

Baltimore City Department Of Transportation Water Transit Strategic Plan

Transit Choices
March 12, 2026





Agenda

What is the Water Transit Strategic Plan?

1

Harbor Connector Service Evaluation

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What is the Water Transit Strategic Plan?



Water Transit Strategic Plan Background

What is the Water Transit Strategic Plan?

- Update to the 2015 Water Transit Strategic Plan
 - Are the previous plan's recommendations still applicable 10 years later?
- Operational Analysis of the Harbor Connector
 - How is the service performing in terms of ridership, and are there opportunities to improve efficiency or service delivery?
- Operational Analysis of the Harbormaster Office
 - Review best practices for other Harbormaster operations in peer cities, recommend ways to modernize this recently relaunched office
- Assessment of Inner Harbor Infrastructure
 - Recommend strategies to improve the state of waterfront infrastructure such as docks, bollards and cleats, and consider long-term infrastructure planning



Harbor Connector Service Evaluation

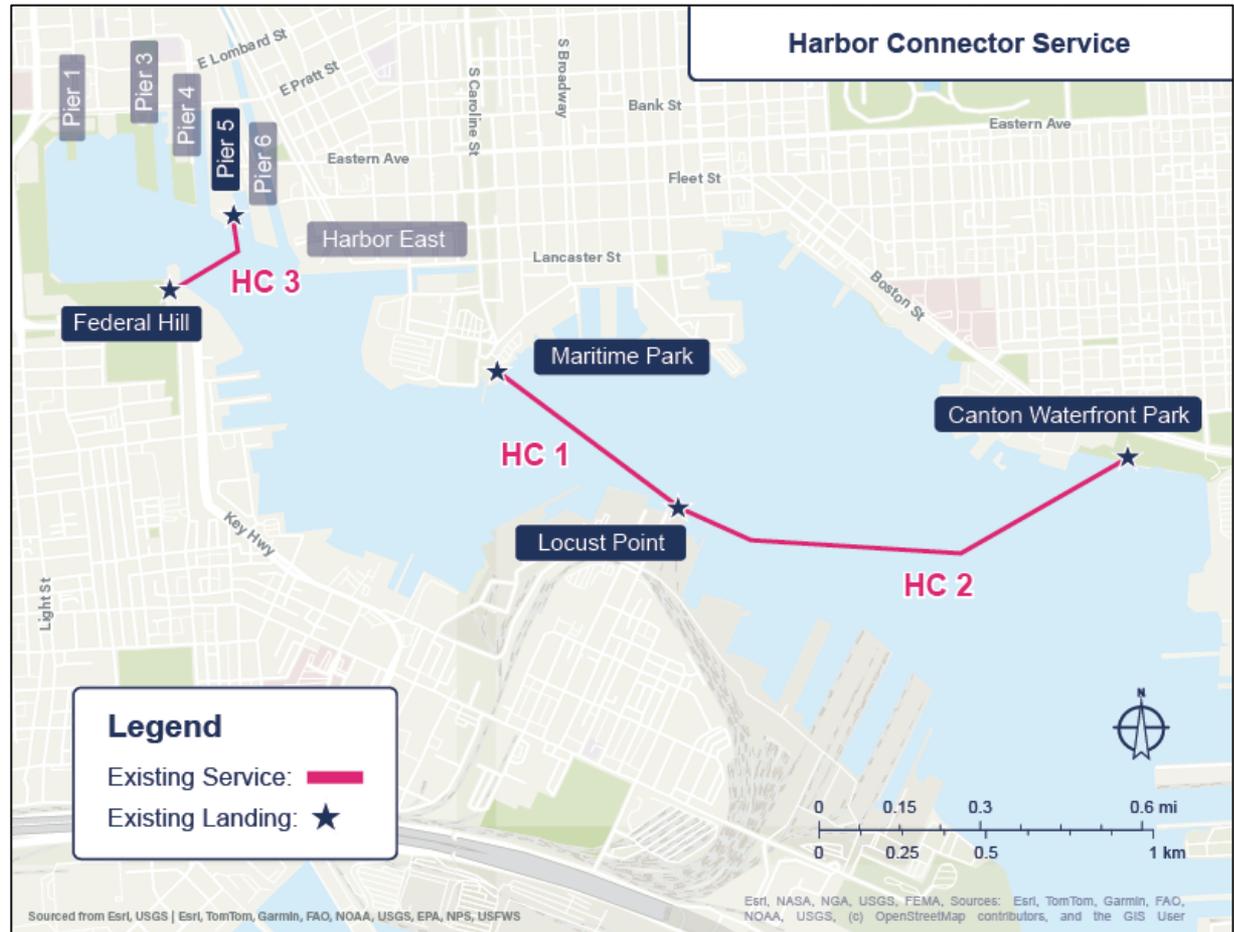


The Harbor Connector – February 2026

The Harbor Connector is made up of 3 routes operating Mon-Fri. from 6a-8p. The service is run using two city-owned vessels and one vessel owned by the contractor who is paid to run the service.

