



FERRIES



NYC's waterways provide a unique resource to expand transportation options for New Yorkers enabling ferries to connect waterfront communities in NYC and New Jersey to jobs, recreation destinations, and each other. Ferries will continue to be used in NYC to provide affordable, convenient transit in communities with limited public transportation options and an important resource that supports growing neighborhoods and increases the resilience of NYC's larger transportation network, especially when there are disruptions to other means of transit service. The City will continue to explore ways to improve ferry services and expand the role our waterways in the larger transportation network.

Goal 1: Increase the sustainability and efficiency of City ferry services.

Goal 2: Complete the planned expansion of NYC Ferry to provide greater mobility to waterfront neighborhoods that are underserved by other forms of mass transit or where residents face long commute times.

Goal 3: Examine ways to improve the delivery of ferry services to New Yorkers while minimizing public subsidy.

Goal 4: Strategically plan ferry services within NYC and the region.

Goal 5: Strengthen the role of ferry landings as hubs to neighborhoods, to other forms of transportation and for emergency response.



Overview

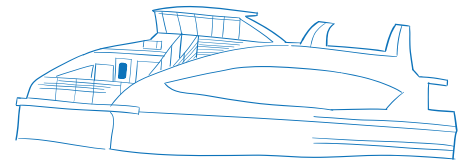
Based on ridership, the NYC Metro Region has the largest ferry system in the United States. The system includes the Staten Island Ferry (the single busiest ferry route in the country), NYC Ferry and service provided by private operators between New York and New Jersey. As of 2019, ferry services in New York Harbor carried approximately 40 million people a year. By comparison, the Washington State ferry system, with the second largest ridership in the country, carried about 24 million passengers in 2019.

Ferry services offer direct connections to jobs and waterfront open spaces providing an attractive transportation option for commuters and other travelers. Ferries have played an important role in moving New Yorkers around during emergencies. Ferry service has played a crucial role in augmenting service when major transportation disruptions occur for example during the emergency closure of the Williamsburg Bridge in 1988; the Nor'easter storm of December 1992, which knocked out the Downtown branch of the PATH commuter railroad for a week; the first World Trade Center bombing in February 1993; the evacuation of Lower Manhattan on September 11, 2001 and the two years of dramatically increased ferry service until the region's commuter rail network was finally restored in November, 2003; the August 2003 Blackout; the December 2005 Transit Strike; the "Miracle on the Hudson" crash of US Airways Flight 1549 in January 2009; and the two years following Hurricane Sandy in 2012, when extra ferry service was needed to provide service when the subway service was disrupted by flood damage.

Maintaining and expanding ferry services is not simple. The City seeks to balance requests to increase the number of communities that ferries serve with reducing the levels of public subsidies needed to provide these services. Like all forms of mass transit, ferry services experienced steep ridership declines during the COVID-19 pandemic.

To help get ferry services back on course and prepare them for the challenges ahead, the City will need to explore ways to make services more efficient, to improve regional partnerships and adapt ferry infrastructure to the threats of climate change.





"The accessibility that has been provided as a result of the ferry has allowed me to see diverse waterfront neighborhoods that I would have otherwise never gone to visit and enjoy."

