

2.7 Potential Passenger Ferry Opportunities

2.7.1 Summary

Among Port Everglades' comprehensive economic development portfolio, passenger ferry service provides additional opportunities to broaden support of the Port's successful cruise business while further diversifying the region's transportation modal options. Passenger ferry service has successfully occupied a Port Everglades niche in various forms throughout the Port's longstanding history, and is poised to remain a viable and sustainable presence looking forward.

Expanding Port Everglades passenger ferry service may include opportunities for additional domestic and international operations at various implementation scales and service types, including:

- **Expanded International itinerant service to the Bahamas, and as federal guidance permits, to Cuba.** Within the short- to medium-term, in partnership with current or additional service providers, passenger ferry service can be expanded to include additional points of call utilizing existing berthing and upland infrastructure in concert with cruise passenger operations.
- **Domestic itinerant service.** Augmenting existing traffic strategies serving Florida's East Coast and Intracoastal region, as a long-term strategic initiative regional service may serve as a component of a larger-scale traffic mitigation and demand management approach, working with state, regional and local transportation agencies and environmental regulators.
- **Local water taxi service.** A medium-term opportunity responding to local commercial demand, local water taxi service currently exists in Fort Lauderdale, but in partnership and coordinated with Port Everglades operations, taxi service could be extended into and through current port-related operations via franchising and licensing practices, observing all security constraints.
- **Hybrid passenger and Lift-on/Lift-off operations sustaining domestic and international calls.** A long-range opportunity, hybrid services may augment the current cruise business by providing cargo-handling logistics combined with tourism and passenger service. Fixed route service loops calling developing waterside locations, or satisfying logistical demands where conventional cargo berthing is limited requires significant coordination by the service provider and ports-of-call.

2.7.2 Background

Passenger ferry service has occupied a significant role throughout Florida's rich maritime history. From simple river barges ferrying soldiers across the St. Johns River during the Seminole Wars, to extending Florida East Coast Railway service via steamship from the Florida Keys to Havana, Cuba prior to the Labor Day hurricane of 1935, and modern fast ferry service

between Port Everglades and the Bahamas—passenger ferry service has connected Florida locally, regionally, and internationally for over 200 years.

For the purposes of this evaluation, passenger ferry service is broadly defined as merchant vessels and related logistical infrastructure (such as parking, vessel berthing, passenger processing, and amenities) providing itinerant, fixed-route, common carrier passenger and/or roll-on/roll-off (Ro/Ro) operations. Passenger ferry service supports a broader transportation network of interconnected public and private systems linking waterside cities and islands, allowing direct point-to-point transits at a capital cost far lower than constructing new airports, rail networks, bridges, or tunnels.

Ferries range widely in vessel types and capacities, each deployed to accommodate specific economic, navigation, and/or physical circumstances; should a financial or environmental variable change, so might the ferry type. Ferry vessel types include:

- **Double-Ended.** -- Vessels with interchangeable bows and sterns, allowing them to shuttle back and forth between two terminals without having to turn around. The Washington State Ferries epitomize this vessel form and function.
- **Hydrofoil.** -- Vessels with the advantage of higher cruising speeds, succeeding hovercraft on some English Channel routes where the ferries now compete against the Eurotunnel and Eurostar trains that use the Channel Tunnel. Passenger-only hydrofoils also proved a practical, fast, and relatively economical solution in the Canary Islands, but were recently replaced by faster catamaran "high speed" ferries that can carry cars.
- **Catamaran.** -- A multi-hulled vessel consisting of two parallel hulls of equal size that are normally associated with high-speed ferry services.
- **Cruise ferry.** -- Combines the features of a cruise ship with a Ro/Ro ferry.
- **Fast RoPax Ferry.** -- Conventional ferries with a large garage intake for vehicles (Ro/Ro) and a relatively large passenger (PAX) capacity, with conventional diesel propulsion traveling over 25 knots (46 km/h; 29 mph).
- **Pontoon Ferry.** -- Generally, a barge or raft powered by a tugboat or cable/winch that carries vehicles and passengers across rivers and lakes. Pontoon ferries are widely used in less-developed environments where the cost of bridge construction is prohibitive.
- **Train Ferry.** -- A vessel designed to carry rail cars and locomotives.
- **Foot Ferry.** -- Small craft used to ferry foot passengers and often also cyclists over smaller distances (generally rivers and lakes).