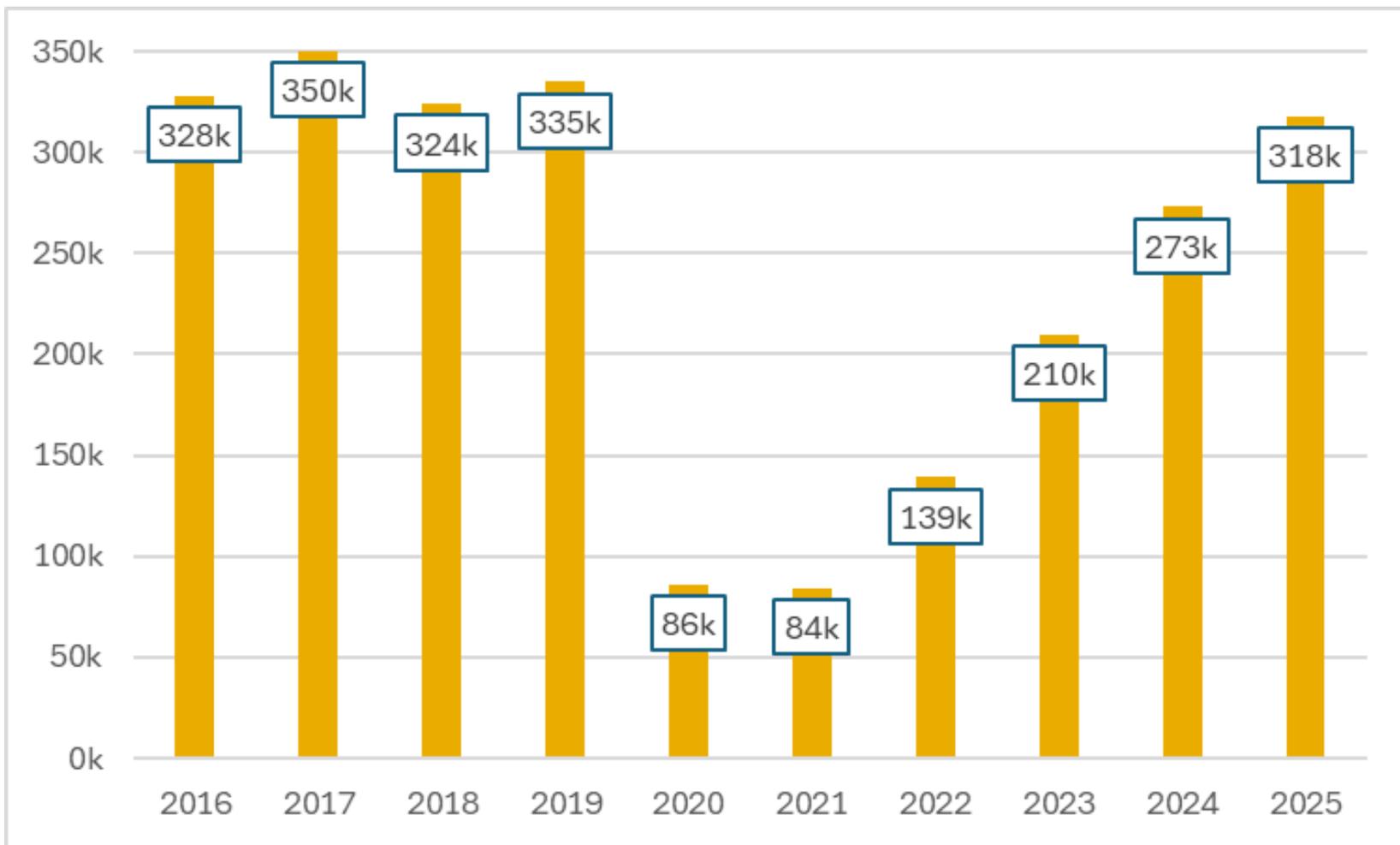
Avg Daily Ridership

- HC1 – 713 rides/day
- HC2 – 58 rides/day
- HC3 – 162 rides/day



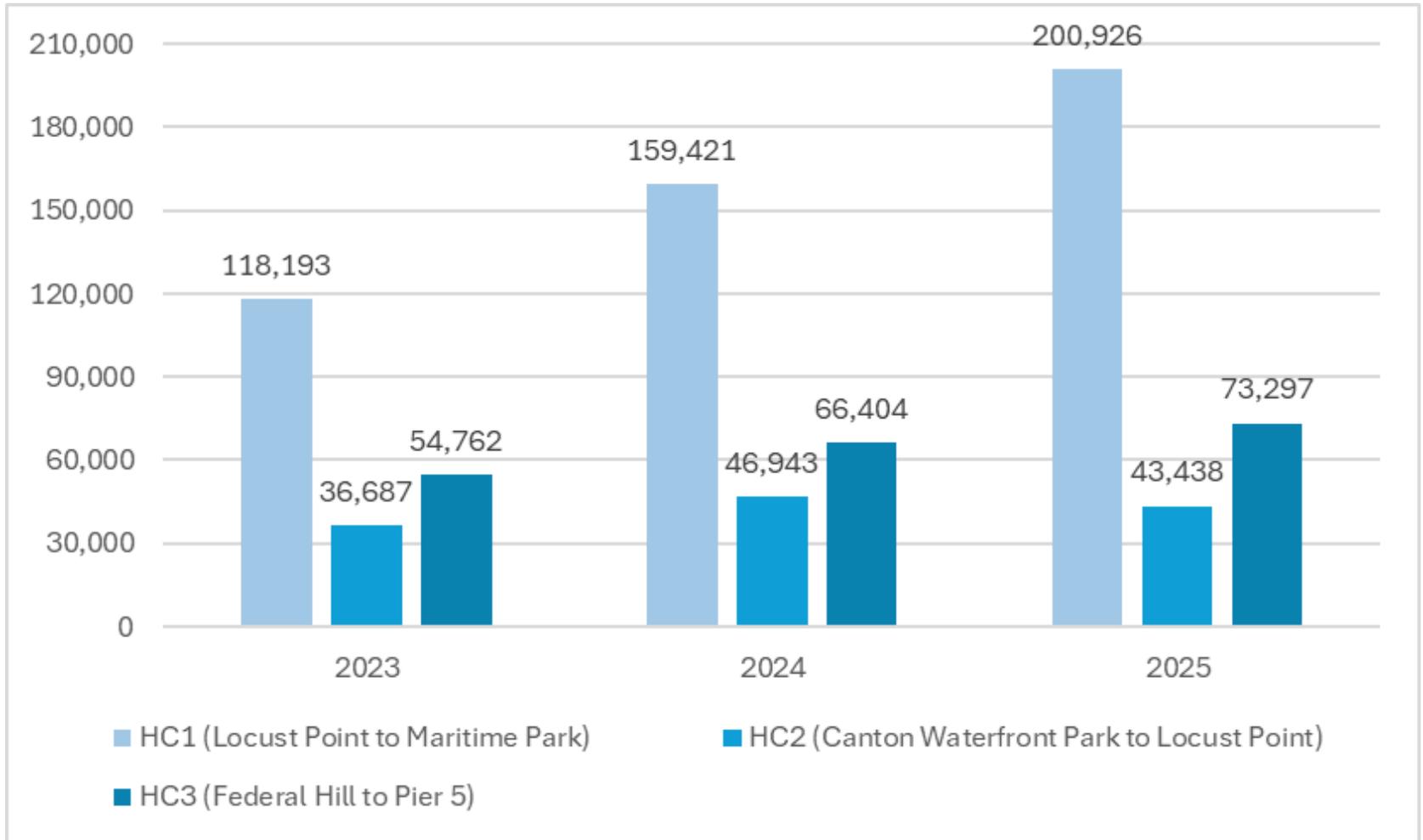


Ridership





Ridership by Route





Harbor Connector - Cost Per Trip (April 2025)

Ridership on HC1 is generally strong throughout the day. Ridership on HC2 is very low in the early morning hours and relatively low overall. Ridership on HC3 is also low in the early mornings and is moderate throughout the rest of the day.

Harbor Connector		HC1	HC2	HC3	Total
Early Morning (6 - 6:59am)	Riders	23	1	2	26
	Cost per Trip	\$4.95	\$92.07	\$49.00	\$12.88
AM Peak (7 - 8:59am)	Riders	222	10	25	257
	Cost per Trip	\$1.02	\$23.68	\$8.93	\$2.64
Midday (9am - 3:59pm)	Riders	264	92	169	526
	Cost per Trip	\$2.98	\$8.46	\$4.55	\$4.45
PM Peak (4 - 5:59pm)	Riders	221	50	96	367
	Cost per Trip	\$1.00	\$4.43	\$2.28	\$1.80
Evening (6 - 8pm)	Riders	102	56	85	243
	Cost per Trip	\$2.21	\$4.54	\$2.67	\$2.91
Weekday Total	Riders	832	209	378	1,417
	Cost per Trip	\$1.89	\$7.64	\$4.11	\$3.33



