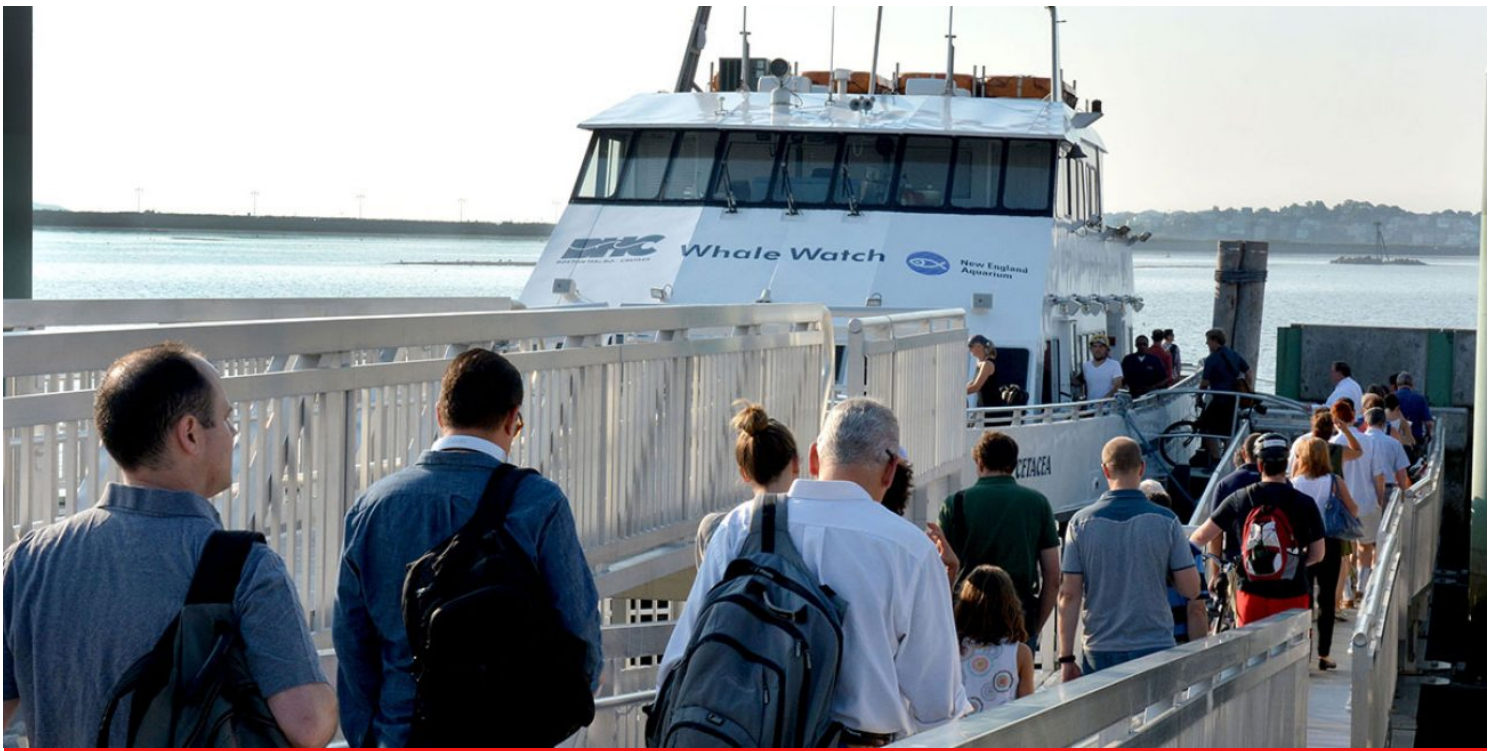


NEWS

LYNN SETS COURSE FOR YEAR-ROUND FERRY

BY GAYLA CAWLEY | September 13, 2017



(File photo)

LYNN — Ferry service from Lynn to Boston could soon become a year-round option for commuters.

