 said he would check and get back to me. I estimate
23 it to be somewhere in the order of from the waterline
24 to the top of the Furuno sonar is at least 28 feet.
25

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1 So, that gives you an idea the size of the boat that
2 would be required to get underneath the bridge.
3

4 In terms of - most importantly, 16 weeks we're
5 not going to have a subway service because this
6 winter, starting in January, we need expanded ferry
7 service. Thank you for your time.

8 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you so much.

9 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you and I just
10 had a follow up question for you Mr. Epter. So, in
11 the part of the peninsula that you reside uhm is
12 quickly growing right with housing development right
13 in the eastern part of the peninsula. What is the
14 transportation like? I know you alluded to the A-
15 Train that's going to be shut down for 18 weeks for
16 the entire, almost the entire peninsula.

17 So, how do you get around to get off of the
18 peninsula?

19 JACK EPTER: Well, unfortunately we're going to
20 find out in January, which most people don't even
21 realize. Uhm, it's going to be 16 solid weeks. We
22 need expanded ferry service. Uhm, it's going to
23 involve buses taking people either to it hasn't been
24 decided definitively at this point, either taking
25 people from the ends of the peninsula to either

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1 Howard Beach or Rockaway Boulevard. We're pushing
2 for Rockaway Boulevard but apparently MTA is leading
3 more toward bus service to Howard Beach. And outside
4 of the 18 week period that we won't have the access
5 to the A-Train, just even right now, what modes of
6 transportation is available for residents in Edgemere
7 for example?

9 JACK EPTER: Thank you for asking the question
10 because the subsidy that is given to the people on
11 the average I learned today earning over \$100,000 to
12 primarily reside on the western end of the peninsula
13 is nothing short of outrageous. So, we definitely
14 need additional services on Edgemere. As an aside,
15 well, I have the map of the bay, there's only one
16 place that any kind of boat could dock that would
17 assist the Edgemere community and that's 59th Street.

18 But unfortunately there's a marina there but
19 anywhere else, the combination of dredging and uhm
20 shallow water, the bulkhead, nowhere else east of
21 86th Street is in any way feasible. So, I had
22 proposed extending the 52 bus by five blocks. It's a
23 very small step but in terms of feasibility, it
24 exists. So, I think that that's a very small step to
25 assist specifically people in Edgemere. Uhm, instead

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1 of having to walk 10 blocks or 20 blocks, knock 5
2 blocks off of it. It wouldn't cost Transit Authority
3 anything. So, that's my answer.
4

5 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: No, thank you for
6 that and I know you and I have had a couple spirited
7 conversations around it and I hope that the study
8 will let us know what all is possible in terms of
9 building and uhm what that potential could be
10 thinking innovatively but thank you for coming all
11 the way from Rockaway to be able to testify today. I
12 appreciate it.

13 JACK EPTER: I would that you know that the panel
14 gets a copy of a maritime map.

15 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Oh yeah, do leave a
16 copy we'll get it yeah.

17 JACK EPTER: If you want to make a copy of this
18 one, you are you know more than welcome to.

19 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Okay, we'll check it
20 out. Thank you.

21 JACK EPTER: Okay, thank you.

22 JOHN DOYLE: Good afternoon. Thank you Chairs.
23 My name is John Doyle and I am a resident of City
24 Island. Over the past few years, I've been working
25 as part of the community based non for profit City

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1
2 Island Rising to advocate for an expansion of the NYC
3 Ferry route to include a City Island terminal along
4 the Soundview route.

