

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

Water Taxi Services for the City of St. Helens



1. Introduction

The City of St. Helens, Oregon (“City”) is seeking proposals from qualified and experienced operators to provide water taxi services utilizing publicly owned waterfront access points and related infrastructure. The selected contractor will operate, maintain, and manage water taxi services for public and/or private use in a manner that maximizes economic and community benefit.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this RFP is to:

- Establish reliable and safe water taxi services
- Enhance connectivity along the Columbia River, Sand Island, and surrounding areas
- Promote tourism, economic development, and community engagement
- Generate revenue and shared economic value for the City of St. Helens

3. Scope of Services

The selected contractor shall:

- Provide fully operational water taxi services for passengers
- Maintain vessel in compliance with applicable federal, state, and local regulations
- Ensure vessel is maintained in a seaworthy condition at all times
- Comply with all applicable United States Coast Guard (USCG) documentation, inspection, certification, and operational requirements
- Operate the following vessel: - Vessel Name: FISHEAGLE OSPREY - Official Number: 1346529 - Oregon Vessel ID: OR802XC - Dimensions: 10 feet by 40 feet quadtoon deck configuration - Propulsion: Twin 2021 115 HP Honda outboard engines - Features: - Canvas top - Forward motorized landing ramp to facilitate passenger loading and unloading - Gated dock access from both port and starboard sides
- Operate on schedules and routes approved by the City
- Offer services for both public transportation and private charter opportunities
- Ensure accessibility and inclusivity where feasible

- Provide customer service, ticketing, and operational management
 - Ensure the vessel is operated at all times by a properly qualified and appropriately licensed captain
 - Provide qualified crew members as required for safe and compliant operation in accordance with applicable laws and regulations
 - Provide and be solely responsible for moorage of the vessel during operational seasons including secure storage of the vessel on land (“on the hard”) during non-operational or off-season periods
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4. Economic Benefit Requirements

Proposers must clearly outline:

- Direct and indirect economic benefits to the St. Helens community
 - Job creation and local hiring strategies
 - Partnerships with local businesses and tourism organizations
 - Expected increase in visitor activity and local spending
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5. Revenue Sharing

Proposals must include a detailed revenue-sharing model with the City, including:

- Percentage of gross or net revenues shared with the City
 - Minimum annual guarantees, if applicable
 - Additional financial or in-kind contributions
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6. Regulatory Compliance

The contractor shall ensure full compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local maritime laws and regulations.

A. Jones Act Compliance

Operations may be subject to the Passenger Vessel Services Act, 46 U.S.C. § 55103 (commonly referred to as the Jones Act passenger vessel provisions), which generally requires that vessels transporting passengers between points in the United States be U.S.-built, U.S.-flagged, and U.S.-owned, unless a valid waiver applies.

The vessel and its operations may be subject to the Jones Act small vessel waiver program. The contractor is solely responsible for:

- Understanding and complying with all applicable requirements of 46 U.S.C. § 55103
- Obtaining and maintaining any required waivers or approvals
- Ensuring continued eligibility for lawful operation

B. Proposal Requirements

Proposers must include in their submission:

- A statement confirming whether the vessel is Jones Act compliant or operating under a waiver
- Documentation of waiver status, if applicable
- A description of how compliance will be maintained throughout the contract term

C. Risk Allocation

The contractor assumes all risk associated with Jones Act compliance, including but not limited to:

- Denial, expiration, or revocation of any waiver
- Changes in federal law or regulatory interpretation

In the event that the contractor is unable to legally operate due to Jones Act non-compliance or waiver issues:

- The contractor shall be deemed in material breach of the agreement
- The City may suspend operations or terminate the agreement for cause
- The contractor shall not be entitled to compensation for lost revenues or damages resulting from such non-compliance

7. Insurance Requirements

The selected contractor shall:

- Maintain commercial general liability insurance of no less than **\$5,000,000 per occurrence**
 - Indemnify, defend, and hold harmless the City of St. Helens
 - Name the City of St. Helens as an additional insured on all applicable policies
 - Provide proof of insurance prior to contract execution
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8. Proposal Requirements

Proposals must include:

A. Company Information

- Legal name and structure
- Relevant experience in marine transportation or similar services
- References from comparable projects

B. Operational Plan

- Proposed routes and schedules
- Vessel specifications and capacity
- Staffing plan and qualifications
- Safety and compliance measures

C. Financial Proposal

- Detailed pricing structure
- Revenue projections
- Revenue-sharing proposal

D. Economic Impact Statement

- Community benefit analysis
- Local engagement strategy

E. Risk Management

- Insurance coverage details
 - Safety protocols
 - Contingency planning
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9. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on a **best value framework**, including:

- **Value to the City (30%)**
 - Revenue-sharing structure
 - Financial sustainability
 - Risk mitigation
- **Value to the Community (30%)**
 - Economic development impact
 - Accessibility and inclusivity
 - Community partnerships
 - Ability to utilize vessel to expand access to waterfront, Sand Island, and underserved locations
- **Operational Excellence (25%)**
 - Experience and qualifications
 - Feasibility of operational plan
 - Safety and compliance record

- **Vessel Utilization & Service Innovation (15%)**
 - Effective use of vessel
 - Ability to serve varied landing conditions (dock, shoreline, events)
 - Passenger experience and comfort
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10. Minimum Vessel Performance Standards

The contractor shall operate the vessel in a manner that fully utilizes its design and capabilities, including but not limited to:

- **Boarding & Accessibility**
 - Use of the forward motorized landing ramp for safe and efficient passenger boarding
 - Capability to accommodate passengers with mobility limitations where feasible
 - Safe embarkation from docks, shorelines, and non-standard landing areas
- **Passenger Safety & Capacity**
 - Maintain safe passenger loading limits in accordance with USCG certification
 - Ensure clear ingress/egress pathways at all times
 - Maintain safety railings and secure boarding conditions
- **Operational Flexibility**
 - Ability to operate in shallow water and variable shoreline conditions
 - Utilize dual port and starboard access points for efficient loading/unloading
- **Passenger Experience**
 - Provide covered seating or standing areas for weather protection
 - Maintain clean, safe, and functional passenger spaces
- **Maintenance & Readiness**
 - Ensure all vessel systems, including ramp mechanisms and engines, are maintained in reliable working order
 - Conduct regular inspections and preventative maintenance

Failure to meet these performance standards may be considered non-compliance and subject to penalties as outlined in this RFP.

11. Scored Narrative Requirement – Vessel Utilization

Proposers shall include a detailed narrative describing how they will utilize the full capabilities of the FISHEAGLE OSPREY to deliver high-value service to the City and community.

This section will be scored and must address:

- **Use of Landing Ramp**
 - How the forward motorized ramp will be used to support shoreline access, events, and non-traditional landings

- **Service Area Expansion**
 - Strategies to utilize shallow draft and flexible landing capabilities to reach underserved or new destinations
- **Accessibility & Inclusion**
 - Methods to accommodate passengers with mobility limitations using vessel features
- **Passenger Experience**
 - Use of canopy, seating configuration, and vessel layout to enhance comfort and usability
- **Operational Creativity**
 - Innovative service offerings (e.g., tours, events, point-to-point service) leveraging vessel design
- **Efficiency & Throughput**
 - How dual-side access and ramp loading will improve boarding efficiency and turnaround times

12. Compliance Checklist & Numeric Scoring Sheet

The following scoring sheet will be used by evaluators. Each proposal will be scored on a 100-point scale.

A. Mandatory Pass/Fail Requirements

Proposals MUST meet the following minimum requirements to be considered responsive:

- Vessel seaworthiness and USCG compliance
- Jones Act compliance or valid waiver
- Licensed captain and qualified crew
- Insurance requirements (\$5M per occurrence)

Failure to meet any of the above will result in disqualification.

B. Numeric Scoring Matrix (100 Points Total)

Category	Criteria	Points
Value to the City (30 pts)	Revenue sharing model	15
	Financial sustainability	10
	Risk mitigation	5
Value to Community (30 pts)	Economic benefit	10
	Accessibility & inclusion	10
	Community partnerships & reach	10

Category	Criteria	Points
Operational Excellence (25 pts)	Experience & qualifications	10
	Operational plan feasibility	10
	Safety & compliance record	5
Vessel Utilization & Innovation (15 pts)	Use of ramp & shoreline access	5
	Multi-landing capability (dock/shore/event)	5
	Passenger experience & innovation	5

C. Detailed Compliance & Scoring Checklist

Requirement	Pass/Fail	Points (if applicable)	Notes
USCG compliance demonstrated	Pass/Fail	Required	
Jones Act compliance/waiver	Pass/Fail	Required	
Licensed captain/crew	Pass/Fail	Required	
Insurance confirmed	Pass/Fail	Required	
Revenue sharing clearly defined		15	
Economic benefit articulated		10	
Ramp utilization plan		5	
Shoreline/multi-landing plan		5	
Accessibility approach		10	
Passenger safety plan		5	
Maintenance plan		5	
Moorage/storage plan		5	
Schedule/routes		5	
Innovation/use of vessel		5	

D. Evaluation Workbook (Scoring Process)

The City will utilize an evaluation workbook (spreadsheet format) to ensure consistent scoring across all proposals. The workbook will:

- Assign individual evaluator scores for each criterion
- Automatically total category and overall scores
- Flag pass/fail disqualifications
- Provide space for evaluator comments and justification
- Generate a final ranked list of proposers based on total score

Evaluators may meet to normalize scores and document final consensus rankings.

13. Term of Agreement

The City anticipates entering into a lease agreement or operational services agreement with the selected contractor for a term to be negotiated, with potential renewal options based on performance.

14. Submission Instructions

Proposals must be submitted by **3PM on June 1, 2026**

Submission format:

- Electronic PDF submission
- Clearly labeled: “Water Taxi Services Proposal – City of St. Helens”

Submit to: **City Administrator John Walsh (503) 366-8211** jwalsh@sthelensoregon.gov

15. Questions

All questions regarding this RFP must be submitted in writing by **5PM on May 22, 2026**

Submit to: **City Administrator John Walsh** jwalsh@sthelensoregon.gov

17. Reservation of Rights

The City of St. Helens reserves the right to:

- Reject any or all proposals
 - Waive informalities or irregularities
 - Request additional information or clarifications
 - Negotiate with one or more proposers
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18. Equal Opportunity

The City is an equal opportunity employer and encourages participation from minority-owned, women-owned, and disadvantaged business enterprises.

19. Attachments

- Photos of Fisheagle Osprey Vessel
- Waterfront Facility Map
- Insurance Requirements Detail (to be issued in an addendum to the RFP)

PHOTOS OF FISHEAGLE OSPREY VESSEL



CITY OF ST. HELENS WATERFRONT FACILITIES

