Writing 3
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All things considered, a trip on the NYC Ferry costs more than $2.75, and its benefits are more than getting from Point A to Point B. Finding the precise costs and benefits is a complex and elusive task than can lend insight into the priorities of the city and the assumptions of an enduring algorithm.

Applying the US Department of Transportation's "Benefit-Cost Analysis Guidance for Discretionary Grant Programs" (and last week's context on travel time) to the case of NYC Ferry raises at least three points: the fuzziness of separating transportation from recreation, the difficulty of analyzing transportation as economic development, and the potential underaccounting of equity and benefit distribution.

First, people appear to get value from riding ferries, enjoying the ride, not just the destination. Walt Whitman wrote a poem about the 19th century Brooklyn Ferry,[1] and one rider of an East River pilot program deemed the ride "worth five times the price."[2] Overall recreational during the same pilot was massive – "more than six times the city's projection."[3] Ferry travel appears to be something more than just derived demand.

With ferry ridership, for work and pleasure, comes potential economic development. As Camay et al. argue, the ferry is deeply integrated with an economic development agenda. USDOT reminds us, however, that capturing this economic development in a Benefit-Cost Analysis (BCA) is difficult, and sometimes inadvisable. USDOT warns that the local economic stimulus from spending and job creation may be outweighed by broader costs, as economic impact analyses tend to focus on positive, rather than net, impacts.[4] Double counting direct and indirect benefits may also be a concern here.[5] Understanding the distinction between economic impact analyses and BCAs, then, is crucial in evaluating a project that straddles transportation and development.

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[1] Stephanie Camay, Ellen Zielinski, and Adam Zaranko, "New York City's East River Ferry Expanding Passenger Ferry Service and Stimulating Economic Development in the New York City Region," *Transportation Research Record* 2274 (2012): 192.
[2] Camay et al., 199.
[3] Ibid.
[4] United States Department of Transportation, "Benefit-Cost Analysis Guidance for Discretionary Grant Programs," 2021, 27.
[5] Ibid.

Probing the concept of economic development leads one to questions of distribution and equity. USDOT holds that these concepts cannot be well-captured in BCAs: "distributional impact" – to whom the benefits go – "would not affect the overall evaluation of benefits and costs" (28).[6] This is a key point to consider with NYC Ferry (one that warrants much more consideration than the brief sentences here), especially since the Ferry, in both pilot and launched forms, appears to serve wealthier, whiter constituents, often in gentrifying areas like Williamsburg and Greenpoint (196).[7] When economic development is a stated goal of transportation, how do we account for the costs of displacement? As USDOT's document admits, BCAs are not all-inclusive.

[6] USDOT, 28.
[7] Camay et al., 196.