

# Construction of Ferry Boats and Ferry Terminal Facilities Program (FBP)

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



## FBP Funding Examples



Source: NPS

### Isle Royale National Park

This remote island park is located in the middle of Lake Superior and is accessible by ferry, seaplane, or private watercraft. In 2013 and 2014, Isle Royale National Park and the Isle Royale Line, a ferry system that serves the park, benefitted from around \$829,000 in FBP funds with a 20 percent local match from NPS Category III funds. The ferries are owned and operated by the NPS and offer roundtrip ferry service from Michigan and Minnesota to Isle Royale.

FBP projects include:

1. Rescue boat compliance that will replace four lifeboats to meet current standards for primary lifesaving equipment;
2. The rehabilitation of a large vessel harbor dock at Isle Royale National Park, which will correct safety issues and provide universal accessibility for different vessels, including three passenger vessels; and
3. The design of a dock and marina waterfront for Isle Royale National Park to improve the safe separation of passenger waiting areas and ship loading operations to ensure compliance with current regulations.

These projects have prompted strong partnerships between NPS, Michigan DOT, FHWA Michigan Division, and USDOT Volpe Center.

*The Construction of Ferry Boats and Ferry Terminal Facilities Program (FBP) is a discretionary grant program that provides funding for ferry facilities that transport pedestrians and/or automobiles with passengers for public transportation purposes. This program also funds structures and amenities that directly serve the ferry boat operation, including passenger parking, ticketing, waiting area, boarding, and disembarking facilities, docks, and slips. Parks or partners providing ferry services must coordinate with the state department of transportation (DOT) to secure FBP funding for improving existing ferry services or building or acquiring new ferry boats and facilities.*

## How can parks access FBP funding?

First, in order to be eligible for FBP funding, the ferry operator must ensure that required data\* is entered into the National Census of Ferry Operators (NCFO). Funding is allocated by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to state DOTs using a formula, based on passengers and vehicles carried by each ferry system, and the total route nautical miles serviced by each ferry system. Projects should be developed in conjunction with state DOTs and NPS must work with the state DOT to secure funding.

\*Find the required data at the [U.S. DOT Bureau of Transportation Statistics](#).

## What projects are eligible?

FBP funding is used for the purchase, lease, or construction of new ferries and ferry facilities, and/or construction and preventive maintenance activities for existing ferries and facilities. Only the capital portion of the cost of leasing a vessel or facility by an eligible entity is eligible for FBP funding. The costs of participation should equal the annual lease costs and federal-aid may not pay for the entire lease period costs up front. Such a lease cannot include the cost of operating the ferry and this funding cannot be used for operational costs of ferry services.

Ferry boats and ferry terminal facilities must be either publicly owned or operated, or majority publicly owned. If a route is operated by a private entity, the NPS must have a contract, permit, or other agreement (such as a concessioner agreement) in place, which demonstrates that the private entity is authorized to provide the service. The operating authority and the amount of fares charged for passage on the ferry should be under the control of the state or other public entity. Boats that are strictly for entertainment and tours are NOT considered ferry boats and are not eligible for FBP funding.

# Construction of Ferry Boats and Ferry Terminal Facilities Program

## Key Resources and Contacts

- [NPS Transportation Branch and regional transportation coordinators](#)
- [FHWA FBP Fact Sheet](#)
- [FHWA FBP Program Website](#)
- [National Census of Ferry Operations \(NCFO\) with contact information](#)
- [State DOT Contacts](#)

## Funding Amount

The Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) authorizes FHWA to disburse \$80 million per year from 2016 to 2020 to state DOTs for the FBP. State DOTs then distribute the funds based on the funding formula.

## Program Details

### Formula Funding

FBP funds are allocated to state DOTs for eligible entities (NPS parks, ferry system operators, etc.), with distribution based on a formula. This formula weighs funding based on the number of ferry passengers carried (35 percent), the number of vehicles carried (35 percent), and the total route nautical miles serviced by each ferry system (30 percent).

The federal share of FBP project funding is 80 percent with a local match of 20 percent. The NPS' core transportation program funds (Federal Lands Transportation Program, or FLTP) may be used towards this match for ferry service that provides access to or within federal or tribal land in coordination with NPS regional transportation coordinators.

### National Census of Ferry Operators (NCFO)

The Bureau of Transportation Statistics maintains a national ferry database, called the NCFO. NPS operated ferry services or partner/concession provided ferry services are required to report ferry operations data to the NCFO biennially in order to be eligible to receive FBP funding. The NCFO database is a collection of summary tables providing ferry operation data from a nationwide census of ferry operators along with other sources of ferry data. The database includes information at various levels such as operator, route segment, terminal, or vessel.

## NEXT STEPS

### Confirm or request listing in NCFO

Check the most recent census on the NCFO website to ensure that the park ferry system is included. If the ferry system is not included, call or email the NCFO contact at the Bureau of Transportation Statistics to request that it be added. The NCFO is updated biennially.

### Develop project ideas

To ensure that a FBP project and corresponding match are eligible, the state DOT should be consulted early in the project development process. Project partners could include the ferry operator, state DOT, metropolitan planning organization (MPO), and the applicable NPS regional transportation coordinator. Parks should work in partnership with the state DOT to submit projects to FHWA. After projects have been developed, ferry boat projects should be included in the state DOT's Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), and the MPO's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), if applicable.

### Build relationships with state and local governments

Parks should work with state DOTs and MPOs to include funded ferry projects in the STIP and TIP. Ongoing collaboration with state DOTs, MPOs, and local governments is the best way to remain aware of potential funding opportunities from the FBP as well as other funding programs.