



LETTER TO THE COMMISSION

LTC No: 26-144

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the Fort Lauderdale City Commission
FROM: Rickelle Williams, City Manager *RW*
DATE: May 15, 2026
SUBJECT: **LauderGO Water Trolley Service**

The purpose of this Letter to the Commission (LTC) is to inform the City Commission of the status of the LauderGO Water Trolley service agreement.

On March 12, 2021, following an Invitation to Bid (ITB) process, the City entered into a contract with Water Taxi of Fort Lauderdale, LLC (Water Taxi), to provide LauderGO Water Trolley service. The service operates twelve (12) hours per day (10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.), providing free transportation to the public along the New River between Esplanade Park and Laura Ward Park, utilizing a nineteen (19)-passenger vessel.

While the contract was recently renewed for an additional two (2) years (until March 11, 2028), Water Taxi has raised concerns related to sustainability of operations under the current service structure. Specifically, Water Taxi has reported that ridership has grown significantly over the years to approximately 140,000 passengers per year. Additionally, Water Taxi notes that a substantial portion of ridership consists of tourists utilizing the service as a free amenity, resulting in long wait times and missed trips, which are affecting the quality of the service and passenger experience.

In recognition of increasing passenger demand, City staff undertook proactive efforts to quantify service conditions, including collecting data related to the number of passengers left behind at each stop in addition to standard ridership metrics. This data supports the concerns relayed by the Water Taxi, reflecting an average of 730 passengers left behind per month.

City staff are working with Water Taxi on short-term and long-term plans. The short-term plan includes renegotiating the current agreement to ensure financial viability, while the long-term plan focuses on service improvements and operational strategies to address the current challenges. City staff are drafting an amendment to address the short-term issues and will present long-term recommendations to the City Commission at a City Commission Conference Meeting after the 2026 summer recess.

For additional information, please contact Milos Majstorovic, PE, Director of Transportation and Mobility, at mmajstorovic@fortlauderdale.gov or (954) 828-5216.

Attachment:

1. Water Taxi Letter

c: Shari L. McCartney, City Attorney
David R. Soloman, City Clerk
Patrick Reilly, City Auditor
City Manager's Office
Department Directors



March 25, 2026
City of Fort Lauderdale
100 Andrews Ave
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33316
Attn: Ben Rogers

Re: City of Fort Lauderdale Water Trolley

Dear Ben,

I hope all is well. I am writing you today to confirm Water Taxi's willingness to extend our operations of the City's Water Trolley Service for the next six months with the contractually obligated 5-percent cost increase to cover fuel, labor and maintenance increases.

That being said, I would like to make clear that the Water Trolley operations are simply not sustainable in their current state.

Over the past year the Water Trolley transported approximately 140,000 people on a 19-passenger boat that operates 12 hours a day and 363 days a year. A substantial number of passengers are coming from outside the local area and utilizing the Water Trolley as a free tourist activity causing massive lines, up to 90-minute wait times and a generally chaotic experience.

This is not what was intended for the Water Trolley when it was went into operation in 2014 and when Water Taxi took over in 2018 through a City RFP with the same 19-passenger boat capacity.

That being said, the service needs significant adjustments to accommodate the growing demand and provide the best possible experience for our guests, our neighbors and our city, and we would love to work with City staff on finding that solution.

Fort Lauderdale Water Taxi

(954) 467-6677
INFO@WATERTAXI.COM
1366 SE 17TH ST, FORT LAUDERDALE, FL 33316

Thank you in advance for your time and attention to this matter and we look forward to working with you to enhance this important City amenity.

Please feel free to contact me at any time to meet or discuss any questions or feedback.

Regards,



William Walker

CEO/Principal

Water Taxi of Fort Lauderdale LLC