

MEMORANDUM

SEPTEMBER 26, 2013

TO: BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY AND
PETER MEADE, DIRECTOR

FROM: KAIROS SHEN, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING
RICHARD MCGUINNESS, DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR WATERFRONT
PLANNING

SUBJECT: CITY OF BOSTON INNER HARBOR PASSENGER WATER
TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS

SUMMARY: This Memorandum requests authorization for the Director to advertise an Invitation for Bids for the purchase of two inner harbor passenger water transportation vessels to initiate new ferry service between the East Boston, South Boston and the Charlestown waterfront districts.

BACKGROUND

In December 2011, the Boston Redevelopment Authority (“BRA”) prepared a proposal and grant application through the Federal Highway Administration (“FHWA”) Ferry Boat Discretionary (“FBD”) Program to purchase two inner harbor passenger water transportation vessels to initiate new ferry service between the East Boston, South Boston and the Charlestown waterfront districts (the “Project”). On August 2nd we were notified that the Boston Inner Harbor Ferry Investment will be funded the full amount requested in the grant application in the amount of \$1,280,000 (the “Grant”).

The FBD City of Boston Inner Harbor Passenger Water Transportation Infrastructure Investments grant application received the full support of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (“MassDOT”) and Secretary Richard Davey. The Grant will be administered through MassDOT’s Office of Transportation Planning.

The purpose of this Project is to expand the capacity and improve the quality of water transportation infrastructure within the City of Boston’s Inner Harbor.

The City of Boston intends to purchase two inner harbor passenger water transportation vessels to initiate new ferry service between the East Boston, South Boston and the Charlestown waterfront districts. Each vessel will have a capacity of 40 to 100 passengers and be ADA accessible.

Inner harbor passenger water transportation plays a central role in the revitalization of Boston Harbor. In 2000, the City completed the Boston Inner Harbor Passenger Water Transportation Plan (the “Plan”), an action plan to address Boston’s dramatic waterfront development implementation and surging demand for water transportation. The Plan provides guidance for locations and design of water transportation terminals. The Plan also develops a network of routes, building off of the Boston Harbor’s current services.

While the City of Boston has benefitted from highway infrastructure investments in the last 15 years, new developments under construction and the City’s policy objectives to reduce greenhouse gases through restrictive parking programs will place more demand on our public transit system. Currently, these waterfront neighborhoods have a peak hour transportation mode split of 50% auto, 27% transit, and 23% walk. Meeting the 27% transit share (which continues to grow) cannot be accommodated without additional capacity. The projected shortfall in transit capacity will challenge the City without either changes in commuter behavior or new transit options including cost effective water transportation.

East Boston and Charlestown are isolated from Boston’s Downtown Waterfront and the emerging South Boston Waterfront Innovation District by Boston Harbor. The main means of access to these neighborhoods is via bridges or tunnels that are near capacity. The projected developments in each neighborhood, East Boston (2.5 million square feet of housing), Charlestown Navy Yard (1 million Square feet of mix use/biomedical) and the South Boston Waterfront (19 million square feet of mix use/research and development) are relying on added transit capacity. Furthermore, adding cost effective capacity sooner may provide additional momentum for this growth.

The proposed ferries will be owned by the BRA and managed through a competitively bid contract with a private ferry operator comparable to the MBTA’s water transportation and commuter rail programs. This proposal is also modeled after the City of Salem’s water transportation infrastructure system. The City of Salem purchased their vessel in 2006 and it is managed through a private ferry operator.

The BRA has effectively managed over 6.2 million dollars in water transportation infrastructure investments. The BRA also owns and manages the City’s three largest water transportation terminals.

FUNDING

The terms of the FHWA grant require that the City match the \$1.28 million by 20 percent, or \$320,000 for a total anticipated purchase price of \$1.6 million. The City match will be paid through City of Boston capital funding.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Director be authorized to advertise an Invitation for Bids for the purchase of two inner harbor passenger water transportation vessels to initiate new ferry service between the East Boston, South Boston and the Charlestown waterfront districts.

An appropriate vote follows:

VOTED: That the Director be, and hereby is, authorized to advertise an Invitation for Bids for the purchase of two inner harbor passenger water transportation vessels to initiate new ferry service between the East Boston, South Boston and the Charlestown waterfront districts.