



Comprehensive Boston Harbor Water Transportation Study and Business Plans;
Water Transportation Strategy for the Boston Harbor Islands National & State Park:

Existing Conditions

October 2017

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1. Introduction

Boston Harbor Now (BHN) is coordinating a strategic planning study for water transportation, the *Comprehensive Boston Water Transportation Study and Business Plan* (the Comprehensive Plan). This work is being done on behalf of and with financial support from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), the Massachusetts Port Authority (Massport), the Seaport Economic Council of the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Affairs, Massachusetts Convention Center Authority, the Barr Foundation, the Cabot Family Charitable Trust, Envoy Hotel, and Clippership Wharf. The aim of the work is to create the foundation for an expansion of the current water transportation system in Boston Harbor within a one- to five-year timeframe in order to accommodate current and future developments in the region and to enhance the use of the leisure and cultural amenities in Boston Harbor.

BHN is also coordinating a parallel study, the *Water Transportation Strategy for the Boston Harbor Islands National and State Park* (the Park Strategy), on behalf of the Boston Harbor Islands Partnership with financial support from the National Park Service. The outcome of this project will be to inform the preparation of the next Request for Proposals (RFP) for ferry service to the Boston Harbor Islands beginning in 2019.

This document is the second deliverable for both the Comprehensive Plan and the Park Strategy. It is a summary of the existing passenger ferry services in Boston Harbor and to the Islands. The report describes each existing route, its operating characteristics, its operating and ownership structure, and several salient measures such as ridership and financial outcomes. It does not provide extensive detail regarding the physical conditions around the piers or planning information for the broader area around the pier including population, employment, and land use. This data, crucial to determining passenger ferry service potential, will be detailed in a subsequent deliverable, titled *Site Profiles*.

2. Overview of Existing Conditions

In September 2017, Boston and the surrounding communities were served by six passenger ferry routes and two passenger ferry routes to Provincetown. The services ranged from single-trip offerings providing commuter service to year-round services connecting major hubs in and around Boston. Three of the routes are part of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) transit system. Five of the services were operated either wholly or in part by Boston Harbor Cruises (BHC). Collectively, the services' operating costs were funded in a variety of ways from solely relying on ticket revenue to substantial municipal support.

At the peak of the 2017 summer season, there were passenger ferry services to six of the Boston Harbor Islands operated by BHC in partnership with BHN, NPS, and the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). There was also weekend ferry service to Thompson Island and Boston Light. Access to the Harbor Islands is seasonal and attracts a range of visitors from local residents to international tourists.

A brief overview of each of these services is provided to contextualize the environment into which future Boston Harbor ferry services would be placed. Unless noted, the information comes from publicly available sources or was provided by BHC.

