

Support documents can be found at [frogferry.com](http://frogferry.com).



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

April 20, 2023

**Media Contact**

Jaci Wilson; 503.330.1029

[jwilson@sterlink.net](mailto:jwilson@sterlink.net)

Susan Bladholm; 503.319.2164

[susan@frogferry.com](mailto:susan@frogferry.com);

## **Potential Portland Good News Story: Frog Ferry asks City Council to partner on federal grant match funding in effort to build back a better Portland.**

***“We can do this! Given unprecedented federal infrastructure dollars, there has never been a better time, nor has there been a greater need, for a green ferry operation.” Susan Bladholm***

**PORTLAND, Ore.**—[Friends of Frog Ferry](http://Friends of Frog Ferry) 501(c)(3) is appealing to Portland City Council to collaborate to help find match funding for a federal grant application to fund a ferry demonstration project on the Willamette River. The project will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, build community resilience, and revitalize Portland’s waterfront. It is expected that the Federal Transportation Administration will announce its Passenger Ferry Grant Program in early June 2023, with an estimated budget of \$300M. Portland’s request would be approximately \$6M.

Frog Ferry Founder Susan Bladholm said, *“We need to build community and get people excited to return to downtown Portland. While Portland faces many challenges, a passenger ferry service is one small but meaningful way to help build back a better Portland—and we can have federal dollars pay for 80% of it.”* Nearly all transportation projects have a 50-50% match of federal to local dollars, but the FTA contributes 80% or more of the cost for green ferry transit. *“We recognize that our City is constrained for financial and staff resources, and we continue to be willing to do 98% of the work. However, as a nonprofit organization we must partner with a public municipality to be able to apply for federal public funding,”* said Bladholm.

**Local Funding:** Frog Ferry leaders believe the one-time catalytic funding of \$2.25M will help get Frog Ferry launched for the first three years, which includes two years of planning/building and one year of operations. The organization says that if it has a partner in City Council it can find the remaining \$9M from federal grants (which includes the \$6M FTA grant request), corporate sponsorships, and foundations. The forecasted ticket cost is \$3.50. Within the first five years it is anticipated that there will be a 10:1 return on the investment because the annual FTA Ferry

Grant Program funds maintenance, docks, vessels, and project management and may be applied for year after year.

**Cost:** The cost for two years of planning, building infrastructure to include dock enhancements and a vessel, and operating one 70-passenger ferry for a year is \$11 million. For six years, Frog Ferry, a volunteer-driven grassroots effort, has successfully delivered reports, studies, and letters of support to City Council and other transit authorities at an estimated cost savings of \$30M of tax dollars. To date, City Council has invested \$90K in the Frog Ferry effort.

**Federal Funding:** The Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) Passenger Ferry Grant program traditionally opens in June, with grant applications due in early September. Frog Ferry applied for an FTA grant in 2021, prior to the Infrastructure Bill having been enacted, when the grant program then totaled \$40M per year. The City and Frog Ferry were not awarded funding for the 2021/22 Grant because the FTA indicated they wanted to see the City have a meaningful oversight role and to provide a financial match. Now the FTA Ferry Fund is roughly \$300M a year due to the Infrastructure Bill. In 2022 the City delayed partnering with Frog Ferry over a grant documentation dispute with TriMet, which was reconciled in July 2022; the delay made an application in 2022 impossible. Frog Ferry is unable to apply directly for most public funding and must partner with a designated public agency. This is the second year of the five year “Infrastructure Bill” grant, and river cities across the U.S. are applying for federal funding to build their ferry operations to lower greenhouse gas emissions, reduce congestion, and build community resilience.

**The Pilot Project:** The grant would pay for a vessel and the operations of a single, 70-passenger ferry for one- year as well as repairing and upgrading two existing docks owned by the City of Portland, (Cathedral Park and RiverPlace). Considered a “demonstration project,” it is estimated that the ferry would move eight hundred people a day, displace 600 cars per day, and displace 3,170 metric tons of carbon emissions per year. The vision is to have a seven-vessel electrified ferry fleet, with shoreside charging infrastructure. The US Department of Energy has announced several charging infrastructure grant funds because green transit infrastructure is a priority of the Biden Administration. Frog Ferry is compelled to start the service from the Cathedral Park area due to the lack of transit solutions on the North Peninsula, the long transit time, substantial number of OHSU employees (700), and because the area is one of the most diverse neighborhoods in Oregon. Residents of the North Peninsula reside in an environmental justice community with the worst air quality in the State of Oregon, where most residents identify as People of Color, and 87% commute by single occupancy vehicle. Frog Ferry offers a “shovel-ready” solution to help combat climate change, build community resilience, and create positive momentum for our region.

More information about the demonstration “pilot” project may be found at <https://frogferry.com/pilot/>.

**Frog Ferry Leadership:** Frog Ferry board chair James Paulson said, *“We believe in Portland and can do this if we work together. The data is clear: ferries are in demand, are low-cost to build and operate, and they are fun! Despite Portland facing a myriad of challenges, our community needs an inspiring new reason to come downtown. We know ferries are a proven, time and cost efficient, and climate-friendly means to build stronger and more equitable communities.”*

**Benefits:**

- Revitalize our waterfront.
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Build community resilience in the event of a disaster.
- Connect employees to jobs.
- Create new jobs. (Estimated 60 fully scaled and 20 for maintenance and construction)
- Broaden electric charging infrastructure.
- Foster education about the river ecosystem.
- Build an understanding of Native American history in our region.
- Connect communities up and down our metropolitan area.
- Provide a new fun activity for visitors.
- Get people out on the water for fun!

The innovative transit mode does not fit clearly into just one City Commissioner’s portfolio; the project has ties to the bureaus assigned to all City Commissioners.

**City Council**

[mayorwheeler@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:mayorwheeler@portlandoregon.gov).

[gonzalezoffice@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:gonzalezoffice@portlandoregon.gov)

[comm.rubio@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:comm.rubio@portlandoregon.gov)

[MappsOffice@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:MappsOffice@portlandoregon.gov)

[CommissionerRyanOffice@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:CommissionerRyanOffice@portlandoregon.gov)

**Frog Ferry Relevance**

Office Management & Finance  
 (Financial oversight of public funds)  
 Emergency Response/Management  
 Bureau Planning and Sustainability: PCEF  
 Prosper Portland/Economic Development  
 Portland Dept of Transportation  
 Bureau of Environmental Services  
 Portland Parks (docks)  
 Arts Commission and Livability

**About Friends of Frog Ferry**

Friends of Frog Ferry 501(c)(3) was founded in 2017, to start a passenger ferry initiative to activate the Columbia and Willamette rivers as an alternate transit option. Green “foot” ferries are a proven best practice for river cities around the world to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, strengthen community resilience and build livability.

The Operational Feasibility Study, letters of support, a Pilot Project overview, Climate Impact, Best Practice Case Study Report and Demand Modeling Report may be found at [www.frogferry.com](http://www.frogferry.com).

Frog Ferry is a grassroots effort supported by hundreds of volunteers. To date, more than \$10M in pro bono goods and services have been provided to the effort at an estimated cost savings of \$30M in tax dollars.

###