2025

Ferries Report

Celebrating Progress, a Commitment to Growth, and a Vision for Ferries in New York Harbor

NYC/EDC

NYC Ferry

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Welcome Letter

Dear Fellow New Yorkers,

I am proud to share with you the 2025 Ferries Report, a document that celebrates the recent successes of the NYC Ferry system delivered under New York City Economic Development Corporation's (NYCEDC's) management, and shares a vision for where ferries in New York City are headed next.

The Adams administration launched Ferry Forward in the summer of 2022, a plan to set NYC Ferry on a much-needed path toward greater equity, accessibility, and fiscal sustainability. Ferry Forward called for: a new discount program with reduced-fare rides for seniors, people with disabilities, and low-income riders; new fare polices to optimize cost structure; and, the pursuit of new opportunities to generate revenue. Now, three years later, we can see clearly the progress NYC Ferry has made as the system delivered on additional discounts to drive equity and access (including for all NYC high school students), cost-effective service improvements, increased financial transparency, a new operating contract bringing a suite of improvements for riders, a search for the system's first-ever naming rights brand partnership, and more. Riders have responded to these changes by flocking to NYC Ferry at historic ridership levels, and the city has seen a substantial decrease in the per-passenger subsidy—now lower than any public passenger ferry system in the country! As much as we can now celebrate these successes, we also need to build on the past three years. This report reflects NYCEDC's continuing commitment to building a ferry system that meets the evolving transportation needs of New Yorkers and fosters continued growth for the city, through:

Improving NYC Ferry Routes – This past summer, we shared new route proposals as part of the Ferry Optimization Plan, a holistic approach to better serve our riders and run the overall system more efficiently. Following input from over 15,000 riders, this report shares details of the final plan—the culmination of over a year of analysis, planning, and rider engagement.

Building a Strong Future – Having set NYC Ferry on strong financial footing we also share our plans for the next round of major investments with the completion of a second homeport facility and improvements at East 34th Street Ferry Terminal. This expanded terminal will ensure that NYC Ferry and other ferry operators can serve growing ridership safely and efficiently for years to come. In addition, NYCEDC has identified two new landings for NYC Ferry that can be served cost-effectively, 125th Street East Harlem in Manhattan, and MADE/Bush Terminal in Sunset Park, Brooklyn.

Developing a Vision for the Future of Ferries – While NYCEDC is committing to two new landings with its current fleet, the 2025 Ferries Report looks to the future of waterborne possibilities, not just for the NYC Ferry system but all ferry operations in the New York Harbor. We offer a preview at how NYCEDC will approach a *Vision for the Future of Ferries in New York Harbor*—one that pushes beyond today's boundaries by considering new operational models, sustainable vessel technologies, and unique partnerships among operators in the harbor.

I invite you now to read the 2025 Ferries Report, learn more about our work and plans, and join in my excitement over the progress and bright future of ferries in New York City.

Sincerely,
Andrew Kimball

President & CEO,
New York City Economic Development Corporation

Executive Summary

As New York City charts a course for sustainable ferry growth in its harbor, the 2025 Ferries Report summarizes recent progress for the NYC Ferry system and future opportunities for broader ferry services throughout New York Harbor. This report unveils dynamic short-, medium-, and long-term strategies that promise an exciting future for ferry service in New York City:

- The introduction celebrates accomplishments of the Adams administration's Ferry Forward plan and the tremendous work to make the system **more equitable, accessible and financially sustainable**;
- Section I presents the Ferry Optimization Plan and the finalized map that will make routes **faster and better-connected for today's riders**;
- Section II shares NYCEDC's approach toward medium-term growth with **commitments to upgrade a major terminal and add two new NYC Ferry landings**; and
- Section III offers a first look at NYCEDC's process to form an expansive **Vision for the Future of Ferries in the New York Harbor**, including evaluations of new potential landings, broader operational and financial models, and sustainable ferry technologies that go beyond NYC Ferry and support the region's connectivity.

Launched in the summer of 2022, the Ferry Forward plan set out to create a more equitable, accessible, and fiscally sustainable system. The City and NYCEDC made huge strides to realize that plan over the course of the Adams administration that resulted in NYC Ferry having the lowest subsidy-per-rider of any public passenger ferry service in the United States—through a new ferry operator contract; a new fare structure; increased access to New York City students; rider-facing upgrades; increased creative revenue-generating activities; and more.

Announced in July 2025, the Ferry Optimization Plan represents the first comprehensive review of the entire NYC Ferry system. Its goal: to propose changes that will benefit riders and encourage further ridership growth. The rider response to this plan was overwhelmingly positive, with nearly 90% of survey participants saying they would ride the same amount or more if the proposed changes were enacted. The final optimized route map, reflecting this input, is detailed in Section I of this report.

While this report establishes an immediate-term plan to improve service for current riders and communities, it also looks ahead to future opportunities to serve more New Yorkers. Among them are a major capital investment to upgrade one of New York City's busiest ferry terminals—East 34th Street—and the ongoing development of NYC Ferry's second homeport at Atlantic Basin in Red Hook. The plan also includes the addition of two new, low-cost landings at 125th Street/East Harlem and MADE/Bush Terminal/Sunset Park.

The final section of this report outlines NYCEDC's plan to develop a *Vision for the Future of Ferries in New York Harbor*. This Vision will explore sites along the city's waterfront and evaluate remaining opportunities for expanded ferry service. The creation of this Vision will draw on NYCEDC's ferry planning and operational expertise and incorporate input from private operators and local communities alike. The Vision will also include an assessment of sustainable vessel technologies and identify strategic investments that the City can prioritize to support sustainable ferry growth among multiple operators. This effort will kick off at the end of 2025 and is expected to take approximately one year, with a finalized report anticipated in Fall 2026.

Introduction

Since 2011, New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) has been at the helm of the city's innovative passenger ferry network— transforming waterfront travel first with the pilot East River Ferry and then with the launch of NYC Ferry in 2017 and its expansion to six routes. NYCEDC owns all 38 vessels in NYC Ferry's fleet, directs landing maintenance at most of the system's 25 landings, and shapes the ferry landscape with strategic decisions about landing locations, fares, and other policy oversight. NYCEDC oversees a private operator who is responsible for the day-to-day operation of NYC Ferry, handling everything from staffing and vessel upkeep to ticket sales and outreach.

This ambitious approach was not without uncertainty. When NYCEDC launched NYC Ferry, there was no guarantee that New Yorkers would embrace this mode of transit. But not only did residents welcome the opportunity to commute and travel the city by water, the NYC Ferry system has continuously surpassed expectations with record-breaking ridership.

NYC Ferry grew rapidly following its 2017 launch, building out a six-route network within two years and then expanding further in 2021 to serve Staten Island and add an additional stop in the Bronx. To keep up with higher-than-expected ridership, NYC Ferry's fleet capacity and service levels doubled. This swift growth brought new opportunities but also significant costs. Like all public transit systems, NYC Ferry faced considerable disruptions due to the pandemic. The system, however, demonstrated its resilience and was the first transit mode in the region to not only regain but surpass, pre-pandemic ridership. Still, the need for greater efficiency remained and, in 2022, the Adams administration introduced the Ferry Forward plan—a comprehensive initiative to further accessibility of the service, improve financial sustainability, drive down subsidy-per-rider, and ensure the system's long-term viability. Today, NYC Ferry maintains the lowest cost-per-rider of any public passenger ferry in the United States and is the only transit mode in the New York City region to reduce its subsidy-per-rider since 2019.

