



## SEASONAL FERRY SERVICE PLAN 2019-2021



It's time to start thinking about bringing back the Cross Bay Ferry for two more years of seasonal service. All it will take is for each local member government to join with FDOT and budget \$150,000 for each of the next two years, and we will have at least seasonal service, with at least one boat, as a run-up to starting permanent service. Now some background.

First, the reason we can only do seasonal service is that there simply are no suitable ferry vessels available in the United States to run service year-round in Tampa Bay. Instead, we have to charter ferries that operate in New England during summer months to run in Tampa Bay during the winter months. That will all change with permanent service.

Tampa Bay got its first taste of passenger ferry service in 2016-2017 when St. Petersburg Mayor Rick Kriseman worked with Tampa, Hillsborough County and Pinellas County to fund a six-month pilot project using a single 149 passenger catamaran ferry out of the Boston area. The first season cost \$1.4 million, and each government invested \$350,000. The CBF carried 38,000 passengers. Various operating schedules were tried, and we found that weekends and Rays and Lightning game nights had the strongest ridership.

Mayor Kriseman and the City of St. Petersburg next secured a project funding grant from the Florida Department of Transportation for three seasons. And HMS lowered its operating cost to \$970,000 and took the risk on the first \$250,000 in revenues. This meant that each government only had to put in \$150,000. HMS also ran a weekend and weeknight schedule for the entire six months. The result was ridership went up by 30%, with over 50,000 passengers. We might have even hit 60,000 passengers, but the City of Tampa couldn't accommodate a landing at the Convention Center due to construction, and cruise ships operating out of Port Tampa Bay limited Sunday operating hours.

So what's next. In the next few months, local governments will again be asked to work together to start another season. This time, we hope the commitment is for two seasons, so everyone can plan on it.

See you on board in November.