

TOWN OF ISLESBORO
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Janet R. Anderson
Town Manager
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August 25, 2022

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

SUBJECT: Letter of Support for the Federal Transit Administration FY2022 Electric or Low-Emitting Ferry Pilot Program

Dear U.S. Secretary Buttigieg:

We, the Select Board and Town Manager of the Town of Islesboro, Maine, write in support of the Maine State Department of Transportation's (MaineDOT) submission for the FY2022 Electric or Low-Emitting Ferry Pilot Program for funding to construction a replacement for our current ferry, the *Margaret Chase Smith*.

Our town is located approximately three miles off the mid-coast of Maine. The island is fourteen miles long and is narrow and home to more than 600 full time residents. In the summer the population increases by several thousand.

We have two small grocery stores on the island, three boatyards, a community Health Center, EMS and Fire Services, a K-12 Central School, and a small assisted living facility. Our school is a "magnet" school, with mainland students attending by riding our ferry to and from the island Monday to Friday. Further information can be found on our website: www.townofislesboro.com.

During the summer, our ferry runs nine round trips a day from and to Islesboro. During the off-season there are seven round trips. Morning runs are filled with contractors and service providers, as well as USPS, UPS, local building delivery services, and, during the school year, students. Truck traffic is regular and heavy, as we have no gravel pit on the island. All our fuel comes over on the ferry. Residents of the island regularly use the ferry service for food shopping, medical appointments, medication pick up (while we have a health center we do not have a pharmacy), veterinary services, hardware and building supplies, and general shopping. The ferry also provides, when necessary, EMS services and spends the night here on the island to be available in the event of a medical emergency. In short, the ferry is essential to Islesboro's continued existence as a robust and viable community.

Our current ferry, the *Margaret Chase Smith*, was built in 1987. Every time it is hauled for repair it costs hundreds of thousands of dollars. It is well overdue for replacement.

Last fall we worked with our MSFS Advisory Board Representative, John King, to reach out to our community in an attempt to determine what people would like to see in a new ferry. Parking at the ferry terminals, an important one for many, took first place. Thereafter, the most interest centered upon alternative propulsion systems, specifically, an electric powered ferry.

We sent the result of that survey to the MSFS on December 9, 2021. We attach a copy of that letter. We understand that the MSFS is in agreement with that letter and the recommendations from our Town. We also understand that Mr. King has written a letter of support in regard to this funding. We agree with that letter in its entirety. Indeed, we believe we are in a unique position for alternative propulsion. We have a three mile crossing. The Scandinavian countries operating electric ferries for quite some time have far longer runs.

As you are aware, the cost of diesel fuel has recently skyrocketed making the operation of a diesel ferry even more costly. Systems operating electric ferries have reported significantly reduced operating costs. As our town seeks to attract younger families and new residents to the island, the affordability of the ferry is a key issue. Anything we can do in the long term to keep operating costs down and tariffs affordable will ultimately inure to our benefit as well as to the benefit of the other communities served by the MSFS.


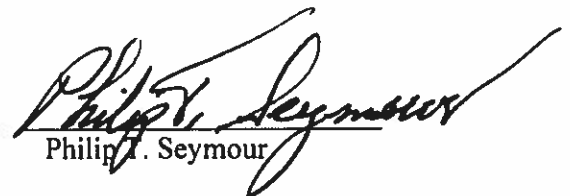
We believe funding for this project will result in reduced greenhouse gas emissions, improved service, better access to work, education, and general services with safe, reliable, and affordable public transportation. Accordingly, we support MaineDOT's proposal without hesitation.

Sincerely,

Janet R. Anderson



Islesboro Select Board


Gabriel I. Pendleton, Chair
Shey V. Conover
Philip T. Seymour
Lauren K. Bruce
Melissa A. Burns