NYC Ferry by the Numbers

When NYCEDC launched NYC Ferry in 2017, the response was strong, with ridership quickly exceeding expectations. By 2019, six routes carried over 6 million riders a year.

Since the Introduction of Ferry Forward

30%
Ridership increased versus pre-Covid levels

82%
Farebox Revenue increased versus pre-Covid levels

36%
Subsidy per rider decreased from its peak in FY20

Achievements under Ferry Forward

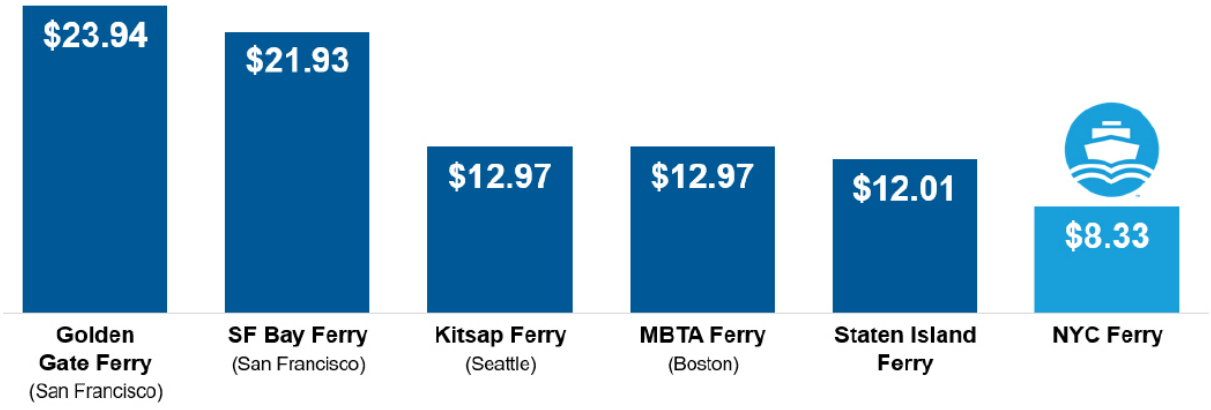
Ferry Forward introduced initiatives to improve the financial stability of the system while enhancing the rider experience and delivering for New Yorkers. To achieve that stability, NYCEDC sought to control costs, increase revenue and increase ridership.

- **A new contract in 2023** that brought improved ridership experiences, expanded accessibility and tech features, increased transparency and oversight of the system, and further investment in NYC Ferry as a maritime career pipeline.
- **Adjusted service levels** by putting more service on to meet ridership demand at peak times and reducing unproductive ferry and shuttle service.
- **A new fare structure** offering 10-pack tickets for the price of a subway ride for commuters, families, and groups; single ride tickets for $4.50; and a half-price discounted ticket for seniors, people with disabilities, Fair Fares NYC participants, and high school students. New fare products also encourage tourists to use NYC Ferry as an anchor for their visit to New York City.
- **Popular seasonal offerings,** like the Rockaway Rocket and Rockaway Reserve, provide riders with more travel options to the beach while generating higher ticket revenue to help offset costs.
- **Onboard and in-app upgrades** for riders make NYC Ferry a welcoming and comfortable commute, including free Wi-Fi, automatic visual and audio stop announcements, real-time seat availability, and in-app concessions purchases.

Reducing Public Subsidy

In the summer of 2023, NYCEDC entered into a new five-year agreement with Hornblower, the operator of NYC Ferry, that locked in lower service costs and allowed NYCEDC to retain all farebox revenue, and significant advertising, sponsorship, and concessions revenue. These changes, along with increased ridership and improved rider experience, reduced the per-passenger subsidy by 36% since its peak in FY20, reaching $8.33 in FY25—the lowest among major passenger-only ferry systems as shown below. Additionally, NYC Ferry has one of the lowest per-passenger subsidies among major New York City transit systems, according to the FTA's National Transit Database (NTD).

Subsidy Per Passenger: Major Publicly-Funded Passenger Ferry Systems in the US



Note: Data is from the most recent year available for each system. NYC Ferry from FY25, based on NYC Ferry Supplemental Financial Information. SI Ferry from FY25, based on NYC MMR. All other systems are from FY24 and based on FTA National Transit Database.

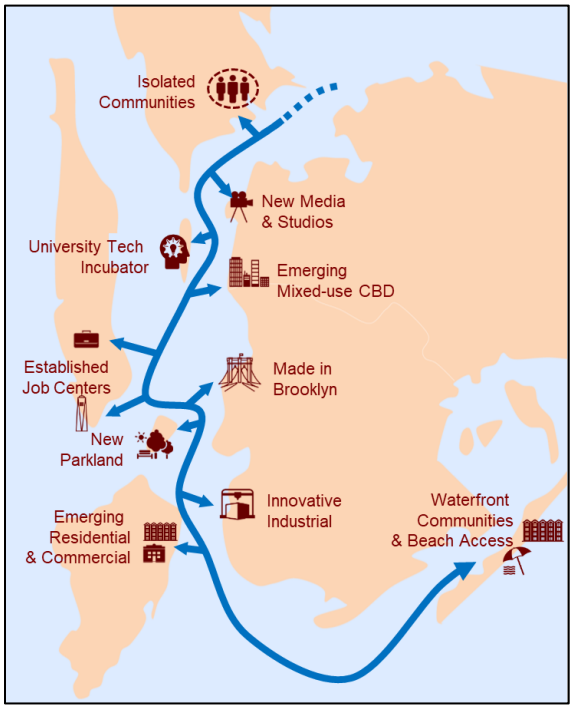
After the adoption of the Ferry Forward plan in 2022, NYCEDC focused on financial sustainability by working to lower NYC Ferry's subsidy per rider through smart service planning, increased fare revenue, and other initiatives described in Section I.

Improving NYC Ferry Routes

Section 1 – Improving NYC Ferry Routes

The Need for Route Optimization

NYC Ferry was introduced to New Yorkers in 2017 as a concept to connect neighborhoods along the waterfront. By 2018, the initial NYC Ferry system was providing service to 20 landings in four boroughs and by the end of 2021, NYC Ferry served 25 landings across all five boroughs. Throughout this rapid expansion, NYC Ferry made several small-scale changes to its network to improve acute operational issues, but changes had not been considered at the system level. As ridership grew and consistent travel patterns revealed themselves, opportunities to improve the existing system became clearer. Many riders cannot easily reach Midtown Manhattan; the most popular routes are full and leave riders behind during commuting times; and some routes spend more time stopped at landings than moving people. The Ferry Optimization Plan addresses these challenges.