5 There are many positives for such a route. It
6 would help reduce traffic congestion, which can be
7 legendary on a summer weekend season. It can also
8 help give much needed foot traffic to our commercial
9 strip, which there are many chronic storefront
10 vacancies and many businesses, some of whom you're
11 going to hear from today, struggle to keep customers
12 during the off season. And most importantly for the
13 residents, hundreds of whom work in Manhattan and
14 Brooklyn, it would cut commute times almost in half.
15 That's truly transformative for many families who can
16 spend up to three hours commuting via bus and subway
17 into the city each day. Moreover, while I understand
18 a study was done five years ago, I'd ask you to keep
19 these few important factors relative to the
20 community. One, peak travel time is on weekends not
21 weekdays when the study was measuring the community.
22 And two, this is a blue collar community, with many
23 folks working in the construction trades, hospitality
24 industry and first responders, working nontraditional
25

1 hours. Thus, they might not have been captured in
2 the previous study.
3

4 While we are not traffic experts, we have over
5 2,000 signatures and many in hard copy form on City
6 Island and the surrounding communities who would
7 support such a transit proposal. Additionally, with
8 climate change concerns mounting and the specter of
9 some of the congestion pricing on the horizon, the
10 city should act now, not later to provide residents
11 with an economical form of transportation into
12 Manhattan and the surrounding boroughs.

13 Finally, I would ask you to remember that the
14 Bronx, despite having only one of two terminals kept
15 nearly 90 percent of its ridership during the
16 pandemic while the whole ridership fell by almost 70
17 percent. Clearly, there's a demand through the
18 borough. Let's seize this opportunity. I hope you
19 will take all of this into consideration for future
20 planning. Thank you for your time and I have two
21 editorials I wrote for your consideration.

22 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you for being so
23 timely.

24 MARIE MIRVILLE-SHAHZADA: Hi, good afternoon. My
25 name is Marie Mirville-Shahzada, I am a Community

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1 Organizer, I'm also the Executive Director of
2 Alfadila Community Services, which is a nonprofit
3 throughout the city but primarily we work out of
4 Coney Island, Brooklyn.
5

6 I do want you guys to know that we are - I am in
7 favor of a ferry in Coney Island. The residents of
8 Coney Island are isolated from the rest of the
9 boroughs and the surrounding areas. The MTA bus
10 system is slow and infrequent. We have two lanes and
11 the MTA has proposed to close out one lane, so that
12 makes it even worse. During events in Coney Island,
13 I don't know if you guys come out during 4th of July,
14 there's a standstill of traffic for about two to
15 three hours.

16 Coney Island needs extra modes of transportation
17 as other people have said. What we are hoping is
18 that if you guys do allow Coney Island to have a
19 ferry service, it would transform Coney Island, which
20 is socially, economically a desert right now to
21 change and transform it in ways that has transformed
22 Red Hook with the ferry system. Now, I'm very
23 jealous of Far Rockaway, which we do service Far
24 Rockaway. We need something very much as the Rocket
25 that we've heard of the Rocket Ferry. At least you

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1 guys have it. We have nothing. So, if you guys
2 could bring it, we would appreciate it. I leave you
3 with these words from the famous movie, 'Field of
4 Dreams,' if you build it, they will come. So,
5 please. Thank you.
6

7 ANTHONY BATISTA: Hello everyone. My name is
8 Anthony Batista, I'm also a Community Organizer and
9 Advocate for Coney Island. I'm the Executive
10 Director for the Coney Island Anti-Violence
11 Collaborative as well.

12 You know the city around 2012, they came out and
13 they promised the Coney Island a ferry. The EDC came
14 out and they themselves realize that Coney Island is
15 a little over a mile and a half for the first train
16 station, Stillwell. So, with that being said, during
17 seasonal times, the traffic gridlocked. You know I
18 know Marie, she mentioned a couple hours, that's for
19 4th of July but on a regular summer day, it takes me
20 to drive out an hour and eight to an hour and fifteen
21 minutes just to get out of the peninsula. Just to
22 hit the Bell Parkway. That's absurd.

