

August 31, 2016

The Honorable Bill de Blasio
Mayor, City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Re: Staten Island Ferry Issues

Dear Mayor de Blasio:

I hope this letter finds you well.

As I gaze out the windows of my office at Borough Hall the Staten Island Ferry Terminal looms large, and I cannot look at it without thinking “they’re coming.”

“They” being a massive influx of tourists using the ferry to visit Staten Island’s upcoming attractions. The ferry itself is already one of the city’s leading attractions because of the panoramic views it offers 22 million annual riders, but with the Empire Outlets, the New York Wheel and Lighthouse Point scheduled to open in the next few years, starting in the spring of 2017 we expect ridership to explode.

If we have not by then properly prepared our ferry system we will be facing a transportation nightmare which will not only impede tourism, but will add even greater burdens to already put-upon Staten Island commuters. It’s bad even now; just ask any commuter attempting to get on the 4:00 pm boat at Whitehall – the crush of passengers funneling through the double doors is enormous.

There is a laundry list of things that must be discussed and myriad conditions that must be improved. The boats have the capacity, but the doors and ramps leading onto the boats are already chokepoints. As one would expect, DOT employees who work on the ferry and in the terminals have plenty of maritime experience, but do need a better understanding of customer service. More bathrooms will be needed in the terminals and those on the boats are ill-maintained, seldom patrolled and at times, dangerous to use. Peter Minuet Park is dotted with overflowing trash cans while aggressive ticket vendors still plague the area and hawk their wares – and these are just the tip of the iceberg.

There is a real reason for us to be pro-active, and a pressing need for teams from Borough Hall and City Hall to meet, perhaps sometime this autumn, to discuss preparing our ferry system for the exploding ridership we know is coming. Let’s work together to establish short, medium and long-term goals to ensure the Staten Island waterfront will be home to a rising tide that will lift all the city’s boats.

Sincerely,



James S. Oddo
President, Borough of Staten Island

