



The Odyssey of Frog Ferry

Nine years at sea, and the harbor is finally in sight



Skylab Architects' vision of the Portland waterfront, with a Frog Ferry at the landing. Rendering: Skylab Architects.

Dear Friends,

Every great journey home has its monsters. Odysseus faced a one-eyed giant, songs meant to lure him off course, with a whirlpool on one side and a rock on the other. Meanwhile his home city waited, worn down and hoping for his return.

Frog Ferry's journey has felt a lot like that. We've met the one-eyed view that transportation only happens on roads. We've steered past distractions of false starts and "not yet," while many advocate to only fund the status quo transit systems that aren't serving us well. And we've watched our city go through hard years while the river, our oldest public space, flowed right past.

This fall, here's the news: **the harbor is in sight**. We've hit real milestones, and momentum is on our side. We knew this project would be a marathon and not a sprint, but we have stuck with it and are making real progress. The last stretch depends on you.

A CITY READY FOR ITS RIVER

The City's design competition to reimagine Waterfront Park has narrowed to three finalist teams, each with a bold vision for the Willamette. Watch with us as we see whether water transit factors into the designs, and add your voice to make sure a passenger ferry is part of the conversation.



"The Future of Waterfront Park" forum features ideas for how to reimagine ferries; an artist sketches a ferry.

WHERE WE STAND ON OUR FOUR GOALS

Listed in order of importance and timing.

1 State Funding Opportunities

IN PROGRESS

We're pursuing a state capital investment to help bring Frog Ferry to the water, and conversations in Salem ahead of the 2027 legislative session are moving in a good direction. We'll share real news as soon as we're able.

In the meantime, here's how you can help:

- **Send letters of support** to susan@frogferry.com. Letters from residents, businesses, neighborhood groups, and civic organizations matter. Save your file: in January, we'll also ask you to share your letter directly with legislators.
- **Already sent a letter?** Thank you. Please send it again. After providing well into a thousand letters and testimonies over nine years, it's a bit like starting over with so many new officials.

We'll let you know the minute there's more to share.

2 A Pilot Ferry, April–September 2027

FUNDING NEEDED

A six-month pilot between St. Johns and RiverPlace (about 25 minutes each way) would let Portlanders feel that **the worst part of your day can become the best part of your day**. We issued an RFP and received five strong, shovel-ready proposals. Timing matters, too: the City is choosing a winning Waterfront Park design now, and a pilot project would be a terrific way to activate Portland's Downtown Waterfront.

We are discussing potential funding opportunities for the Pilot Project. Your funding support helps us continue our work, soliciting major funding to pay for a Pilot Project.

3 Year-End Campaign: Be a Local Hero

STARTING NOW

Every odyssey needs heroes, and ours are local: neighbors, commuters, business owners and river lovers who believe Portland can be a river city again. You are part of this crew.

This is a time of great promise, and a time of acute financial need. Big wins in Salem, in Washington, D.C., and with lead donors all hinge on one thing: proof that Portland wants this ferry. Your support is that proof.

- **Give today through PayPal:** make a secure year-end gift of any size at frogferry.com (click Donate). Every gift keeps our crew working and tells funders the community is all in.
- **Follow and share:** follow us on [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#), and share our posts.

DONATE TODAY →

Help put a boat on the water. Click here, or visit frogferry.com and click "Donate."

WHAT WE NEED FROM CATALYTIC LEAD DONORS

- **Every donation matters and gets stretched.** Frog Ferry is where it is today because of hundreds of \$20, \$50, and \$300 contributions. Thank you!
- An **anchor gift of \$1 million or more** that makes the pilot real and draws in other funders
- **Commitments by January 31, 2027**, so we can sign an operator contract and launch in April
- **Early funds this winter** for ADA and safety upgrades at the two docks
- **Matching challenge gifts** that double every community dollar
- **Vessel sponsorship:** naming rights and a branded wrap on the pilot boat
- **Introductions** to peers, companies and foundations who care about Portland's comeback

4 A Public Agency Partner

UNDERWAY

We're working to establish the City or TriMet as our public transit agency partner — the step needed to pursue the hundreds of millions of dollars the federal government awards each year for passenger ferries, funding a nonprofit like ours can't apply for directly.