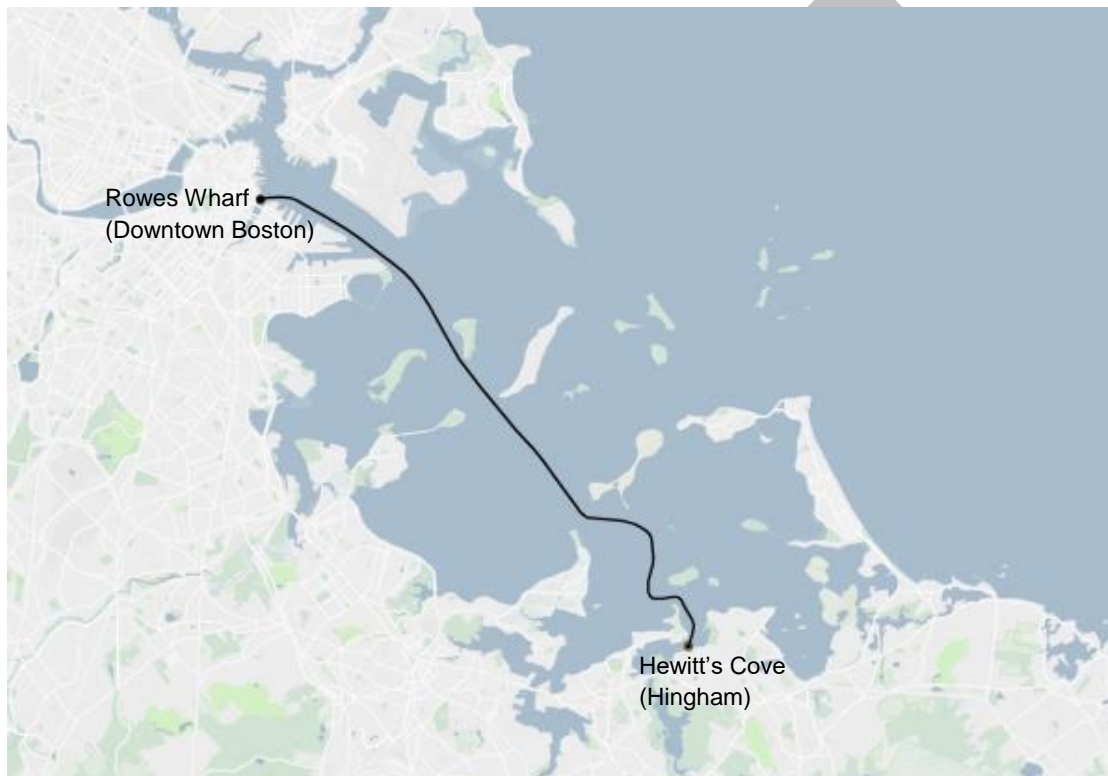
Existing Routes

Hingham to Boston

MBTA Route

This service operates year-round between Hewitt's Cove in Hingham and Rows Wharf in Boston with 18 daily weekday roundtrips 12 months of the year. This is largely a commuter service though it is also used by South Shore residents to get to Boston for services, performances, concerts, and sporting events. As the area around Hewitt's Cove continues to develop, it has the potential to draw more discretionary trips to Hingham in the future.

Figure 1: Hingham to Boston Ferry Route



Route Details

- Fare: \$9.25/ride with discounted fares for students, seniors, and people with disabilities; a \$308 monthly pass can be used on the ferries and all other MBTA transit modes up to Zone 5
 - Ridership: 827,397 (2016)
 - Farebox Recovery: 72% (2015)¹
 - Owner: All of the boats that serve this MBTA route are provided by Boston Harbor Cruises (BHC) as part of their contract.
 - Operator: BHC
 - Funding: MBTA and farebox
- Travel Time: 35 minutes

¹ The combined farebox recovery for the three MBTA ferry routes was 71% in FY2015. Including tickets and galley revenue, BHC has an 89% farebox recovery on this route.

Hingham to Hull to Logan to Boston

MBTA Route

This MBTA service operates year-round connecting Long Wharf North and Logan Airport in Boston with Pemberton Point in Hull and Hewitt's Cove in Hingham. There are 19 weekday arrivals and departures from Long Wharf 12 months of the year and 14 weekend round trips from Memorial Day to Columbus Day. These trips consistently serve Hull, serve Hingham on most trips, and usually stop at Logan in one direction. In the summer, the ferry also connects South Shore residents to Georges Island twice daily on weekdays and four times on weekends.

Figure 2: Hingham to Hull to Logan to Boston Ferry Route



Route Details

- Fare: \$9.25/ride with discounted fares for students, seniors, and people with disabilities; a \$308 monthly pass can be used on the ferries and all other MBTA transit modes up to Zone 5
- Ridership: 337,499 (2016)
- Farebox Recovery: 74% (2015)²
- Owner: Two of the boats on this route are provided by the MBTA; the remainder are provided by Boston Harbor Cruises (BHC) as part of their contract.
- Operator: BHC
- Funding: MBTA and farebox
- Travel Time: varies (times range from 23 minutes to 55 minutes depending on stops)

² The combined farebox recovery for the three MBTA ferry routes was 71% in FY2015. Including tickets and galley revenue, BHC has an 82% farebox recovery on this route.

Long Wharf to Charlestown

MBTA Route

This MBTA service operates year-round connecting Long Wharf South in Downtown Boston to Pier 4 in the Charlestown Navy Yard with 39 daily weekday roundtrips and 17 weekend roundtrips. It is heavily used by commuters during the morning and evening peak as well as serving a considerable number of tourists visiting the Charlestown Navy Yard, Bunker Hill Memorial, and other stops on the Freedom Trail.

