



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

NEWS

URBAN MASS TRANSPORTATION ADMINISTRATION

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Phone: (202) 426-4043

The U.S. Department of Transportation today made a grant of \$1.7 million to the Puerto Rico Ports Authority to help improve passenger ferry service between Catano and Old San Juan, Puerto Rico.

The \$1,700,466 grant, made by the Department's Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA), is the third such Federal grant made to help provide ferry boat service for urban commuters.

Secretary of Transportation John A. Volpe said that the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico Ports Authority will use the UMTA funds to buy three new ferry boats and build a new passenger terminal in Catano.

"We expect that these improvements will further increase patronage of the Authority's ferry boat system, which already serves about 8,000 passengers a day," Secretary Volpe said.

Each of the three new ferry boats will cost about \$360,000 and the new terminal in Catano will cost more than \$1.4 million, the Secretary said, bringing the total cost of the project, including improvements to the San Juan terminal, to around \$2.5 million. Local funds totaling \$850,234 will be provided by the Commonwealth and the Ports Authority, which owns and operates the only passenger commuter service across San Juan Harbor.

Presently, seven aging ferry boats run between Catano on the south side of the harbor and Old San Juan to the north. It takes about 12 minutes for each boat to cover the 1.15 nautical mile distance between the two terminals, both of which are served by the island's public bus system. Land travel time between the two terminals is about 45 minutes by public transportation.

"Today's grant is part of President Nixon's billion-dollar-a-year program to save and upgrade urban mass transportation in every major American city and possession," Secretary Volpe said.

The Ports Authority has operated the ferry service since 1961 and has managed to hold the fare to 10 cents, according to UMTA Administrator Carlos C. Villarreal.

"Despite large deficits, the Ports Authority has made it a policy to retain this economical, fast and reliable form of transportation for the predominately low and middle-income passengers," Administrator Villarreal said. The ferry boats provide transportation between the residential municipalities of Catano, Bayamon, Toa Baya and Dorado, and the commerical and employment centers in Old San Juan and Santurce.

The three new ferry boats are capable of carrying 360 passengers each.

The new terminal at Catano will replace the present old, small terminal, which can dock only one boat at a time, causing back-ups in the terminal during peak passenger hours. Preliminary plans for the new facility call for a large entryway and waiting area, with a capacity of docking four boats simultaneously, Administrator Villarreal said.

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For further information, contact the UMTA Office of Public Affairs at (202) 426-4043, or the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico Ports Authority, G. P. O. Box 2829, San Juan, Puerto Rico 00936. (UMTA Project No. PR-03-0007)

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