



Review of New Jersey Transit and New Jersey Department of Transportation  
Presentations  
City of Hoboken

August 20, 2019

The purpose of this document is to provide commentary and rebuttal information based on Boswell Engineering's ("*Boswell*") review of the two following documents, both of which are attached as ***Appendix A***:

- New Jersey Transit's ("*NJT*") presentation, entitled, "Final Report Ferry Maintenance Facility Evaluation," dated August 8, 2019 ("*2019 NJT Presentation*"); and
- New Jersey Department of Transportation's ("*NJDOT*") presentation, entitled, "Final Report NYWW Ferry Maintenance Facility Site Feasibility Analysis – MOTBY and Union Dry Dock," also dated August 8, 2019 ("*2019 NJDOT Presentation*").<sup>i</sup>

The City of Hoboken's ("*City*") position is that New York Waterway's ("*NYWW*") planned ferry maintenance and refueling facility, currently proposed to be located at the Union Dry Dock ("*UDD*") site, can and should be relocated to a site that is more appropriate and consistent with the proposed use. The City, along with numerous stakeholders, have provided various location options and raised significant environmental concerns in support of its position to locate a more appropriate site for NYWW's proposed facility. The following is based on Boswell's review of the 2019 NJT Presentation and the 2019 NJDOT Presentation.

### **2019 NJT Presentation**

The intent of the 2019 NJT Presentation is to demonstrate that new conditions changed the conclusions drawn by NJT in its previously published study, entitled, "Ferry Berthing and Maintenance Analysis" ("*2009 NJT Study*"), dated August 2009, attached herein as ***Appendix B***. In the 2009 NJT Study, Hoboken South was NJT's top ranking location for a ferry maintenance facility. In this same study, the UDD location in Hoboken was ranked 6<sup>th</sup> out of 9 locations evaluated. Around the release of its 2009 NJT Study, NJT also obtained a Waterfront Development Permit from the NJDEP, issued on August 3, 2009, which permitted the installation of such a facility at Hoboken South. A copy of the permit is provided in ***Appendix C*** of this document. As discussed below, the changed conditions are provided by the NJT as reasons for not locating its ferry maintenance and refueling facility at Hoboken South.

One changed condition, referenced in the 2019 NJT Presentation, is the need to relocate the facility because Jersey City objected that the proposed facility would adversely impact plans for high-rise residential development. However, this is contrary to a letter, dated December 13, 2018, which the City wrote to Governor Murphy, in conjunction with various elected State,

County and Local officials, including Jersey City Mayor Steven Fulop, supporting Hoboken South as an alternative for the proposed ferry maintenance and fueling facility. A copy of this letter is attached as *Appendix D*.

Another changed condition noted in the 2019 NJT Presentation related to Super Storm Sandy's impact on the pier. Nonetheless, the presentation does not provide any opinion on possible resiliency planning efforts that could be incorporated by NJT into a proposed ferry maintenance and refueling facility. NJT obtained a 146 million dollar Federal Transit Administration ("FTA") grant to undertake resiliency upgrades at Hoboken Terminal. With that grant, NJT is already working towards protecting Hoboken Terminal against future weather events. Accordingly, it is likely that a properly designed ferry maintenance and refueling facility at Hoboken South is feasible and could be constructed. Given NJT's success in obtaining FTA grant funding, there may also be an opportunity to obtain additional grants or alternative funding to aide in the design and construction of the proposed facility at Hoboken South.

"Pier condition and pilings for Hoboken Terminal have degraded in the last decade," is listed as another changed condition in the 2019 NJT Presentation. However, it appears that in 2009, NJT already contemplated that Hoboken South would require extensive rehabilitation and reconstruction work. The poor condition of the pier and pilings was previously described in the NJDEP Waterfront Development Permit referenced above. The 2009 permit outlined major reconstruction and replacement of existing pilings and platforms, as well as the construction of new appurtenances. NJT is currently performing a technical analysis of the pier and piling conditions, but does not appear to have received the results as of the date of the 2019 NJT Presentation. Accordingly, it appears to be premature to quantify the level of degradation of the piling and pier, and to determine same as a changed condition.

