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CEO suggests Superferry time frame to stay, leave

Advertiser Staff and News Services

John Garibaldi, the chief executive officer of Hawaii Superferry, said he needs to have "actionable information" within four to six weeks to determine whether to continue operations of Hawaii's first regular car-passenger ferry service. He declined to elaborate.

Garibaldi also would not comment on a possible backup plan or how much money his company is losing while its high-speed, luxury catamaran remains idle in bustling Honolulu Harbor.

A second ferry is currently under construction in Alabama and is scheduled for service in 2009.

"Our current efforts are focused on the resumption of services," Garibaldi said in an e-mail to the Associated Press.

The Advertiser first reported the six-week timetable on Friday, along with talks planned between Gov. Linda Lingle's administration and the state Legislature about a possible special session to help Superferry.

Despite fulfilling all of the state's requirements, the Superferry has run into more turbulence than just the rough Pacific seas that have discouraged previous efforts to establish such a service.

The state Supreme Court last month unanimously ruled that the state should have required an environmental review before the Superferry started service.

The Superferry voluntarily suspended its O'ahu-Kaua'i service Aug. 28 after two days of demonstrations at the harbor, where dozens of protesters on surfboards, canoes and kayaks blocked the ferry.

Kaua'i service is set to resume Sept. 26 with heightened security and a revised daytime schedule.

A state judge on Kaua'i will tomorrow consider a request for a permanent injunction to keep the ferry from using that island's Nawiliwili Harbor.

The ferry's Maui route has been suspended as state Judge Joseph E. Cardoza determines if it will be allowed to operate while an environmental assessment is conducted.

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