

Link to the study, supporting documents and b-roll for use by news media:

[https://www.dropbox.com/sh/n27dhw65fguj2s/AAAuxWb-3hkU2WoM\\_A2doEkBa?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/n27dhw65fguj2s/AAAuxWb-3hkU2WoM_A2doEkBa?dl=0)



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**Media Contacts**

Sue Van Brocklin, Coates Kokes  
(503) 860-1978, [sue@coateskokes.com](mailto:sue@coateskokes.com)

Lance Heisler, Coates Kokes  
(541) 852-1779, [lance@coateskokes.com](mailto:lance@coateskokes.com)

## **Operational Feasibility Study and Finance Plan Finds a Passenger Ferry is a Viable Public Transit Option for Portland-Vancouver Metro Area**

***A public ferry service is possible on the Willamette and Columbia rivers, but how much will it cost?***

**PORTLAND, Ore.**— A passenger ferry service in the Portland-Vancouver metro area is one step closer to becoming a reality. That news comes following the completion of an Operational Feasibility Study and Finance Plan presented by Friends of Frog Ferry 501(c). Details of the findings, the result of three years of work, were revealed during a Zoom press conference Tuesday morning.

Since 2017, Friends of Frog Ferry (FFF) has delivered more than \$5 million in pro bono value, has a stakeholder list of 1,600 supporters and has created nine pro bono committees comprised of business and community leaders. FFF delivered a Best Practice Case Study in 2019, a Demand Modeling Study in March 2020, and today the Operational Feasibility Study and Finance Plan. This is the largest study to date, and it was paid for in part by an Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) Statewide Transit Improvement Funds Grant as well as by the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT). The 130+ page plan addresses two key questions:

1. *Is a passenger ferry service feasible on the Willamette and Columbia rivers?*
2. *How much will it cost and how would we pay for it?*

The [study](#) is extensive in its analysis, and was needed because the Portland region has not had a ferry service for more than 100 years and passenger ferries are considered a best practice for many river cities. Key content areas of the report include:

**Passenger Ferry Feasibility Study**

- Route overview – challenges identified
- How the route influences the vessel requirements
- How the route influences the schedule
- Staffing requirements and management
- Terminals and docks – recommendations

**Finance Plan**

- Costs: Total cost for capital expenditures (capex) and operating expenses (opex)
- Average ticket cost

The proposed route includes nine proposed stops from Vancouver, Wash., to Oregon City, Ore., and the plan outlines how the Willamette River differs significantly upriver (Willamette Falls to Portland's South Waterfront) from downriver (Portland's South Waterfront to Vancouver, Wash.). Two sizes of low-profile and low-wake vessels are recommended, varying in capacity from 70-100 passengers. The report provides renderings of current dock facilities as well as what is needed in order for a stop to be serviceable by the ferry. The ferry service would focus on serving commuters in the morning and evening with "on-demand" services to locations such as OMSI or the Duckworth Dock near the Moda Center and Oregon Convention Center.

Key takeaways from the Operational Feasibility Study and Finance Plan include:

- Recommendation of seven vessels: Average moving 3,000 passengers a day and 800,000 per year
- Capital Costs (\$40 million): Planning, engineering, vessel and equipment acquisition, and regulatory requirements
- Operating Costs (\$6.8 million): Labor, fuel, insurance, maintenance, technology, communications and training
- Annual subsidy: \$2.5 million (ticket revenue covers 45% of costs)
  - *It's a myth that a ferry in Portland would be more expensive than other modes of transit*
- Cost per passenger: \$8.50
- Average passenger ticket price: \$5 per passenger | \$3 for honored passenger

For next steps, FFF will take the findings to apply for funding opportunities and an operational plan. Key needs include:

- Secure a public agency sponsor for federal funding: Must be a designated recipient. (*Note: For federal funding, 80-20% (or more) federal to state match.*)
- Secure funding for a Triple Bottom Line and Ridership Demand Report
- Plan and fund a pilot project, to start in 2022. Looking for partners and sponsors

"We've been encouraged by the amazing interest and support we've received from a broad cross section of people," said Susan Bladholm, Founder and President of Friends of Frog Ferry. "It's especially gratifying to see that from a planning and operational perspective, a ferry service is feasible. Now we need to figure out how to move this effort forward, working with our local public agencies, to ensure the ferry is accessible and affordable to all residents."

Water transportation is considered one of the most economical, energy efficient and environmentally friendly transportation modes that exists for major river cities today—and the Portland-Vancouver market is one of the few communities in the U.S. to not use the river—a natural infrastructure for transit.

Bladholm and other organizers want to hear from metro area residents on whether they support the launch of a ferry system, and encourage residents to sign up for the Friends of Frog Ferry newsletter at [www.frogferry.com](http://www.frogferry.com). Friends of Frog Ferry aims to find enough support and funding to launch the first phase of a ferry system, a pilot proof of concept by Summer 2022, followed by region-wide operation in Summer 2024.

### **About Friends of Frog Ferry**

Friends of Frog Ferry 501(c)(3) was founded in 2017, by Susan Bladholm, who started the passenger ferry initiative to leverage the Columbia and Willamette rivers as an alternate transportation option. Most major river cities around the world use their waterways to ease the burden on freeways and roads. "Frog" the namesake, derives from a Chinookan myth about Frog teaching local people how to fish. The logo is used with permission by two Chinookan artists, Chairman Tony Johnson and tribal artist Adam McIsaac.