

MIAMI BEACH

COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Commission
 FROM: Commissioner David Richardson
 DATE: March 27, 2023

SUBJECT: REFERRAL TO THE FINANCE AND ECONOMIC RESILIENCY COMMITTEE TO DISCUSS IMPLEMENTING A WATER TAXI / FERRY SERVICE IN THE CITY, AND PROVIDING A POTENTIAL SUBSIDY FOR THE PROGRAM, IN AN EFFORT TO REDUCE THE FARES CHARGED TO PASSENGERS AND PROMOTE AN ALTERNATIVE MODE OF TRANSPORTATION BETWEEN MIAMI BEACH AND DOWNTOWN MIAMI.

ANALYSIS

Please place on the agenda a referral to the Finance and Economic Resiliency Committee (the Finance Committee) to discuss whether the City should implement a Water Taxi / Ferry Service program, as well as options for the City to potentially subsidize the water taxi service, in order to reduce the fares charged to passengers and provide an additional alternative mode of transportation for commuters traveling between the City of Miami Beach and downtown Miami.

After years of planning, the City previously launched a Water Taxi Pilot Program in 2017. I understand that the City's prior water taxi program was particularly successful during high impact periods, but that during other periods, ridership was low because the high fares rendered the service cost-prohibitive for many passengers. Separately, a private operator also offered a ferry service until early 2021, but discontinued its service due to the pandemic. Attached are background materials relating to the prior ferry operations in the City.

My intent with this item is to promote alternative modes of transportation until such time as a permanent mass transportation solution is developed. For this reason, I would like for the City to study the feasibility of a ferry service that is subsidized by the City, and potentially the City of Miami and Miami-Dade County. Ticket pricing is a key component of spurring new consumer behavior, and although I do not believe I will support providing "free" ferry service, we should do everything we can to make fares more affordable to the general public, as doing so will increase ridership.

As part of this referral, I also request that the City's Transportation Department provide information regarding lessons learned from the prior program, and any recommendations for implementing a new water taxi / ferry program in the City of Miami Beach, including recommendations as to routes, locations, and other relevant operational issues.

SUPPORTING SURVEY DATA

N/A

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

N/A

Applicable Area

Citywide

Is this a "Residents Right to Know" item, pursuant to City Code Section 2-14?

Yes

Does this item utilize G.O. Bond Funds?

No

Legislative Tracking

Commissioner David Richardson

ATTACHMENTS:

Description

- ☐ [2016-29370 Reso Water Taxi](#)
- ☐ [LTC 011-2017 Water Taxi Pilot Program Service Commencement](#)
- ☐ [LTC 018-2021 Commuter Waterborne Transportation Service by Poseidon Ferry LLC](#)