FRIENDS OF
FROG FERRY

Summer 2026 Newsletter

Make A Donation

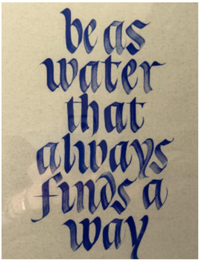
A note from our Founder: "Be Like Water..."

Photos from our recent ‘River Run’ from RiverPlace Dock to Cathedral Park Dock and back, simulating a ferry passenger experience.

First photo, from left to right: Randy Miller, Jerry Benedetto, Susan Bladholm, Ailene Romualdo, Sharon Sherpa, Rob Bennett, and Emi Day. **Second photo, from left to right:** Sharon Sherpa, Megan Kenealy, and Ailene Romualdo from Avenue Agency, who provide social media counsel to Frog Ferry.

Dear Frog Ferry Supporters and Partners,

Over my desk I have a favorite proverb: *"Be as water that always finds a way."* To me, that has always represented a relentless pursuit of moving forward — forging new ground, adding to the path created, always in motion, always powering ahead.



From Push to Flow

On vacation last week, I started *Be Water, My Friend* by Shannon Lee, which reflects the teachings of her father, Bruce Lee. The book has changed my perception of "being like water." Water is formless and shapeless; when it's hit, it splashes, but it doesn't hit back. It is fluid, and it works in harmony with its environment.

Reading it, I recognized how much I've pushed, advocated, and prodded — again and again — to bring Frog Ferry to life in a community that wasn't yet ready for it. There are no more rabbits to pull out of hats. **The public agencies must flow with us if we are to continue.**

Read more at frogferry.com.

Susan Bladholm
Founder & President

The Path to a “Go” or “No Go” Decision

As a gentle reminder: we've de-risked the project by roughly $40M, with less than 1% of that from public funding, and $22M will put a boat into operation. Every effort described below goes toward securing that remaining $22M commitment over three years. But for our team to keep advancing, we need to secure approximately $1M in the soon to keep the doors open. We thank all of you who have contributed to help keep the lights on. We would not be here today without you.

Here is what's in motion over the next six weeks, which will determine the course of Frog Ferry by **mid-September**.

At a Glance — What We Need Right Now

- **A public agency partner** willing to be our designated Section 5307 applicant, which unlocks federal infrastructure dollars at up to a 90/10 federal-to-local match.
- **September 11:** funding-bill deadline for the 2027 Oregon Legislature.
- **$1M** in bridge funding from Fall 2026-Fall 2027 to pay team members.

Public Agencies

Leaders from Metro, the City of Portland, and TriMet will meet to determine whether they wish to see Frog Ferry move forward, and who — and how — to cultivate as a partner to apply for state and federal grant dollars.

Having a public agency partner is instrumental to tapping the "big" infrastructure dollars, since these grants can be matched up to 90% federal to 10% local. We are willing to write and implement a grant ourselves, but only a designated Section 5307 applicant can actually apply. In the Portland area, that means a Port, a Tribe, the City, or TriMet.

We've had a front-row seat to the City's and TriMet's budget constraints. We kept pushing ourselves anyway, expecting that once our planning was complete, those agencies would be ready to meet us and move forward together. Instead, ongoing turmoil at both agencies has made it difficult to even discuss a partnership. Most of our elected officials are unaware of the available federal funding, let alone the 90/10 match.

Oregon Legislature: Funding-bill requests for the 2027 Oregon Legislature are due September 11th. There have been conversations about a Frog Ferry funding bill for what is certain to be a very budget-constrained session. We've made multiple requests via Capital Construction (the "Christmas Tree Bill") without success, and it's now in the hands of Portland's legislators to determine whether there's a path forward. If this avenue succeeds, that money won't be available for more than a year.

Private

We continue to have conversations with individuals and potential corporate sponsors who want to be part of Frog Ferry. That can look like a business leader contributing personally or through the company they lead, or a sponsorship that puts a logo on a vessel. Corporate sponsorship is part of our Community Ownership Campaign, where the threshold to release raised funds is $500K. A $900K sponsorship (or two) would be transformative for us...and a handful of conversations are underway with potential sponsors.

Donate

Nonprofit

String of Pearls — Individual Projects: You may be seeing news stories about opportunities for Portland's downtown waterfront, as well as other projects planned along the Columbia and Willamette. What we're finding is that many incredible projects are underway, and their leaders are heads-down on their own work. They want the benefit of a ferry, but they're battling high construction costs and sluggish investor interest, and they don't necessarily have bandwidth to advocate for a ferry system themselves. We believe Frog Ferry can be part of Portland's renaissance for a relatively modest cost and short timeframe — helping jump-start confidence and downtown renewal.

Every day we hear how great it will be to have a ferry serve one of the many coming developments:

- "It will be great to have a ferry when the Interstate Bridge is under construction!"
- "I love St. Johns but rarely go there due to traffic — I look forward to hopping on a ferry to have lunch up there."
- "It will be terrific to connect Willamette Falls and Tumwata Village to downtown Portland."
- "The new 1803 Fund and Albina Vision Trust projects look so cool — imagine people hopping on a ferry."
- "Taking a ferry to work will be a gamechanger for my day! Promise me you'll serve great coffee on board."
- "Can I take the ferry to a Portland Fire game? To an MLB game? Can I arrive and walk up to a Timbers/Thorns game?!"

