

Request for Proposal

**WATER TAXI SERVICE
and
BOAT TOUR OPERATOR**

December 18, 2024

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INTRODUCTION

The Thames River Heritage Park Foundation (TRHPF) is soliciting proposals from Licensed Commercial Tour Boat Operators (referred to here as "Operator") to provide Hop-on Hop-off Harbor Cruise / Water Taxi Shuttle Service among at least three points linking the cultural and historic sites of the Thames River Heritage Park (TRHP), as well as to operate boat tours in the lower Thames River estuary. The Operator will utilize the three former US Navy Willard launches owned by the TRHPF (See Appendix A attached for boat description.). In 2024 the Hop-on Hop-off Harbor Cruise / Water Taxi Service currently operates Saturdays and Sundays. Public history-themed boat tours are scheduled for Saturdays and Sundays – July 1- September 8, 2024. Private group tours and charters are scheduled as booked and are typically midweek. There are also happy hour and sunset cruises scheduled on Fridays and Saturdays evenings along with full-moon cruises based on the lunar calendar. The contract will be a three-year contract with the potential for additional three-year renewals.



Three sites make up the Hop-on Hop-off Harbor Cruise/Water Taxi route:

1. **City Pier** – Historic Waterfront / Downtown District, New London
2. **Fort Trumbull State Park** in New London
3. **Thames River Landing** - Thames Street / Fort Griswold, Groton

Fourth site coming in 2025

4. **Nautilus Dock** – Nautilus and Submarine Force Museum, Groton

The Operator will be expected to be available for additional shuttle service upon request with mutually agreed-upon advance notice for special events and charters.

The Boat Tours will operate in the Thames River estuary as far south as Ledge Lighthouse and as far north as the length and theme of 1-2 hour tours will allow.

THAMES RIVER HERITAGE PARK DESCRIPTION



Thames River Heritage Park is a collection of historic, educational and recreational partner attractions, which, similar to Boston's Freedom Trail, links together existing cultural and historic resources on both sides of the Thames River in New London and Groton. By creating a major attraction in the region, tourists are encouraged to extend their stay, creating additional economic opportunities for regional businesses. Studies have shown that heritage tourism is among the fastest growing segments of the tourism market and that visitors within this segment spend more than their non-heritage counterparts. The water taxi connects two state Parks — Fort Trumbull State

Park in New London and Fort Griswold Battlefield State Park in Groton — by boat. The other TRHP sites that are within walking distance to each of the landings include, at Thames River Landing in Groton: the Avery-Copp House, the Groton Bank National Register Historic District, Ebenezer Avery House, US Subvets World War II National Memorial East, and the historic Bill Memorial Library. About two miles up the river is the Submarine Force Museum/USS Nautilus. On the New London side, in addition to the landing at Fort Trumbull State Park, is Eugene O'Neill's Monte Cristo Cottage — located a short distance away — and within walking distance from the landing at New London's Historic District are the Hygienic Art, Custom House Maritime Museum, Garde Arts Center, the Hempsted Houses, Nathan Hale Schoolhouse, St. James Episcopal Church, Waterfront Park and the National Register Historic Waterfront District. In addition, the US Coast Guard Academy, Connecticut College, and the Lyman Allyn Art Museum are located adjacent to or within a short distance from the water. The TRHPF boasts many institutional partners as well including but not limited to New London Landmarks, New London County Historical Society, seCTer, SECT Cultural Coalition, UCONN/Avery Point Maritime Studies and Sea Grant.

Vision

The vision of Thames River Heritage Park Foundation is to be a network of people, communities, institutions, sites and stories connected by and to the historic waterfront of the Thames River and Long Island Sound. Our water taxis help us to make these connections. It is a unique way to transport visitors to our historic and cultural sites on both sides of the river. As importantly, they provide a chance to introduce riders to the places they can visit when they disembark.



SCOPE OF SERVICES

The Operator shall employ fully licensed boat captains and appropriate crew to safely staff up to three (3) CG certificated boats, with certification for 40 passengers each, owned by the City of Groton and maintained by TRHPF. The boats are former Navy Utility launches. The specifications for the boats are attached to the RFP as Appendix A.

The contract will be one (1) year in duration with the potential for 3-year renewals.

Captains and crew will be expected to maintain operational and passenger safety and act as park ambassadors during the cruises. When operating the Hop-on Hop-off Harbor Cruise / Water Taxis, captains will be provided brief narrations to follow, general area information and will be charged with pointing out landmarks to the passengers as the boat motors up and down the river. Mates will be expected to interact with passengers, answer questions about the area, local events, sell merchandise, get survey information, and assure passengers have a positive experience.