Figure 3: Long Wharf to Charlestown Ferry Route



Route Details

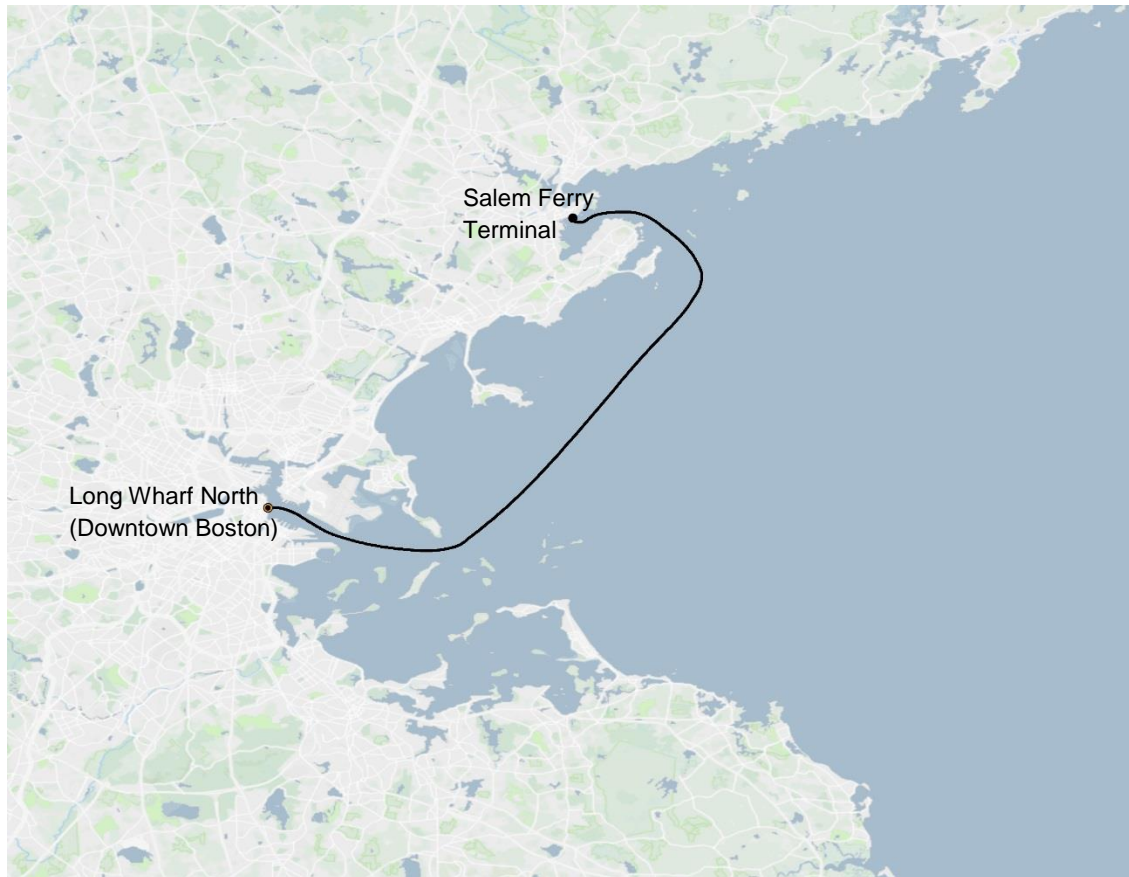
- Fare: \$3.50/ride with discounted fares for students, seniors, and people with disabilities; a \$84.50 Zone 1A monthly pass as well as daily and weekly unlimited Charlie Tickets are also accepted on the Charlestown ferry
- Ridership: 317,355 (2016)
- Farebox Recovery: 58% (2015)³
- Owner: All the boats that serve this MBTA route are provided by Boston Harbor Cruises (BHC) as part of their contract.
- Operator: BHC
- Funding: MBTA and farebox
- Travel Time: 10 minutes

³ The combined farebox recovery for the three MBTA ferry routes was 71% in FY2015. Including tickets and galley revenue, BHC has a 79% farebox recovery on this route.

Salem to Boston

This seasonal service offers five daily roundtrips between the Salem Ferry Terminal in Salem and Long Wharf North in Boston from May 20 to October 31. The service is priced differentially so leisure travelers to Salem subsidize the cost to commuters.

Figure 4: Salem to Boston Ferry Route



Route Details

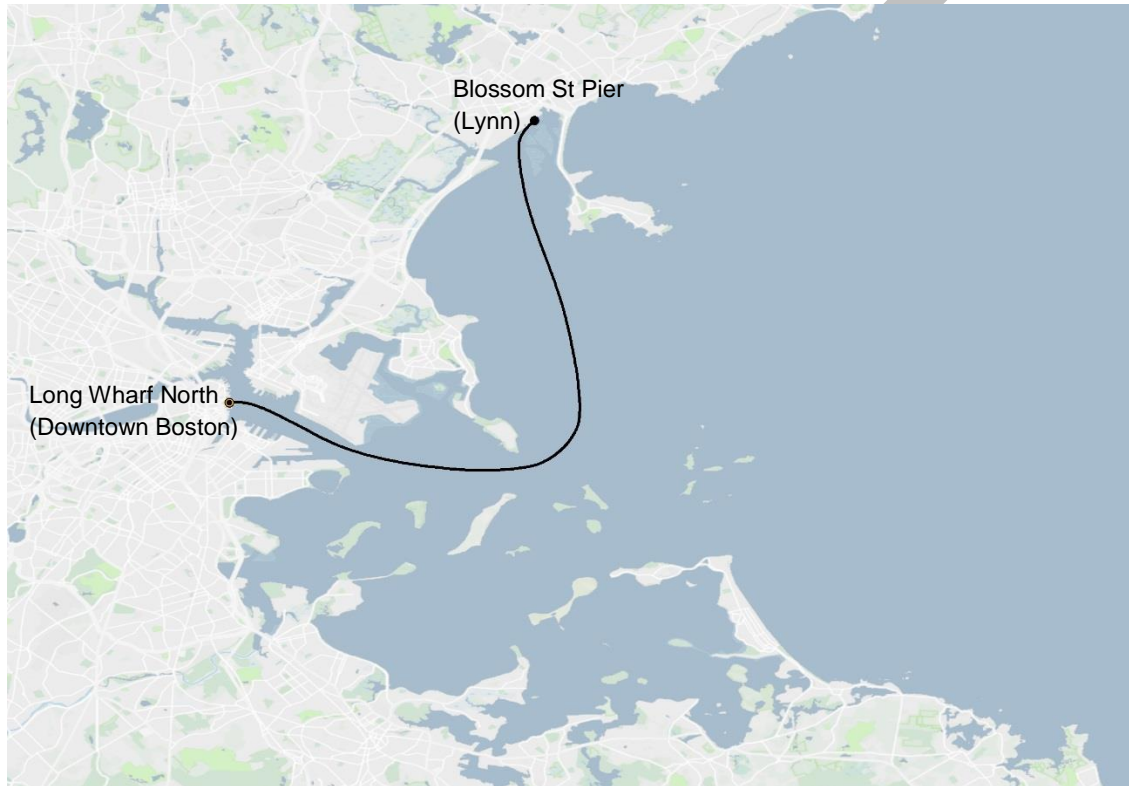
- Fare: \$25/ride with discounts for seniors, children, Salem residents, and North Shore residents; the fare is only \$8/ride for commuters taking the 7:00 AM trip to Boston and 5:30 PM trip to Salem
- Ridership: 61,185 (2016)
- Farebox Recovery: 91% (2016)⁴
- Owner: The City of Salem owns the boat and contracts with Boston Harbor Cruises (BHC) for operations.
- Operator: BHC
- Funding: Salem and farebox
- Travel Time: 55 minutes