23 You know in 2018, the EDC, they did come out.
24 They started doing the ferry in Kieser Park. The
25 residents were telling everyone when they started

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1 dredging or digging, that they were getting dizzy.
2 They found out that there was toxins coming in air,
3 so they halted. It was a waste of the money for the
4 city but the residents were telling them not to do
5 it. They were telling them the moment they started
6 drilling, they weren't feeling well. No one listened
7 until finally they got fined and then they realized
8 they made a mistake. We deserve a ferry. You know
9 the hour and eight minutes in the summer time is just
10 ridiculous. Over a mile and a half for someone to go
11 from Sea Gate to Stillwell. We can't rely on the
12 buses. They're trying to take away buses. They're
13 trying to close bus lanes. How else is anybody going
14 to be able to travel? It took me to drive here it
15 took an hour and twenty five minutes to drive. The
16 train would be an hour and thirty-two minutes just to
17 get here. I put it in my GPS. You know it will cut
18 about 30 to 45 minutes the ferry just to get to the
19 city.
20

21 You know a parent that has to get to work, one
22 hour and thirty minutes, that's - you can't work.
23 You know you have to drop off your kids at school
24 7:30 to 8:00. From 8:00, what job is going to hire
25 you from 9:00 to 12:30 to be able to get - you can't

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1
2 work if you have children. So, we desperately need
3 this ferry.

4 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: I appreciate you folks from
5 Coney Island and from City Island and Rockaways
6 coming to contribute to this conversation. I think a
7 lot of times, especially when we're looking at an
8 area like City Island in the Bronx or even Coney
9 Island or Rockaway for the Beach, we're seen as
10 seasonal spots where people want to go. Versus the
11 reality of it is our communities are interconnected
12 and there are people residing there every single day
13 and need reliable options as New Yorkers. So, I'm
14 hoping through this hearing, the bills that are
15 presented, future bills to come and the conversations
16 that will continue on with EDC, that we're able to
17 foster some real solutions for our communities. So,
18 we're just really appreciative of you folks coming
19 out and driving the hour and thirty minutes. I feel
20 that pain as a Bronxite sometimes. Thank you folks.

21 I'd like to call the last two folks in person and
22 we have some virtual folks still waiting. Michael
23 Harwood and Mr. Stein, Alex Stein, now that I'm
24 looking at it Alex Stein.

25

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1 Just a reminder Mr. Stein, you are not allowed to
2 do any audio or visual recordings during the hearing.

3 ALEX STEIN: [INAUDIBLE 02:44:09]

4 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: No, there's already a
5 prerecorded hearing and so, that is the -

6 ALEX STEIN: [INAUDIBLE 02:44:16]

7 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Would you like me to read
8 the -

9 ALEX STEIN: [INAUDIBLE 02:44:19]

10 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: That is the rule that you
11 are not allowed to record. So, I'll read it again
12 for folks that are still waiting even virtually.
13 Members of the public, it's a formal government
14 proceeding that decorum shall be you know observed at
15 all times. Members of the public shall remain silent
16 who are not testifying. The witness table is
17 reserved for people who wish to testify. No video
18 recording or photography is allowed from the witness
19 table. Further, members of the public shall not
20 present audio or video recordings as testimony but
21 may submit transcripts of such recordings to the
22 Sergeant at Arms for inclusion in the hearing record.

23 MICHAEL HARWOOD: Would you like to go first?

24 Hmm, hmm, thank you.
25

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1
2 Yes, my name is Michael Harwood. I am a resident
3 of the Northshore of Staten Island for over 30 years
4 and a member of the St. George Civic Association and
5 the association - oh, I'm not on? Oh, okay. Okay,
6 St. George Civic Association and its Ferry Riders
7 Committee. As pleased as I am to have the New York
8 City Ferry service between Staten Island and
9 Manhattan, I fear it is doomed to failure because EDC
10 and Hornblower have not learned from history and they
11 do not listen to the riders who are best positioned
12 to advise on how to make the service better and more
13 user friendly as evidence by the fact that they've
14 left the room.

15 Back in the 1990's, we had a fast ferry from St.
16 George to Midtown East, which filled the gap for
17 connectivity to the east side. The service was well
18 used from the beginning until someone decided to
19 change the contract to a new provider on the west
20 side of Manhattan, which basically duplicated the
21 Staten Island Ferry and the Number 1 Train. It also
22 had - it was not weather protected at the terminals
23 and there were no services on the boats. It
24 ultimately failed because of lack of interest in
25 ridership.

