



PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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DRBA Commission Awards Contract to Construct New “Green” Ferry *\$78.6 Million Vessel Expected to Join Cape May – Lewes Ferry Fleet in 2028*

NEW CASTLE, Del. – Today, Delaware River and Bay Authority (DRBA) officials announced that the addition of a new diesel-hybrid vessel is one step closer to joining the Cape May – Lewes Ferry fleet. The DRBA Commission unanimously voted to award a contract for the construction and outfitting of a new 75-car passenger/vehicle ferry to SENESCO Marine LLC of North Kingstown, RI. The project low bid was \$78.6 million.

The new ferry will eventually 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. DRBA Executive Director Joel Coppadge realizes the historical significance of the Cape May – Lewes Ferry and its importance to the resort communities on both sides of the Delaware Bay. “For sustainable ferry operations in the future, it’s imperative we make this necessary capital investment today,” Coppadge said. “The Ferry’s a critical piece of regional infrastructure and we’re proud of the Ferry’s heritage and link between two historic destinations. The new hybrid ferry is the start of the next chapter in the proud history of the Cape May – Lewes Ferry.”

The benefits of this new eco-friendly vessel include lower operating and maintenance costs, decreased emissions at sea and zero emissions while near port and 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 an estimated 35 percent.

Heath Gehrke, Director of Ferry Operations said, “The Cape May – Lewes Ferry is a vital transportation link and an economic catalyst for the southern regions of Delaware and New Jersey. Hundreds of thousands of people rely on our year-round service to get them safely across to work, visit loved ones, get to that vacation destination or to avoid the hassle of highway congestion. By moving forward with our vessel modernization effort, we’re ensuring that future generations will continue to enjoy a break from the ordinary aboard the Cape May – Lewes Ferry.”

The project's price tag of \$78.6 million is partially funded with a \$20 million U.S. Department of Transportation grant award. The board action to award the contract, which is subject to the New Jersey and Delaware Governors' ten-day review and consent period, took place at the bi-state agency's monthly meeting on November 18, 2025.

With the recent bid award complete, construction on the new vessel is slated to start early next year with a projected completion date of summer 2029.

About the Delaware River and Bay Authority

The DRBA, a bi-state governmental agency created by Compact in 1962, owns and operates the Delaware Memorial Bridge, the Cape May- Lewes Ferry, and the Forts Ferry Crossing. The DRBA also manages two airports in New Jersey (Millville Executive Airport and Cape May Airport) and three in Delaware (Wilmington Airport, Civil Air Terminal and Delaware Airpark). All DRBA operating revenues are generated through the bridge, ferry and airport facilities. For more information, visit www.drba.net.

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 or call 800-643-3779.