TRHPF will provide a ½ day of training prior to the start of the season — paid for by TRHPF based on Operator's hourly rates — for Operator's staff to familiarize themselves with the Park sites and the area so they can best assist passengers to make their experience a positive one.

The Operator and its staff will represent the TRHPF and will not promote any other business while operating the TRHPF Boats. The Operator's staff will wear TRHPF apparel with khaki shorts or slacks; will promote the sale of TRHPF merchandise including but not limited to t-shirts, hats, tumblers, suncatchers, postcards; and will distribute and collect surveys as requested by TRHPF.

The Operator and its staff shall distribute a TRHPF Map & Guide and tour brochure — provided by TRHPF — to passengers the first time they board the boat. They will check local events calendars at the start of each weekend to inform riders of activities and events in the Park.

Hop-on Hop-off Harbor Cruise / Water Taxi Shuttle Service

The Operator shall provide crew for the 3-stop Hop-on Hop-off Harbor Cruise / Water Taxi Shuttle Service listed below. The service is based on the use of one boat with one boat reserved for back up, especially on busy occasions (such as Sailfest, Connecticut Maritime Festival) and for charters and tours.

Days / Dates of Operation

Hop-on Hop-off Harbor Cruise / Water Taxi Shuttle Service will operate Saturdays and Sundays and as follows:

- 2025 – June 7 through September 7
- 2026 – June 13 through September 13
- 2027 – June 12 through September 12

See Appendix A for draft schedule subject to change upon mutual agreement.

Hours of Operation

Saturday: 11:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.*

Sunday: 11:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.*

** Subject to change upon mutual agreement.*

Landing and Departure Sites

1. Fort Trumbull State Park, New London - departs on the hour
2. Waterfront Park Historic Waterfront District, New London - departs 20 minutes after the hour
3. Thames River Landing, Groton - departs 40 minutes after the hour
4. Nautilus and Submarine Force Museum*

** In 2025 TRHPF will introduce service to the Nautilus and Submarine Force Museum. See Appendix A for draft, which is schedule subject to change upon mutual agreement.*

Boat Tours & Specialty Cruises

In addition to operating the Hop-on Hop-off Harbor Cruise / Water Taxi Shuttle Service, TRHPF seeks a contractor to operate the boats for tours and specialty cruises and service to/from the Submarine Force Library and Museum. The tours would be at regularly scheduled times, primarily, late June through mid-October. TRHPF and the selected Operator will work out an agreed upon schedule for tours. In addition to these tours, the boats are chartered by other groups for fundraisers and company outings. Prospective operators should provide projected costs associated with operating one-hour, 75-minute, 90-minute and two-hour tours along with an hourly cost for tours or charters that extend beyond 2 hours.

See Appendix A – 2025 Draft Boat Schedule – subject to change

Description of the Boats

See Appendix B

Exclusive rights to operate:

The Operator shall have exclusive rights to operate a water taxi using TRHPF boats only at the Thames River Heritage Park water taxi landings pursuant to a contract to be negotiated, under the auspices of the “Thames River Heritage Park” name, logo and brand, for the term of the contract. Nothing in the terms of this RFP or the contract should be construed so as to grant the operator an exclusive right of access to these sites otherwise (when the taxi is not in service). TRHPF sites remain the property of their respective owners and may be used by them for any reason and purposes that do not unreasonably interfere with the water shuttle services. Except for unusual circumstances, it is expected that the operator will be able to dock or moor the water taxi boats at or near these docks when the boats are not in use. The TRHPF will secure necessary agreements with CT DEEP, City of New London and U.S. Navy to use the respective docks.

OTHER TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

The Operator shall comply with any and all conditions and requirements of the CT DEEP for use of the landings at Forts Trumbull and Griswold, with any and all conditions and with any and all conditions and requirements of the City of New London and/or its Port Authority for use of the landing at City Pier Historic Waterfront District, and with any and all conditions and with any and all conditions and requirements of U.S. Navy for use of the landing at Nautilus and Submarine Force Library and Museum.

The Operator should note that, from time to time the City of New London utilizes City Pier for large functions and festivals. This may require the Operator to relocate to another pier. Every effort will be made to accommodate the Operator so as to ensure business is not interrupted. Details will be made final during negotiations.