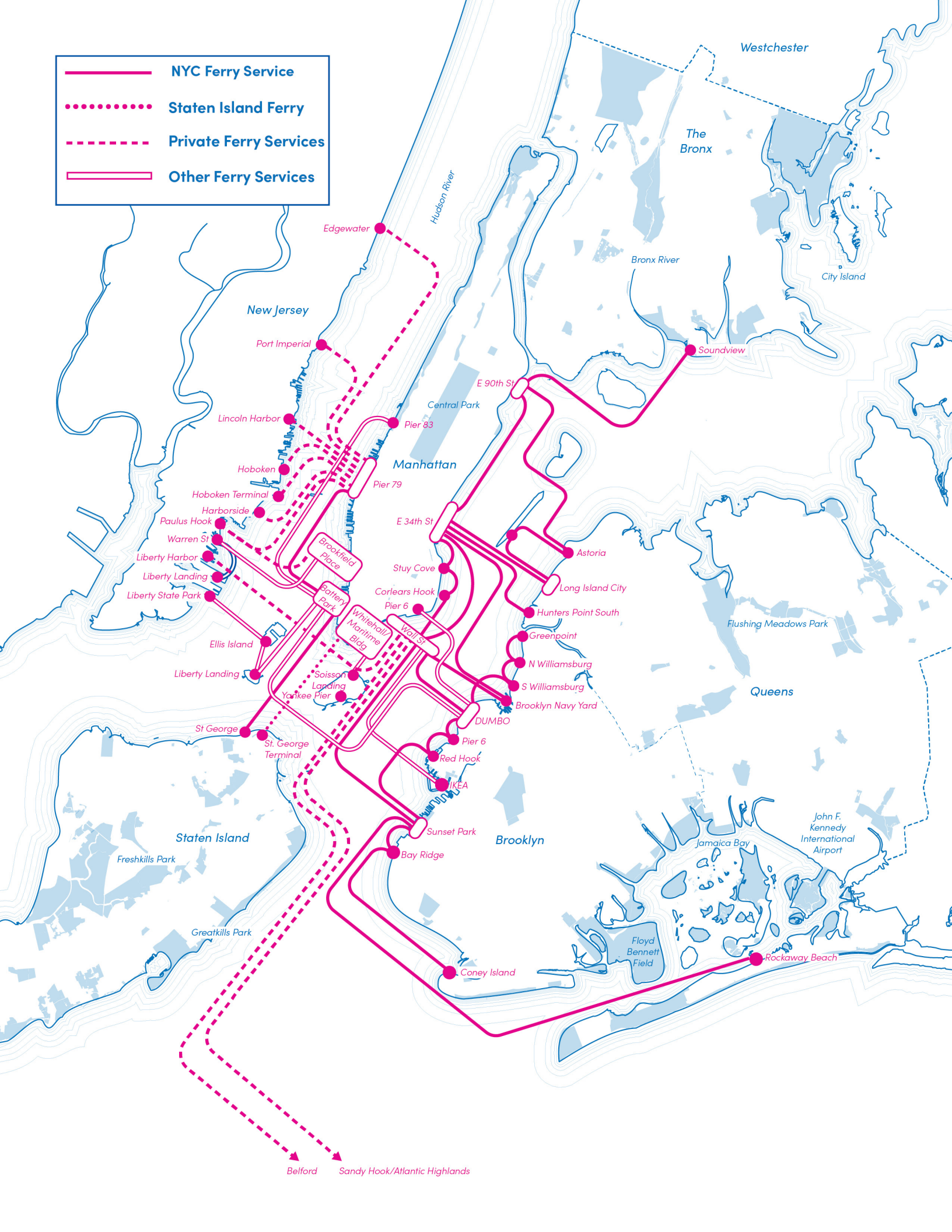


As of 2019, ferry services in New York Harbor carried about 40 million people a year.

Opposite:
Riders on NYC Ferry.

Credit: NYC EDC

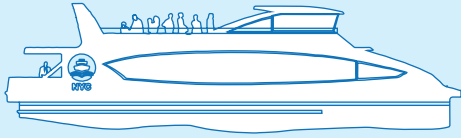
	NYC Ferry Service
	Staten Island Ferry
	Private Ferry Services
	Other Ferry Services



Belford Sandy Hook/Atlantic Highlands

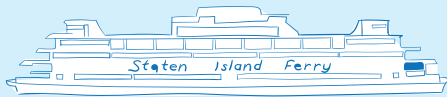
Ferry Service at a Glance

NYC Ferry



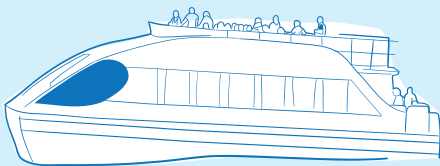
In 2017, the City launched NYC Ferry, with NYCEDC managing the service on its behalf. The service currently operates six routes using 21 landings. In 2019, average daily weekday ridership was approximately 16,000. NYC Ferry has carried 16 million riders since it launched, and overall ridership in 2019 was 30 percent higher than 2018 — far exceeding earlier projections about the service’s growth potential. In 2021, the system is expanding to eight routes serving all five boroughs. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, NYC Ferry anticipated serving 11 million annual riders by 2023.

