



The City of New York

Manhattan Community Board 1

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Public Comment on the Draft Scope of Work for a Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Citywide Ferry Service (CEQR No. 15DME009Y)

This testimony was submitted to the Mayor's Office of Sustainability as public comment on the Draft Scope of Work for a Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Citywide Ferry Service (CEQR No. 15DME009Y). Community District 1 includes most of Manhattan below Canal Street and south of the Brooklyn Bridge, as well as Ellis Island, Governors Island and Liberty Island.

Our full board unanimously adopted the following resolution regarding this matter on September 30th:

- WHEREAS: Community Board 1 (CB1) includes three significant islands: Governor's Island, Statue of Liberty Island and Ellis Island. It is bounded by the East River and the Hudson River. We have almost 70,000 residents, 310,000 workers and were visited by 13 million tourists last year. Ferries are the only way to get to these iconic historic places and parks, and for others to commute to and from New Jersey and elsewhere to Lower Manhattan; and
- WHEREAS: Ferries are a significant part of Lower Manhattan's transportation system. They are a valued community amenity and provide commuters with an alternative to more environmentally taxing forms of transportation such as buses and personal automobiles. In addition, ferry service was crucial during the evacuations that took place as a result of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 and the 1993 WTC bomb attacks, and was one of the first modes of transportation back on-line after Superstorm Sandy struck New York City. Ferries are also a beloved tourist attraction, create jobs, and provide opportunities for Lower Manhattan residents to easily travel to Red Hook for grocery shopping and other services; and
- WHEREAS: The New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) is proposing to implement a Citywide Ferry Service (CFS) that would provide an affordable and convenient transit option to residents in otherwise transit-isolated neighborhoods; and
- WHEREAS: The Draft Scope of Work outlines the technical areas to be analyzed in the preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the CFS project; and
- WHEREAS: The proposed CFS would expand the existing East River Ferry (ERF), a privately operated commuter and recreational transit service paid for by the City of New York and NYCEDC and managed by NYCEDC; and
- WHEREAS: The ERF serves seven landings year-round including two Manhattan terminals at East 34th Street and Pier 11, and five other landings along the Brooklyn and Queens waterfronts. On summer weekends, the ERF also serves Governors Island; and
- WHEREAS: The expansion required for the proposed CFS would include five new routes and fifteen new or upgraded landings. Ferries would operate daily, generally between 6:30 a.m. and 10:00 p.m., with frequent and consistent service during weekday peak periods. During off-peak periods, including weekends, the frequency of service would vary based on the season; and

- WHEREAS: NYCEDC is proposing to launch three routes (Rockaway, South Brooklyn and Astoria) in Spring/Summer 2017 and the remaining two routes (Lower East Side and Soundview) in Spring/Summer 2018; and
- WHEREAS: The proposed CFS would introduce five new ferry routes, providing service to either or both of the existing Manhattan ferry terminals (Pier 11/Wall Street and Midtown/East 34th Street) as well as new landings in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx; and
- WHEREAS: The proposed CFS includes upgrades to the Pier 11/Wall Street terminal (controlled by NYCDOT). The terminal currently receives vessels from several commuter and sightseeing ferry services, including East River Ferry, New York Water Taxi, Seastreak, IKEA Express, City Sightseeing, and New York Waterway; and
- WHEREAS: The Pier 11/Wall Street terminal is anticipated to be the primary terminal of the expanded CFS, receiving vessels from all five of the proposed new ferry routes. The Pier 11/Wall Street terminal would be upgraded to accommodate additional vessel landings and passenger circulation related to the proposed CFS. Potential upgrades include widening gangways or adding gangways to the existing barges, adding gates to relocate queuing areas to the barges, rotating barge E to alleviate navigational issues and provide for a second bow loading berth, and reconfiguring or replacing additional barges to allow for double bow loading and/or double bow loading and side loading; and
- WHEREAS: While the existing pier configuration would be adequate to accommodate the projected increase in pedestrian activity, some modification of upland pedestrian circulation elements along South Street and Wall Street may be needed. Potential modifications include widening crosswalks, signal timing adjustments to provide additional pedestrian crossing time, removing sidewalk furniture at constrained locations, and/or the installation of sidewalk extensions (bulb-outs) at corner areas; and
- WHEREAS: The EIS Scope of Work includes several tasks relating to the Pier 11/Wall Street terminal including: a traffic study, a pedestrian analysis, a parking analysis, and an air quality/noise analysis; and
- WHEREAS: The New York Harbor is one of the busiest waterways in the Western Hemisphere; and
- WHEREAS: Residents of CB1 have suffered some negative impacts from ferry service in Lower Manhattan. Older ferry models are loud and have heavy emissions, creating noise and environmental pollution. Periods of heavy ferry usage have caused subsequent pedestrian and vehicular congestion in areas of Lower Manhattan designated for ferry queuing; and
- WHEREAS: Existing ferry service already creates significant wake impact, including damage to vessels, piers, historic ships and waterfront infrastructure, and occasionally including threat to life and safety for waterfront personnel and those operating human-powered craft. Increased ferry routes and trips will further exacerbate this problem; and
- WHEREAS: These wakes also create wear-and-tear on the delicate water's edge; and
- WHEREAS: Currently, the queue of people waiting in line for the ferry at the Pier 11/Wall Street terminal stretches down Wall Street, and the close proximity to the Downtown Manhattan/Wall Street heliport creates an extremely disruptive atmosphere for ferry customers as high volumes of tourist helicopters create constant noise; and

WHEREAS: There have been several ferry accidents at Pier 11, including one on January 2013 and one in August 2015; and

WHEREAS: A series of public scoping meetings has been scheduled to provide a forum for public comments on this Draft Scope of Work. The Manhattan public scoping meeting will take place on September 21st at 6:00pm; now

THEREFORE

BE IT

RESOLVED

THAT: CB1 supports the expansion of ferry service through the proposed CFS, but emphasizes that comprehensive traffic and pedestrian analysis must be conducted in relation to Pier 11/Wall Street to ensure that safety is paramount in the anticipation of increased activity. Sidewalks and bike paths must be wide enough to accommodate increased traffic. In addition, vehicular and pedestrian traffic must be separated in order to reduce pedestrian-vehicular conflicts; and

BE IT

FURTHER

RESOLVED

THAT: The effect of increased ferry traffic on air quality must be thoroughly studied and understood so that mitigation may be implemented as soon as possible. Ferries should be retrofitted using the best available technology and industry standards and use ultra-low sulfur diesel fuel; and

BE IT

FURTHER

RESOLVED

THAT: In order to minimize wake impact, CB1 strongly urges that ferry standards be established including speed limits, or the requirement that new ferries meet minimal-wake standards. We also request that these standards be enforced by the U.S. Coast Guard and the NYPD.