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The Lynn-to-Boston commuter ferry is set to begin service on May 19



[Jon Chesto](#)

Managing Editor, Print- Boston Business Journal

[Email](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Google+](#)

Kati Enscoe has tried just about everything to commute from her home in Marblehead to her law firm's office on the South Boston waterfront.

She's taken the commuter rail, boarded the Blue Line, and even tried the bus. Some days, this meant also using the Hubway bike share program, or plenty of walking. But she usually drives, despite the hassles. No matter what combination she tries, she says she is often looking at a one-way trip ranging from 45 minutes to an hour and 45 minutes.

That's why the communications manager at Fish & Richardson is excited she won't have to wait long before North Shore commuters like her get a new option: [the new Lynn-to-Boston ferry starts up on May 19](#).

"Working in the Seaport is awesome," Enscoe tells me via email. "Every day there is a new office or restaurant opening, and the vibe in this area is young, professional and full of energy and excitement. The only downside is the commute, as there is no public transportation to this area if you are coming from the North Shore. This move to provide us ... with the Lynnway ferry option is honestly the best move that transit in Massachusetts has made for a long time."

The boat will pull up at Central Wharf, next to the New England Aquarium. It's a nearly 15-minute walk from there to Fish & Richardson's office at One Marina Park Drive. But it sure beats sitting in traffic on the Lynnway.

James Cowdell is banking on more commuters like Enscoe showing up for the roughly half-hour ride into Boston. As executive director of Lynn's Economic Development & Industrial Corp., Cowdell has helped shepherd this project to fruition. [It's been an eight-year process to get to this point](#), and Cowdell was dogged by skeptics for much of the way. Now, Cowdell is about to prove those skeptics wrong.

Cowdell tells me the EDIC hired Boston Harbor Cruises last month to operate the new ferry — Lynn's first in its history — on a trial basis for two years. At the start, the boat would only travel in warmer months, from May 19 through September 12. The one-way fare would be \$7, but holders of "Zone 2" or higher commuter rail passes would be able to ride for free. (Lynn's two commuter rail stops are in "Zone 2" and charge \$6 one-way without the MBTA pass.) The big attraction: nearly 300 parking spaces at the Lynn dock, all of them free.

Public subsidies have played a key role in getting this project off the ground. Roughly \$6 million in state and federal funds helped pay for a three-phase construction project to prepare the site — work that included dredging, drainage, paving, seawall construction and a new dock. Cowdell says that funds from the state's Seaport Advisory Council are paying for the \$1.3 million in operating costs over two years — essentially the contract with Boston Harbor Cruises. But the EDIC wants additional revenue to help pay for the other costs of maintaining the ferry site off Blossom Street in Lynn. The EDIC now controls about four acres there, and Cowdell would like to get work under way for a two-story terminal building that could include a restaurant with water views on the second floor.

The schedule calls for the boat to leave Lynn at 6:30 and 8 every weekday morning and at 6:30 at night, and to leave Boston at 7:15 in the morning, and 5:45 and 7:15 every weeknight. Cowdell says Boston Harbor Cruises will be a 250-foot boat that the company currently uses for whale watch cruises. Those cruises will continue in the midday hours and on the weekends when the boat isn't in use as a commuter ferry.

Eventually, Cowdell wants to prove to state and federal officials that there's enough of a demand for a year-round service that the EDIC will be able to obtain some financial help so the ferry can run throughout the year after this pilot program is over. Unlike the Salem ferry, which navigates a significant amount of open water, Lynn's ferry is only outside of the Boston Harbor for a short period of time, making winter trips more feasible.

"We really think it's going to lead to big things in this area," says Cowdell, who sees this ferry as a catalyst for redevelopment on Lynn's worn-out waterfront. "It makes people look at Lynn in a different light, a good light."