Port Everglades' passenger services have experienced cycles of boom and bust. Long-range passenger ferry strategic planning not only incorporates the capital facilities required for consistent service, but necessitates a business model that supports sustainable growth within a highly dynamic niche market. Historic Port Everglades examples of once successful, but now defunct operations include:

- **Discovery Cruise Line.** -- Commencing operations in 1987, Discovery Cruise Line ferried over 5 million passengers aboard the *Discovery Sun* between Port Everglades and Grand Bahama Island through daily 5-hour “all-inclusive” sailings, featuring on-board entertainment, casino, and dining amenities. Operations ended September 2011, citing high operational costs and waning profitability.
- **SeaEscape Casino Cruises.** -- SeaEscape provided daily “cruises to nowhere” on the *Island Adventure*, a converted cruise ferry vessel featuring on-board gambling, Las Vegas-style live entertainment, dancing, poolside activities, spa amenities, and various dining options. Service ended in August 2008 as land-based casinos and other entertainment options eroded the primary SeaEscape casino cruising market, creating financial difficulties for the company.
- **Imperial Majesty Cruises.** -- Founded in 1999, Imperial Majesty Cruises provided 2-day scheduled cruise service to Nassau on the vintage ships *SS Ocean Breeze* and *MS Regal Empress*. In spring of 2009, Imperial Majesty’s operations ended when the *Regal Empress* was retired. Celebration Cruise Line took over the Port Everglades-to-Nassau route with the *MS Bahamas Celebration* and moved the operation to the Port of Palm Beach in 2010.

Currently, Port Everglades’ passenger ferry service is limited to one daily passenger carrier:

- **Bahamas Express.** -- Operated by Balearia Group, a Spanish shipping company specializing in the transport of people and Ro/Ro cargo, the *Bahamas Express* provides daily round-trip, high-speed ferry service to/from Grand Bahama Island at Freeport, the Bahamas. Travel time, weather dependent, is approximately 2 ½ hours.

2.7.3 Opportunities

Local Domestic Service.

Expanded Water Taxi Connectivity. The cruise experience doesn’t begin or end on the cruise boat; the experience should extend to the ultimate trip origin and destination, including the transit to and from the cruise terminal. Typical experiences may include a taxi or shuttle from a local hotel. Many Fort Lauderdale hotels have convenient or direct access to the Intracoastal Waterway. Current water taxi service provides fixed-point connections to local commercial nodes, but there are no connections to Port Everglades piers. Establishing a managed call within the Port’s security zone, interfacing with a secured, common passenger access point (public access) would extend and enhance the cruise passenger experience beyond the cruise itself. More feasible, however, with the “carve out” of the Greater Fort Lauderdale/Broward County Convention Center from the Port’s security area, would be a hotel-related operation, given the constraints of the Port’s security requirements.

Although not significant to today’s cruise passenger experience or greater traffic congestion context, planning for future long-range water taxi connectivity to Port Everglades as a modal hub (cruise, passenger ferry, landside transit, etc.) may contribute as a component of a larger transportation mitigation and/or public access strategy, supporting the permitting process for

other Port projects and further leveraging the Port's long-range capital investment program. Coincidentally, the current operator of the Boston service also operates in Fort Lauderdale (see the water taxi case study below).

Regional Domestic Service. The Florida Department of Transportation cites the Transportation Research Board's Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP Synthesis 102) advocating for the development of strategies to integrate mass transit with passenger ferry service, leveraging modal options to meet mobility, environmental, and energy objectives while accommodating regional growth. As a travel demand management strategy, integrated passenger ferry service supporting southeastern Florida's regional transportation needs (generally, the Florida Keys to Port St. Lucie) may mitigate emerging I-95 corridor traffic congestion as the region experiences population growth.

Current Florida Keys and Key West ferry connections call mainland Florida at Fort Myers, a West Coast connection. Similar service could call Port Everglades and provide complementary East Coast domestic passenger options. Intracoastal point-to-point service could augment regional traffic mitigation measures and further enhance the Port Everglades-based tourism industry, including the cruise industry and burgeoning Bahamas passenger service.

