

U.S. Ferry Systems Investment Act of 2009

A bill to improve and expand federal investment in ferries, a vital part of America's transportation system

Ferries – A Critical Part of our Transportation System and Economy

- Ferries carry more than 100 million passengers annually and operate in at least 38 states.
- They provide a critical transportation option helping to ease congestion in major metropolitan areas, serve isolated communities, provide a critical emergency evacuation alternative and serve as an interim solution when other transportation infrastructure fails.
- Ferries also provide emergency evacuation support during times of crisis (i.e. 9/11, and following the collapse of the San Francisco Bay Bridge).

Current Funding Levels - Too Low to Meet Aging Fleets and Growing Demand

- Many public ferry systems need federal assistance to help meet growing demand and to make investments in system infrastructure including replacing aging vessels and improving terminals and other land-side facilities.
- According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, 25 percent of ferry systems in the country are 40 years or older, and five percent are 60 years or older.
- Despite being the preferred and, at times, sole means of surface transportation in many areas of the country, the federal investment in ferries is **only one-tenth of one percent of the total Surface Transportation Program** and there is virtually no coordination at the federal level to encourage and promote ferry transportation.

The U.S. Ferry Systems Investment Act – A Big Boost for Ferry Systems

1) Increased Funding – New Formula

- The legislation would authorize an increase in funding for the Ferry Boat Discretionary program from its current level of \$67 million in fiscal year 2009 to \$200 million annually for fiscal years 2010-2015.
- It would establish a weighted formula to distribute half of the authorized funding based on passenger boardings (50 percent), vehicle boardings (25 percent), and total ferry system route miles (25 percent). The formula program will help ensure that significant funding is directed to the largest and most important public ferry systems. The remaining half of the authorized program funds would continue to be distributed on a discretionary basis, which will help initiate and expand ferry services throughout the country.

2) Clean Fuels Grant Program

- Authorizes ferries systems to compete for the Clean Fuels Grant Program administered by the FTA.

3) Ferry Joint Program Office

- The legislation would establish a Ferry Joint Program Office within the U.S. DOT to coordinate federal programs affecting ferry systems under the U.S. DOT and DHS.

4) National Ferry Database Improvements

- The legislation improves the National Ferry Database and requires that it record data in a manner consistent with the National Transit Database maintained by FTA.

5) National Ferry Transportation Institute

- The legislation establishes a National Ferry Transportation Institute at a college or university to conduct R&D, training and other programs directed at improving ferry transportation systems in the U.S. This includes, but is not limited to programs that focus on technologies to reduce wake; developing and testing advanced materials for vessels; testing clean, renewable fuels on propulsion systems, etc.