



CITY OF NEW BEDFORD

JONATHAN F. MITCHELL, MAYOR

October 2, 2015

Marc N. Hanover
Chairman, Woods Hole, Martha's Vineyard
and Nantucket Steamship Authority
P.O. Box 284
Woods Hole, MA 02543

Re: Proposed New Bedford-Nantucket Ferry Service

Dear Chairman Hanover:

It is our understanding that the Steamship Authority will hold public hearings in the coming weeks to evaluate a proposal by SeaStreak, LLC for daily ferry service between New Bedford and Nantucket beginning next Spring. We write to express our emphatic support for the proposal, which we believe would make travel between the islands themselves and with the mainland more convenient, alleviate traffic congestion on the Cape, and promote the continued growth of the Port of New Bedford.

SeaStreak is a leading provider of ferry services in the New York metropolitan area, and has a stellar reputation for safety and customer service. It has provided reliable seasonal ferry service between Martha's Vineyard and New Bedford for over a decade, and is widely credited with rebuilding a route that had been declining in popularity. SeaStreak has been a dependable partner to the City of New Bedford and the towns on the Vineyard.

The proposed New Bedford to Nantucket service would reestablish the historic link between America's most storied former whaling ports, and would be a natural extension of the successful New Bedford service to the Vineyard. It would entail two daily trips that would stop for ten minutes in Oak Bluffs each way to drop off and pick up passengers. The service would increase the opportunities for travel between the islands from the once-a-day-service currently in place, benefiting residents and businesses of both islands alike.

Perhaps more importantly, the proposed service would enable islanders and visitors to avoid Cape traffic. There is no doubt that fewer cars on Cape roads would be welcomed by Cape residents, but the residents of Nantucket stand to gain as much as anyone from the new service. As we all know, summertime traffic on the Cape is getting worse, not better. Having a reliable means of bypassing that congestion would save Nantucket residents not only time (and therefore money), but also the uncertainty that comes with unpredictable traffic patterns. The service would similarly enable building contractors and other mainland businesses to save on travel costs – which ordinarily are passed on to island residents. Moreover, the introduction of competition with the existing Hyannis-to-Nantucket service would benefit consumers in the long run.

It also should be noted that the proposed service would contribute to the growth of the Port of New Bedford. It would draw more tourists to and through New Bedford, ushering in more business for nearby shops and restaurants. Shore-side businesses that support SeaStreak, such as fuel suppliers, also would enjoy an uptick in demand.

In short, the proposed service would offer enhanced convenience and efficiency for ferry travelers and promote the interests of all the communities served by the Authority. We urge you to vote favorably on the proposal in time for next season.

Sincerely,


Jon Mitchell
Mayor


William M. Straus

Representative, 10th Bristol District
Chair, Joint Transportation Committee