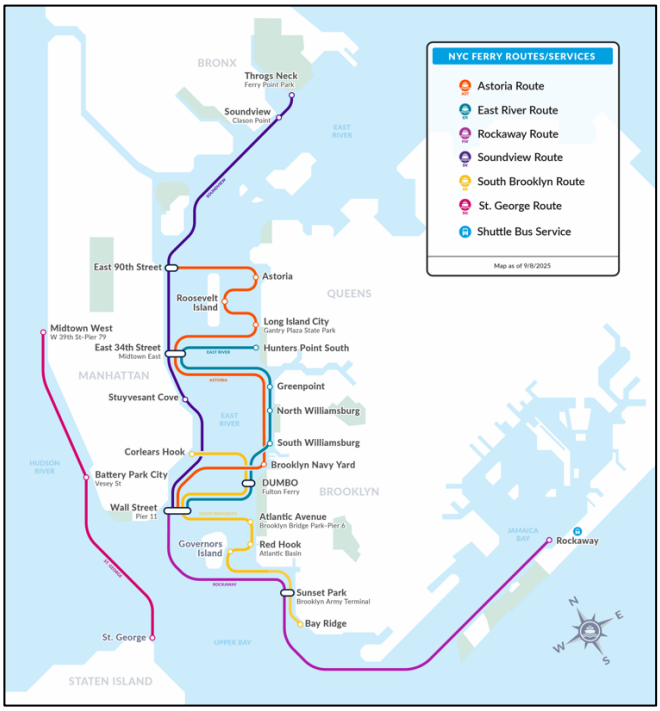


Figure 1 – (Left) Concept Map for a Citywide Ferry System, 2015

Figure 2 – (Right) NYC Ferry System Map, 2025

Opportunities for Network Improvement

NYCEDC conducted a detailed analysis of each route in the NYC Ferry system and identified different challenges to address through route optimization, listed below. More detailed assessments are provided in Appendix A.

East River

The East River route has the highest ridership in the system and often operates at or over capacity. During peak commuting times and on weekends from April through October, riders at some stops are often unable to board the first boat that arrives at their landing. Additionally, the route has many stops between terminals, which, combined with the high ridership at each landing, means riders on board spend more time waiting at landings than traveling to their destination.

South Brooklyn

The South Brooklyn route has the most stops and the second fewest boardings per hour of any route. While the ferry could offer faster travel times than other transit in Brooklyn, the number of stops prevents this. The absence of direct connections to Midtown also limits ridership potential.

Rockaway

The Rockaway route is an important year-round connection for commuters and a marquee service for beachgoers in the summer. While ridership to and from Downtown Manhattan is strong, the ability to connect further into Manhattan would improve the service for commuters in Rockaway and Sunset Park.

Additionally, the Rockaway shuttle bus has very low ridership outside of summer weekends and weekday peaks and there are opportunities to focus shuttle bus service on times when shuttle service is most valuable.

Soundview

The Soundview route operates primarily as a commuter route, as evidenced by its consistent and frequent ridership. Riders tend to use the Soundview route to reach destinations along Manhattan's East Side in the morning, and return home to the Bronx in the evening. That often means that vessels returning to the Bronx in the morning operate mostly empty, even though they continue to make many stops in Midtown and the Upper East Side. These empty seats are inefficient to operate but present an opportunity for riders that don't currently have access to these destinations.

Astoria

Astoria remains a highly used route with the second-highest ridership in the system. Riders boarding in Brooklyn or Queens are never more than two stops away from Manhattan. While there are some slower portions of this route near Brooklyn Navy Yard, it is generally an efficient route.

St. George

Running between Staten Island and Manhattan's West Side, the St. George route, NYC Ferry's newest route, is isolated from the rest of the system. While St. George's annual ridership growth has been higher than other routes, it consistently has the lowest ridership in the system. There have been community requests from both sides of the harbor to connect St. George and Bay Ridge, citing improved connectivity and the relatively short distance between the two landings.

Optimization Goals and Process

Given the assessment of issues outlined above, NYCEDC embarked on a process to improve the system by:

- Expanding access to Midtown,
- Introducing useful cross-river connections,
- Speeding up commutes,
- Making more seats available, and
- Reducing subsidy-per-rider.

The process of considering, proposing, and implementing route changes began in winter 2024 and will have taken approximately one year:

1. **Existing Conditions – Winter 2024:** Analyzed ridership data, rider demographics, travel patterns, and demand using historical operations data, annual surveys, and census data.
2. **Draft Route Map – Spring 2025:** Used historical operations data and elected/community advocacy as basis for an optimized route map that balances service efficiency, rider needs, and estimated costs.
3. **Public Review and Feedback – Summer 2025:** Presented an optimized route map proposal to NYC Ferry riders and solicited feedback to ensure alignment with rider needs and identify remaining opportunities for improvement.
4. **Finalize Network Map – Fall 2025:** Incorporated public feedback and shared final network map with report detailing optimization process and anticipated impacts, including an equity analysis.
5. **NYCEDC Board Approval – Fall 2025:** The optimized routes will be presented to NYCEDC's 24-member board for adoption prior to implementation.
6. **Rider Education and Implementation – Winter 2025:** Implement the optimized route map. Riders will be notified about modifications to routes, schedule, and service levels ahead of the effective date.

On July 14, 2025, NYCEDC announced a proposal to make significant changes to the NYC Ferry system map—splitting up the East River route, combining the Soundview and Rockaway routes, connecting Staten Island to Brooklyn, and extending South Brooklyn up to Midtown. This announcement kicked off a robust engagement process to ensure that changes met riders' needs.

Over more than seven weeks, NYCEDC received a tremendous amount of feedback from riders, communities, community groups, and elected officials. The main channel for public comment was a feedback form, available online and distributed to NYC Ferry riders via email, on board vessels, and through social media channels, service alerts, and Community Boards in NYC Ferry's service area. The feedback form received over 15,000 individual responses and more than 20,000 landing-specific responses. More than 10,000 people left additional written comments that the NYCEDC planning team reviewed to identify trends in overall sentiment and specific feedback.

When asked how this proposal would impact their use of NYC Ferry, nearly 90% of respondents said that they would take NYC Ferry the same amount or more in the proposed network[1]. When asked if this proposal would make it easier to get them where they wanted to go, 71% of respondents agreed.

While the bulk of feedback was positive, NYCEDC also received feedback and requests for changes that are reflected and highlighted within the optimized route map presented below.

[1] In response to the question, "If these route and service changes are implemented, how would it change your use of NYC Ferry?", 49% of respondents reported that they would "ride more" and 29% of respondents reported that they would "ride the same."

Optimized Route Map

The final optimized route map is the culmination of thoughtful analysis, engagement and consideration to achieve the optimization goals laid out in this report. It includes the following key changes:

- **Splits up the East River route** to increase seat capacity, reduce travel times, and maintain frequent service at most times, while allowing for local connectivity during low-ridership periods.
- **Combines the Soundview and Rockaway routes** to provide Rockaway and Sunset Park riders access to Midtown in a one-seat ride while offering Bronx residents access to Rockaway beach.
- **Connects Staten Island to Brooklyn** at Bay Ridge and access to the rest of the NYC Ferry route network via transfer at Wall Street/Pier 11.
- **Extends the South Brooklyn route to Midtown** and increases frequency for Red Hook and Atlantic Avenue riders while maintaining local service on summer weekends.

The plan's various components and rationale are described below; further detail about the July 2025 proposal is provided in Appendix B. Changes made between the July 2025 proposal and the final optimized route map are highlighted in this report as they are the result of community engagement and feedback, further detailed in Appendix C.

When asked how this proposal would impact their use of NYC Ferry, nearly 90% of respondents said that they would take NYC Ferry the same amount or more in the proposed network.

Students make the most of time on board NYC Ferry.