⁴ This farebox comes from BHC and includes ticket and galley revenues.

Lynn to Boston

This temporary seasonal service between Blossom Street Pier in Lynn and Long Wharf in Boston offered one inbound and one outbound trip per day primarily to serve commuters from June 20 to September 22 of 2017. MassDOT provided support to the City of Lynn for this route as mitigation for the impact of construction work on Route 1A and around the Sumner Tunnel. There was previously a pilot service for this route in the summers of 2014 and 2015.

Figure 5: Lynn to Boston Ferry Route



Route Details

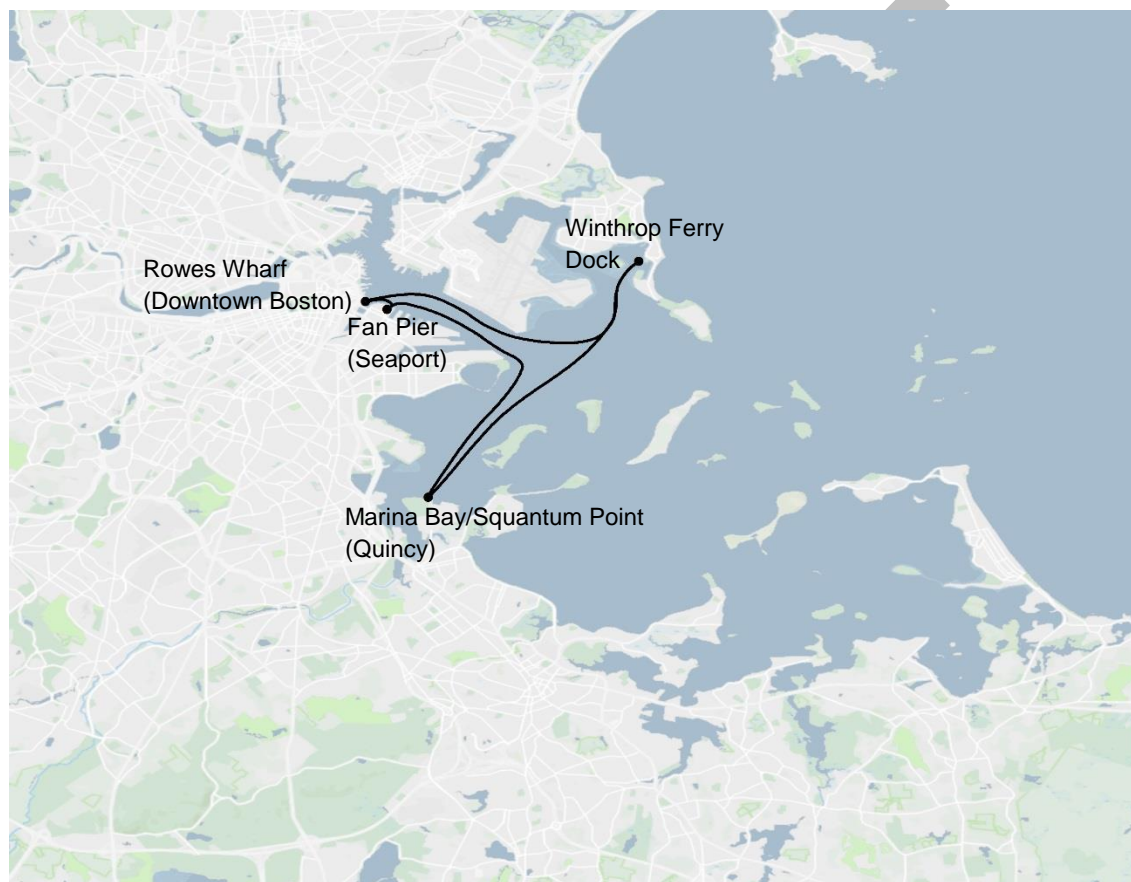
- Fare: \$7/ride
- Ridership: 15,230 (2015)
- Farebox Recovery: data not available⁵
- Owner: Boston Harbor Cruises (BHC) owns the boat.
- Operator: BHC
- Funding: MassDOT
- Travel Time: 30 to 35 minutes

⁵ Due to the structure of the subsidy for this service, the team has been unable to secure an accurate farebox recovery ratio for either the two-year pilot in 2014 and 2015 or the mitigation service in 2017. The farebox recovery in 2015 may have been as low as 4%.

