

Japanese firm plans zero-emission ferry

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File photo shows the first zero-emission, hydrogen-fueled public water taxi in San Francisco. A Japanese shipmaker has said it plans to launch the world's first large electric ferry - the latest innovation aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

A Japanese shipmaker said Thursday it planned to launch the world's first large electric ferry -- the latest innovation aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

A subsidiary of heavy machinery giant IHI Corp. has completed a basic design for a 30-metre (99-foot) long ferry that could carry 800 passengers, powered by rechargeable batteries, a company spokesman said.

While smaller battery-powered boats are already in use, IHI's ferry would be "the world's first large plug-in vessel," he said.

"It would emit no [carbon dioxide](#) or nitrogen oxide. We also aim to slash fuel costs," said the spokesman, who declined to be named.

The ferry would be able to cruise some 120 kilometres (74 miles) on a charge of six to eight hours, he said.

The group's shipbuilding subsidiary IHI Marine United Inc. plans to launch the ferry in around 2015, when it expects high-performance rechargeable batteries to be available at a lower cost.

The total battery capacity would be around 5,000 kilowatt hours -- more than 300 times greater than that of a small electric vehicle currently in use, the spokesman said.

The price is likely to be some 60 percent higher than that of a conventional ferry, he added.

Japanese car makers are already world leaders in fuel-efficient vehicles and Nissan plans to start selling what it describes as the world's first affordable electric car in late 2010.

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