Public transport by ferry

Introduction

A ferry is a boat that is designed to move people and goods across water from one point to another. For cities adjacent to large bodies of water or coastal areas, islands or locations with a large number of rivers and canals, ferries can form an important part of the public transport system.

Before railways and motorways, waterways were the main transport corridors and a ferry was often the only way to cross a large body of water. Typically, the operator lived by the water, so that travellers could have rapid access to the services of the ferry. Vessels ranged in size from small rowboats to much larger boats that could potentially hold horses and supplies as well as people.

In modern coastal cities or those located on rivers, lakes and canals, ferries once again play a key role as a lower cost alternative to bridges or tunnels to link points separated by water. In densely populated areas, high frequency ferry services remove large numbers of commuters from roads, thus helping to reduce peak hour congestion.

Objective

Ferry based public transport aims to provide safe accessible passenger transport services across water.

Auckland Ferry Terminal
Benefits

- **Accessibility**: Public ferry services enable individuals who do not have access to a car to reach basic community activities and services such as work, education, health care, welfare and shopping.

- **Time saving**: Ferry services can greatly reduce the length of a journey and therefore the time needed to reach some destinations using land-based transport.

- **Environment**: Increasing ferry patronage can result in fewer car journeys. This means less stress on the environment in relation to noise, air pollution and greenhouse gases.

- **Safety**: Moving large volumes of people by ferry is safer than moving individuals in private cars, in terms of both personal risk and the danger posed to other road users.

- **Multimodal**: Public transport by bus represents an option for moving people over short, medium and longer distances. Ferries will often form the main link in a multimodal chain, with trains, buses, walking, cycling or Park & Ride at either end.

- **Flexibility**: A flexible ferry service can offer varied ferry sizes, frequencies and routes. This flexibility provides the benefit of meeting new needs and being able to respond to additional capacity demands.

- **Congestion reduction**: By making use of harbours, rivers or lakes ferries shift passengers off the road and lower traffic congestion levels.

- **Customer service**: Because they are often less constrained by space than land-based public transport, on-board many ferries offer passengers unique amenities such as outdoor viewing decks, cafes and bars and the ability to transport bicycles and other large items.
## Tools for ferry-based public transport

### Wharves and terminals

Unlike facilities for land-based transport modes, terminal technical design requirements are driven by the unique conditions in which the ferry operates. For example, some may face tidal variations of many metres, requiring long and expensive ramps to access floating pontoons, while others may be situated in swiftly flowing rivers. Design must also take account of patronage levels, physical constraints and access to/use of adjacent land and water space.

Climate will determine the kind of protection passengers require from sun, wind and rain. Other key considerations are access for mobility-impaired passengers and safety and security.

![Milsons Point Wharf, Sydney Harbour, Australia](image)

### Inter-modality

As the public interface of the ferry system, the facilities a terminal offers will vary according to its specific location and function. In some cases, park and ride may be important for ferry users, whereas in others pedestrian or bus/rail transfers will be significant factors. Making such transfers as seamless as possible will increase ferry patronage.

### Sensitive design

Ferry terminals should be designed to fit into the surrounding urban and natural environment with minimal impact, while also meeting the level of service appropriate to the scale of the ferry service and passenger numbers.

### Vessels

The ferry size and on board facilities will vary according to passenger numbers and journey length and the berthing facilities available. Some ferries offer a bar or café service, toilet facilities, viewing platforms and ample space to transport large items including bicycles for onward travel.
Case study – Hobsonville Ferry, Auckland

Introduction

The Hobsonville ferry service was launched in 2013. It links Hobsonville Point with Beach Haven and the Auckland Downtown Ferry Terminal, and uses the 80-seat catamaran, Discovery II.

The new ferry service is part of a multi-million dollar urbanisation project (known as the Northwest Transformation) being implemented by Auckland Council, Auckland Transport, New Zealand Retail Property Group and the Hobsonville Land Company, a subsidiary of Housing New Zealand. The project includes up to 5500 new homes, including state housing, community facilities, transport and public transport infrastructure and improvements.

Transport links

A new public ferry terminal has opened at the Landing, supported by a park and ride car park and bus service, both of which will facilitate ferry usage. The new ferry is a key component in a range of integrated transport projects planned for the development. Local bus services also provide good access to the North Shore, Waitakere and central Auckland. Further improvements to be added over time include dedicated cycle facilities, quality walking infrastructure, including a 4km coastal walkway, bus priority measures and improved safety and access throughout the development.
Case study – Hobsonville Ferry, Auckland contd.

Building a new town

In addition to public transport services and other transport infrastructure, the new development will feature:

- A community and marine industry precinct at Hobsonville Point which will provide up to 2000 boat building/maintenance and other marine industry jobs;
- A new town centre at Westgate;
- A new village centre, library and employment park at Hobsonville;
- 3000 new homes at Hobsonville, on the site of the former RNZAF military airbase, together with parks, two schools and shops and offices.

Public transport’s role in increasing accessibility

With a considerable proportion of the new homes designed for low income families, public transport (and good walking and cycling infrastructure) plays an essential role in facilitating access to jobs, school, shopping etc. for those who may not have access to a car. Hobsonville's location made the new public ferry service an obvious choice to provide access to downtown Auckland since the new development opens up more than 4km of coastline to the public.

Hobsonville Point Ferry Terminal
Further information

