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Portlanders Step Up to Advance \$40 Million Ferry Project Amid Transit Funding Challenges

As public transit funding stalls, Frog Ferry seeks \$400,000 to unlock \$22 million in state and federal funding for Portland's first all-electric passenger ferry.

PORTLAND, Ore. — As public transit agencies across the United States grapple with budget shortfalls and mounting climate challenges, a Portland nonprofit is demonstrating how grassroots leadership can advance major transportation projects when public resources are limited.

Friends of Frog Ferry (dba Frog Ferry), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, estimates it has generated more than \$40 million in research, planning, stakeholder engagement, technical analysis, and project development value over the past nine years in pursuit of a modern passenger ferry system on the Willamette River.

Founded in 2017, Frog Ferry was created to address climate change, traffic congestion, transportation emissions, and the need for more resilient mobility options. The organization seeks to help Portland meet its climate goals while bringing a proven transportation solution used successfully in waterfront cities throughout North America.

"Climate change is not waiting for government budgets to recover," said Susan Bladholm, founder and president of Frog Ferry. "Communities increasingly need to participate directly in creating solutions. Frog Ferry is an example of citizens stepping forward to advance climate-friendly transportation infrastructure when traditional systems lack the resources to do it alone."

Frog Ferry's work began in collaboration with local and regional agencies, including Portland Bureau of Transportation, TriMet, Metro, and the Oregon Department of Transportation. Together, stakeholders completed feasibility studies, financial analyses, route planning, and community engagement designed to position the project for future implementation through a public-private-philanthropic partnership model.

As financial pressures have constrained agencies' ability to pursue new transportation investments, Frog Ferry has continued advancing the project through grassroots fundraising, donated professional services, community partnerships, and a largely volunteer-driven effort.

In April 2026, the organization launched a Community Ownership Model inspired by the public support and stewardship approach associated with the Green Bay Packers. The initiative allows community members to help fund ferry development while building long-term local ownership of the project.

Frog Ferry is now seeking \$400,000 in catalytic funding to complete pre-development activities, secure public-sector partnerships, and position the project to compete for approximately \$22 million in state and federal transportation funding needed to launch initial service.

Because most transportation grant programs require a public-sector sponsor or operating partner, discussions with public agencies remain a critical part of the project's next phase.

"We are looking for donors, foundations, corporate partners, civic leaders, and transportation innovators who believe communities can work together to build a more sustainable future," said Bladholm. "The question isn't whether cities need new climate-resilient transportation options. The question is whether we're willing to create them."

The proposed all-electric ferry service would connect communities along the Willamette River while supporting climate goals, economic development, multimodal transportation access, and regional resilience.

The Oregonian recently wrote about Portland's underutilized Willamette River:

<https://www.oregonlive.com/environment/2026/06/portland-has-woefully-under-invested-in-willamette-river-needs-more-in-river-recreation.html>

For more information, visit www.frogferry.com

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About Frog Ferry

Frog Ferry is a Portland-based nonprofit organization dedicated to developing a safe, reliable, equitable, and all-electric passenger ferry system for the Portland metropolitan region. Founded in 2017, the organization works with public agencies, community partners, businesses, and residents to create climate-friendly transportation solutions that strengthen mobility, resilience, and economic opportunity.