International Service.

Expanded Bahamas Destinations. Current Balearia *Bahamas Express* service calls only at Freeport, Bahamas. Bahamas Ferries, Albury's Ferry Service, and other operators offer an extensive point-to-point passenger service network throughout the Commonwealth. Interfacing with these Bahamas carriers by calling common destinations extends passenger options to travel throughout the island nation. In addition to Freeport, potential passenger ferry hub connections include:

- Fresh Creek Andros.
- Governor's Harbour.
- Harbor Island.
- Marsh Harbour.
- Nassau.
- Spanish Wells.

Cuba. Codified into United States law in 1963, the Cuban Democracy Act imposed a comprehensive Cuban embargo imposing trade and travel restrictions between the United States and Cuba. This policy continued until April 13, 2009, when President Barack Obama announced lifting restrictions allowing Cuban-Americans to travel between the United States and Cuba to visit family members. Subsequently, a few carriers have been able to provide aid shipments directly to Cuba.

For a seaport to be permitted to receive passenger traffic from Cuba, it must be designated by the United States Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) as an entry port or gateway. Currently, only airports are designated as entry gateways.

The OFAC's jurisdiction is broad and individuals or companies subject to OFAC jurisdiction are generally prohibited from facilitating trade, maritime transportation, vessel chartering, brokerage services, and maritime insurance or reinsurance.

In October 2009, Broward County initiated the process to become a gateway for United States residents to travel to Cuba. The Broward County Board of County Commissioners approved by resolution a request to the OFAC to approve Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport as an entry port/gateway for air service between South Florida and Cuba and for Port Everglades to be designated as an entry port/gateway for passenger ferry service between South Florida and Cuba. Despite multiple commercial initiatives attempting to establish the business case providing service between the two countries, Broward County's aspirations have not been able to drive the OFAC towards action. In the spring of 2012, Broward County reiterated its request to the OFAC to extend entry port/gateway designation to the airport and seaport and awaits response (as of summer 2013).

Anticipating further federal guidance from the OFAC in alignment with the Obama administration's softening stance on Cuba travel restrictions, various companies are strategically positioning themselves to capitalize on potential Florida/Cuba passenger operations; these include:

- America Cruise Ferries.
- Balearia.
- CubaKat.
- Havana Ferry Partners.
- United Caribbean Lines.

In the summer of 2012, however, stating that ferries don't fit in the administration's current people-to-people travel policy, the OFAC sent a denial letter to at least one of the five entrepreneurial groups vying to offer passenger service between Florida and Cuba. Federal guidance to port authorities and municipalities has yet to grant port-of-entry or gateway designation to a seaport.

2.7.4 Case Studies, Innovative Services and Analog Opportunities

Combination Vessel Operations

Aranui III, IV. The Arauni III (to be replaced by the Arauni IV in 2014) is a unique passenger/cargo combination ConPax vessel; providing exclusive cruising amenities with those of a container feeder ship.

The fixed Aranui itinerary provides a consistent 14-day sailing rotation, originating out of Papeete, allowing for comprehensive cargo transfer services, as well as passenger and automobile loading/unloading. This operation provides a lifeline logistical service to the six inhabited Marquesas Islands, bringing supplies and picking up export resources (copra, dried coconut and noni fruit) while catering to the unique tourist activity demands and limited container operator needs throughout the French Polynesian Archipelago.



RMS St. Helena. Saint Helena, an isolated 47-square-mile island with a 2008 population of 4,255, is part of the British Overseas Territory, roughly 1,200 miles from the nearest landmass (West Africa) in the South Atlantic Ocean. It is considered among the most remote places in the world. Supplying the island population and providing passenger service to/from South Africa is solely provided by the *RMS St Helena*, a combiliner (combination cargo and cruise liner) calling Cape Town and Saint Helena with regular shuttles to Ascension Island and Walvis Bay (among other limited calls). The vessel has a capacity of 128 passengers and 1,800 tons of cargo (both dry and liquid). With the completion of a new airport on St. Helena (anticipated 2015), dependence on regular vessel calls will likely diminish.



