



**Testimony of Carter Craft, Program Director, on the Redevelopment of the
Transportation Infrastructure of Lower Manhattan**

**Before the Transportation Committee and Select Committee on Lower Manhattan
Redevelopment of the New York City Council**

March 7, 2002

Good afternoon. My name is Carter Craft. I am the Program Director of the Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance, a network of more than 300 organizations in New York and New Jersey. Thank you for inviting us to share a waterfront perspective on this important subject.

There was a time when the waterfront was the thriving heart of this city, when the sights and smells of waterborne commerce and transportation were a part of every resident's daily life.

More recently there was a time when the waterfront was a place most people avoided or from which they were physically detached. Trucks and trains were in constant motion, and most of the buildings were warehouses or piersheds. Most people didn't even know there was a waterfront-and in many cases this is still true.

Slowly NOW we are awakening to the opportunity of the waterfront-New York's last frontier

On September 11 this frontier was almost a wall. The rigid design of the Battery Park City seawall and the blocks of fixed iron fences along the waterfront hindered the evacuation of tens of thousands of people. When the rescue began, this fencing thwarted access for the tons of oxygen tanks, water, rescue equipment brought in by water.

If I can point you to a photograph and accompanying article from *Soundings Magazine* that describes the tremendous and heroic response of the maritime community. We applaud Chair John Liu and Chair Alan Gerson for calling this hearing and thank you for inviting us to testify. What we now ask you to do is to help us redesign our waterfronts to be as intermodal as they can be. Bollards, cleats, and places for boats and barges to tie up are critical. There must be fewer fences, period. Less chain link and more access. Where fences are deemed necessary we will need gates and other openings for when we need them.

There are two opportunities we must not miss:

- 1) We must create enhanced intermodal commuter connections to Lower Manhattan in order to reinvigorate this essential business district that helps drive the region's and the nation's economy.
- 2) We should seize the opportunity to make Lower Manhattan into an intermodal hub for harbor tourism and recreation.

Looking ahead we must look at ways to facilitate intermodal connections between ferry and land-based transit. The plans of the Port Authority to build a \$40 million dollar ferry terminal along the sea wall outside the World Financial Center must be re-examined in light of the proposals to convert North Cove itself to a ferry terminal.

We must find a way to accommodate the recreational and tour boats who now call North Cove home. They were there when we needed them in September, and as the waters get cleaner we should be making more room for recreational and excursion boating and sailing in the heart of our City-not less.

The opportunity, however, is not just for improving commuter access, but redesigning the Lower Manhattan waterfront to be the hub of our region's growing waterfront tourism and recreation sector. While there were 13,000,000 yearly commuters through the World Trade Center PATH Station there were also more than 37 million tourists who visited the City, including 6,000,000 tourists traveling through Lower Manhattan to the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island.

According to the statistics of the U.S. Census and NYC & Company, New York's 280,000-person tourism sector employs more than education, construction or transportation in the city.

Nearly 1 in three tourists in New York visit Lower Manhattan, and half of these take a boat out to the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. The combined economic impact of these 6,000,000 excursion ferry riders every year is more than \$4 billion dollars.

Tourist spending by ferry riders visiting the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island supports 45,000 jobs in New York City. Despite the events of September 11—visitation still rose to record levels last year.

"The Nation's Gateway" is a whole network of waterfront cultural attractions we should really market and grow together. On Upper New York Bay alone there are more than 2 dozen recreational or cultural facilities expanding or opening, from the Skyscraper museum just a few blocks from here, to the Chinese Scholars' Garden at Snug Harbor Cultural Center on Staten Island.

But what do Empire Stores Fulton Ferry State Park in Brooklyn, Ferry Point Park in the Bronx, and Riis Beach on the Rockaway Peninsula of Queens have in common? Well, all of them are seeing infusions of millions of dollars in public and private capital right now--but none of them have ferry service to connect them to each other or lower Manhattan. The Department of Transportation moves traffic, the MTA and the Port Authority? move commuters. But what Agency in this city is enhancing the mobility of tourists, one of the largest contributors to the New York economy?]

Every summer about 25,000 New Yorkers during June, July and August go to the beach by ferry - but they go to beaches in New Jersey. We have 5 Parks Department and National Park Service beaches in the City but there is no ferry to the beach in New York.

Now if 50,000 people went from Lower Manhattan by ferry to waterfront attractions like the Bronx Zoo and the New York Botanical Garden in the Bronx, the Queens Botanical Garden just off the Flushing River, the Staten Island Botanical Garden on the Kill van Kull, or to Coney Island on the ocean we'd create an estimated 400 additional jobs in each one of these communities, according to economic development statistics used by NYC & Company.

If we created comparable water transit to our islands - City Island, Roosevelt Island, Brother Island, Randall's Island, Hoffman Island, Swinburne Island, Coney Island or Governors Island.... Or to any of the historic forts such as Fort Totten, Fort Schuyler, Fort Jay, Fort Wadsworth, Fort Hamilton, or Fort Tilden, Fort Washington or Fort Defiance we'd create an estimated 10,000 additional jobs. --most of these in many parts of the city where unemployment is higher than it is in Manhattan.

If we make Lower Manhattan the hub of the harbor in this way we can bring more than a million more tourists who will use Lower Manhattan as their base of

operations, filling up the hotels and restaurants, and create a greater economic base that can bring basic neighborhood services such as grocery stores and theaters now lacking.

These visitors will create an economic impact of nearly \$700 million dollars a year, while also making the necklace of waterfront cultural and recreational attractions more accessible to New Yorkers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1) North Cove and the World Financial Center water transit should be closely integrated with direct stairs, escalators and elevators between recreation, ferry and excursion boats and land based transit including PATH, subway and buses transit at Battery Park City and the World Financial Center .

2) A Hudson River ferry line providing for direct service to and from the World Financial Center should be implemented as soon as possible. Travel times by water from Yonkers, for instance, are 24 minutes faster than the comparable train + subway travel time.

3) Convert the area from the Pier 6 heliport to the Coast Guard office building, including the Battery Maritime Building and the Whitehall Ferry Terminal, into a unified ferry transit super hub. Waterborne freight should be accommodated south of Pier 6, where access to the heliport, the tunnels is direct.

4) From the heliport north to the Wall Street Ferry Pier 11, a recreational marina district should be created, not necessarily to accommodate boats displaced from North Cove, but to allow recreational boating of all types a larger presence on the Lower Manhattan waterfront.

Lower Manhattan needs better water transit--and a better waterfront, period--than the 20th century left it.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in today's hearings, and I will be happy to answer any questions you might have.