Ferry Crowding

July 2025			
Locust Point		Maritime Park	
Depart Time	% Trips at Capacity (45+)	Depart Time	% Trips at Capacity (45+)
7:52 AM	13%	4:45 PM	4%
8:07 AM	22%	5:00 PM	17%
8:22 AM	61%	5:15 PM	36%
8:37 AM	48%	5:30 PM	23%
8:52 AM	30%	5:45 PM	9%
9:07 AM	4%	6:00 PM	4%

Ridership data shows that in the mornings, HC1 trips from Locust Point to Maritime Park are at capacity, meaning some riders are forced to wait for the next ferry. The same issue occurs in the afternoons and evenings, with trips from Maritime Park to Locust Point being at capacity.

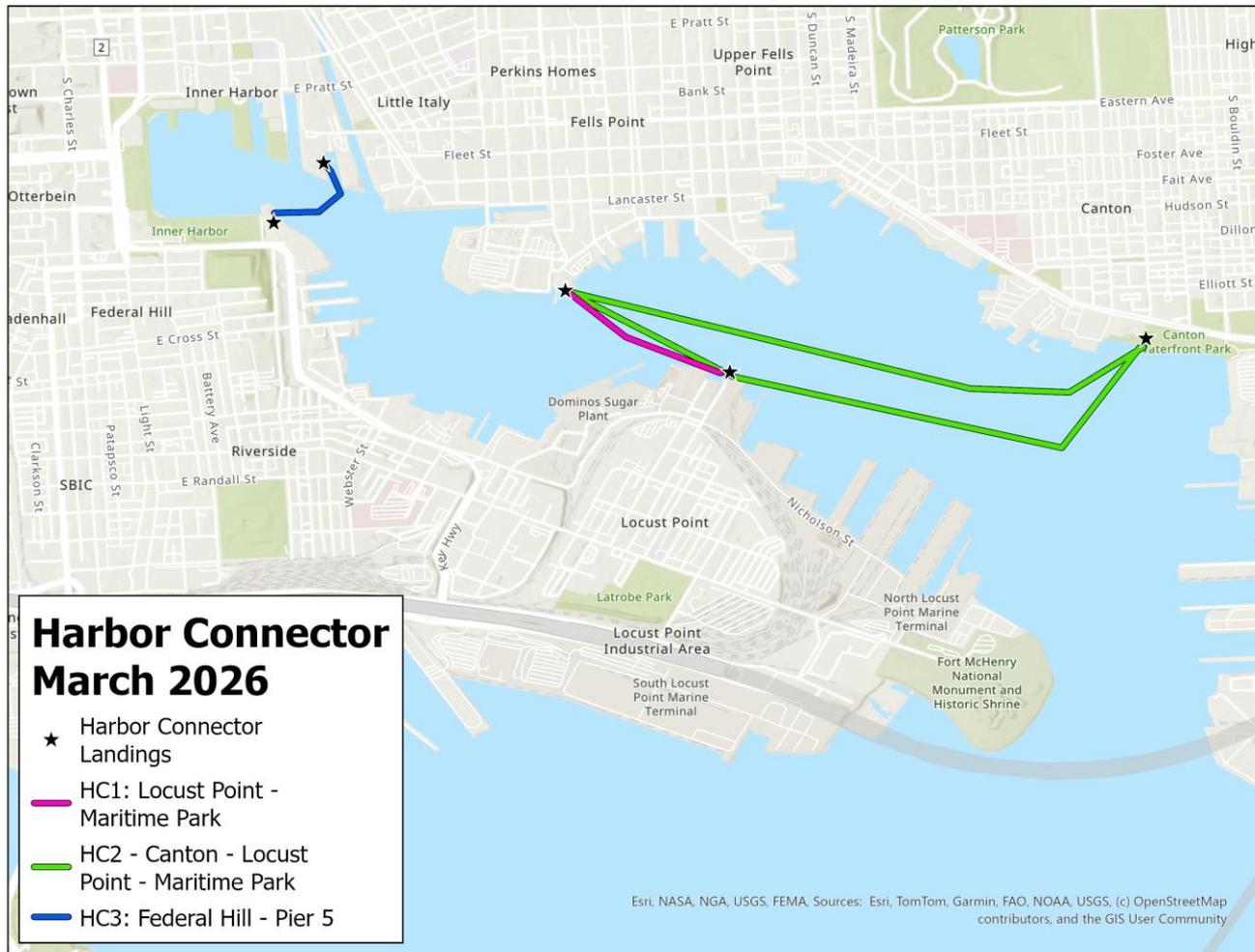


Harbor Connector – March 2026

HC1: Continues to serve Locust Point and Maritime Park, operating 6a-8p

HC2: Now serves Canton, Locust Point and Maritime Park, operating 7:15a-11:25a; 3:40p-8p