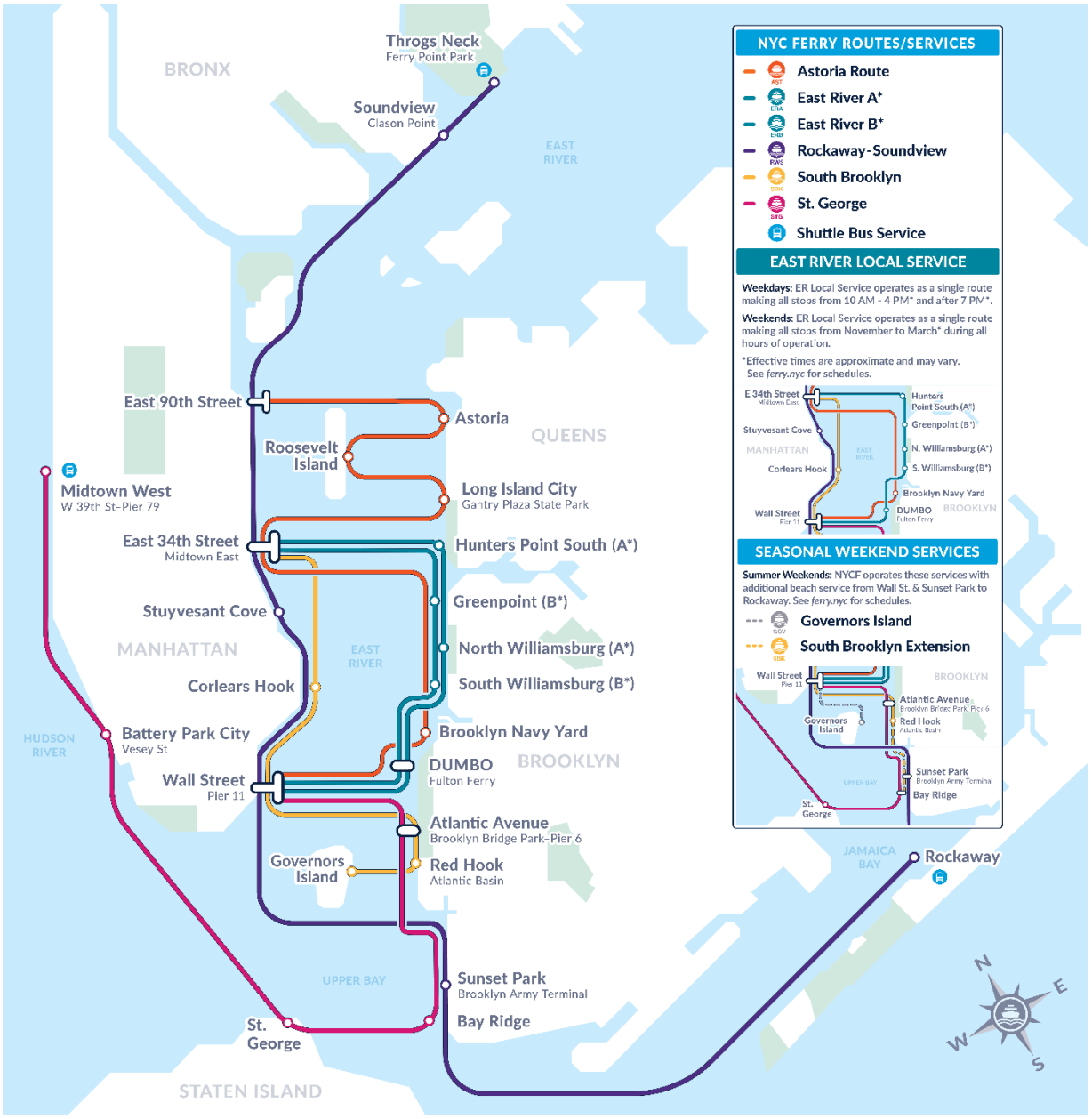


Figure 3 – Optimized Route Map

East River

At most times, the East River route will operate as two "skip-stop" routes, letting riders reach major destinations like East 34th Street, DUMBO, and Wall Street/Pier 11 faster by skipping select stops. For example, an East River A rider from Hunters Point South would bypass Greenpoint and South Williamsburg but stop at North Williamsburg, DUMBO, and Wall Street/Pier 11. This change will reduce stops, free up seats, and cut travel times while keeping peak service frequencies similar (approximately every 20-25 minutes). The busiest segment, Wall Street/Pier 11–DUMBO, will operate about every 15 minutes during peak hours.

Community Engagement ▼

This change was originally proposed to be in place at all times. However, feedback from over 6,000 responses related to East River trips revealed a desire to preserve local connections between some of the stops that were on different routes. This is accommodated as part of the final optimized route map: on weekday peak times and most weekends when ridership is highest (Spring through Fall), the East River will operate as two routes (A/B); at all other times, including off-peak times on weekdays and winter weekends, it will operate as a single route making all stops.

Rockaway & Soundview

The Ferry Optimization plan merges the Rockaway and Soundview routes, allowing vessels to continue between the Bronx and the Rockaways instead of turning around at Wall St./Pier 11 and forcing riders to transfer. This means that Rockaway residents will have a one-seat ride to Midtown Manhattan and the Upper East Side, expanding available destinations significantly without increasing operational costs. Local to the Rockaway landing, the Rockaway East and West shuttle bus services will continue to operate during weekday peak hours and summer weekends, which correspond with higher ridership times, but will no longer operate on non-summer weekends or mid-day on weekdays.

Community Engagement ▼

By combining these two routes, NYC Ferry will now have a route that spans over 30 miles. Among the concerns voiced by riders during the public engagement period was the potential for delays. To address this concern, additional dwell time will be added strategically to make sure travel times on popular existing route segments are not unduly impacted. Summer 2026 weekend service will include increased capacity for beach and non-beach riders. On-time performance and ridership trends will be monitored in the first few months of implementation and schedules will be adjusted accordingly.

St. George

Under the revised plan, the St. George route will connect to two Brooklyn stops (Bay Ridge and Atlantic Ave/BBP Pier 6) and Wall St/Pier 11, improving connections for Staten Island and the West Side riders. Key links between Bay Ridge, Atlantic Ave/BBP Pier 6, and Wall St. Service at Bay Ridge and Atlantic Avenue will improve to every 34 minutes (from every 50). Riders in St. George will be served approximately every 34 minutes in each direction. This adjustment balances greater connectivity with appropriate service frequency.

South Brooklyn

During most times of the year, the South Brooklyn route will begin at Governors Island and end at East 34th Street, shortening travel times to Downtown Manhattan and expanding access to Midtown. The number of stops currently served by the South Brooklyn route slow service and reduce frequency, making it less competitive with other transit options. The optimized route results in improved frequency with service approximately every 43 minutes during weekday peak periods and a new direct connection to East 34th Street, increasing access to major employment areas. Bay Ridge, Sunset Park, and DUMBO continue to have service and access to key commuter destinations via other routes.

Community Engagement ▼

Like the East River route, this change was originally proposed to operate at all times. NYCEDC received over 4,000 responses to the engagement form along with advocacy from elected officials and civic groups. While the overall proposal remained a positive change for most, there was an ongoing desire to retain local connections, emphasizing access to Red Hook and connectivity among Bay Ridge and

Sunset Park. Informed by a review of the feedback results and the overall goals of ensuring an efficient and cost-effective operation, the final optimized route map includes an extension of the new South Brooklyn route on summer weekends. This extension will make “local” stops between Bay Ridge, Sunset Park, Red Hook, Atlantic Avenue, Pier 11, Corlears Hook, and Midtown East on summer weekends from approximately Memorial Day to Labor Day. After the Summer 2026 schedule concludes, NYCEDC will evaluate ridership on the summer weekend extension to assess its effectiveness.