TRHP is in a Security Zone. The United States Coast Guard or the United States Navy may close all docks/sites without notice in cases when National Security levels warrant.

Operator Responsibilities

The Operator will be responsible for:

1. Hiring and managing water taxi/tour personnel. All Personnel will not be TRHPF employees. They will be employed by the selected operator.
2. Training personnel
3. All personnel drug testing and screening
4. Scheduling water taxi and tour boat personnel
5. Ensuring boat personnel are attired in TRHP uniform and perform duties as outlined in the scope of work and as required by US Coast Guard
6. Coordinating with COI inspection/service from the US Coast Guard
7. Budgeting the operating expenses associated with labor for each of three seasons
8. Preparing the boats for 2025 to included required CG inspections and ensuring compliance with all applicable state/federal requirements and following seasons (cleaning, inspecting, testing all systems)
9. Making minor repairs and troubleshooting possible mechanical failures.
10. Coordinating with boatyard and/or marina for repairs, maintenance schedules, getting the boats in and out of the water on schedule and with the US Coast Guard for required inspections.
11. Stocking the boat with ice and water every day. Checking and replenishing inventory of TRHPF map & guides (on the boats and at the landings), tickets, and other TRHPF printed material as requested.
12. Maintaining inventory and selling TRHPF merchandise.
13. Monitoring weather and communicating all delays to TRHPF Executive Director.
14. Executing emergency procedures in case of inoperability due to weather or other event.

Operator Requirements

Diesel Engines

The Operator must be familiar with diesel engines.

Personnel:

Selected Operator will be required to provide copies of valid USCG Licenses and Certifications (including for his or herself).

All captains must be licensed before he or she can operate the boats.

Other Operator Responsibilities

The following shall be required to operate Water Taxi and Boat Tour Services as part of the Thames River Heritage Park and should be considered an integral part of the RFP.

1. U. S. Coast Guard requirements:

The Operator shall meet, maintain and have on board all Licenses, Certifications and Requirements of the United States Coast Guard and any other state or federal agencies to operate a commercial passenger vessel.

The Operator shall have on board at all times a Captain and First Mate who shall meet and maintain all Licenses, Certifications and Requirements of the United States Coast Guard to operate a vessel of the tonnage used in this concession contract.

The Operator shall ensure that Captains fulfill the duties as required of a Master Captain's Licensee including proper log keeping requirements. 46CFR Part 185.505

The Operator shall schedule and secure all necessary inspections and approvals for the TRHPF boats from the United States Coast Guard.

2. Boat Maintenance and Repair

The Operator will be responsible for identifying repairs needed in a timely manner and will coordinate with the TRHPF and the boatyard to schedule such repairs. The Operator shall be responsible for the overall daily maintenance of the boats. The Operator shall be required to provide daily written logs for inspections and documentation and/or fuel. TRHPF will be responsible for the costs to repair and insure the boats.

3. Loading/unloading of passengers:

The Operator shall ensure that staff assists passengers when embarking and disembarking. The Operator shall provide information on how fluctuating capacity would be handled, particularly for event weekends and how accurate passenger

counts for each trip and leg of the Hop-on Hop-off Harbor Cruise / water taxi service will be maintained.

4. Handicapped Issues:

The Operator shall enforce the TRHPF's Accessibility Policy which is posted on the TRHPF website.

5. Security of the Sites:

The Operator shall secure Gates to the Docking facilities at Fort Trumbull and Fort Griswold after each arrival and departure.

6. Trash:

The Operator shall provide a trash receptacle aboard the vessel and shall be responsible for disposal of same.

7. Storage of Supplies:

No storage of materials or supplies relating to the Water Taxi Service Operation shall be allowed at or on docking sites.

8. Emergency Number

The Operator will provide an emergency number that TRHPF will post at each landing for passengers to call if stranded or for any unexpected delays.

9. Signage

The Operator will set up sandwich board signs at each landing prior to the start of each scheduled hop-on hop-off water taxi service, tours and/or cruise and secure the signs at the end day of operation.

10. Uniforms

The Operator shall enforce the TRHPF's Uniform Policy with crew and staff– TRHPF shirts and hats and khaki slacks or shorts or an alternate TRHPF approved uniform.

11. Meetings

The Operator will be expected/required to meet weekly with the TRHPF team during the season at a mutually agreed upon time and attend periodic meetings throughout the duration of the contract during the off-season.