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1 Once again, thanks to EDC we have a single line
2
3 ferry to the west side with no connectivity to the
4 rest of the system, whether Brooklyn or the east side
5 of Manhattan. My colleagues have spoken to the need
6 for service to Brooklyn from Staten Island, but the
7 EDC has told us they have no plans to expand the
8 service, even now on Staten Island, the docks exist
9 between Staten Island and Brooklyn and there would be
10 no infrastructure costs whatsoever to expand service
11 there. When New York City Ferry has added summer
12 service to the Rockaways, they did so for Brooklyn
13 and Queens but not Staten Island which has no form of
14 mass transportation to get to the beaches in
15 Rockaways.

16 And to add insult, which just shows that EDC is
17 selective and dismissive of Staten Island when they
18 decide where to expand service. Then to add insult
19 to injury, they have made clear they will do nothing
20 to respond to our requests to connect the easy
21 mistakes in the system. We have asked them to add
22 service of Wi-Fi on the Staten Island Ferry Boat and
23 the NYC Ferry boats from Staten Island. They said,
24 "wait, we'll see in the future." We have asked them
25 to protect the ticket booth, which is open to rain

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1 and weather so that people can buy tickets, they've
2 said, "no, we will not do that. We have no plans to
3 do that."
4

5 The ferry dock is open to wind blowing from the
6 sides. They said, "we're not going to put up any
7 tarps to help you." They will not do anything and
8 they're setting this route for failure it seems to
9 try to reduce ridership so they can cancel it and
10 either it's that or it's just indifference and
11 incompetence. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you.

13 ALEX STEIN: Hello, my name is Alex Stein. I'm
14 here in New York City all the way from Dallas Texas
15 on the 23rd Anniversary of the terror attacks that
16 happened on September 11, 2001.

17 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: So, this hearing is solely
18 focused on the NYC Ferry.

19 ALEX STEIN: These buildings were owned - it's
20 about the Port Authority. Amanda, it's about the
21 Port Authority. Do not try to shut me down.

22 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: I'm not. You can continue
23 on to talk about the Port Authority.

24 ALEX STEIN: Yeah, I am talking about the Port
25 Authority. The Port Authority owned these buildings.

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1 They sold them to Larry Silverstein for a very cheap
2 price. If you look at Tower 7, it looked like a
3 controlled demolition. University of Alaska at
4 Fairbanks did a study on this and they said that the
5 way that these buildings fell looked clearly like a
6 controlled demolition. So, we need to look into the
7 Port Authority on why they were able to sell these
8 buildings so cheaply.
9

10 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Does this have anything to
11 do with the NYC Ferry on the Port Authority -

12 ALEX STEIN: Let me talk about the Port
13 Authority. If you'll do some research into these
14 towers, they had irreparable asbestos. Not only were
15 they basically totaled because the price to fix this
16 asbestos made the buildings worthless.

17 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Mr. Stein, I'd like to
18 reiterate that while you are talking about the Port
19 Authority -

20 ALEX STEIN: Yes I am. Quit shutting me down.
21 Are you going to stop the clock? I'm here to bring
22 up 911 truth and you're trying to stop me because you
23 don't like this.

24 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: [INAUDIBLE 02:48:34]
25

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2 ALEX STEIN: Are you the same person that's in
3 the EPA?

4 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: The NYC's Ferries
5 development and its ticketing system. Would you like
6 to talk about the Port Authority and the possibility
7 of it being NYC Ferry -

8 ALEX STEIN: Let me just tell you this. Listen,
9 you're trying to hide the truth. If you look into
10 911, you guys lied. You said the air was okay.

11 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: [INAUDIBLE 02:48:49].

12 ALEX STEIN: On September 11th and all of those
13 got cancer and died.

14 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Mr. Stein. [GAVEL].

15 ALEX STEIN: No, no.

16 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Listen, this solely is
17 focused on the NYC Ferry system. You can remove him
18 from the Chamber. Thank you so much.

19 Thank you Michael for coming to testify. We'll
20 now move on to virtual testimony. I would like to
21 acknowledge and recognize Wayne Richards to speak.