Astoria

The optimized route map does not include changes to the Astoria route. With the second-highest ridership in the system and its effective service plan, Astoria is an effective route that provides real travel-time savings for riders in Brooklyn and Queens.

Future Opportunities

Throughout the optimization process, NYCEDC aimed to balance community feedback with optimization goals. In some cases, requests or route proposals were not included in the optimized route map. Feedback and suggestions from online forms, emails, Community Boards, and elected officials will be reviewed in future evaluations.

NYC Ferry expands waterborne transit options for all five boroughs.

Commitment to Growth

Section 2 – Investing in Growth

Improving Key Systemwide Infrastructure

With an eye towards growth, NYC Ferry is investing in key systemwide infrastructure projects that support the existing operation and two new cost-effective landings while we explore ways to expand ferry access to more communities.

NYC Ferry is a vast operation that covers over 70 nautical miles and relies on a properly maintained fleet of 38 vessels and 25 landings across five boroughs. Investments are critical at facilities that are key to the full system including East 34th Street – the second largest passenger terminal in the system – and NYC Ferry's second homeport, a fleet maintenance and warehouse and office facility. Investing in systemwide infrastructure alongside route optimization will better position NYC Ferry for future ridership growth under the current system and the new markets under consideration in Section 3.

East 34th Street Terminal Expansion

The East 34th Street ferry terminal connects riders to Midtown Manhattan, one of the densest job centers in the country. The terminal is served by three existing routes and a variety of private ferry operations. Although East 34th Street serves just as many NYC Ferry departures per day as Wall St/Pier 11, it has less than half as many docking slips (three versus seven at Wall St./Pier 11. This means schedules are constrained by limited docking options and delays are exacerbated when a slip is out of service for repairs.

Figure 4 - Existing East 34th Street Ferry Terminal
Source: Google Earth

East 34th Street also operates over capacity from a passenger queuing perspective, and riders regularly spill out into the adjacent esplanade because of limited queuing space on the pier. During summer months, the landing regularly serves over 900 ferry passengers per hour. East 34th Street's upland infrastructure does not have the capacity to meet rider demand.

With a new capital funding commitment from the City, NYCEDC and New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT) will undertake a significant project to expand the slip and queuing footprint of

East 34th Street, ensuring the landing can accommodate existing ridership and future growth. Planning and design will commence in early 2026.

Homeport 2, Brooklyn Marine Terminal (Existing Project)

NYC Ferry currently operates out of Pier C in the Brooklyn Navy Yard, which supports 22 vessels with essential services and dry-docking space for two boats. However, since the fleet expanded beyond initial plans, many vessels are stored at a nearby shipyard without proper support. To address this, a second homeport facility was planned, which will feature similar maintenance facilities, additional slip space, and a repurposed pier shed on Brooklyn's Pier 11 for future warehouse and office use. Homeport 2 will centralize NYC Ferry operations at the Brooklyn Marine Terminal. With in-water marine work complete, upland construction is set to begin by late 2025, with anticipated completion by mid-2027.

Figure 5 - Rendering of Homeport 2, Brooklyn Marine Terminal (Anticipated Completion Mid-2027)

Opportunities for Cost-Effective Growth

Since NYC Ferry's inception in 2017, there have been numerous requests for expansion to new neighborhoods. In the past three years, as part of Ferry Forward, NYCEDC focused on stabilizing the finances of NYC Ferry, limiting opportunities for growth. Now, with NYC Ferry's more stable financial foundation, NYCEDC is considering growth opportunities that can be achieved in a cost-effective manner. In addition to physical and policy considerations around a new landing, NYC Ferry's ability to serve new sites often depends on (1) the operational cost of service expansion, and (2) the ability for the existing fleet to meet those needs without investing in new vessels.

The operational cost of serving a landing is dictated by its physical location in relation to the destinations it will serve, and whether existing routes provide service that can be modified to include it. Landings that are best served with a new route have the highest new costs to operate, whereas landings that can be incorporated into or are small extensions on existing routes have far lower new costs to operate.

In addition to operational costs, new landings are constrained by the NYC fleet, both in the number of vessels available and where they can go. The current NYC Ferry fleet can safely navigate and dock in

most parts of the New York Harbor, limited primarily by areas with inadequate water depth, areas facing the open ocean (beaches), and areas restricted by bridge heights. The expected growth in ridership on existing and planned routes also limits the number of vessels available for new services. NYCEDC expects that any new route will require the construction of new vessels and therefore concentrate on new landings that can be served by existing NYC Ferry vessels as part of small route modifications.

Two locations offer opportunities for cost-effective growth with NYC Ferry's existing fleet: East Harlem 125th Street and Bush Terminal/MADE in Sunset Park. The many sites of interest beyond these two short-term growth opportunities will be comprehensively reviewed as part of the Vision, laid out in Section 3. This approach prioritizes cost-effective short-term expansion while allowing time to evaluate locations needing larger investments in infrastructure or different operating models.

NYC Ferry's second homeport will expand storage and maintenance facilities in Atlantic Basin, Red Hook.

East Harlem 125th Street

The construction of the Manhattan Greenway Harlem River offers new opportunities to introduce ferry service alongside the many new pedestrian and bicycle connections to the waterfront near 125th Street. The neighborhood's proximity to existing ferry routes limits new operating costs required.

East Harlem is a vibrant neighborhood today but faces significant transit needs. With a rich history of commercial uses along 125th Street, and surrounding residential neighborhoods, community members have long sought a ferry service for improved transit access. By prioritizing improved transportation to East Harlem, the City can support the neighborhood's existing residents and its continued growth.

The Manhattan Greenway Harlem River, now under construction, has involved robust community engagement where ferry service has been frequently requested. The many new pedestrian and bicycle connections to the waterfront create opportunities for ferry service to serve the existing neighborhood and new sites like the Harlem African Burial Ground. As park construction continues in this vicinity, NYCEDC has the opportunity to collaborate with community stakeholders about the specific site constraints and design considerations for a future ferry landing.

From a service-planning perspective, this neighborhood represents the northernmost reach of the current NYC Ferry fleet which cannot go further north of the Willis Avenue Bridge due to bridge heights. It is less than two miles from East 90th Street, a site served by two existing routes with an opportunity to extend one, the Astoria route, to this location. Doing so is likely to require an additional vessel in daily service, achievable with NYC Ferry's existing fleet utilization.

