



Statement on NYC Ferry Forward Plan

Contact:

Sean Campion
212-279-2605, ext. 312

Ana Champeny
212-279-2605, ext. 329

New York, NY – July 14, 2022 - Citizens Budget Commission (CBC) President Andrew S. Rein released this [statement](#) on behalf of the CBC:

“The Adams Administration plans to take some important, positive steps to improve the finances and transparency of NYC Ferry. In line with CBC recommendations and critiques first published three years ago, the New York City Economic Development Corporation (EDC) will implement variable pricing—charging more for single ferry rides while preserving a commuter fare—and improve reporting on how much the ferries are costing New Yorkers. This is welcome progress.

NYC Ferry is highly subsidized, both relative to other transit systems in New York and other ferries nationally. Ultimately, success of this plan should be evaluated in large part by whether and how much the subsidy—per ride and in total—is reduced, with evidence that the remaining subsidy above what is provided to other transit users is well targeted to those in the greatest need of transit options and affordability. Reducing this subsidy is important, especially if there are other ways those funds could be put to better use helping New Yorkers in need and growing the economy. CBC will monitor the newer, more transparent data to evaluate and report on progress.

Tiered pricing is a common-sense approach. Discounted fares can help commuters that lack reasonable transit alternatives, while charging one-time users a higher fare helps defray the cost of the premium service they are receiving. Assisting low-income commuters get to jobs helps individuals, families and the economy; CBC strongly supports Fair Fares for the subways and buses and a similar discount makes sense here.

While EDC is employing the right approach, it is starting with lower fares than CBC recommends. EDC should strongly consider a single-ride ticket price closer to the MTA’s express bus fare; higher fares on weekends and for the longer, more expensive routes; and reassess the most subsidized routes to determine if they provide the broad-based value and effectiveness the public deserves from its resources. CBC urges EDC to evaluate the impact of the new fare system on NYC Ferry’s ridership and finances, and if appropriate, increase fares or change routes and timetables, even if they decrease ridership but allow redeployment of subsidy dollars to other high-value initiatives.

Transparency is critical for public accountability and to foster healthy debate and analysis of public policies. We applaud EDC's commitment to release reports that include more of the ferry system's costs. The promised improvements will make real progress. To represent the total operating costs of the system—and to properly calculate the per-ride subsidy—these costs should be comprehensive, including all direct and indirect EDC spending on ferry operations, and City spending critically including debt service for all capital expenditures related to the system. Without these, the system's costs and per ride subsidy would still be understated. We will monitor these reports closely going forward to determine whether they are comprehensive and to evaluate the ferry system itself."