SELECTION CRITERIA

The selection of the Operator will depend on submission of all requested material and a demonstration of the ability to successfully operate tourism-related water taxi and boat tour services. The Operator must also demonstrate the ability to comply with all requirements prior to the commencement of operation. Other selection factors may include, but not be limited to, the following: references, crew experience, and fees.

INFORMATION FOR PROPOSAL

The proposal should include, but not be limited to, the following information:

Business Information:

1. Name and address of Company/Corporation
2. Name and address of Principal Owner of Business
3. Contact person with Business Phone, Email, Mobile Phone
4. Number of years in business
5. Business Plan for a Water Taxi Service to include:
 - Number of captains and crew to be employed
 - Hourly rates for captains and crew
 - Total costs per day for captains and crew for water taxi service
 - Total costs per 1-hour, 90-minute and 2-hour boat tours and charters
 - Management fee and scope of work covered
 - Expenses
 - Any other costs

Experience:

1. Describe any experience the company and/or staff has had in operating a water taxi service or related service as well as experience in the tourism-related industry and/or customer service field.
2. Describe any experience the company and/or staff have with mechanical knowledge and minor boat repair as it relates to or compares with the TRHPF Willard diesel engine utility boats.
3. Describe the maintenance procedure you would follow at the start of each operating day/weekend.
4. Describe your experience with FareHarbor or other tour ticketing system.
5. Optional: Describe any experience you have developing, marketing and/or selling boat or river tours. *(This is not a criterion for submission; however, we would like to know about your experience if any as it would be considered during the review of proposals.)*
6. Describe any experience you have managing employees - i.e., payroll, scheduling, customer complaints, compliance with requirements of US Coast Guard requirements for Master Captain licensees along with duties and uniform policies as outlined in RFP and compliance with passenger count Code of Federal Regulations (CFR).

Operational and Procedural Issues:

1. Describe how on-board emergencies (medical and non-medical) will be handled.
2. Provide information on how stranded patrons will be handled.
3. Provide information on a contingency plan should mechanical or other issues render the vessel inoperable.
4. Describe procedures related to cancellations due to inclement weather or other circumstances.
5. Describe your policies and procedures related to noncompliance with US Coast Guard requirements for Master Captain licensees.
6. Describe your policies and procedures related to noncompliance with TRHPF requirements, duties and uniform policies.
7. Describe the process / procedure for greeting and checking-in passengers for tours and cruises and processing passenger payments via an online ticketing tool and cash transactions.

References:

Please include 2-3 references along with their contact information.

Budgets:

1. Hop-on Hop-off Harbor Cruise / Water Taxi Shuttle Service

The Operator shall submit a projected budget for each of years 2025, 2026, and 2027 based on the schedule below and in Appendix B. If proposed budget includes a management fee, describe what the fee includes.

Saturdays and Sundays – 11 AM – 6 PM

- 2025 – June 14 through September 14
- 2026 – June 13 through September 13
- 2027 – June 12 through September 12

2. Tours and Specialty Cruises

The Operator shall submit projected budgets for operating 1-hour, 90-minute and 2-hour tours along with an hourly rate for tours / charters that extend beyond 2 hours. If proposed budget includes a management fee, describe what the fee covers.

Fares:

TRHPF reserves the right to determine a fare schedule. The Operator shall be responsible for clearly providing a daily account of all ticket and merchandise sales, passengers, cash receipts and credit receipts.

Describe the process and tasks which would be used to collect, record, and accurately account for moneys and passengers. All credit card, cash and online sales will be processed through TRHPF FareHarbor ticketing tool.

Disclaimer:

All information is provided for informational purposes and does not constitute all or part of a contract. The information is designed to assist the potential Operator in determining whether to proceed with the submission of a proposal. While the information herein is believed to be correct, it is the responsibility of the proposer to perform due diligence. Many of the historical sites listed above have websites and be located on web-based search engines as well as at www.thamesriverheritagepark.org. Applicants are encouraged to review the information.

Thames River Heritage Park Foundation Discretion:

The TRHPF, at its sole discretion, may reject any or all proposals for any reason.

The selected Operator will be required to sign a contract with TRHPF. The Operator shall not be allowed to assign the contract. TRHPF and the Operator shall be the sole and exclusive parties to the contract, and the contract shall in no way be construed as to give rise to a contractual obligation on the part of the United States Government, the State of Connecticut or the Department of the Navy.

Submission Information and Schedule

Proposal Submission Deadline: February 3, 2025

Please upload proposal your proposal via the on-line portal at <https://thamesriverheritagepark.org/boat-operator> by midnight on February 3, 2025.