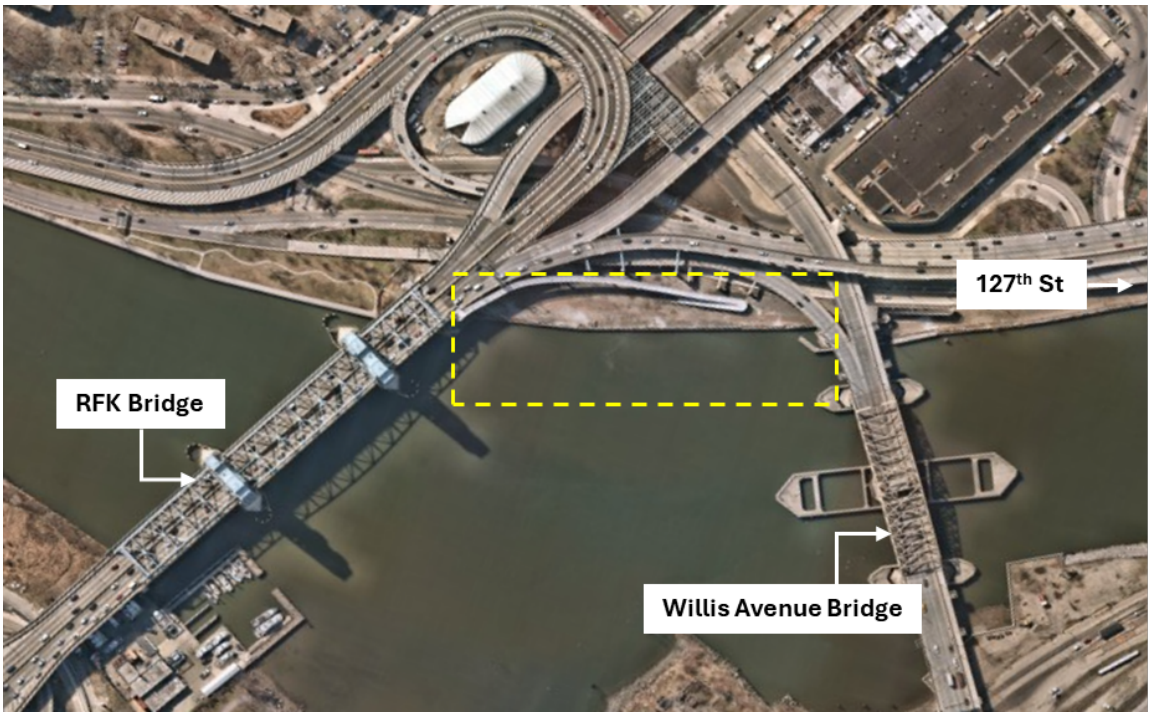


Figure 6 - Potential Siting for a Landing in East Harlem

Bush Terminal/MADE

A new ferry landing at Bush Terminal/MADE improves access to a mixed use, job-dense center of activity that is undergoing rapid business growth and transformation. With planned routes already passing by the site, the cost to serve a new landing will be limited.

The Bush Terminal area of South Brooklyn is rich in commercial, manufacturing and other industrial sector jobs while also providing the public with several recreational and retail outlets. MADE Bush Terminal is an ambitious urban redevelopment project transforming a historic 20-acre waterfront property into a modern, mixed-use hub for local producers and fabricators. NYCEDC controls the MADE campus on which a new ferry landing will be placed and is overseeing the area's redevelopment, offering efficiencies and institutional knowledge to inform ferry landing siting and design. Such a design process would additionally include local stakeholders including local elected officials and community members.

When complete, the MADE campus will have over 1,000 employees and a steady stream of visitors to the site's retail, events, and 30+ acres of surrounding park and open space, including Bush Terminal Piers Park and the new Pier 6 public park, both of which are directly on the waterfront.

Just north of MADE, the South Brooklyn Marine Terminal (SBMT) is a 70-acre port facility for staging, assembly, operations, and maintenance for offshore wind. To date, SBMT has created 2,500 union jobs during construction and will create 200 assembly jobs and 50 permanent positions once operational in 2026. Adjacent to SBMT, two private developments, Industry City and Liberty View Industrial Plaza, have resulted in the creation of thousands of additional industrial, commercial and retail jobs in recent years.

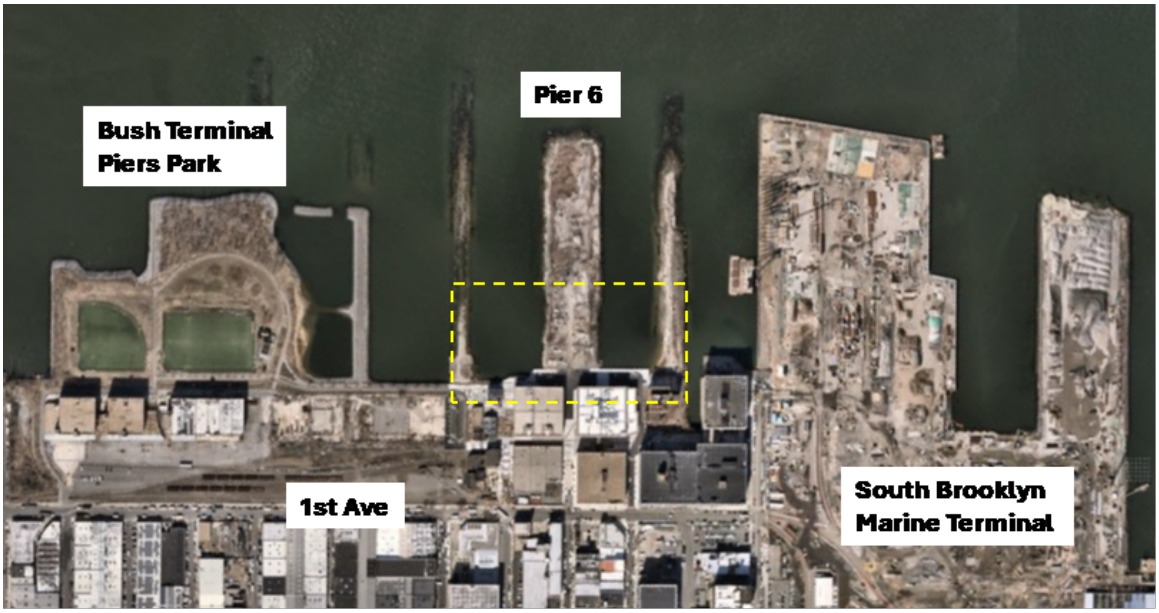


Figure 7 - Potential Siting for New Landing at MADE/Bush Terminal

Developing a Vision for the Future of Ferries

Section 3 – Developing a Vision for the Future of Ferries in New York Harbor

Since New York City's earliest days, ferries played a significant role in the city's growth, connecting communities across rivers and boroughs. While ferry use declined following extensive bridge and tunnel construction at the turn of the twentieth century, the past two decades have seen a resurgence in both public and private services, supporting waterfront revitalization, residential growth, and job access. The introduction of NYC Ferry in 2017 was a pivotal moment in New Yorkers' ability to once again use the city's waterways for transportation and recreation. Still, NYC Ferry is just one of several passenger operations that provide year-round and seasonal ferry service to New York's many waterfront neighborhoods. Today, five primary operators serve New York Harbor with nearly 100 passenger ferries. Looking ahead, NYCEDC will develop a new *Vision for the Future of Ferries in New York Harbor* (the Vision) to guide sustainable expansion of ferry service in the harbor, consider new routes and connections, and prioritize infrastructure investment and emission-reducing technologies for the future.

The Need for a Vision

Despite the many ferry services in the harbor and fast growth of the NYC Ferry system, certain conditions have made ferry service hard to deliver in some communities. In certain cases, the existing fleet is physically unable to operate in shallow, narrow, or low-clearance waters. In other instances, the limited ridership and the high cost of providing frequent daily service or has proven challenging to justify with public subsidy. Finally, beachfront communities facing open water often have the most difficult conditions to overcome for safe docking. Regardless, the desire to activate ferry service remains an unfulfilled opportunity for many waterfront communities. Passenger ferries, even those that operate seasonally under different fare structures than NYC Ferry, offer the ability to transform access to a community. Communities around the city have been vocal about the need for improved transit access and interest in their waterfront.

