

AGENDA ITEM

BUSINESS OF THE CITY COUNCIL
City of Des Moines, WA

SUBJECT: Passenger Ferry Pilot Test

ATTACHMENTS:

FOR AGENDA OF: April 14, 2022

DEPT. OF ORIGIN: Administration

DATE SUBMITTED: April 7, 2022

CLEARANCES:

- Community Development _____
- Marina _____
- Parks, Recreation & Senior Services _____
- Public Works _____

CHIEF OPERATIONS OFFICER: _____

- Legal /s/ TG _____
- Finance _____
- Courts _____
- Police _____

APPROVED BY CITY MANAGER

FOR SUBMITTAL: 

Purpose and Recommendation

The purpose of this agenda item is for the City Council to consider next steps for passenger ferry pilot program implementation.

Suggested Motion

Motion 1: “I move to authorize the City Manager to begin negotiating necessary contracts and agreements for a 2022 passenger ferry pilot program in an estimated amount of \$975,000, and to bring them to the City Council for consideration and approval.”

Background

A passenger ferry system has long been considered as a project of potential value for our City. Recent events, including multi-modal transportation demands, prospects for Marina redevelopment and sustainable options to reduce environmental impacts of vehicular traffic have all created an opportunity to move forward with passenger ferry service.

Discussion

In the context of reviewing and moving forward with our Marina redevelopment process including development of Marina Steps and significant capital investment in our Marina (primarily dock replacement), opportunities to pursue passenger ferry service, initially linking Des Moines and the Seattle waterfront have arisen.

Last September (2021), the City sponsored (in cooperation with the Griffin family who operate businesses on Pier 57 in Seattle and donated the boat and crew) a maiden voyage round trip between Des Moines Marina and Pier 57 in Seattle. The trip was very positively received by those in attendance and the public. We now are recommending the next step in this process. Initiating a pilot beta test passenger ferry service for this summer, anticipated start date in July and end date in the fall. At the conclusion of this trial period, staff working with our consultants, will compile a report to City Council that will summarize the pilot study and offer City Council options related to future service.

As part of the process in reviewing passenger ferry options, the City commissioned a statistically valid demand study which surveyed residents regionally. The results were provided to City Council and were posted on the website. The study results were very positive in terms of regional demand and respondents having a positive view of passenger ferry service in Des Moines, including City residents and regional interests.

Alternatives

The alternative is to not move forward with a pilot passenger ferry service trial for Des Moines.

Financial Impact

In order to implement this pilot program, City administration is requesting an allocation not to exceed \$975,000 that will utilize one time sales tax funds that are designated for capital expenditures and other appropriate sources. There are two critical considerations. First, this estimate for costs associated with this pilot program does not include any projected revenue from farebox receipts. This is because of the uncertainty of the amount of receipts. In the future, if City Council wants to proceed with passenger ferry service beyond this beta test, we anticipate that passenger ferry service would be financed through a public/private partnership. We are not currently associating this effort with the Washington State ferry service.

Any operating contracts will be brought before City Council for approval prior to establishing this pilot service.

Recommendation

To proceed with this pilot program passenger ferry service in 2022.

Council Committee Review

Passenger ferry service has been discussed in Economic Development Committee (2020, 2021).