Application of these combination vessel operations case studies to Port Everglades may include:

- Providing fixed itinerary logistical services (passenger and cargo) to remote Caribbean islands or other maritime destinations where infrastructure and marine development is limited.
- Homeport for US Aid services via maritime operations (such as hurricane relief, the 2010 Haiti earthquake, or other relief missions)

Integrated Water Taxi Operations

Boston Harbor Water Taxis and Water Shuttles.

The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) operates both land- and water-based public transit in the Boston area. The MBTA ferryboats operate three routes, which connect eight distinct interface points. Ferries departing from Long Wharf serve Quincy, Hull, and Logan Airport. Several other ferry services are operated out of Long Wharf; a National Park Service ferry to the Harbor Islands, a private ferry to Salem, and harbor tours. Just south of Long Wharf, Central Wharf and



Rowes Wharf serve the Charleston Navy Yard and Hingham. In collaboration with the MBTA, Massport, Seaport Boston, and other private sector operations, the water taxis and shuttles offer a comprehensive, interconnected network of passenger stops, augmenting the mass transit system by providing an alternative to land-based automobiles and commuter rail options within the congested greater Boston area.

Interfacing with existing bus and subway routes, the water taxis and shuttles provide year-round direct connections (just like a wheeled taxi) to Logan International Airport, the Black Falcon Cruise Ship Terminal, various tourist destinations, and downtown business district locations via scheduled service and on-call vessels.

Application of water taxi and/or water shuttle case studies to Port Everglades may include:

- Extending and enhancing the cruise passenger experience throughout the Intracoastal Waterway to Fort Lauderdale hotels, tourist destinations, and transportation hubs.
- An indirect application of the service can be integrated into the Port's long-range landside traffic mitigation strategy. New Port capital development generally creates additional traffic on the local and regional roadway network, for example the trips required to bring cruise passengers to the terminal, or new cargo facilities requiring additional truck transactions to move cargo to and from inland destinations. Such impacts generally require some negotiated improvements to mitigate adverse impacts. With planning and proactive negotiations with regulators, water taxi and shuttle service may be a contributing mitigation measure by removing vehicle trips from the network, replacing that trip with a water-side alternative. Such opportunities would also need to address the security requirements of the Port.

2.7.5 Customs and Border Protection Passenger Service Requirements

(<http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/toolbox/contacts/ports/ferry.xml>).

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) *Technical Design Standards for all Seaport Passenger Processing Facilities, including Cruise Terminals, Ferry (Passenger/Vehicle),*

Seaplane Processing Facilities, and Private Craft Facilities are currently under revision. These standards apply to all new facilities and facility renovation projects.

All transportation lines and/or port operators must contact the local CBP office to coordinate required CBP project approval(s) and assistance in determining project specific requirements. This early coordination with CBP will help ensure the proposed facility meets all CBP operational, security, and safety requirements necessary for CBP approval, occupancy, and operations.

Upon notification, the CBP Field Office will contact the CBP Headquarters Office of Field Operations, Facilities Division, with the following information to be provided by the requesting transportation line and/or port operator in coordination with the CBP Field Office:

- Location of project.
- Type of operation and CBP areas affected.
- Estimated project commencement date.
- Estimated project completion date.
- Frequency of vessels/crafts.
- Number of arrival passengers per hour (maximum).
- Passengers expected (year 1).
- Passengers expected (10-year projected).
- Anticipated functional space required.
- Number of passport control booths.
- Project staffing implications/requirements.
- Information Technology implications.
- Security considerations.
- Scheduled, charter, or seasonal arrivals.
- Port(s) of Embarkation (foreign) from where aircraft/vessels will arrive.
- Special interests, if any.
- Port Operator/Transportation Line Project Coordinator POC, title, address, e-mail and telephone number

Upon receipt of this information and once a project has been approved by CBP, Operations Facilities Office works with the Office of Administration, Asset Management, and the Field Office to begin coordination and development of all project specific requirements to include functional space, security, operational, and other requirements

2.7.6 Ferry Operations Currently in Florida Service

The following cross-section of contemporary operations illustrates the diversity of passenger ferry service throughout Florida, demonstrating potential business models and operational opportunities at Port Everglades:

Regional Ferry Service

- Tampa Bay-Key West
<http://www.fastcats.org/home.htm>
Provides connections between Regatta Pointe Marina in Palmetto (Bradenton) and Key West; twice daily.
- Balearia Bahamas Express
<http://www.ferryexpress.com/>
Offers daily round-trip service between Fort Lauderdale (Port Everglades) and Grand Bahama Island.
- Bimini Superfast Ferry
<http://www.rwbimini.com/>
Twice-daily round-trip service between Miami (PortMiami) and Resorts World Bimini
- Marco Island-Key West Express
<http://www.seakeywestexpress.com/>
Connecting Ft. Myers Beach and Marco Island with Key West.