Earlier in the week, state Sen. Thomas McGee (D-Lynn), state Rep. Brendan Crighton (D-Lynn) and James Cowdell, Economic Development and Industrial Corporation of Lynn executive director, proposed a new year-round ferry pilot program from Lynn to Boston to the MassDOT Board of Directors and MBTA Fiscal Management and Control Board.

McGee cited the success of the Hingham ferry, which he said started with only 75 daily riders and one round trip per day and now provides more than 30 departures per day and averages 65,000 passenger trips per month, while making the case for year-round service with commuter rail pass connectivity and a more robust schedule.

“The average number of daily passenger trips when the Lynn (ferry) began in 2014 was double that of what Hingham saw initially,” McGee said in a statement. “We know that to encourage mode shift and increase ridership, the Lynn to Boston ferry needs to adapt to commuters’ needs, and year-round service with departures to Logan and the Boston waterfront would allow more flexible and convenient options for commuters.

“We need solutions to the gridlock that our region faces and water transportation offers a reliable, sustainable and more immediate solution than any other transportation improvements.”

Mayor Judith Flanagan Kennedy said she supports a year-round ferry, but only if the state picks up the tab.

The Lynn to Boston ferry, funded by a grant from the Massachusetts Seaport Advisory Council and in partnership with Boston Harbor Cruises as the operator, first began service with a two-year pilot program in May 2014 and completed its second year in 2015. McGee said the estimated total number of riders during the 2014 season was 13,322 and about 14,577 the following season.

This summer’s ferry service consists of one morning peak hour departure from Lynn’s Blossom Street Extension at 7:45 a.m., arriving at Boston’s Long Wharf at 8:20 a.m., and one evening peak hour departure from Boston at 6 p.m., arriving in Lynn at 6:35 p.m.

Crighton and Cowdell spoke about the positive impact the Lynn ferry service has had on economic development in Lynn since the initial pilot, citing hundreds of new residential units and multiple mixed-use developments that have come to fruition since the ferry launched.

Crighton said he was advocating for a year-round ferry, and the three officials were basically making the case that with a limited schedule and only a seasonal pilot, the city was able to demonstrate really strong ridership numbers.

“As our ability to get to Boston becomes more and more difficult because of traffic congestion, it makes sense for water transportation to be part of the solution,” Crighton said.

Crighton said year-round service would provide additional economic development in the area, with people having access to additional modes of transit.

He said the reason they went to the meeting was to hopefully get in the pipeline for a pilot program, with the idea that once Lynn has its own ferry vessel over the next year or two, and if it could get through the next few years, the city could have a long-term solution for additional transportation access across the North Shore.

“The pilot program, if we were to receive it, the state would pay for a ferry to operate out of Lynn for 52 weeks, which we believe would be awesome,” Cowdell said.

Cowdell said the service has only been from May to September. He said it’s his belief that if people who commute to Boston have a ferry option for an entire year, the ferry would become much better traveled and more popular.

According to McGee’s office, the Lynn Ferry project has been a vision of community leaders for more than a decade – it was incorporated into the city’s Waterfront Master Plan in 2007 to maximize planning and economic development. Work toward the vision began in 2008 with a \$750,000 grant from the Massachusetts Seaport Advisory Council. The initial funding was used at the designated Blossom Street Extension site for the reconstruction of the boat ramp, improvements to the drainage, pavement of the adjacent lot and demolition of an existing building – both had been vacant for more than 30 years.

Last year, in an effort led by U.S. Rep. Seth Moulton and in partnership with state and local leaders, the Federal Transit Administration awarded a \$4.5 million grant for the city to purchase a dedicated vessel to support long-term ferry service, McGee said.

MassDot also provided resources this past winter for the city to develop a long-term sustainability plan for ferry operations, and is currently helping the city with its procurement of the vessel.

“I think it’s important to note that the state and the federal government gave us \$7 million to build this wonderful terminal that we now have,” Cowdell said. “You can’t just invest that kind of money and walk away. It makes sense for the state to further their investment with a year-round program.”



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