



# PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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## **Senators Carper, Coons and U.S. Rep. Blunt Rochester Tout Proposed New Vessel *\$20 Million Federal Grant to Aid Modernization Effort of Cape May – Lewes Ferry Fleet***

**LEWES, Del.** – Today, Delaware River and Bay Authority (DRBA) officials joined with the Delaware Congressional Delegation to announce a \$20 million grant award from the U.S. Department of Transportation to the DRBA that will be used to construct a new diesel-hybrid ferry vessel that is expected to join the Cape May – Lewes Ferry fleet in the summer of 2027. The new ferry will replace the MV Cape Henlopen, an over 40-year-old diesel engine ferry that currently serves passengers who travel between Lewes, Delaware, and Cape May, New Jersey. The new ferry is expected to cost approximately \$74 million.

“It’s important that necessary investments are made today for sustainable ferry operations for the next generation of our customers,” **said DRBA Executive Director Thomas J. Cook.** “I want to thank Delaware’s congressional delegation for all they’ve done to secure this vital federal grant. With this grant in hand, our vessel modernization program can now move forward, with a focus on improving service, reducing operating costs, and transitioning to be more eco-friendly.”

The diesel-hybrid ferry will operate with lower emissions compared to a diesel ferry, and it will allow zero-emission operations while near port and while docked. The hybrid and all-electric operating modes are estimated to achieve the following annual reductions: 2,025 tons in carbon dioxide, 102.7 tons in nitrogen dioxide, 1.51 tons of fine particulate matter, 1.03 tons of hydrocarbons, and 5 tons of carbon monoxide. The new engines will also reduce fuel consumption by 35 percent.

“I’ve long supported replacing diesel engines with cleaner-powered engines to help improve our air quality and protect public health while lowering greenhouse gas emissions,” **said Senator Carper, chair of the Environment and Public Works Committee in the U.S. Senate.** “Hundreds of thousands of people depend on this ferry route every year, and I’m glad we are making investments into cleaner operations that our passengers, operators, crew members, and folks who live and work around the terminals can enjoy.”

“The Cape May-Lewes Ferry has provided a vital link between New Jersey and Delaware for six decades connecting people and vehicles, while also contributing to the economic development of southern Delaware,” **said Senator Coons, co-chair of the bipartisan Senate Climate Solutions Caucus.** “Thanks to this \$20 million grant from the Biden-Harris administration, this important ferry can finally go green with its first diesel-hybrid ferry—paving the way for new, cleaner operations in the future. I’m proud the First State is taking action to lower costs and increase fuel efficiency while also driving our emissions down.”

“The Cape May-Lewes Ferry is a critical piece of our regional infrastructure and a significant driver of our tourism sector and economic activity,” **said Rep. Blunt Rochester, member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee.** “Alongside Senators Tom Carper and Chris Coons, I’m proud to have secured a \$20 million federal investment, funded by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law that I championed in Congress, to modernize the Cape-May Lewes Ferry fleet. The new diesel-hybrid ferry will make our communities healthier by cutting down on emissions and bring us one step further toward our clean energy future.”

“We applaud the foresight of the Delaware River and Bay Authority for taking this big step toward electrification,” **said FTA Regional Administrator Terry Garcia Crews.** “This project will advance adoption of ferries powered by cleaner and greener technology and is particularly significant because the vessel will travel through the open waters of the Delaware Bay every day.”

“Our naval architects are expected to complete the vessel final design package by year’s end,” **said Heath Gehrke, Director of Ferry Operations.** “The DRBA will solicit shipyard bids in early 2025, with construction starting by early next summer. If all goes as planned, we should have the new vessel for the summer of 2027.”

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### **About the Cape May-Lewes Ferry**

Owned and operated by the Delaware River and Bay Authority, the Cape May – Lewes Ferry is open year-round and has carried more than 50 million passengers since its inception on July 1, 1964. As an integral transportation system connecting the communities and economies on both sides of the Delaware Bay, the Ferry service is a significant catalyst for economic growth and regional tourism activity in New Jersey and Delaware. Its operations sustain over 4,000 jobs while generating tens of millions of dollars in local taxes and hundreds of millions in regional economic activity. For schedules and rates, please visit [www.CMLF.com](http://www.CMLF.com) or call 800-643-3779.