Philanthropic & Grants

Our grant applications are typically to public agencies or foundations; we currently have four relatively small applications submitted.

PCEF (Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Fund): We recently received this response to our fourth application (none have yet been funded):

> *After thorough review, we determined that your application did not move forward in our review process. Reviewers found the proposed scope of work to be ineligible. The proposal significantly focused on planning efforts, and while some planning can be part of an Implementation grant application, implementation must be the primary focus (per page 12 of the Applicant Handbook). Proposed scope such as limited operational/preparation activities and a point-of-sale system did not have a direct relationship with emissions reductions. Additionally, the proposed ferry service and its anticipated outcomes* ***relied heavily on securing future state funding to purchase the ferry within the next several years. As reviewers could not demonstrate reasonable confidence regarding that funding, reviewers determined that the application did not sufficiently demonstrate it could be implemented as proposed.***
>
> *This decision is not a reflection on the quality or potential of your project, but is based on alignment with our funding guidelines.*

We share this candidly because it illustrates the chicken-and-egg problem we're asking our public and philanthropic partners to help us solve: grantors want funding certainty before they'll fund us, and we need their funding to create that certainty.

Foundations: We've met many foundation leaders this summer. There is never enough money, and resource constraints remain tight. That said, they see Frog Ferry's merits and how it will benefit the community and scale over time.

Thanks to You: The Good News

Billboards: The groovy billboards you're seeing on McLoughlin/Hwy 99 and NW Grand are provided pro bono by Big Walls. They emailed us out of the blue to ask how they could help — and it's amazing how many folks are signing up for this newsletter as a result.

Be an owner.
Go to frogferry.com.
I'D RATHER BE ON
FROG FERRY

See why Mia Birk, founder of Alta and one of the leaders behind Portland's @biketownpdx bike share program, supports Frog Ferry.

Social Media: Thanks to the support of Avenue Agency (thank you, Megan!), our social media presence has shifted toward quality-over-quantity content and more video/LinkedIn "town hall" posts; over 75% of Instagram engagement came from non-followers; total views up more than 250% month-over-month; Instagram followers up more than 20% (surpassing 1,200); 104 external link clicks to community ownership information. If you aren't already following us, please do:

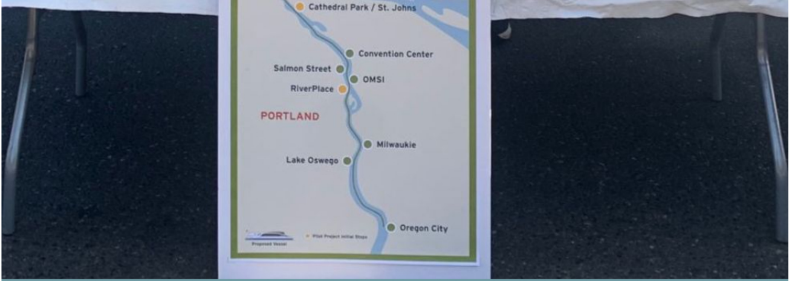
- Instagram
- Facebook
- LinkedIn
- X
- YouTube

Video Testimonials: If you haven't seen the inspired videos from our supporters, please check them out — they'll warm your heart. Watch them on our News page.

Community Ownership Campaign: Our Community Ownership Campaign invites individuals, families, and businesses to become founding owners of Frog Ferry through tax-deductible Community Ownership Shares — from a $300 share up through a $900K vessel-naming sponsorship — with benefits ranging from an annual meeting invitation to a permanent seat nameplate to naming rights on the vessel itself. We're raising toward a $2M campaign goal (as of early August we've raised more than $40,000 and heard from several potential sponsors). Learn more or become an owner at frogferry.com/support/community-ownership.

Volunteers/Tabling: Our volunteers have been wearing Frog Ferry gear and out in force this summer. At the Sunday Parkways event that culminated in St. Johns, everyone who stopped by knew of Frog Ferry.

FRIENDS OF FROG FERRY
FROG FERRY
Frog Ferry Proposed Route
VANCOUVER
Vancouver



Frog Ferry Board Secretary Jennifer Schloming and her partner Jim table for Frog Ferry at Sunday Parkways, St. Johns on August 2, 2026.

PR: A big shout-out to Julie Lee and Little Bird Media for working their connections to help us place speaking engagements and media interviews — we have a dozen on the books for the coming weeks.

Frog Ferry Team: We are very proud of our crew. The May/June grant cycle was a bear, but Xavier, Barbara, and Michelle (and many others) have continued to step up to troubleshoot, organize, and "get it done" — without pay, and often against very restricted timelines.

We're grateful to be on this journey with you.

How You Can Help

- **Become a Community Owner** — frogferry.com/support/community-ownership
- **Donate** — every gift helps keep our all-volunteer team moving: Donate via PayPal
- **Follow and share** on Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn
- **Volunteer** — reach out at frogferry.com/contact
- **Spread the word** — forward this newsletter to someone who should be standing with us

Thank you for flowing with us,
The Frog Ferry Team

Thank you for your continued support. Together, we can bring Frog Ferry to Portland!

Donate