Winthrop to Quincy to Boston

This seasonal service offered by the Town of Winthrop connects the Winthrop Ferry Dock to Marina Bay/Squantum Point in Quincy and to Fan Pier and Rowes Wharf in Boston with 6 to 8 trips per day. With a schedule that has evolved over two seasons, the Winthrop-owned vessel, the *Valkyrie*, has served variations of this route in 2016 and 2017. A pilot service that connects Quincy with the Seaport directly is operating in the fall of 2017.

Figure 6: Winthrop to Quincy to Boston Ferry Route



Route Details

- Fare: \$8.50/ride
- Ridership: 12,562 (2016)⁶
- Farebox Recovery: 58% (2016)⁷
- Owner: Winthrop
- Operator: Winthrop
- Funding: Winthrop and farebox with temporary MBTA support
- Travel Time: varies (times range from 25 minutes to 65 minutes depending on stops)

⁶ Ridership data provided by the Town of Winthrop.

⁷ Farebox recovery data provided by the Town of Winthrop. Additional forms of support were secured in 2017 in order to offset the farebox with the intention of breaking even on operating costs but not to make a profit.

Boston to Provincetown

Passenger ferry service between Provincetown and Boston is an entirely private venture. Both Boston Harbor Cruises (BHC) and Bay State Cruise Company own and operate high speed services between Long Wharf South and World Trade Center, respectively, in Boston and MacMillan Pier near the tip of Cape Cod. Seasonal service from mid-May to mid-October provides one to four roundtrips per day primarily for leisure travelers.

Figure 7: Boston to Provincetown Ferry Route



Route Details

- Fare: \$59/ride and \$88/roundtrip with discounts for seniors and children
- Farebox Recovery: >100%
- Owner: BHC and Bay State Cruises
- Operator: BHC and Bay State Cruises
- Funding: Farebox with market rate ticket pricing
- Travel Time: approximately 90 minutes

Harbor Islands Routes

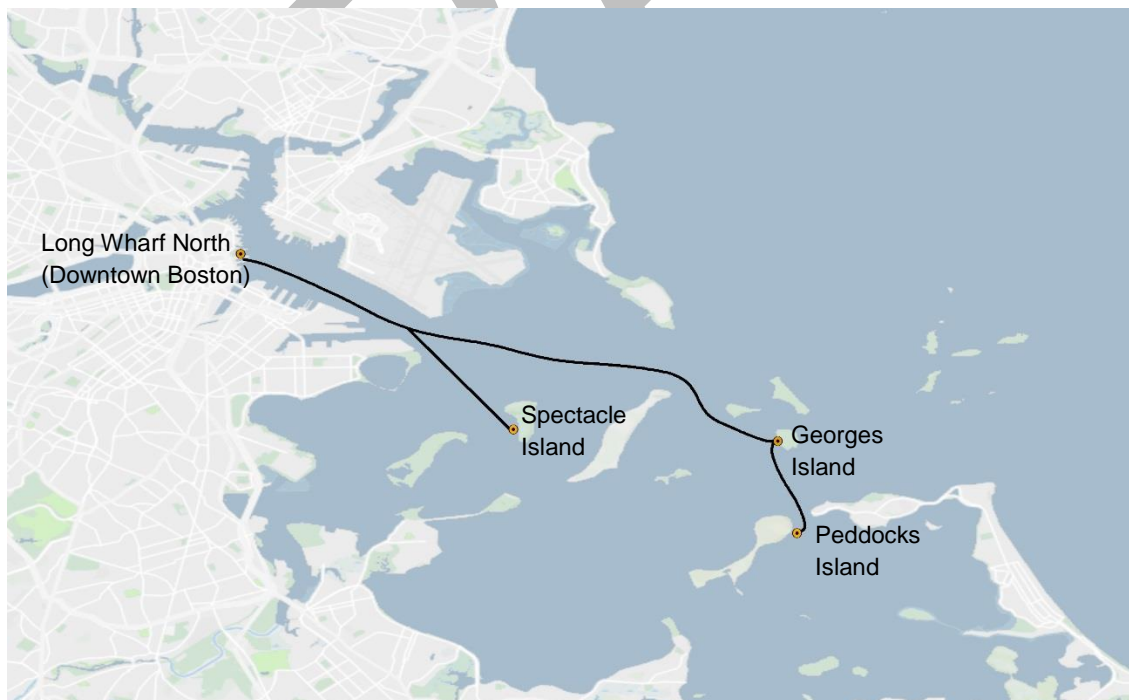
Service from Boston, Hingham, and Hull to Georges, Spectacle, Peddocks, Lovells, Grape, and Bumpkin Islands

Service to the Boston Harbor Islands from Long Wharf in Boston, Hewitt’s Cove in Hingham, and Pemberton Point in Hull is seasonal. Direct trips to Georges and Spectacle Islands from Long Wharf are available over the longest season (May to October) and are the most frequent. In summer months, boats depart hourly to Georges or Spectacle. There is also a single direct trip to Peddocks Island from Long Wharf in the peak season that was added two years ago to increase visitation to the island. The MBTA ferry from Hingham also makes a limited number of stops at Georges Island in the summer.