Candidate Interviews: February 4-14, 2025

Operator Contract Issued: February 28, 2025

Appendices

Appendix A: Draft HOHO / Tour Schedule

Thames River Heritage Park - Harbor Cruise (water taxi) - 2025 DRAFT Schedule

Time	Fort Trumbull	City Pier	Groton	Nautilus	Boat 1	Boat 2
11:00	11:00					Depart Fort Trumbull
11:10		11:10				Arrive City Pier
11:15		11:15			Depart Fort Trumbull	
11:25					Arrive City Pier	
11:35					Depart City Pier	
11:50				11:50	Arrive Nautilus Dock	
11:20						Depart City Pier
11:30			11:30			Arrive Thames Landing Groton
11:40			11:40			Depart Thames Landing Groton
11:45				11:55	Tour 1 departs Nautilus Dock	
11:50	11:50					Arrive Fort Trumbull
12:00	12:00					Depart Fort Trumbull
12:10		12:10				Arrive City Pier
12:20		12:20				Depart City Pier
12:30			12:30			Arrive Thames Landing Groton
12:40			12:40			Depart Thames Landing Groton
12:45				12:55	Tour 1 returns to Nautilus Dock	
12:50	12:50					Arrive Fort Trumbull
13:00	13:00			13:10	Tour 2 departs Nautilus Dock	Depart Fort Trumbull
13:10		13:10				Arrive City Pier
13:15		13:15				
13:20						Depart City Pier
13:30			13:30			Arrive Thames Landing Groton
13:40						Depart Thames Landing Groton
13:50	13:50					Arrive Fort Trumbull
14:00	14:00			14:10	Tour 2 returns to Nautilus Dock	Depart Fort Trumbull
14:10		14:10				Arrive City Pier
14:15		14:15		14:15	Depart Nautilus dock	
14:20						Depart City Pier
14:30		14:30	14:30		Arrive City Pier	Arrive Thames Landing Groton
14:40		14:40	14:40		Tour 3 departs City Pier	Depart Thames Landing Groton
14:40						
14:50	14:50					Arrive Fort Trumbull
15:00	15:00					Depart Fort Trumbull
15:10		15:10				Arrive City Pier
15:20		15:20				Depart City Pier
15:30			15:30			Arrive Thames Landing Groton
15:40			15:40			Depart Thames Landing Groton
15:55		15:55			Tour 3 returns to City Pier	
16:00						
16:05		16:05			Depart City Pier for Nautilus Dock	
16:10		16:10				Arrive City Pier
16:20		16:20				Depart City Pier
16:20				16:20	Arrive Nautilus Dock	
16:30			16:30			Arrive Thames Landing Groton
16:40				16:40	Depart Nautilus Dock	
16:40			16:40			Depart Thames Landing Groton
16:50	16:50					Arrive Fort Trumbull
17:00	17:00			17:00	Arrive City Pier	Depart Fort Trumbull
17:10	17:10	17:10				Arrive City Pier
17:20		17:20				Depart City Pier
17:30			17:30		Evening Cruise	Arrive Thames Landing Groton
17:40			17:40			Depart Thames Landing Groton
17:50	17:50					Arrive Fort Trumbull

Appendix A: Utility Boat Specifications

S9007-B5-BIM-010

Table 1-1. Leading Characteristics

Item	Data
Performance	
Range	120 nautical miles
Capacity (incl. crew).....	75 persons
Displacement (full load)	28,800 lbs. max.
Hoisting Weight (Design)	17,000 lbs. max.
Draft (full load)	3 feet, 6 inches
Crew	4 persons
Fuel Capacity	112 gallons
Hull Specifications	
Length	39 feet, 11 inches
Beam	11 feet, 10 inches
Molded Depth	5 feet, 4-3/4 inches
Bottom Configuration.....	Semi-V
Engine	
Manufacturer	Detroit Diesel
Model	1062-7000
Rated Horsepower	174 shp
Displacement	425 cu. in.
Cylinders	6
Fuel	Diesel fuel
Marine Gear	Allison "M" Gear 1.52:1 Reduction Ratio
Propeller and Shaft	
Type	3 blade
Rotation	Right-hand
Diameter	26 inches
Pitch	19 inches
Material	Manganese Bronze
Shaft Diameter	1-3/4 inches
Stuffing Box	Sliding gland type
Electrical power	
System Power	24 Vdc
Batteries	(3) 12-volt, 100 amp hrs
Alternator	24 Vdc, 2-wire, ungrounded