Staten Island Ferry



The Staten Island Ferry annually serves 22 million people, with an average weekday ridership of 70,000 passengers. NYCDOT operates and maintains a nine-vessel fleet, the St. George Ferry Terminal on Staten Island and the Whitehall Ferry Terminal in Manhattan. The main purpose of the Staten Island Ferry is to transport New Yorkers between Staten Island and Manhattan, but the 25-minute ride is also popular with tourists because of its views of New York Harbor, including the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island.

Private Ferry Operators



Privately operated ferry services have operated continuously in NY Harbor since ferry service was reactivated in 1986, primarily running between New York and New Jersey. Unlike the municipally-operated Staten Island Ferry and the City-

subsidized NYC Ferry, these private companies do not receive direct operating subsidies and fund their operations on farebox and related revenue. These ferry operators do benefit, however, from public investments in docking and terminal infrastructure.

NY Waterway runs 20 routes between New Jersey and the Manhattan terminals at Brookfield Place/Battery Park City (controlled by PANYNJ), Midtown/West 39th Street and Pier 11/Wall Street. Pre-pandemic, NY Waterway’s average weekday ridership was approximately 30,000.

Seastreak operates ferry service from Monmouth County in New Jersey to Pier 11/Wall Street and East 35th Street in Manhattan. Pre-pandemic, Seastreak’s average daily weekday ridership was approximately 4,000.

Other Ferry Services

The Trust for Governors Island operates ferries from Manhattan and Brooklyn to Governors Island. The Manhattan ferry departs from the Battery Maritime Building in Lower Manhattan. Brooklyn service departs from Pier 6 in Brooklyn Bridge Park. This Lower Manhattan ferry service is one of the only routes in the NYC that carries motor vehicles, facilitating the only vehicular access to Governors Island for emergency vehicles, deliveries and construction/maintenance operations. Ferry service here is expected to increase in conjunction with the plan to redevelop a portion of the island.

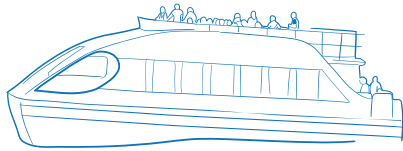
Liberty Landing Ferry operates between Brookfield Place/Battery Park City in Manhattan and Jersey City in New Jersey. In New Jersey, the ferry stops at Liberty State Park and Warren Street before returning to the World Financial Center in Manhattan.

NY Water Taxi operates shuttle service between Pier 11 in Manhattan and Ikea in Red Hook, Brooklyn. NY Water Taxi also operates hop-on-hop-off sightseeing services.

Historical Context

For much of the 19th century, ferries were the primary means of crossing the Hudson and East rivers into Manhattan. By the 20th century, the use of passenger ferries throughout the region rapidly declined due to improved access from newly constructed bridges and tunnels that connected Manhattan with the rest of NYC and New Jersey. By 1967, all that remained of the ferry network was the Staten Island Ferry.

“It is amazing to have a different perspective from the water, and I began to realize how massive the East River and other areas of our waterways are.”



Privately operated ferry services were reintroduced to the region in the mid-1980s. Cross-Hudson ferries provided commuters with an alternative to crowded trains and congested bridges and tunnels. Ferries became especially important transportation links in redeveloping areas in New Jersey, such as Weehawken and Jersey City, where residential density and demand for new commuting routes increased.

Until recently, ferry services operating within NYC were limited. The scale of service and ridership within NYC remained modest because of higher fares charged by operators to cover costs, entrenched competition from highly available and more affordable subways and buses, and low residential density along much of NYC’s waterfront. Demand for ferry service grew as stretches of the NYC waterfront transitioned from traditional industrial use to new residential, commercial and recreational developments. In response, the City undertook several studies to examine the viability of a citywide ferry system. In 2011, the City-contracted East River Ferry system began as a pilot project. In 2017, NYC Ferry launched as its successor.



Pier 11 Ferry Terminal in Manhattan.

Issues and Challenges

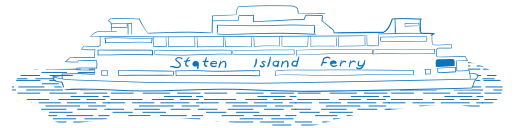
Ferry services are an important resource within the regional transportation network, but operating ferries within New York Harbor successfully require dealing with several complex challenges.