From late June to early September, a 49-passenger boat operates between Hewitt’s Cove, Pemberton Point, Grape Island (5 landings/day), Peddocks Island (6 landings/day), Georges Island (7 landings/day), Lovells Island (4 landings/day), and Bumpkin Island (3 landings/day). This is the only service to Grape and Bumpkin – small islands primarily used for camping. Prior to 2013, subsidies allowed for more frequent inter-island service, but the current schedule reflects the need to economize on the route without the previous subsidy.

With the exception of Spectacle Island, a single ticket can provide access to multiple islands, allowing transfers between Georges, Peddocks, and other islands via the inter-island shuttle. A library pass program offers a 2 for 1 rate when Boston area residents book online in advance. Two “free ferry days” offer access to the islands at no charge on opening day in May and on one Friday in August.

Figure 8: Boston to Georges, Spectacle and Peddocks Islands Ferry Routes and Schedule



SUMMER SCHEDULE IS IN EFFECT JUNE 23 - SEPTEMBER 4. SPRING / FALL SCHEDULES ARE IN EFFECT MAY 13 - JUNE 22 AND SEPTEMBER 5 - OCTOBER 9 UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.

CHECK BOSTONHARBORCRUISES.COM FOR SPECIAL EVENT SCHEDULING IN EFFECT JUNE 15 - JUNE 21.

BOSTON TO GEORGES ISLAND

TRAVEL TIME: 50 MINUTES

SUMMER WEEKENDS		SPRING / FALL / SUMMER WEEKDAYS	
DEPART BOSTON	DEPART GEORGES	DEPART BOSTON	DEPART GEORGES
9:00 AM	10:00 AM		
10:00 AM	11:00 AM	10:00 AM	11:00 AM
11:00 AM	12:00 PM	12:00 PM	1:00 PM
12:00 PM	1:00 PM		
1:00 PM	2:00 PM	2:00 PM	3:00 PM
2:00 PM	3:00 PM		
3:00 PM	4:00 PM		
	5:00 PM		
	6:00 PM		

BOSTON TO SPECTACLE ISLAND

TRAVEL TIME: 20 MINUTES

SUMMER		SPRING / FALL	
DEPART BOSTON	DEPART SPECTACLE	DEPART BOSTON	DEPART SPECTACLE
9:30 AM	10:30 AM	10:30 AM	11:30 AM
10:15 AM*	11:00 AM*	1:00 PM	2:00 PM
10:30 AM	12:30 PM	3:00 PM	4:00 PM
11:30 AM	2:30 PM		
1:30 PM	4:30 PM		
3:30 PM	6:00 PM		

*weekends and holidays in summer only

BOSTON, SPECTACLE, GEORGES AND PEDDOCKS ISLANDS LOOP

TRAVEL TIP: CHANGE AT GEORGES ISLAND FOR MORE SERVICE TO PEDDOCKS

SUMMER ONLY				
DEPART BOSTON	DEPART SPECTACLE	DEPART GEORGES	DEPART PEDDOCKS	ARRIVE BOSTON
8:30 AM	-	-	9:30 AM	10:15 AM
10:30 AM	11:15 AM	-	12:15 PM	-
-	-	12:45 PM	-	-
-	1:15 PM	1:45 PM	2:15 PM	-
-	-	2:45 PM	-	-
-	3:15 PM	3:45 PM	-	-
-	4:15 PM	-	5:00 PM	5:45 PM

Figure 9: The Inter-Island Ferry Route and Schedule



HINGHAM AND HULL TO GEORGES, GRAPE, LOVELLS, PEDDOCKS AND BUMPKIN ISLANDS

GRAPE AND BUMPKIN ISLAND STOPS AVAILABLE WEDNESDAY - SUNDAY. ALL OTHER STOPS AVAILABLE 7 DAYS A WEEK.

SUMMER ONLY							
DEPART HINGHAM	DEPART GRAPE	DEPART HULL	DEPART PEDDOCKS	DEPART GEORGES	DEPART LOVELLS	DEPART BUMPKIN	ARRIVE HINGHAM
8:30 AM	8:45 AM	-	-	-	-	9:15 AM	-
-	-	9:35 AM	9:45 AM	10:05 AM	10:15 AM	-	-
-	-	-	-	10:30 AM	-	-	-
-	-	10:45 AM	11:00 AM	11:15 AM	11:30 AM	-	-
-	-	-	-	11:45 AM	-	-	-
-	-	-	12:05 PM	-	-	-	-
-	12:30 PM	-	-	-	-	-	12:40 PM
12:45 PM	1:00 PM	-	1:30 PM	1:45 PM	2:00 PM	2:35 PM	-
-	-	3:00 PM	3:15 PM	3:35 PM	4:05 PM	-	-
-	-	-	-	4:25 PM	-	-	-
-	-	-	4:40 PM	-	-	-	-
-	-	5:00 PM	-	-	-	5:30 PM	-
-	6:00 PM	-	-	-	-	-	6:15 PM

