

## Coastal service launched in Trinidad

A long awaited service along Trinidad's west coast from Port of Spain was introduced on December 1. Four vessels are being operated by Hornblower Marine Services under contract to the Trinidad and Tobago government's National Infrastructure Development Company.

Last year, NIDCO purchased three Teknikraft Design 27m foil assisted catamarans from VT Shipbuilding and a Marinteknik Shipbuilders 45m catamaran from a Turkish operator.

The three sister vessels (*HC Katia*, *HC Milancia* and *HC Olivia*) were built in 2004 and originally leased for two years for service in France and the Caribbean. They arrived in Trinidad from the United Kingdom in June 2008. The larger catamaran, *Su*, was launched in Singapore in 1996 and operated in Guadeloupe until 2005.

Four daily return services have initially been timetabled between Port of Spain and San Fernando. Scheduled journey time is approximately 50 minutes in each direction. The second phase of the project includes extending the route north to Point Cumana, south to Point Fortin and introducing additional stops.

Commenting on the planned expansion, Hornblower vice president of operations Gary Seabrook said, "The service is commuter oriented and will begin operations with four vessels, with four additional vessels added over the next two years."

*Three Teknikraft Design 27m foil assisted catamarans have entered service in Trinidad*



"Hornblower Marine Services Trinidad will operate the ferries on behalf of the National Infrastructure Development Company. The 'water taxi service' is vital to the region to alleviate vehicle traffic on the national roadways and to improve community and business productivity. The service is looking to ultimately carry 9,000 passengers on approximately 34 daily trips."

## Government support for Bay Ferries

Canada's Nova Scotia government has confirmed that it will be increasing its financial support this year for Bay Ferries' operation of Incat 98m wavepiercing catamaran *The Cat* on the company's Yarmouth-Bar Harbor and Yarmouth-Portland routes.

In a statement issued on January 22, the government said, "The province is investing in the Yarmouth to Maine ferry service to protect this important transportation link between southwestern Nova Scotia and the United States.

"The province's Industrial Expansion Fund will cover financial losses for Bay Ferries to allow the company to maintain the operation for the 2009 season. The total amount of assistance will depend on the financial results of the service, but will not exceed \$12 million.

"Yarmouth continues to be an important entry point between Nova Scotia and the United States. About 100 people are employed by Bay Ferries in Yarmouth. In 2008, 85,000 customers used the ferry service.

"Without this immediate assistance the service would not be able to continue. We are supporting Bay Ferries while we work with all partners to develop a more permanent solution.

"Changes in fuel costs together with economic challenges in the United States and now Canada have had an impact on the number of individuals using the ferry service, particularly in the past year. New passport requirements also take effect on June 1, adding to uncertainty over Canada-US travel.

"A joint federal-provincial study will examine the transportation needs in southwest Nova Scotia to determine long term decisions about the Yarmouth to Maine service. The federal government has committed \$1 million for the study."

Referring to the current situation, Bay Ferries president and chief executive officer Mark MacDonald said, "For the last 12 years, Bay Ferries and our employees have worked hard to continue this vital connection between southwestern Nova Scotia and Maine. For nine of those years, we proudly operated without government assistance, but now require support to continue to operate out of Yarmouth.

"Working with our government partners and the communities we serve, Bay Ferries is looking forward to reviewing the findings of the transportation study to put in place a long term solution."

In October 2007, the Nova Scotia government announced that it was to provide funding of \$2,500,000, spread over two years, to Bay Ferries' operation of *The Cat*. At the beginning of July 2008, it confirmed that it would provide additional funding of "up to \$4.4 million".

The 2009 operating season is May 31-October 12 inclusive. Five single services have been scheduled each week between Yarmouth and Bar Harbor and a minimum of five between Yarmouth and Portland. In 2008, seven single services were scheduled on both routes.

This year's peak season from July 4 until September 7 is 17 days longer than in 2008. The service frequency is identical, the Bar Harbor route remains at five crossings each week while the Yarmouth timetable is increased to nine crossings each week.

Scheduled journey times are approximately 3 hours for Yarmouth-Bar Harbor and 5 hours 30 minutes for Yarmouth-Portland.