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Port of Friday Harbor Secures \$7 Million Grant for Electrification and Environmental Initiatives

Friday Harbor, WA — The Port of Friday Harbor has been awarded \$7 million as part of the Washington State Department of Transportation's Port Electrification Grant Program. This funding will enable the Port to launch an expansive program of carbon reduction projects, further establishing it as a leader in sustainable maritime practices within the Salish Sea. The grant is part of a broader \$26.5 million initiative across 11 Washington ports, collectively aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions by over 140,000 metric tons over the next decade.

The awarded grant will support the Port of Friday Harbor in its ambitious efforts to electrify its operations, including the installation of advanced charging infrastructure for cruise ships and smaller vessels, a solar canopy and microgrid, and the introduction of several electric workboats. In partnership with Photon Marine, a leader in electric propulsion technology, the Port will replace internal combustion engine vessels with electric alternatives, thereby reducing emissions and enhancing the region's environmental health.

"This is an exciting and rewarding time for the Port," said Todd Nicholson, Executive Director of the Port of Friday Harbor. "We are extremely grateful for the support of the community and the continued funding from our local, state, and federal partners. This grant allows us to pursue a bold environmental program that not only addresses climate change but also preserves the pristine environment of the Salish Sea for future generations."

The partnership with Photon Marine will see the deployment of advanced electric vessels, including a 24-foot electric pumpout vessel, a 24-foot electric workboat, and a 28-foot electric passenger transport boat. These vessels will significantly reduce diesel particulate and NOx emissions, improve water quality, and reduce noise pollution, benefiting the local marine life, including the resident Orca pods.

"Photon Marine is proud to partner with the Port of Friday Harbor on this transformative project," said Marcelino J. Alvarez, CEO and co-founder of Photon Marine. "Our mission to decarbonize marine propulsion is advancing with this collaboration, marking a key step toward cleaner, quieter, and more efficient vessel operations in the Pacific Northwest. This partnership also enables us to establish the first U.S. node in our electric vessel supercharger corridor within the Salish Sea. We are thrilled to be contributing to this program that benefits the environment, the economy, and the maritime ecosystem.

The Port Electrification Handbook, developed by Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL), played a critical role in guiding the Port's strategy. The Handbook highlights the wide-ranging benefits of port electrification, from environmental improvements to enhanced energy resilience.

“Port electrification is a crucial step in mitigating the impacts of climate change and advancing environmental justice in our maritime communities,” said Shannon Idso, one of the authors of the Port Electrification Handbook at PNNL. “The Port of Friday Harbor’s initiatives align with our research findings, and we are excited to see these efforts come to life.”

Trades Training and Workforce Development

A key component of this project is the focus on trades training and workforce development. In partnership with Photon Marine and Mostar Labs, the Port of Friday Harbor will deliver specialized training programs designed to equip workers with the skills needed to maintain and operate electric vessels, high-voltage systems, and renewable energy infrastructure. This initiative will create high-value jobs in electric vessel maintenance, charging system operation, and other critical areas, ensuring that the local workforce is prepared for the future of maritime operations.

“This training program is about more than just skills development,” added Alvarez. “It’s about building a workforce capable of supporting the broader transition to a clean maritime industry. By investing in people, we’re ensuring that the benefits of this project extend beyond environmental impact to include economic resilience and job creation.”

Community Outreach and Engagement

The Port of Friday Harbor and Photon Marine are committed to involving the community throughout this transformative process. An extensive community outreach strategy is planned, including hybrid meetings, virtual sessions, and public events designed to engage local stakeholders. The project team will host a series of “Demo Days,” allowing residents, businesses, and potential customers to experience the new electric vessels firsthand. These events will also serve as educational opportunities, featuring STEM programs aimed at K-12 students, where they can learn about marine electrification and its benefits.

A significant focus will be on the Commercial Boatshare Program, which will allow local operators, including small businesses and minority-owned enterprises, to access the new electric vessels at discounted rates. This initiative not only promotes cleaner propulsion but also fosters inclusive economic growth by supporting small-scale operations in the region.

This project not only reflects the Port’s commitment to sustainability but also sets a precedent for other ports across the region and the country. As the Port moves forward with its electrification initiatives, it will continue to engage the community, local businesses, and environmental groups to ensure broad-based support and participation.

For more information on the Port of Friday Harbor’s electrification projects, please visit <https://www.portfridayharbor.org/>.

Media Contact:

Todd Nicholson
Executive Director
Port of Friday Harbor
ToddN@PortFH.org
360-378-2688