The primary issue facing NYC ferry service is how to generate enough revenue to pay for its high operating expense. Ferry services operating between New Jersey and Manhattan generally do not require public subsidies. Waterfront neighborhoods having high residential density and high demand from commuters are conditions that make ferry services profitable for these private operators. Ferry services with routes serving communities within NYC alone, are subsidized with public funds like other forms of NYC public transit. Ferry services within NTYC, however, currently require a higher per-rider subsidy than other forms of public transit.

This situation is due to several reasons: First, significant up-front capital costs were needed to build the infrastructure to launch the ferry system. Second, the City's policy is to keep fares low. A ride on NYC Ferry costs \$2.75 – the equivalent of a single-ride fare on an MTA subway or bus. The fare for the Staten Island Ferry is free. Low- and no-cost fares ensure that ferry service remains affordable to New Yorkers with a wide range of incomes. Third, the NYC Ferry network includes long routes to relatively low-density areas, such as the Rockaways in Queens and Soundview in the Bronx. These longer routes to low-density communities have higher operating costs than shorter routes to high-density neighborhoods along the East River.

Despite these challenges, the City plans to gradually expand ferry services over the next 10 years. New Yorkers have expressed interest in service expansion to waterfront locations that do not have easy access to mass transit or where commute times are extremely long. New Yorkers also want better coordination between ferry services with other forms of mass transit, creating easier transfers, increasing ridership across all modes, and enhancing operational efficiency at terminals. To accomplish this, the City must reach agreements between transit providers to coordinate schedules, accept transfers and share fare revenue.

Another challenge is the need for suitable ferry landings, especially to support emergency management. Ferry services have played a crucial role in the City's ability to respond to emergencies. The events of September 11, the Northeast Blackout of 2003 and Hurricane Sandy each caused major disruptions to NYC's transportation system. Nearly 460,000 people evacuated lower Manhattan by ferry on 9/11. During the Blackout and NYC's recovery from Hurricane Sandy, ferry services were expanded to help move New Yorkers while subway service was



“We should be looking at how to incorporate ferries within the MTA and new revenue structures that make it more financially viable over the long haul.”

restored. Increasing the number of ferry landings and expanding the capacity of existing landings will enhance NYC's resilience during and after other potential disasters.

The threat of coastal flooding is another significant issue for ferry services. Locating ferry infrastructure within waterways and along shorelines makes it vulnerable to the effects of rising sea level and damage caused by coastal storms. The City and PANYNJ must take steps to adapt ferry infrastructure to minimize damage and disruption from potential storms and coastal flooding. As the City continues to adapt its fleet of vehicles toward its sustainability goals, it will explore how to reduce the environmental footprint of ferry services.

Nearly 460,000 people evacuated lower Manhattan using ferries on 9/11.



Right:
Staten Island Ferry.

Credit: Julienne Schaeer,
NYC & Company

A 10-Year Vision

To support and strengthen ferry services over the next 10 years, the City will continue to optimize routes and identify ways to make service more sustainable. The City’s ferry fleet will incorporate new vessels with no or reduced air emissions. Ridership must increase to ensure the financial strength of ferry services. To broaden the reach of ferry services, the City will proceed by expanding NYC Ferry, including service to Coney Island, home to approximately 4,000 NYCHA residents. The City also intends to explore opportunities for regional collaboration on ferries.

Over the past decade, New Yorkers have expressed excitement about the role that ferries play in creating neighborhoods hubs and expanding transportation options. The Whitehall and St. George ferry terminals, for example, are multimodal transit hubs serving as critical links in the regional transit network. The City will explore ways to connect other ferry landings to adjacent neighborhoods more effectively, for example, by adding more bicycle racks or wayfinding signs. As the City plans future ferry services, plans must include infrastructure that is resilient to sea level rise and coastal storms and ongoing support for operations and maintenance.

“The waterfront has become an alternative mode of transportation in the city. It is a low carbon transportation system that we should continue to invest in and make sure it can continue to work better.”



Governors Island Ferry.

Goals and Strategies

Goal 1: Increase the sustainability and efficiency of City ferry services

Strategy 1.1

Launch three new Staten Island Ferry vessels with improved propulsion, ease of access, enhanced efficiency and improved air emissions standards.