Another issue noted in the 2019 NJT Presentation relates to Hoboken South's open southern exposure, which leaves it vulnerable to future storm events. While this may be true, the existing facility has the same southern exposure which existed in the 2009 NJT Study. Resiliency, as discussed above, should be considered with any new proposed facility.

In the 2019 NJT Presentation, safety and security is listed as another concern regarding Hoboken South. Hoboken Terminal is listed by the Department of Homeland Security on the Top Transit Asset List. However, these identical safety and security concerns existed during the post-9/11 period in which the 2009 NJT study was conducted, and homeland security was not identified by NJT as an impediment to the safe and secure operation of ferry refueling, repair and maintenance operations. The 2019 NJT Presentation does not provide any new information that would warrant designation of Hoboken South as a greater security threat in 2019 than in 2009.

Regarding the claim of homeland security concerns, we further note that earlier this summer, the federal Department of Homeland Security conducted a security site visit of both the Hoboken South and Union Dry Dock sites, and their findings have not yet been made public. Accordingly, we respectfully submit that any conclusion that Hoboken South is not feasible due

to homeland security and safety concerns is premature pending the outcome of what we understand to be an ongoing federal homeland security assessment of this claim.

Finally, we agree that the site is a critical asset to regional transportation and is a site that must be hardened to prevent terrorist activity; however, these results can often be achieved through proper planning and design to insulate against such threats. NJT currently implements target hardening strategies at vulnerable facilities, but the NJT 2019 Presentation does not discuss why the same could not be accomplished with the proposed maintenance facility.

Another changed condition in the 2019 NJT Presentation stated that Brick Alley is not viable for truck activity; however, there is no discussion regarding an alternative access solution, which we believe may exist. Given the filling of the long slip and the modifications proposed at the adjacent rail yard, there may be an opportunity to provide access along the south side of Hoboken Terminal. There is no discussion or assessment of this approach in the 2019 NJT Presentation.

### **2019 NJDOT Presentation**

The basis of the 2019 NJDOT Presentation is that the utilization of MOTBY is feasible, but there may be additional costs associated with siting on the peninsula. The estimated costs provided in the presentation are vague and do not take into account the initial acquisition cost of the UDD site (approximately 11.5 million dollars).

The 2019 NJDOT Presentation briefly touches upon the possibility of expanded ferry services, which should be a primary objective of the NJDOT, namely expanded regional transportation alternatives. While not discussed in detail, MOTBY should be considered as a viable alternative. MOTBY is on the outskirts of NYWW's current ferry routes and presents an opportunity to promote expansion of NYWW's operations into Central New Jersey, which would result in increased service options and ridership benefitting New Jersey commuters. This expansion of ferry service could also pay dividends in reducing bus traffic from central New Jersey to the Hudson River crossings into New York. Accordingly, long term regional mass transit planning strongly suggests that MOTBY would be an ideal location for the proposed use because it is more centralized than north Hudson County, thereby offering more efficient opportunities for ferry mass transit for residents in central New Jersey and coastal municipalities currently seeking to construct ferry terminal infrastructure, such as Bayonne, Carteret and South Amboy.

### **Conclusion**

The 2019 NJT Presentation and the 2019 NJDOT Presentation do not sufficiently detail the existence of alternative locations for the NYWW ferry maintenance and fueling facility. As discussed above, Hoboken South and the MOTBY Southeast Property are viable sites. Any claim that homeland safety and security concerns eliminate the feasibility of Hoboken South are premature pending the federal Department of Homeland Security's ongoing assessment, and such concerns, if legitimate, can be addressed through routine target hardening planning

strategies. Until detailed evaluations are completed, the estimated construction costs noted in both presentations are speculative. Finally, we believe Hoboken South and MOTBY sites are more appropriate than the UDD site given how the City's waterfront has evolved from a commercial hub to a primarily residential and parklike area.

Should you have any questions or require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

BOSWELL ENGINEERING



Joseph A. Pomante, P.E.

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<sup>1</sup> Hoboken was not given an opportunity to assist in the research and analysis of the subject matter of the studies.