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Online Exclusive

## Nova Scotia considers restoration of ferry service

by Wanda Curtis

Almost one year after the discontinuation of the CAT ferry service between Portland and Nova Scotia, the Yarmouth Area Industrial Commission is considering possible restoration of ferry service between Maine and Nova Scotia.

"We put out a call for proposals," said Yarmouth Area Industrial Commission's CEO Dave Whiting in September, adding that five companies responded to the call by requesting proposal paperwork, which is due back in Nova Scotia by October 15.

Whiting said that the proposals would include a business plan, an operations plan and details on the vessel to be used. He added that probably a conventional vessel rather than a high-speed vessel like the CAT would be selected.

"It's a viable run [between Maine and Nova Scotia]," said Whiting, however finding the right vessel for the job will be critical.

Whiting noted that new international emission standards for the Bay of Fundy will be enacted in 2012 and 2013. He said the new regulations will include reduced sulfur emissions, which will be a consideration in deciding on an appropriate vessel.

In regards to the selection of a port, Whiting said that the cost of fuel and distance are both factors that could influence that decision.

U.S. ports under consideration for the ferry service include Boston, Mass., Portsmouth, N.H., Portland, or Bar Harbor, according to a story published by the *Morning Sentinel* on September 2,

Whiting reported that it's possible a decision could be made by the end of October 2010 and ferry service could possibly be restored during the spring months of 2011.

Bay Ferries discontinued the CAT's ferry service between Maine and Nova Scotia last

Columbus Day weekend. The Canadian government had subsidized the ferry service but decided to discontinue the funding because the number of passengers riding the ferry had decreased. The decreased ridership is attributed to the worldwide recession and increased travel restrictions, including the requirement that American citizens purchase passports to re-enter the U.S.

Portland's assistant city manager Pat Finnegan said in September that they were sad to see the ferry service discontinued last year and hope that a viable business model can be found to replace it.

She said that some Maine officials are hopeful that a vessel that can accommodate not only passengers but also freight and cargo will be selected.

"That would have a double economic impact," said Finnegan, noting that passengers would feed the tourism industry while the freight and cargo would benefit the shipping industry.

"We have a good relationship with Canada and a ferry service could further solidify it," commented Finnegan.

The executive director of Maine Port Authority John Henshaw is also excited about the possibility of ferry service being restored between Maine and Nova Scotia. However, he concurs that a new business model such as a vessel that can carry not only passengers but also freight and cargo is needed.

"It would be a great thing if that came to be," Henshaw said. "The previous service wasn't sustainable in its configuration."