Strategy 1.2

Launch a new electric ferry to service Hart Island.

Strategy 1.3

Continuously review ridership demand and other factors to ensure that NYC Ferry is operating as efficiently and effectively as possible.



New Staten Island Ferry Vessel, The SSG Michael H. Ollis.

Credit: NYCDOT

Goal 2: Complete the planned expansion of NYC Ferry to provide greater mobility to waterfront neighborhoods that are underserved by other forms of mass transit or where residents face long commute times

Strategy 2.1

Launch the St. George Route in 2021 with stops at St. George, Battery Park City at Vesey Street and Midtown West at Pier 79.

Strategy 2.2

Launch the Coney Island Route in 2021 with stops at Coney Island, Bay Ridge and Wall Street/Pier 11.

Strategy 2.3

Extend the Soundview Route in 2021 to a new landing at Throgs Neck/Ferry Point Park.



2021 NYC Ferry Expansion Map.

Credit: NYC Ferry

Goal 3: Examine ways to improve the delivery of ferry services to New Yorkers while minimizing public subsidy

Strategy 3.1

Ensure the service is financially strong by expanding ridership for existing NYC Ferry locations, especially those near job hubs and by pursuing other revenue-generating opportunities.

Strategy 3.2

Examine opportunities for systemwide optimization and resource planning for the NYC Ferry fleet, landing site infrastructure and operations to ensure safe and reliable service.



NYC Ferry riders boarding at Pier 11, Manhattan.

Credit: NYCEDC

Goal 4: Strategically plan ferry services within NYC and the region

Strategy 4.1

Identify and pursue opportunities for regional collaboration on ferry services to expand transit options for commuters and other travelers.

Strategy 4.2

Analyze ferry slip capacity in Lower and Midtown Manhattan to assess ferry congestion and better plan for future growth.

Strategy 4.3

Continue to address the operational and maintenance needs of the ferry system.

Strategy 4.4

Connect New Yorkers to jobs related to ferry maintenance and operation.



NYC Ferries pass Lower Manhattan.

Credit: NYCEDC

South St and Whitehall St
Whitehall Ferry Terminal

citi bike



- 1. Walk
- 2. Bike
- 3. Park
- 4. Station
- 5. Dock
- 6. Return
- 7. Lock
- 8. Unlock
- 9. Start
- 10. Stop

Walk NYC

citi bike

Walk NYC
the new way

Walk Mode
Bike Mode
Park Mode

Walk Mode
Bike Mode
Park Mode

Walk Mode
Bike Mode
Park Mode

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Walk Mode
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Park Mode



Goal 5: Strengthen the role of ferry landings as hubs to neighborhoods, to other forms of transportation and for emergency response

Strategy 5.1

Support the provision of bicycle racks and expanded mobility options, such as bike share and scooters, adjacent to ferry landings to connect the ferry system more effectively with nearby neighborhoods.

Strategy 5.2

Improve the connectivity of ferry landings as hubs for buses and other forms of mass transit.

Strategy 5.3

Explore intermodal freight opportunities at ferry landings to improve freight deliveries and further enhance the marine highway.

Strategy 5.4

Design ferry terminals for adaptation to sea level rise, ensuring service will not be disrupted.

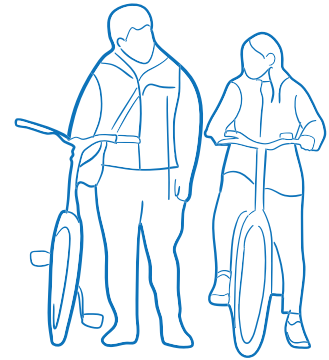
Complete planned investments at the Whitehall and St. George Ferry Terminals to make them more resilient to coastal storm flooding.

Strategy 5.5

Continue to work with public- and private-sector partners to develop and implement plans for ferry services to play a role in emergency response.

Strategy 5.6

Continue to minimize on-water conflicts between ferries and human-powered boats by raising awareness about rules for water safety. Plan for future on-water and in-water uses in an increasingly busy harbor.



Opposite:
Citibike station and wayfinding signage at Staten Island Ferry Whitehall Ferry Terminal, Manhattan.

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