

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Ferryboat Travel Between St. Croix And St. Thomas Alive Again As Senators Override Mapp Veto

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ST. THOMAS -- The territory's residents were filled with excitement [after learning](#) that the 31st Legislature had passed a measure, sponsored by Sen. Neville James, that would revive ferry travel between this island and St. Croix.

The measure sought to reestablish affordable ferry travel between St. Croix and St. Thomas, which came to a halt several years ago.

The bill saw universal support from senators, some of whom asked that their names be added to the measure. They also highlighted the many benefits a revival of ferry service between the islands would bring to the territory.

According to then-Acting Commissioner of the Department of Public Works (DPW), Gustav James, who was summoned to give testimony on the measure, the government has already secured \$7.5 million to purchase three vessels costing between \$8-\$10 million each. However, Commissioner James said the process of searching for the first vessel had already commenced since they intend to purchase the ferryboats as funding becomes available.

But Governor Kenneth Mapp vetoed bill [No. 31-0137](#) — an act establishing the Virgin Islands Ferryboat Fund as a separate and distinct fund in the Treasury of the Virgin Islands, calling the measure “fatally flawed.”

Funds for the service, according to the bill, would be provided by the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration Ferryboats and Terminal, and monies provided from “time-to-time” by the Legislature would remain in the fund until expended. The bill also charges the commissioner of finance to submit quarterly reports of the fund’s disbursements and its “unobligated balance.”

Mapp contended that the measure was flawed because a section within the legislation that says “all funds,” represents a broad reference that includes federal grants — the latter of which cannot be appropriated by the Legislature “for deposits into named funds of the Government of the Virgin Islands.”

But the 31st Legislature's unanimous override of Mapp's veto at the Earl B. Ottley Legislative Hall on Tuesday makes the measure law.