In August, about \$665 million was awarded nationally for passenger ferries, with more than half going to Alaska. For those wondering whether a blue city in a blue state can win this funding: Seattle has received funding for the past six years, and San Francisco has received several awards.

The federal funding is there, but we must, as a community, apply through an entity such as the City, TriMet, the Port, or a tribal entity.

In September, the City of Portland, through our new City Administrator Raymond Lee, granted Frog Ferry a conditional letter to use its docks at Cathedral Park and RiverPlace.



Portland City Council President Jamie Dunphy with Founder Susan Bladholm. His letter of support follows.

~\$10M
FEDERAL REQUEST

May 2027
APPLICATION DUE

Aug 2027
AWARDS EXPECTED



City of Portland

Office of Councilor Dunphy
1221 SW 4th Ave. # 210
Portland, OR, 97204

Councilor.Dunphy@portlandoregon.gov

portland.gov/Dunphy
503-823-4350

Council President Jamie Dunphy, District 1

(He/Him)

Re: Letter of Support — Friends of Frog Ferry Willamette River Pilot Project

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express my strong support for Friends of Frog Ferry and its proposed six-month passenger ferry pilot project connecting the St. Johns/Cathedral Park neighborhood to Southwest Portland's RiverPlace waterfront.

As a District 1 representative and the Portland City Council President, I have spent much of my time in office pushing for safer, more reliable, and more equitable ways for Portlanders to get where they need to go, particularly for neighborhoods that have too often been an afterthought in the region's transportation planning. A pilot project that tests a new mode of transit between St. Johns and downtown speaks directly to that work. It offers a low-risk, time-limited way to learn whether river transit can genuinely expand mobility options for our residents, ease pressure on our bridges and roads, and connect people to jobs, services, and each other.

I have gotten to know Frog Ferry's leadership, including Founder and President Susan Bladholm, and I have been impressed by the rigor and community-centered approach behind this effort, from the years of stakeholder engagement with elected officials, tribal leaders, and neighborhood associations, to the careful attention being paid to first-mile and last-mile connectivity so that a ferry stop actually serves the people who need it. I am glad to know that our State legislative delegation is also championing this work, and I believe a coordinated effort across city, state, and community partners gives this pilot a real chance to succeed.

I encourage funders, agency partners, and fellow public officials to give this proposal serious consideration. A well-designed pilot is exactly the kind of measured, data-driven step Portland needs as we think about the next chapter of our transportation system, one that tests real demand and real operating costs before asking taxpayers or investors to commit to more. Frog Ferry has earned the opportunity to run that test.

Please feel free to contact my office with any questions.

Sincerely,

Jamie Dunphy

A handwritten signature of Jamie Dunphy in black ink.

Portland City Council President



ODYSSEYS ARE A FAMILY AFFAIR



Past and current board leaders convene at Built Oregon with a focus on the future of Portland through ferries. From left: past board member Juan Vildósola with his new baby daughter; board member Lori Spencer, founder of Oregon Chai; and Juan's partner Lena Childress. Juan and Lena are the founders of Salsa Macha.



The Oregon Charity Championship golf tournament was held Sept. 28 to raise funds for 32 worthy charities. Big Walls, a foursome led by Kirk Becker, played on behalf of Frog Ferry and earned the organization \$1,000. We are grateful for the sponsorship and important work of OCC, led by Athena Boyer and John Bladholm (our founder's brother).

*Odysseus got home because he never lost sight of the destination.
Neither have we.*

With gratitude, and our eyes on the river,

Susan Bladholm

Founder/President, Frog Ferry

frogferry.com

The river belongs to everyone. The joy is in the journey.

Give today →

Donate securely through PayPal

Write & reach out →

Elected officials at
frogferry.com/support

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