22 WAYNE RICHARDS: Hi, good afternoon. Can you
23 hear me?

24 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Yes, we can hear you.
25

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2 WAYNE RICHARDS: Hi, good afternoon. Okay, um I
3 was asked to do a testimony in reference to the
4 infrastructure. I thought that the infrastructure
5 um had to do it overall but I see that you're now in
6 [INAUDIBLE 02:49:52]. You're narrowing it down to
7 just the transportation portion as far as the ferry
8 is concerned.

9 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: So, what I can clarify for
10 you is this hearing is focused on the New York City
11 Ferry, the infrastructure component can be the
12 potentiality of the expansion of ferry landings
13 throughout New York City. And so, if you'd like to
14 testify in regards to any of the current ferry stops,
15 the challenges or successes of those ferry landings
16 and ferry operations and/or the potentiality of the
17 expansion of the infrastructure of ferry landings,
18 you may do so now.

19 WAYNE RICHARDS: Okay, so I made an overall
20 design concept in reference to infrastructure for the
21 overall peninsula included in the infrastructure
22 design concept. I included the water taxi and so, it
23 is part of the design concept that I prepared.
24 Selvena's staff Julian has that information and I
25 guess if he wants to upload it you guys can get it

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1 from Selvena. But the design concept has to do with
2 you know creating a prometon but also, we want to
3 create a water taxi and able to stop along the
4 peninsula. It's something that's highly needed and
5 basically what we're looking for communities asking
6 that the investment that was put on the beach side,
7 we would like to now take the investment, possibly do
8 an investment to do it on the Bay side. And so,
9 developing the Bayside is a major infrastructure
10 portion for this peninsula because we deal with high
11 flooding issues and things of that nature and we're
12 trying to come up with all different ways to resolve
13 those and working with the Army Corp of Engineers
14 etc..

16 So, uhm as far as this is just a design concept
17 but my thing was to get the ferry plus it's been
18 highly needed. We have now increased, we have at
19 least, I want to say maybe 10,000 new units just came
20 into Far Rockaway on the Peninsula and so, the bus
21 service, the train service is not going to be enough.
22 We need two means of egress and other ways of
23 transportation and having the water taxi service
24 coming all the way down, even into Inwood because it
25 will allow Manhattan to actually come all the way

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1 into Far Rockaway the peninsula and come all the way
2 down to Rockaway Turnpike Boulevard, next to the I
3 Hop if you will was at the last stop but there will
4 be another shopping area. So people can actually
5 come to our area and enjoy the things that we have
6 here just not the beaches. We have a whole lot
7 happening in Far Rockaway and on the peninsula and we
8 would like to have the access so that people can use
9 it because currently what we do have is insufficient.
10 Obviously we know about the trains. Obviously we
11 know about the buses and uh you know even with the
12 volunteer bus service that they have. So, I guess
13 they've been lacking in that.

14 So, if uh what else can I say is that it is
15 something that we dually truly need. As far as the
16 design concept and as far as getting the water taxi
17 to fit here or work there, I think, I spoke to a
18 gentleman from the Army Corp of Engineers, one of
19 engines that [INAUDIBLE 02:53:14] was holding a rally
20 and I met him and expressed all those things to him,
21 my concepts. And but the idea is there's more than
22 one way to skin a cat, if you will. So those guys
23 that's doing the water taxi, those private owners,
24 there's more than one way, it's just a matter of
25

1 designing. At this point, that's pretty much my
2 input but it's something that is truly needed and in
3 particular, if you're talking about the 21st Century
4 of Far Rockaway, this is one of the things that's
5 going to be highly needed. I'd like to thank you at
6 this time for allowing me to speak.
7

8 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you so much Mr.
9 Richards and uhm, you touched on something in terms
10 of the businesses that are on the eastern end of the
11 peninsula. Can you speak to some of your observation
12 in terms of like if you observe a boom in support for
13 local businesses on the west end? Just trying to tie
14 in how the ferry is connected to economic success, in
15 many instances with our local small businesses on the
16 peninsula.

