

# The Daily Item

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## TIME TO HALT FERRY FOLLIES AND FUND SAILING SEASON



### OPINION: Mark Sutherland

State Sen. Thomas M. McGee didn't use the phrase "jerked around" to describe the way the Baker administration has blocked efforts to operate a commuter ferry from Lynn to Boston this summer. But he should have.

Like a hapless tourist in a foreign country sent from one bureaucrat to another, Lynn can't get a straight answer, or satisfaction, from the state when it comes to finding \$650,000 to run a ferry this summer and fall.

One agency appeared ready to honor the funding request before declaring the city had missed an application deadline. Undaunted, the city with McGee and his colleague's help, searched for money elsewhere. A federal agency responsible for distributing billions of dollars for transportation projects gave ferry funding a thumbs up only to subsequently withdraw approval.

"The people involved in this were running us around for a year until the clock ran out," said McGee.

What makes the state's inability or unwillingness to fund the commuter ferry so confusing is the millions of dollars already committed to the project.

With McGee, Mayor Judith Flanagan Kennedy and EDIC/Lynn Executive Director James Cowdell taking the lead, the city secured state money to transform a dead-end off the Lynnway into a ferry terminal with parking, a dock protected from ocean storms, a gangway and benches.

The state provided \$1.5 million in 2014 and 2015 to help the city pay to lease a Boston Harbor Cruises ferry and run it between Boston and Lynn. The ride proved popular with commuters who extolled the joys of drinking morning coffee or an afternoon beer while enjoying a panoramic Boston Harbor view.

The ferry appeared to take a major step forward in April when U.S. Rep. Seth Moulton said Congress approved \$4.5 million to buy Lynn its own boat. But the announcement preceded the first signs of diminishing state interest in the ferry.

It's easy to understand why that lack of interest angers a transportation visionary like McGee.

As he convincingly points out, the commuter ferry is a regional transportation contributor just as much as Blue Line rapid transit running through Revere is a regional one.

Wonderland station is located in Revere but that doesn't mean only Revere people ride the subway. The commuter ferry sailed from Lynn Harbor but commuters from across the North Shore were aboard the boat.

Now is the perfect time for Baker and his aides to assess water transportation's regional value in an increasingly-congested transportation hub like the one surrounding Greater Boston. The Lynn ferry is just one link in a chain of ferries making up a network that can help ease pressure on clogged highways and the problem-plagued mass transit system.

It makes no sense for the Baker administration to ignore this regional benefit and nonsensically isolate Lynn from regional transportation thinking. It is bordering on criminal for the administration to pour millions of dollars into an innovative project only to pull the plug.

What makes sense is for the administration to spur efforts to get the ferry operating again this summer. The governor can divert from his Swampscott to Boston commute and buy a ticket for the ferry's inaugural trip of the season: Hop aboard, Governor, because the ferry is riding a wave into the future.