HC3: Continues to serve Federal Hill and Pier 5, operating 7a-8p





Harbormaster Operational Analysis



Harbormaster

In June of 2025, the Mayor's Office announced the relaunch of the Baltimore City Harbormaster Office. This position had been vacant since 2019. Formerly known as the Dockmaster, the Harbormaster is part of Baltimore City's Department of Transportation and monitors a variety of Baltimore Harbor marine activities including:

- Managing 5,000 linear feet of City-owned municipal piers (23 locations)
- Collecting docking and amenity fees
- Requesting annual adjustments to docking rates set by the Board of Estimates
- Reviewing wharfage agreements and land leases impacting waterfront access
- Inventorying maritime infrastructure (bollards, cleats, life rings, ladders, etc.)
- Identifying and prioritizing maintenance for state of good repair (SOGR)
- Logistics for special events such as Sail250 Maryland and Airshow Baltimore
- Assignment of docking locations for annual Sail Baltimore program (free tours)
- Promoting recreational boating around Baltimore Harbor
- Coordinating with Port Harbor Safety Committee

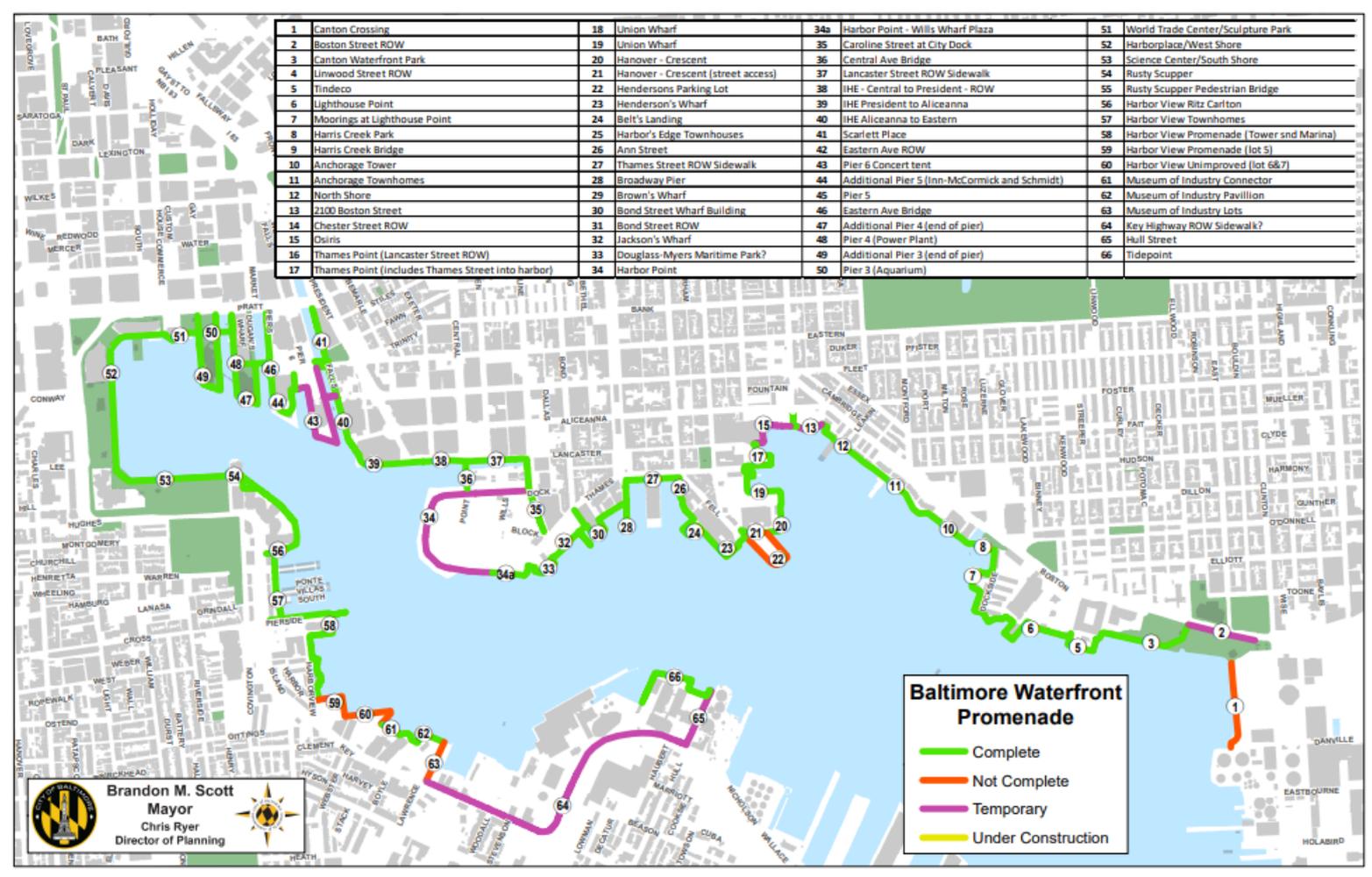


Baltimore City Municipal Piers



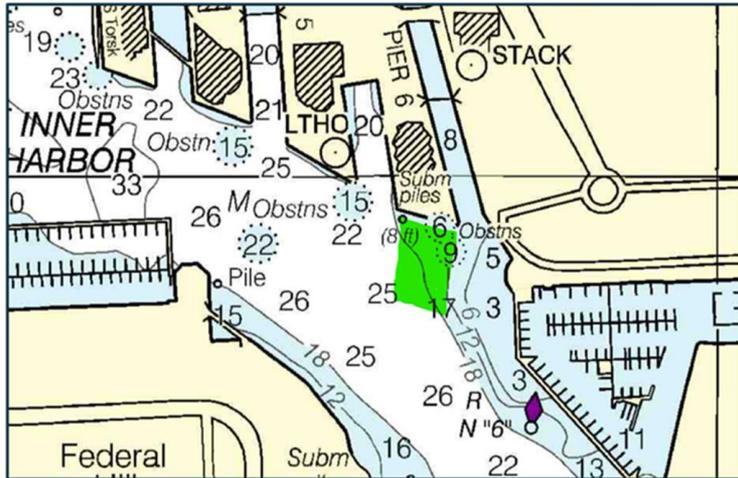


Baltimore City Waterfront Promenade

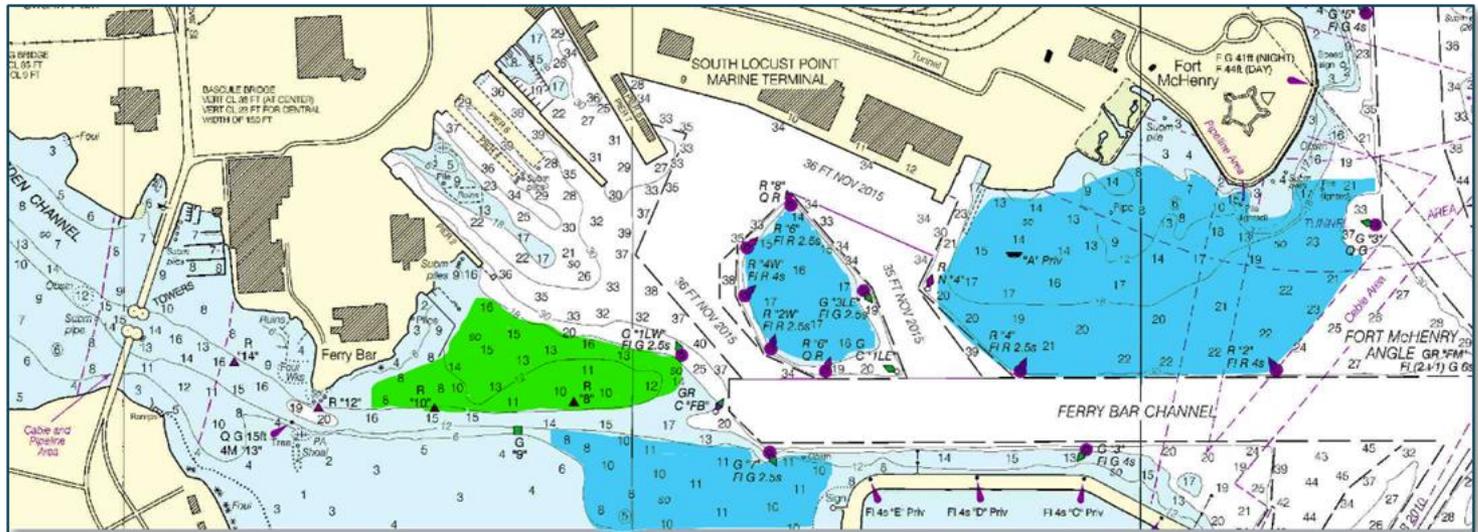




Concepts for Future Moorings



Pier 6



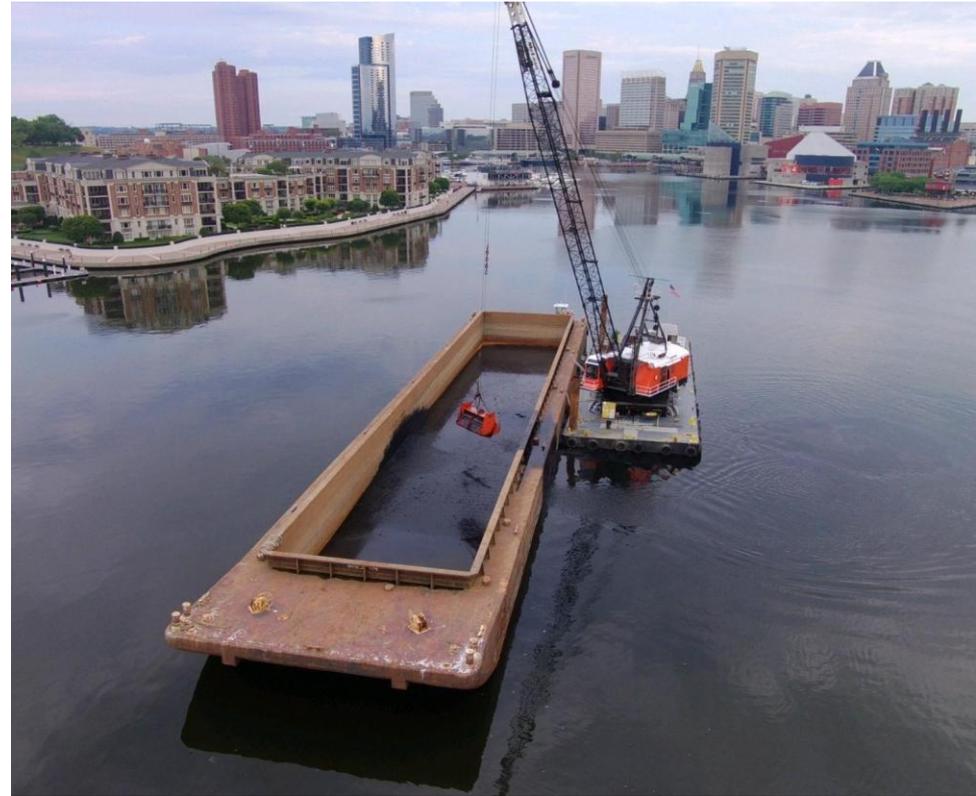
Middle Branch



Infrastructure Assessment

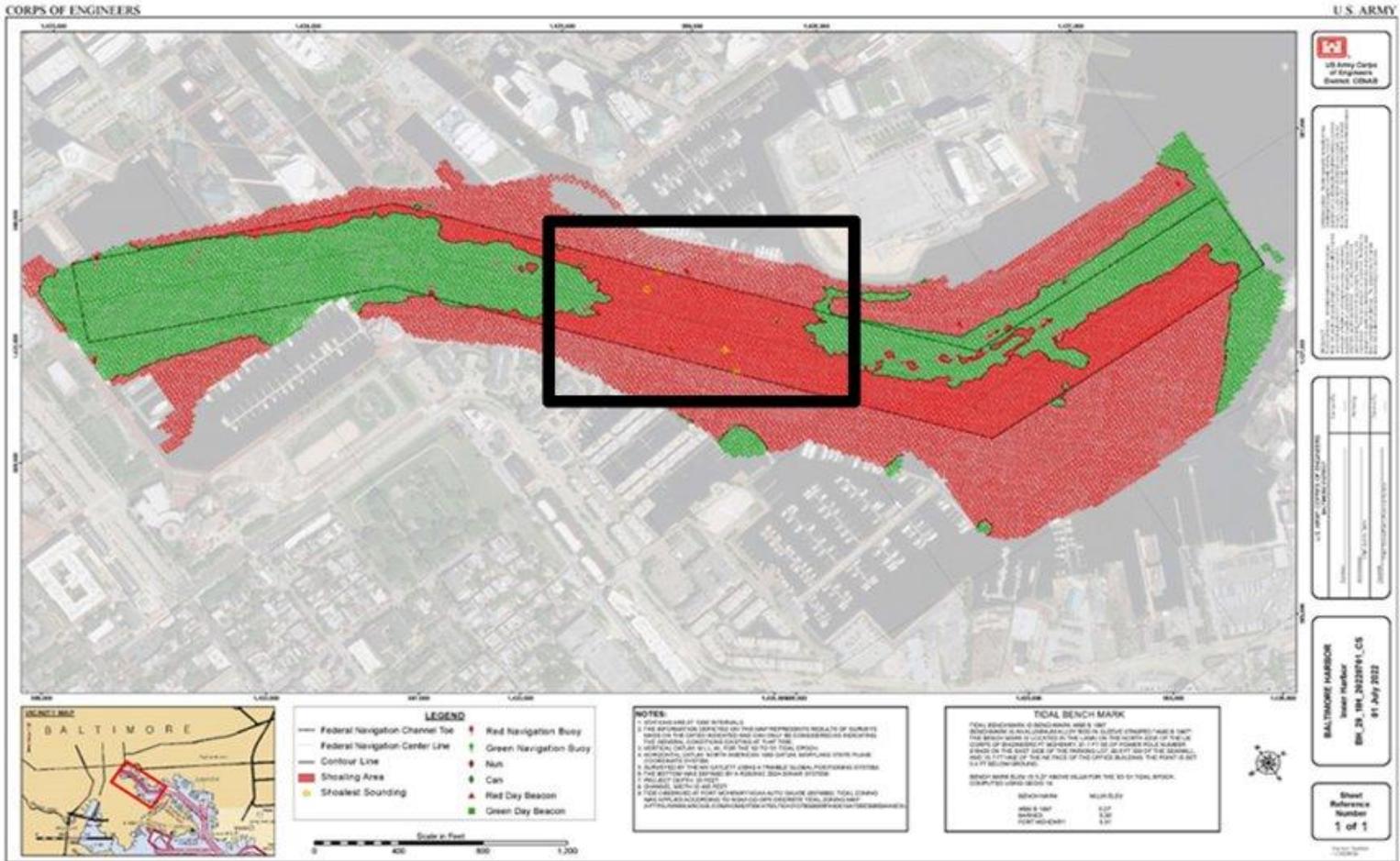
Under a 2023 Baseline Services Memorandum of Understanding with Waterfront Partnership, Baltimore City DOT has broad responsibility for waterfront infrastructure maintenance, including:

- Brick, sidewalk and promenade repairs on and adjacent to city property
- Maintenance of lighting, electrical service, carpentry, painting, and dredging
- Maintenance of Baltimore City Municipal Piers and public docking locations including utilities
- Provision of life rings, cleats, ladders & bollards
- Inner Harbor Finger Piers are over 50 years old and are the only Baltimore City Municipal Piers with shore power and potable water supply.
- Baltimore City does not charge a fee for use of public boat ramps. The cost to use a public boat ramp in the Chesapeake region varies depending on location, type of facility (county, town, or state park), and whether you're paying a daily fee or buying an annual permit.





Dredging





Wharfage Agreements

A recommendation from the **2015** Water Transit Strategic Plan was to centralize the negotiation and management of wharfage agreements in one department at Baltimore City.

When reviewing existing agreements, the Harbormaster observed that this has not been implemented and continues to create issues with consistency, standardization, and duplication of efforts, with agreement authority spread over several departments.

Wharfage agreement management should be consolidated under the BCDOT Transportation Services Division and assigned to the Harbormaster, with support from the city's Department of Real Estate and the Baltimore Development Corporation.





Key Priorities and Recommendations



Key Recommendations – Water Transit

1. Convert HC2 into a “peak-only” service that operates between Canton, Locust Point and Maritime Park in the mornings from roughly 6:40a to 10a and in the afternoons from 4p-8p. (Implemented – March 2)
2. Recommendation 2: Complete ferry landing improvements that were initially planned to be executed through the FY22 discretionary grant.
3. Launch weekend Harbor Connector service
4. Consider new Harbor Connector routes, including expansions to Riverside, Point Park, Baltimore Peninsula and Westport.





Key Recommendations: Harbormaster/Infrastructure

1. Review wharfage agreements for consistency of terms and pricing. Centralize agreement management under Baltimore City Department of Transportation, Harbormaster office.
2. Dedicate wharfage agreement and transient docking revenues to fund maintenance of maritime infrastructure in support of commuting options and tourism.
3. Collaborate with the Department of Real Estate, BDC and Waterfront Partnership on a “Inner Harbor Infrastructure Maintenance Working Group” to identify, prioritize and complete waterfront infrastructure State of Good Repair (SOGR) projects.
4. Establish \$1 million annual CIP appropriation to fund maritime infrastructure projects.
5. Review promenade ownership status and create repair and replacement schedule for sections approaching the end of functional lifecycle.
6. Investigate feasibility and revenue potential of creating moorings and/or anchorage areas for events & festivals at Pier 6, Canton Waterfront Park, Fort McHenry and Baltimore Peninsula.
7. Add gated access to improve safety of the Finger Piers pending their removal (2027) and possible replacement as part of the Harborplace redevelopment.
8. Include maintenance dredging in the City’s budget every 3 to 4 years, and work with the USACE to extend the length of the Federally-maintained channel past the Jones Falls.



Questions?

To view the draft Water Transit Strategic Plan, including new Harbor Connector route proposals and plan recommendations, scan the QR code or visit www.streetsofbaltimore.com/watertransit

