



## Cowdell floats ferry as wave of the future

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LYNN — A regular ferry from the city to Boston was one of Jim Cowdell’s goals since his first month on the job as executive director of the Lynn Economic Development and Industrial Corporation in 2006.

“When I see the boat coming in, I get goosebumps,” Cowdell said. “It started so many years ago and to see it come to fruition is really exciting.”

After 17 years of fits and starts, including pilot programs in 2014, 2015, and 2017, it seems that ferry trips from Blossom Street Pier to Long Wharf in Boston, [which started in June](#), are here to stay.

The ferry was due to make its last voyage of the year earlier this month, but had service extended until November after state Sen. Brendan Crighton and other members of the state delegation advocated for an extension.

“(The state delegation) always knew there was ridership here, but I don’t think any of us expected that it would be as high as it was and consistent as it was throughout the summer,” Crighton, who serves as chair of the Joint Committee on Transportation, said.

Crighton said the success of the service, along with the extension, show the long-term viability of the Lynn ferry. He also credited Gov. Maura Healey and Lt. Gov. Kim Driscoll’s administration for being so receptive to the idea.

“We had been pitching this for a long time with the previous administration, and they always found a way to ‘no,’” Crighton said. “We’ve been trying to do this for years and (the Healey-Driscoll administration) got this done in a few short months.”

Cowdell said he always knew the ferry, which had slightly less than 20,000 riders in the months of July and August, would be a success.

“The numbers were proof that we had a good idea,” Cowdell said. “A lot of people were naysayers and said it was never going to work.”

Thomas McGee, who was previously the Senate chair of the Joint Committee on Transportation and currently serves on the MBTA Board of Directors, said the ridership numbers from the summer were no surprise.

“I think it’s really exciting to see that this year the ridership was what many of us always believed it would be, that this really should be a permanent operation,” McGee said.

The journey, which is around 30 minutes, is one that Cowdell described as smooth and relaxing compared to travelling to Boston by car.

“You see the customers come off and they’re happy,” he said. “It’s 30 minutes, you could take a nap, you could do work, or just go on your phone.”

When he visits Blossom Street Pier now, Cowdell said the area is unrecognizable from what it looked like when he first began developing the ferry plan with McGee.

McGee said the idea came to him when he was serving in the state House of Representatives, inspired by the Hingham and Hull MBTA ferry lines.

“It’s something that I started to explore,” McGee, who served as Lynn’s mayor from 2018 to 2022, said. “Why couldn’t we start to see an opportunity to have a ferry service from Lynn to Boston?”

When Cowdell joined EDIC/Lynn in 2006, he got right to work.

“The city owned the land and the land was contaminated,” Cowdell said. “The city gave it to EDIC and said ‘Do something with it.’”

The area now includes two new sections of paved parking, a public boat ramp, and a ferry pier.

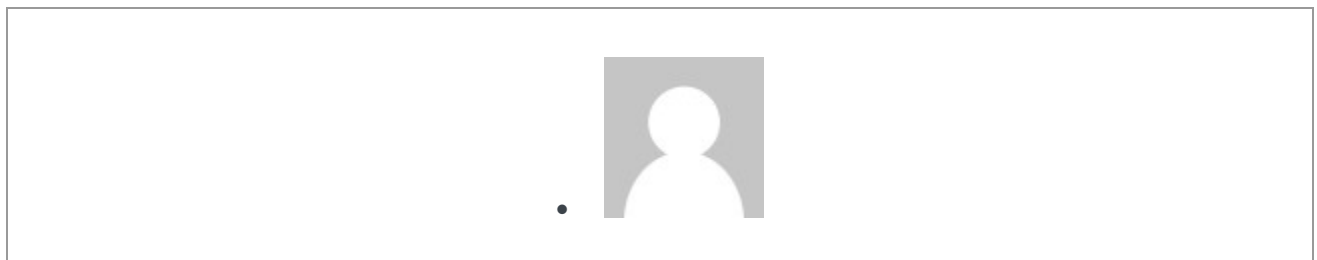
In the future, Cowdell said the parking lot will have electric-vehicle charging stations that are currently being acquired, as well as a boardwalk along the waterfront.

The ultimate vision, according to Cowdell, is for a two-story building with a public-safety office, waiting area, café, and restaurant to accommodate ferry riders and visitors alike.

“What we’re trying to do is activate this area,” Cowdell said. “When you think of Lynn, you don’t often think about Lynn having a waterfront, so we’re trying to get folks to experience it.”

Cowdell said he believes that the ferry can be a year-round solution, something that Crighton also said should be the service’s goal.

“We have to have this be part of Massachusetts’ transportation, using our water,” Crighton said. “We shouldn’t see this as some novelty for seasonal service. We see this as a viable option to get to Boston”



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