Route Details

- Fare: \$17/ride with discounted fares for children, seniors, students, and military personnel. Family four packs, 10-ride passes, and season passes are additional discount options.
- Ridership: 104,139 (2016)⁸
- Farebox Recovery: 69% (2016)⁹
- Owner: Boston Harbor Now (BHN) contracts with Boston Harbor Cruises (BHC)
- Operator: BHC
- Funding: Farebox
- Travel Time: 25 to 30 minutes to Spectacle, 50 minutes to Georges on the current vessels

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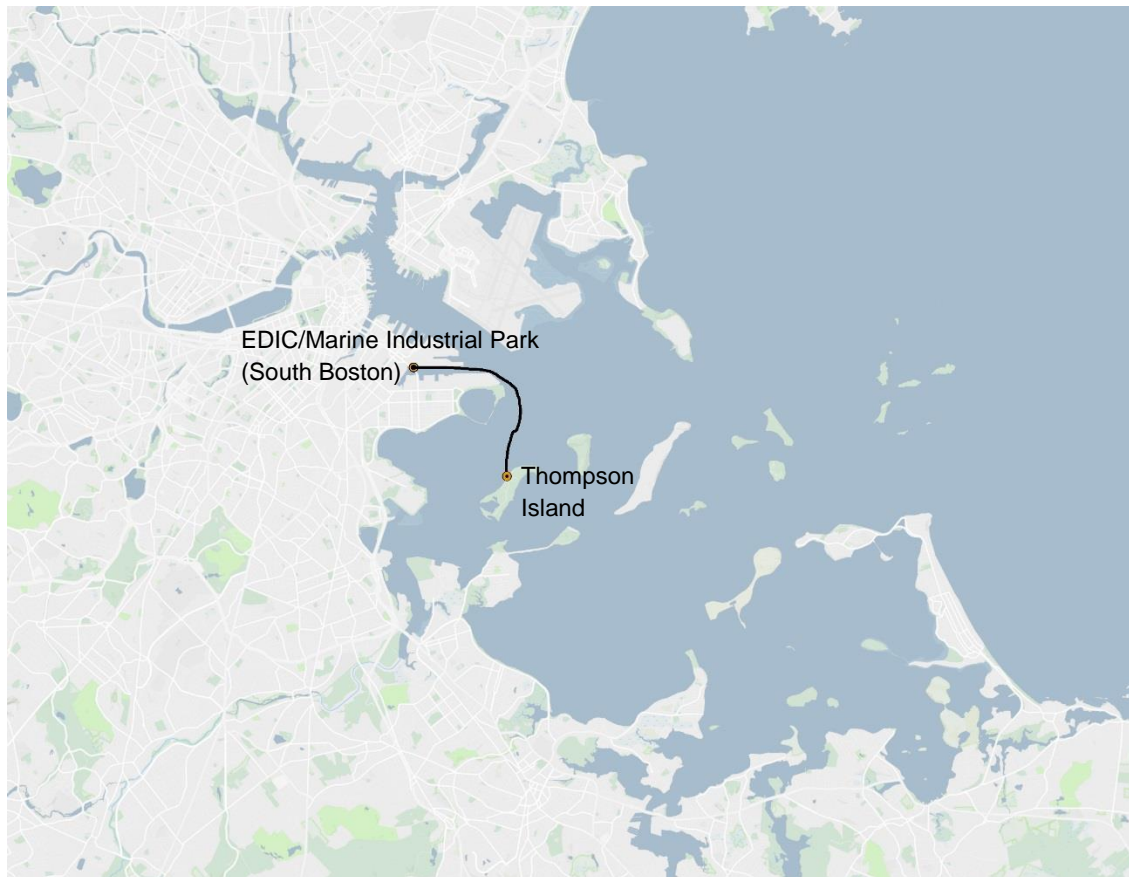
⁸ Ridership data is for all of the Harbor Island routes operated by BHC.

⁹ Farebox recovery data is for all of the Harbor Island routes operated by BHC and includes ticket and galley revenues.

Boston to Thompson Island

Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center (TIOBEC) owns a vessel that is used on weekdays to ferry students to programs on the island. From early June to early September, the boat has three Saturday and two Sunday departures from the EDIC/Marine Industrial Park Pier that are open to the public, though they are primarily operated to take staff and supplies to the island.

