



The City of New York

# **Manhattan Community Board 1**

Catherine McVay Hughes CHAIRPERSON | Noah Pfefferblit DISTRICT MANAGER

## **New York City Council Committees on Waterfronts, Transportation, and Economic Development**

### **Oversight Hearing on A Vital Part of New York City's Public Transit System**

**Testimony by  
Catherine McVay Hughes, Chairperson**

**Tuesday, May 28, 2013  
250 Broadway, 14<sup>th</sup> floor, New York, NY  
1:00 PM**

Good afternoon. I am Catherine McVay Hughes, Chair of Manhattan Community Board One (CB1). Thank you Chairperson Peter Koo, and committee members, for the opportunity to comment on the value of ferries to New York's transportation network.

Community Board 1 (CB1) is one of New York City's 59 community boards and covers most of the southernmost part of Lower Manhattan below Canal Street and includes three significant islands: Governor's Island, Statue of Liberty Island and Ellis Island. It is bounded by the East River and the Hudson River. We have almost 65,000 residents, 310,000 workers and were visited by 12 million tourists last year. Ferries are the only way to get to these icon historic places and parks, and for others to commute to and from New Jersey and elsewhere to Lower Manhattan. They are critical component of NYC's public transportation network. For example, the Staten Island Ferry is the only non-vehicular mode of transportation between Staten Island and Manhattan. It provides 20 million people a year with ferry service and plays a vital connectivity role in NYC's transportation system, linking them to the subway, bus and now Citibike.

Ferries are a significant part of Lower Manhattan's transportation system. They are a valued community amenity and provide commuters with an alternative to more environmentally taxing forms of transportation such as buses and personal automobiles. In addition, ferry service was crucial during the evacuations that took place as a result of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 and the 1993 WTC bomb attacks, and was one of the first modes of transportation back on-line after Superstorm Sandy struck New York City. Ferries are also a beloved tourist attraction, create jobs, and provide opportunities for Lower Manhattan residents to easily travel to Red Hook for grocery shopping and other services.

Unfortunately, residents of Community Board 1 have suffered some negative impacts from ferry service in Lower Manhattan. Older ferry models are loud and have heavy emissions, creating noise and environmental pollution. For example, we recently noticed the black soot emanating from ferries transporting people to and from the island, including the Staten Island Ferry. Also, residents of Battery Park City have reported un-proportional ferry docking between the north and

south docks, disproportionately placing a burden on residents in the northern portion of the neighborhood. Finally, periods of heavy ferry usage have caused subsequent pedestrian and vehicular congestion in areas of Lower Manhattan designated for ferry queuing.

Progress has been made in alleviating some of these negative impacts. The two new Goldman Sachs ferries are a major improvement over older models; they are quiet and environmentally friendly. Also, an effort has been made to reconfigure ferry docking in Battery Park City in order to achieve better balance. Community Board 1 would like to thank the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey as well as New York Waterways for working with us in mitigating some of these negative effects.

In light of these concerns and our enthusiasm for ferries as a part of Lower Manhattan's transportation network, Community Board 1 has the following suggestions for future ferry service:

1. Balancing of ferry service – Future ferry service should be equally distributed and balanced in a way that does not place any disproportionate burden on residents in any particular area.
2. Air quality and noise issues – Ferries should be retrofitted using the best available technology and industry standards and use ultra-low sulfur diesel fuel.
3. Pedestrian and vehicular flow – Sidewalks and bike paths must to be wide enough to accommodate increased traffic. In addition, vehicular and pedestrian traffic must be separated in order to reduce pedestrian-vehicular conflicts.
4. Space for bicycles on ferries – Retrofitted ferries should be designed to hold bicycles in order to accommodate cyclists.
5. Security – Security is an absolute priority in regards to ferry service. Security screening should take place in a manner that minimizes the effect on the public realm, without blocking views, disrupting pedestrian flow, or creating unsanitary conditions. We believe that this can be done without compromising safety.
6. Safety – Ferries should be operated according to the highest safety standards in order to prevent accidents such as the one that took place on the East River at Pier 11 on January 9, 2013, which injured dozens of passengers.

Ferries not only play a significant role in New York City's transportation network, but they also help reconnect residents, workers and tourists to the water that surrounds them. Community Board 1 supports the expansion of efficient and environmentally friendly ferry service in Lower Manhattan and looks forward to working with the City and ferry service providers to implementing this vision.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the value of ferries to New York's transportation network.