Water Taxis and Shuttles

- Downtown West Palm Beach Shuttle
<http://watertaxi.homestead.com/ShuttleService.html>
Crosses Lake Worth, between Sailfish Marina in Palm Beach Shores (Singer Island) and downtown West Palm Beach; Thursday and Saturday nights.
- Peanut Island Shuttle
<http://watertaxi.homestead.com/ShuttleService.html>
Connects Phil Foster Park to Peanut Island Park in West Palm Beach; Monday through Wednesday hourly.
- Palm Beach Gardens Shuttle
<http://watertaxi.homestead.com/ShuttleService.html>
In West Palm Beach, between Sailfish Marina and "PGA (Fathom)"; Friday night.
- Fort Lauderdale Water Bus
<http://www.watertaxi.com/FortLauderdale/FLLHome.Asp>
Along Intracoastal Waterway and New River, between SR 816/Oakland Park Boulevard and 3rd Avenue, with 15 regular stops and 6 whistle stops; daily, 9 am to midnight.
- South Beach Water Express
<http://www.watertaxi.com/FortLauderdale/FLLHome.Asp>
Along Intracoastal Waterway, between Fort Lauderdale and Miami Beach; Saturday only, leaves at 8:30 am, returns at 7 pm.

- Jacksonville Water Taxi
<http://www.jaxwatertaxi.com/>
Five stops within downtown Jacksonville on the St. Johns River.
- Tampa Water Taxi
<http://www.tampawatershuttle.com/>
Tampa's water tour and water taxi fleet operating seven days a week offering downtown taxi service and various harbor tours.

Private Access Ferries

- Little Palm Island Ferry
<http://www.littlepalmisland.com/>
Access to private resort; from Little Torch Key to Little Palm Island Resort (on Little Munson Island); hourly.
- Sunset Key Ferry
<http://www.westinsunsetkeycottages.com/factsheet>
Private ferry to Sunset Key resort community, west of Key West; operated by Westin Hotels & Resorts.
- Little Gasparilla Island Ferry
<http://www.littlegasparilla.com/faq.html>
Daily service (daylight hours) or with reservations
- Cabbage Key Ferry
http://www.captivacruises.com/sched_cruises.html
Provides Pine Island Sound crossings daily to the South Seas Resort (private) on Captiva Island.

State and National Park Access

- Cayo Costa State Park Ferry
<http://www.tropicstarcruises.com/cayo.cfm>
Daily camper service to Cayo Costa State park, morning and afternoon departures with reservations.
- Caladesi Island Ferry
<http://www.caladesiferry.org/>
Departs from Honeymoon Island at the West End of Dunedin Causeway to Caladesi Island State Park; daily, on the hour.
- Egmont Key Ferry
<http://www.funandsun.com/parks/EgmontKey/egmontkey.html>
Access to Egmont Key State park crossing Tampa Bay, the Anna Maria Sound and Boca Ciega Bay from St. Petersburg Beach and Cortez.
- Fort Matanzas Ferry
<http://www.nps.gov/foma/basics.htm>
Across Matanzas River, from Anastasia Island to Fort Matanzas on Rattlesnake Island; daily.
- Pelican Island Ferry
<http://www.co.miami-dade.fl.us/parks/mpaquat3.htm>
Free ferry from Miami to Pelican Island; Saturdays, Sundays and holidays; 35-seat "Pelican" pontoon boat; run by Miami-Dade Parks.

- Hontoon Island Ferry
- <http://www.planetdeland.com/hontoon/rates.htm>
Crossing Hontoon Dead River to Hontoon Island State Park; daily, 8 am to sunset