Figure 10: Boston to Thompson Island Ferry Route



Route Details

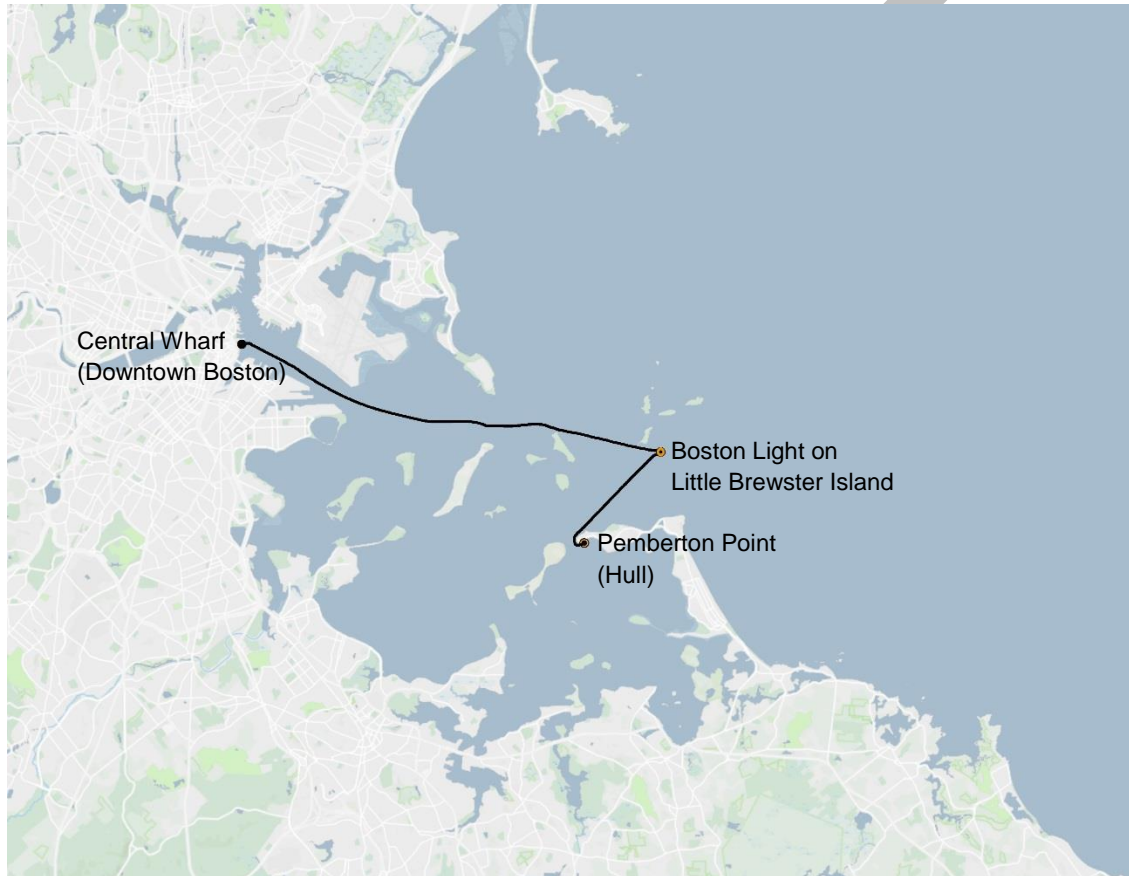
- Fare: \$17/ride¹⁰
- Owner: TIOBEC
- Operator: TIOBEC
- Funding: TIOBEC and Farebox

¹⁰ Cash is collected on board. Ridership and Farebox Recovery are not calculated.

Boston and Hull to Boston Light

In summer and fall, there are two daily departures from Central Wharf in Boston to Little Brewster for tours of Boston Light, America's Oldest Light Station. Twice a summer, there are tours from Pemberton Point in Hull. The lighthouse is operated by the US Coast Guard while NPS rangers provide tours of the island and the light. The boat trips are operated by UMass Marine Operations in partnership with Boston Harbor Now (BHN). All of these groups work together to provide access to Boston Light.

Figure 11: Boston and Hull to Boston Light Ferry Route



Route Details

- Fare: \$30/roundtrip to Little Brewster Island (\$41/roundtrip with lighthouse climb)
- Ridership: approximately 2,800 people in an average summer¹¹
- Farebox Recovery: >100%
- Owner: BHN contracts with UMass Marine Operations
- Operator: UMass Marine Operations
- Funding: Farebox

¹¹ In 2016, Boston Light celebrated its tercentennial as a light station and had a record 4,300 visitors. The number of visitor is limited by the sensitivity of the historic site.

3. Conclusions and Next Steps

The services described above reveal the complexities of the existing ferry system in Boston Harbor and to the Islands. While the current ridership is significant, it is notable that only the three MBTA routes currently offer year-round service. Existing and future commuter services may offer considerable potential as year-round services. It is also notable that the farebox recovery is relatively high across the various services. Given the modest frequency for some services, this suggests the potential for further increasing usage and revenue from a more frequent level of service on existing smaller services.

Various locations in the Inner Harbor, North Shore and South Shore are not currently served by ferries, and an investigation and assessment of potential new routes will be the focus of subsequent work.

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Credits

Project Coordination

- Boston Harbor Now



Study Sponsors

- MassDOT
- Massport
- National Park Service
- Seaport Economic Council of the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Affairs
- Massachusetts Convention Center Authority
- The Barr Foundation
- Cabot Family Charitable Trust
- Envoy Hotel
- Clippership Wharf



Consultant Team

- Steer Davies Gleave
- KPFF Consulting Engineers
- Moffatt and Nichol Engineering
- Elliott Bay Design Group
- Progressions
- Norris and Norris

