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Governor Doyle Announces \$800,000 Grant for Milwaukee High-Speed Ferry Service

Also Announces Additional \$249,956 Grant to Fund Navigational Improvements in Brown County

MILWAUKEE – At a groundbreaking event at the Port of Milwaukee today, Governor Jim Doyle announced an \$800,000 state Harbor Assistance Program (HAP) grant to support the Lake Express high-speed ferry service that will connect Milwaukee and Muskegon, Michigan when it begins operating this coming summer.

“A key part of my ‘Grow Wisconsin’ Initiative is to make strategic investments in our transportation infrastructure in an effort to spur economic activity and create jobs,” Governor Doyle said. “This ferry service will provide a tremendous boost to the tourism industry in Wisconsin and Michigan, connecting travelers to Milwaukee’s wide variety of social and cultural activities with the many outdoor and other recreational opportunities along Michigan’s western shoreline.”

The HAP award to the City of Milwaukee will help complete site preparation work for the ferry terminal building and associated motor vehicle parking area. The award will also assist with the construction of passenger and auto ramps for the ferry service that is expected to begin operation on June 1, 2004.

The planned catamaran-style ferry will be 192 feet long and 57 feet wide, and will be capable of transporting some 46 vehicles and 250 passengers. At a top speed of about 40 miles-per-hour, the modern vessel will be able to make a one-way voyage between the two cities in about two-and-a-half hours. Its expected service will run from May through December each year with up to three round trips daily.

Along with the harbor grant to Milwaukee, Governor Doyle also announced a \$249,956 HAP grant to Brown County that will assist with navigational improvements to U.S. Oil facilities along the Fox River. The project will complete dredging, replace pilings, and upgrade U.S. Oil’s Quincy Street docking facility along the Fox River in Green Bay.

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The project holds important economic implications for northeast Wisconsin because the currently restricted navigational depths prevent fully-loaded inbound petroleum shipments from accessing the U.S. Oil facilities. The project is expected to be completed in summer 2004.

Governor Doyle approved both projects following favorable recommendations from Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) Secretary Frank Busalacchi and the state Harbor Advisory Council. Successful projects must pass a rigorous cost/benefit analysis and require a 20% local match.

The HAP assists harbor communities to maintain and improve waterborne commerce. Port projects typically involve dock reconstruction, mooring structure replacement, dredging and the construction of facilities to hold dredged material. Since 1980, WisDOT has provided about \$39 million in matching funds for some 48 port preservation and improvement projects. Each year, about 40 million tons of goods worth over \$7 billion pass through Wisconsin's commercial ports.