The Vision will thoroughly examine how ferries could serve those New York City waterfront communities currently without service. In neighborhoods advocating for ferries, the Vision will aim to identify landing sites where suitable, estimate travel demands, and evaluate the financial feasibility of seasonal, part-time or year-round operations. NYCEDC will draw on its ferry planning expertise, input from private operators, and engagement with local communities to identify site-specific opportunities and challenges. Where NYC Ferry isn't viable, NYCEDC will explore ways to catalyze ferry service using alternative operating and funding models, including partnerships with private waterfront property owners—such as residential, work and recreational destinations, geography, density and recent developments, and existing transit options. In all cases, the future of ferries must have thorough consideration for the development of zero-emission vessel designs and an assessment of the viability and risks associated with them. The Vision will explore and prioritize infrastructure improvements needed for expanded ferry service and decarbonization, including upgrades to electrical systems to support cleaner vessels. By taking a broader view of the entire ferry industry, NYCEDC hopes to align on standards and technologies among other ferry operators in order to ensure maximum adoption of low or zero-emission vessels in the future.

Forming a Vision

Previous ferry studies have narrowly focused on the opportunity to expand NYC Ferry to new sites around the harbor. The Vision aims to widen that lens by considering other operators, fare models and service types to bring ferry service to more New Yorkers. While prior studies relied more narrowly on quantitative analyses—ridership, economics, and navigational constraints—to prioritize landing sites, the Vision will go further and incorporate ferry operator engagement, respond to community-led advocacy, and plan for sustainable vessel technology research to recognize each potential site's unique challenges

and opportunities. Once formed, the Vision will present a harbor-wide assessment of landing sites, vessel and infrastructure needs, operational models and other supporting analyses.

The process to form a new *Vision for the Future of Ferries in New York Harbor* will include the following steps and considerations with a more refined scope to be developed as the process kicks off in late 2025:

- **State of Ferries in New York Harbor**. While the Vision will have a strong focus on opportunities for NYC Ferry, it will also consider the wider context of ferries throughout the region. The Vision will begin with a comprehensive inventory of ferry operators, routes, services, fares, and ridership patterns, among other information. In its assessment of existing conditions, the Vision will further describe the city's ability to accommodate new services at key terminals and to adapt to new and upcoming technologies to reduce vessel emissions.
- **Neighborhood Ferry Assessments.** For waterfront neighborhoods not currently served by ferries, the Vision will incorporate site suitability assessments that evaluate typical in-water and upland characteristics that determine whether ferries are viable. The assessments will consider key factors influencing ridership—such as residential, work and recreational destinations, geography, density and recent developments, and existing transit options—which will be analyzed to determine market potential.
- **NYC Ferry Compatibility and Alternative Service Options.** NYC Ferry currently serves most landings with daily, full-time service. This analysis considers how a new expansion site could fit into the NYC Ferry network, with attention to ridership impact and costs. Service routes and levels should align with demand to ensure cost-effectiveness. Where NYC Ferry may not be an ideal operational solution, other operational models will be considered like recreational services, market-based fare structures, and part-time or seasonal services. Rather than excluding sites that don't meet strict criteria, the Vision will consider the need for flexible approaches—evaluating unique conditions with customized solutions for vessels, landings, or third-party operations.
- **Community Education and Engagement.** Throughout the process of developing a Vision, NYCEDC will engage in open discussion around the viability, opportunities and challenges for sites under review. Where physical constraints prevent ferry service or higher-cost operations are required because of a site's location, the Vision will share this information for communities' consideration. Feedback from these conversations will shape project priorities and help the system serve waterfront needs across the city.
- **Regional Infrastructure and Sustainable Ferry Technology.** In addition to planning for ongoing ridership growth and the potential for new services, the Vision will incorporate environmental stewardship as a key factor in long-range planning. The Vision arrives at an inflection point for sustainability of the NYC Ferry system and other operators throughout the harbor. As technology advances for low and zero-emission ferries, New York City plays a critical role in supporting them with upland charging infrastructure. As a convener of many of the region's ferry operators, NYCEDC can harmonize various operators' decarbonization goals and support them with landside infrastructure plans. This work will follow NYCEDC's ongoing evaluation of technologies and strategies to decarbonize NYC Ferry which has found that a key barrier to implementation is available upland charging infrastructure.

In all, this effort is expected to take approximately one year, concluding by Fall 2026.

Neighborhoods and Regions of Focus

New Yorkers in all five boroughs have advocated for ferry service in their communities, seeking faster transit options, higher quality transportation, and the realization of ferries as a source of recreation and economic development. The history of landing requests and the prior analysis of site conditions are important starting points from which the Vision will take a more expansive look at opportunities for ferry service. A summary of key sites that have been requested and background information are provided below.

Canarsie (Brooklyn)

Local community members have long advocated for service to Canarsie Pier, located in Gateway National Park, as a vital and deserved transit link that today operates on the other side of Jamaica Bay. The neighborhood core is centered around the terminal of the L-train, 1.5 miles from the pier, with substantial residential areas along Rockaway Parkway, including Bay View Houses. As a transit alternative, ferries may struggle to compete with the L-train's travel time to Manhattan and cannot achieve a similar frequency as the L-train. Still, alternative service patterns may be viable options. The Vision will assess the condition of Canarsie Pier, the navigability and ecology of Jamaica Bay, operational options to connect to the existing Rockaway-Beach 108th Street landing, and other relevant factors. Partnership and cooperation from the National Parks Service (NPS), the owner and operator of the pier, is a critical and required first step. In preliminary discussions with NYCEDC, NPS highlighted significant existing capital needs for Canarsie Pier and restrictions on commuter-only ferry services in National Parks.

Chelsea (Manhattan)

Chelsea is home to a growing workforce, cultural institutions like the High Line, and high-density residential development. Hudson River Park features a mix of recreational boaters, commercial charter vessels, passive park uses and waterfront educational facilities. The busy in-water and upland uses combine to create challenges for in-water vessel traffic and upland passenger flow; any consideration of ferry service would require strong partnership and support from Hudson River Park Trust and other waterfront stakeholders.

City Island (Bronx)

City Island is a remote community in the Bronx with a seaside character unique within New York City. While ferry service would likely have travel time advantages to Manhattan compared to the limited vehicular and transit options, the island's remote location, low population, and limited public waterfront require a thoughtful assessment to determine the impacts of increased access. Limited parking is also a key consideration as neighboring communities may use a service from here as a commuting option.

Coney Island (Brooklyn)

Prior efforts to deliver year-round ferry service to Coney Island have been hampered by geography and in-water navigational conditions. In 2021, shifting sand accumulation made a site in Coney Island Creek unreachable without continually dredging a navigable waterway in the creek. And an additional study found that the open-ocean exposure of Coney Island Beach made safe and secure landings at Steeplechase Pier out of reach for the existing NYC Ferry fleet without a breakwater estimated to cost up to $250 million. To determine whether larger vessels and barges could safely serve this location without a breakwater, NYCEDC began a more rigorous data collection exercise in fall 2025 to monitor wave activity in this area, to be concluded around fall 2026. This information will be included in the Vision to ensure all options have been considered.