17 WAYNE RICHARDS: Right, so what you do notice is
18 that when the ferry stops uptown, we call it west
19 side uptown, right? You'll notice that the stores,
20 uh the local store there, they benefit from the
21 incoming summer crowds and incoming businesses. The
22 people that are coming over, they benefit from that
23 because the ferry is right there, they come out,
24 that's uptown, downtown if you will. So, all the
25 shopping and everything is here so the guests that

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1 are coming, the visitors that are coming, they're
2 getting to pass the pizza shop, the Jamaican
3 restaurants, the small little clothing stores that we
4 have. So, they're benefiting on that end.
5

6 On the other end, there's no - if we can create
7 certain things there will be benefits; however,
8 there's no real benefits from the ferry coming to the
9 peninsula. The only area that's really benefiting is
10 the uptown side, which would be the west side.

11 CHAIRPERSON BROOKS-POWERS: Thank you uhm for
12 that.

13 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you so much. I'd now
14 like to call on April Jackson followed by Susan Haze
15 and [INAUDIBLE 02:55:27].

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has begun.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: April, we can hear you.

18 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Sorry, April Jackson, we're
19 calling you to testify at the hearing.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has begun. I'm
21 going to mute her; I think she's on a phone.

22 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Can we mute the constituent
23 and notify her that she's up next. I'll now call on
24 Susan Haze.

25

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1
2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has begun. Your
3 time has begun.

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: She's not on the Zoom. Glen
5 Bolofsky and that's, that's the only person left.

6 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Great, Glen Bolofsky, if you
7 are ready to testify, you may begin now.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has begun.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Glenn, you're unmuted.

10 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: I'm unable to provide
11 elevator music folks, I'm sorry about that. Do we
12 want to give an attempt at April Jackson one more
13 time?

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: April, your time has begun.

15 APRIL JACKSON: [INAUDIBLE 02:57:01]

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: I think she's on another call.
17 Glen, we'll try you one more time.

18 GLEN BOLOFSKY: Yeah, yes, yes.

19 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: We can hear you Glen. You
20 may begin.

21 GLEN BOLOFSKY: Yeah, yes, hi, how are you today?
22 I want to thank the Council for this important
23 meeting today simply because there's not enough done
24 for alternate transportation. When we hear
25 transportation alternatives. Today really is

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1 wonderful because its really presenting so many
2 various options for transportation alternatives that
3 we desperately need here in the city. You know the
4 ferries are vital for everyone to get around.
5

6 So, we applaud the Council today for doing this
7 and I also wanted to say, you know revenue is needed
8 for all of these important projects and since revenue
9 is needed, I'd just like to say from a part of
10 infrastructure, relating to transportation and
11 parking, which everyone may know is my expertise,
12 that uhm, electronic parking signs in Midtown and in
13 high congested areas of downtown Brooklyn and
14 throughout Queens as well, can produce tremendous
15 revenue for the city. It can help us expand all of
16 our transportation options.

17 So, I just want to remind everyone about that.
18 I've been throwing that on the table for a while.
19 Revenue by using electronic parking signs that can be
20 displayed in multiple languages can be seen from your
21 car, so you don't have to get out in the middle of
22 the night where it might be you know a cold night you
23 know and a dangerous block.
24
25

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1
2 So, these kind of things are vital and I want to
3 thank the Council again and the central staff and
4 uhm, all the advocates for their help today.

5 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Thank you so much for your
6 testimony.

7 Sorry folks, we're just waiting on virtual
8 testimony. If we can try to see if April Jackson is
9 unmuted and can testify again. If not, I will be
10 closing out the hearing.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: April, you're unmuted.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Your time has begun.

13 CHAIRPERSON FARIAS: Okay, thank you folks. With
14 that, I am closing today's hearing at 1:54 p.m..
15 Thank you for all of those folks who came to testify
16 today. Again, for those that were unable to, you
17 have up to 72 hours to submit written testimony to
18 the Committee and have a great day. [GAVEL]

19

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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 17, 2024