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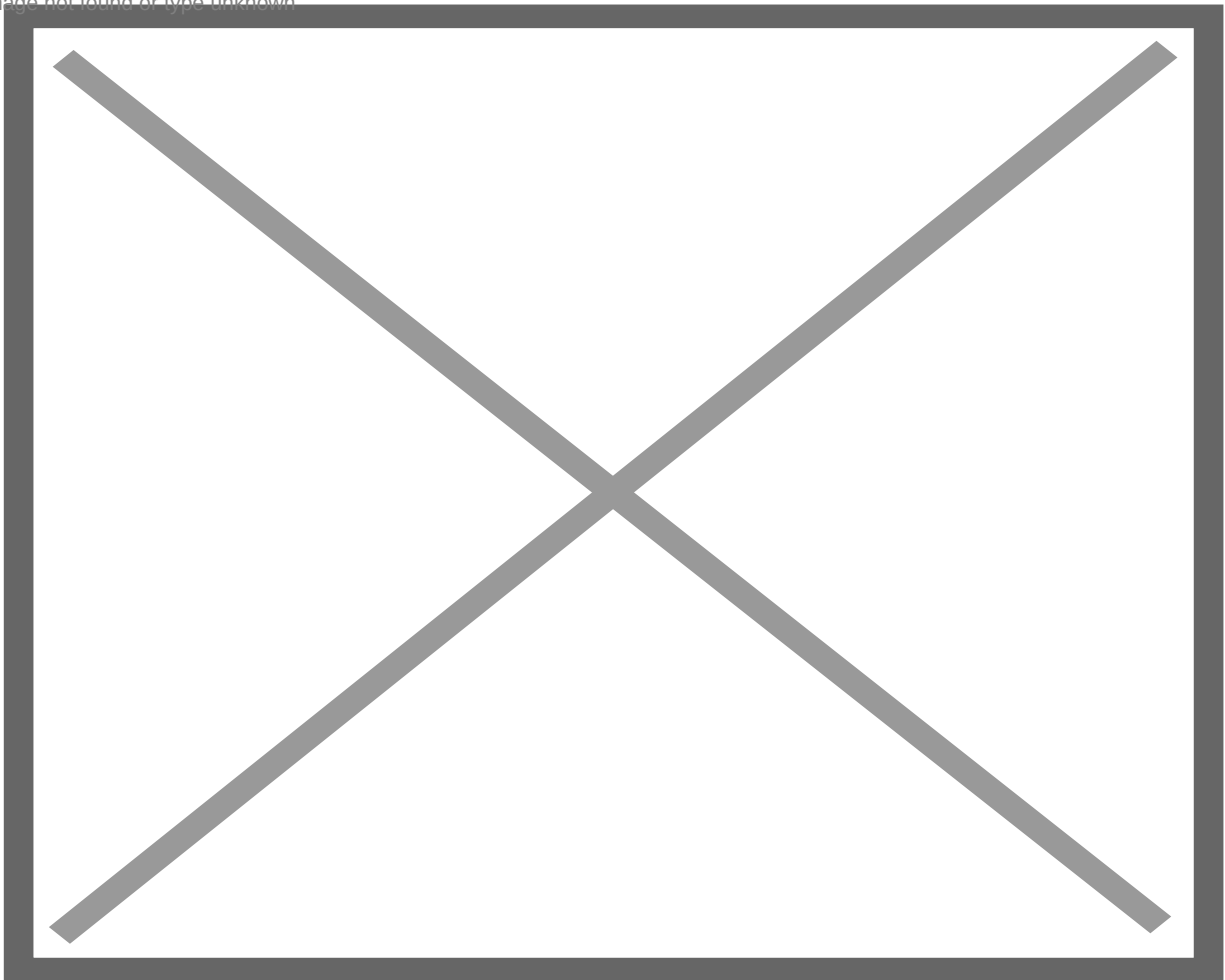
USVI Awarded \$2.5 Million for New St. Thomas–Water Island Passenger Ferry

Federal transit officials awarded the V.I. Department of Public Works \$2.5 million to purchase a passenger ferry for the St. Thomas–Water Island route, with the vessel intended to expand reliable service and improve connections between the two islands.

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Aerial view of Water Island in the foreground with St. Thomas and Charlotte Amalie across the harbor, highlighting the short marine route that will be served by a new federally funded passenger ferry. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM.

The V.I. Department of Public Works has been awarded \$2.5 million in federal funding to purchase a passenger ferry for service between St. Thomas and Water Island, giving the territory

new resources to expand transportation between the neighboring islands.

The Federal Transit Administration identified the USVI project among 23 ferry investments announced Friday by the U.S. Department of Transportation across 14 states and the Virgin Islands. Federal officials described the local project as the procurement of a passenger ferry vessel intended to expand reliable inter-island service between St. Thomas and Water Island and improve connections with other modes of transportation.

The award comes through FTA's Passenger Ferry Grant Program, which finances capital projects supporting passenger ferry systems in urbanized areas. The St. Thomas–Water Island project is part of approximately \$103.5 million awarded through that program this year. Across three federal ferry programs, the Department of Transportation selected nearly \$665 million in projects after receiving 49 eligible proposals from 16 states and the USVI seeking a combined \$1.1 billion.

Water Island is currently connected to St. Thomas by daily passenger ferry service between Crown Bay Marina and Phillips Landing. Current schedules provide multiple crossings throughout the day, with the trip taking approximately 10 minutes. The federal announcement does not state the capacity, dimensions or propulsion system of the vessel DPW plans to purchase, nor does it provide a procurement timetable or say when expanded service is expected to begin.

The latest award follows previous federal investment in the territory's passenger ferry network. DPW previously secured \$1.7 million from FTA's 2022 Passenger Ferry Grant Program toward a separate 100-foot vessel for the St. Thomas–St. John route. In 2024 testimony, the department said that 300-passenger, ADA-accessible ferry was under construction and intended for service between Red Hook and Cruz Bay during peak and high-demand periods.