East Midtown (Manhattan)

A series of healthcare and institutional uses line the east side of Manhattan between 63rd and 79th Streets, representing important work destinations along the waterfront. A landing at East 62nd Street was proposed in 2016 but not built because of operational concerns from other harbor operators prior to the launch of NYC Ferry. The narrowest portion of the East River between the Long Island Sound and the Atlantic Ocean is between approximately 42nd and 90th Streets. With several years of operational experience and ongoing development of the East Midtown Greenway, there may be an opportunity to revisit these discussions with harbor operators while prioritizing safe operations.

Far Rockaway/Rockaway Peninsula (Queens)

Communities in Far Rockaway have long advocated for a ferry service. However, the NYC Ferry fleet cannot navigate east of Beach 86th Street due to low clearance under the South Channel Subway Bridge. Additionally, identifying a landing site is challenging given the sensitive ecological areas surrounding Far Rockaway and the mostly soft shoreline with residential streets at the waterfront. The Vision will evaluate the opportunity for alternative vessels and docking infrastructure to determine if an alternative service that connects to the Rockaway landing at Beach 108th Street is viable.

Harlem River (Manhattan)

The Harlem River is a seven-mile strait between Manhattan and the Bronx connecting the Hudson River to the East River. The waterway is restricted on the northern end by a low-clearance swing-bridge and features more than a dozen other bridges with a mix of vertical clearances; the Willis Avenue Bridge is the southernmost bridge under which existing NYC Ferry vessels cannot pass. An active private rail line along the Bronx side further complicates safe and accessible pedestrian access to the waterway; this was briefly overcome with a temporary landing near Yankee Stadium that required safety personnel to walk people across the railway every time it was used to allow a safe crossing of the tracks. Despite these physical bridge limitations, slow-moving sightseeing tours and a variety of pleasure-craft have long navigated this waterway, demonstrating the viability for certain vessels to serve the area. The Vision will further explore vessel types and viable service patterns to assess if they could offer competitive travel times or destinations given existing transit options like subways and the Metro North Hudson Line.

Manhattan Cruise Terminal (Manhattan)

Located on the waterfront between West 52nd Street and West 54th Street, the Manhattan Cruise Terminal (MCT) is undergoing a master planning effort that will establish a roadmap towards extending the useful life of the site. Part of this study includes opportunities to improve transportation along this section of the waterfront and will be coordinated with evaluation as part of the Vision.

Queensbridge (Queens)

The Queensbridge neighborhood borders the eastern channel of the East River, across from Roosevelt Island and is connected to Midtown and Lower Manhattan via the F train at 21st Street-Queensbridge. Today, Queensbridge Park is the only publicly accessible waterfront in the neighborhood; however, the neighborhood is in the context area for the Long Island City Neighborhood Plan (One LIC) which includes a stated goal of creating a “connected, resilient and accessible waterfront from Gantry State Park to Queensbridge Park. OneLIC certified into the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) in April 2025. The outcome of the One LIC plan will be considered in an evaluation of potential ferry service in or near Queensbridge.

Randall’s Island (Manhattan)

Randall’s Island is a unique part of New York City—beyond a popular recreation destination with over 60 sports fields, an Olympic-level track and field stadium, tennis center, and plans for a new golf center, the island is also home to a variety of City and State institutions employing over 3,000 workers daily. With transit access limited to the M35 bus connecting Randall’s Island to East Harlem, many workers and visitors drive to access the island. There is an existing ferry landing on the northwest corner of the island typically used by private operators for major events at nearby Icahn Stadium, but the landing is not compatible with NYC Ferry’s existing fleet. Investing in a new, more accessible landing on the southwest corner of the island, close to where many daily commuters work, would be ideal for daily ferry service. This location is likely an achievable, low-cost opportunity to expand ferry service if capital funding for a new landing is secured.

South/East Shores (Staten Island)

Waterfront communities on the East and South Shores of Staten Island, have some of the city's longest commute times to Manhattan with the Staten Island Railroad serving as the key transit connection running nearly a mile from the coast. Residents have called for ferry service as a way to reduce commute times, however the East and South Shores are lined with sandy beaches that are exposed to harsh wind and wave conditions, prohibiting service using the existing NYC Ferry fleet. The Vision could explore the application of findings of the Coney Island alternative service study to the South Shore to facilitate discussion with the community about whether any opportunities remain for alternative ferry services.

Stapleton (Staten Island)

There have been many new and planned mixed-used developments along the Stapleton waterfront on the North Shore of Staten Island. Currently, the Staten Island Railway and local buses serve neighborhood and provide easy connections to the NYC Ferry and Staten Island Ferry services at St. George. The Vision will re-evaluate development, land-use and growth in the area to evaluate the cost and viability of direct service in this neighborhood.

Upper West Side/Upper Manhattan (Manhattan)

The Upper West Side of Manhattan is generally well-connected by transit with north-south subway options along Broadway; while ferries have potential for recreational uses, they are unlikely to improve transit speed to Midtown or Lower Manhattan in these neighborhoods. Still, the northern length of Manhattan directly faces parts of New Jersey, such as Edgewater and Port Imperial, which have existing privately held ferry landings. With potential existing infrastructure at West 125th Street in Harlem and a long-standing request for a new landing at Dyckman Street in Inwood, the Vision will focus on opportunities to activate private ferry services to serve the cross-Hudson market to landings north of Pier 79, recreationally oriented services, and other potential ferry options.

Willets Point (Queens)

Home to multiple sports stadiums and tremendous growth in residential, event, and other future uses, Willets Point remains an opportunity site within Flushing Bay for certain kinds of ferry service. While navigating from Flushing Bay to Manhattan's East Side makes ferry service a slower alternative to the 7 train and Long Island Rail Road, there remains substantial private interest in delivering ferry service to activate this area. With shallow waters in much of the Bay and necessary esplanade upgrades to bolster the seawall, the Vision will review the navigational and structural conditions and planned projects of Flushing Bay and its esplanade to evaluate site suitability. In addition, it will evaluate the opportunities for event-based services that are typically best-served by reservation and market-based pricing. The number of substantial developments in this neighborhood make Willets Point a strong candidate for public-private partnerships for funding and operations.

Airports: JFK and LaGuardia (Queens)

New York City's airports have long been viewed by the public as having high-potential for ferry service. While JFK has been successfully linked with a frequent, high-quality, 24/365 transit option via the AirTrain, LaGuardia remains connected primarily by buses, private vehicles and taxis, and ride-share services. Travel patterns for travelers and workers at airports call for high-frequency services that operate throughout and beyond peak commute times. Frequency and span of service are unfortunately the highest cost drivers for transit service and a high-speed ferry to an airport like LaGuardia, which is far from Manhattan, is particularly susceptible to these pricing dynamics. Operating high-frequency services is likely to require ticket prices that may be out of reach for air travelers and significantly higher than existing transit modes for daily workers. The Vision will further articulate these costs and explore potential roles and opportunities for private ferry operators.

Next Steps Toward a Vision

In early 2026, NYCEDC will develop building blocks for the Vision and consult with the public, elected officials, and stakeholders to ensure these insights address community needs and reflect changing priorities around the city. These insights will guide advocacy, foster meaningful dialogue about the transit on the waterfront, and ultimately drive the Vision for the Future of Ferries in New York Harbor. NYCEDC anticipates sharing a final report by Fall 2026.

Riders line up to board ferries at Wall Street, Pier 11.

Appendices

All appendices to this report (listed below) can be found at **edc.nyc/ferry**

- **Appendix A:** Route and Landing Data
- **Appendix B:** Proposed Changes as of July 14, 2025
- **Appendix C:** Optimization Engagement Results