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15 State Street Suite 1100
Boston, MA 02109
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bostonharbornow.org

April 1, 2022

Via email: james.fitzgerald@boston.gov

Boston Planning and Development Agency
Attention: Jim Fitzgerald
One City Hall Square Boston, MA 02201

Re: South Boston Seaport Strategic Transit Plan

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Dear Mr. Fitzgerald,

Boston Harbor Now appreciates the opportunity to comment on the South Boston Seaport Strategic Transit Plan that the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) and the Boston Transportation Department (BTD) have been working on for the past several years. We have been following the plan closely, hosted a special Harbor Use Public Forum on this topic in January of 2020, and attended the most recent public meeting on March 3, 2022.

As a significant waterfront neighborhood, the Seaport's transportation options matter to Boston Harbor Now. We care deeply about having a range of safe, low-cost, and environmentally responsible options for accessing the waterfront and Harborwalk in this rapidly changing district. Given concerns about racial equity and affordability, high quality public transit options coupled with high quality infrastructure designed for people walking and biking are essential for the area.

The breadth of water transportation recommendations is commendable. Boston Harbor Now is strongly supportive of expanding water transportation services around both the Inner Harbor and the region. Based on the comprehensive study and resulting business plans that we completed in 2019, we would like to refine the recommendations presented on slide 55 of the March 3 slide deck.¹ Comprehensively, it is our ultimate goal to create a public ferry network that is integrated with the fares and schedules of the existing public bus and train network. Ferries would ideally offer full ADA accessibility, include fare transfers from other modes, provide 7-day service from early morning to late evening, and utilize electric or hybrid vessels for routes within the low-wake zone.

¹ <http://www.bostonplans.org/getattachment/6b59e00b-e91e-41fe-a686-7b76aaaf94a1>



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In considering the numbered facilities and services on the map labelled “Water Transit Connections,” we offer the following suggestions:

- 15: The ferry dock at Fan Pier is in good condition. The only urgently needed upgrade is the addition of charging infrastructure for electric ferries. A public ferry dock on the east side of World Trade Center, recently rebranded as Commonwealth Pier, would better serve the Convention Center and most buildings and facilities east of B Street. As such, this facility should be a priority for service. Improvements to Pier 10 are also welcome, since they have garnered significant support from building owners and businesses near the working dry dock and the Reserved Channel. A ferry terminal near the historic dry dock should not be prioritized, though a water taxi dock may be built here.
- 16: Based on the recommendations of the Inner Harbor Connector Business Plan, we believe that a Charlestown ferry connection should leverage the existing service from Charlestown’s Pier 4 to Long Wharf and then continue on to the Seaport.² There is not sufficient demand between the Charlestown Navy Yard and the Seaport to justify a direct service with departures frequent enough to make it competitive with other modes. The relatively new service from Lovejoy Wharf to Fan Pier that connects North Station to the Seaport is working well and could be marketed to Charlestown residents who might transfer from the 92 or 93 bus routes or the Orange Line to the Lovejoy ferry dock. We hope to see the hours increased over time, particularly in the afternoon and evening.
- 17: We applaud the East Boston to Seaport ferry pilot as a critical first step in restarting water transportation for East Boston. It is important to us that this service have longer hours in the future instead of catering only to traditional commuters. Ideally, this route would be operated by the MBTA or at least integrated into their fare structure. The route could also include a link to Long Wharf to provide additional transit options to East Boston residents and workers.
- 18: If the Inner Harbor Connector Business Plan was implemented, Long Wharf and Seaport connections would be part of the routes that also served Charlestown and East Boston as described above.
- 19: Not only can regional ferry services from Salem, Hingham, and Hull connect with the Seaport, but the Winthrop and Quincy route that stops there now can be further supported and expanded. At

² <https://www.bostonharbornow.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/BHN-Water-Trans-report-Inner-Harbor-FINAL.pdf>



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present, there is much more demand for direct service from the North and South Shore to downtown Boston than to the Seaport, so any stops in the Seaport should go downtown and then to the Seaport in the morning while stopping first at the Seaport and then downtown in the afternoon. This model is used by the Winthrop boat now. Additionally, given the relative proximity of Rowes Wharf to Fan Pier, especially once the Northern Avenue Bridge is rebuilt, regional ferry services in particular should dock at World Trade Center (Commonwealth Pier).

In addition to the water transportation recommendations above, we want to voice our support for the Summer Street Multimodal Corridor and the efforts to improve transit flow and bicyclist safety on this important arterial street. By contrast, we are concerned by the inclusion of bus service over the Northern Avenue Bridge given concerns by locals and transportation advocates that have been voiced repeatedly during the design process. It remains unclear what benefits there are to incorporating this complexity into the bridge given the realities of the surrounding roadway network and the lack of existing public bus service that requires this feature.

At Boston Harbor Now, we use the term “Harborwalk 2.0” to capture our aspirational standards for creating resilient and welcoming spaces along the Boston Harbor waterfront. We hope that all of the infrastructure updates proposed and implemented through this planning process will take the anticipated coastal climate change impacts into account as well as consider how to capture and divert rainwater flooding and prepare for extreme with additional trees and shade. Similarly, roadway and station designs should consider the inclusivity of their features and invite people to linger.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments. Boston Harbor Now looks forward to continued collaboration with the BPDA and BTM to improve the transportation options to and within this waterfront neighborhood.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alice Brown".

Alice Brown, AICP
Chief of Planning and Policy
Boston Harbor Now