

Skagit County Ferry News

February 2023

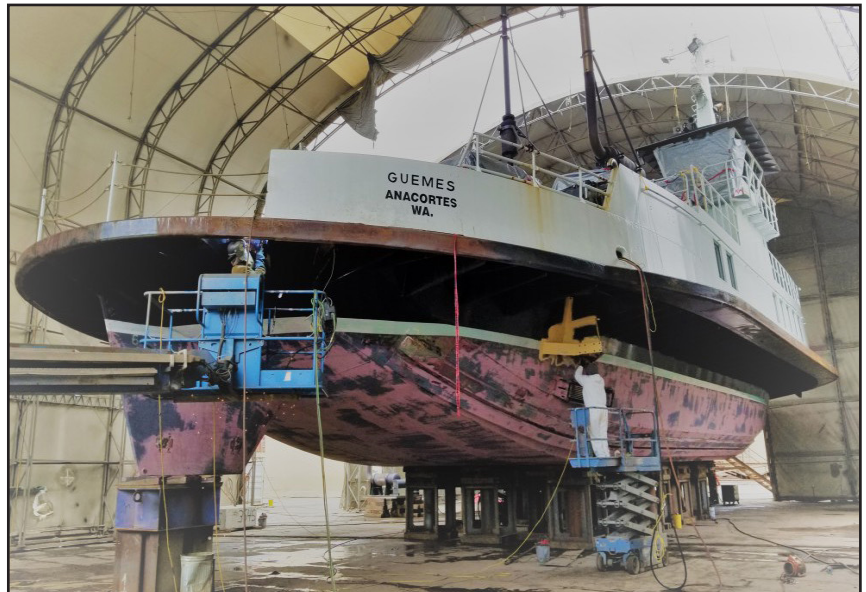
Haul-out set for Feb. 27 to March 19

The next scheduled haul-out of the Guemes Island Ferry will be February 27 through March 19, 2023. Arrow Launch will provide passenger-only service during this time.

Skagit Transit will provide on-demand shuttle bus service on Guemes during the haul out.

Ferry riders can get updates and additional information about parking and Skagit Transit service on the Skagit County Ferry haul-out website at www.skagitcounty.net/ferryhaulout.

During the haul out, Dakota Creek Industries will repaint the hull, car deck, and void spaces, service major equipment, strip and clean fuel tanks, complete minor repairs and



The last Guemes haul out was completed by Nichols Brothers in Freeland in May and June of 2021. The vessel was previously hauled out in early 2019.

maintenance items, and complete the United States Coast Guard dry dock credit.

The ferry is scheduled to return to regular service at 6:30 a.m. Monday, March 20.

Helpful haul-out tips from Captain Rachel

► **ARRIVE EARLY:** Arrow Launch can take a maximum of 49 passengers per trip. Arrive at the dock at least 10 to 15 minutes prior to the scheduled departure to make sure you have a place on the passenger ferry.

► **PLAN FOR PARKING:** Parking can be a challenge. If you plan to park a car in Anacortes, there is a 72-hour parking lot at 6th Street and K Avenue. Street parking may be available but you

should pay attention to city parking restrictions.

► **USE SKAGIT TRANSIT:** Skagit Transit will provide call-in shuttle service on Guemes Island during the haul-out. To arrange a pickup, call Skagit Transit Dispatch at 360-757-4433, press #1 and ask for Guemes Dispatch. Please call at least 1 hour ahead of your requested pick-up time.

► **BOOKMARK THE HAUL-OUT WEBSITE:** www.skagitcounty.net/ferryhaulout.



FERRY RATE STUDY TIMELINE

Jan. 3 - 20 — Consultant reviews ferry fare data and presents preliminary findings

Jan. 23 - Feb 3 — Develop draft rate schedule and other documents

Feb. 6 — Submit technical memo and findings to Public Works Staff

Feb. 13 - 24 — Develop draft rate schedule and ferry fare report

Feb. 28 — Present report and findings at 10 a.m. public hearing

Feb. 28 - March 10 — Public comment period

March 17 — Finalize rate schedule and ferry fare report

April 3 — Board of Commissioners votes on new ferry fare schedule

May 1 — If approved, new fare schedule goes into effect



2023 Ferry Fare Proposal Information



NOW ONLINE - www.skagitcounty.net/ferry

Ferry Fare rate study: What you need to know

Skagit County Public Works is proposing an increase to ferry rates in 2023. Skagit County has hired a Consultant, KPFF, to conduct a rate study. The objectives of the study are:

- ▶ Reduce the road fund subsidy that contributes to the ferry operating deficit each year
- ▶ Simplify the fare structure for future implementation of electronic ticketing
- ▶ Use previous studies and stakeholder input to guide the process
- ▶ Evaluate opportunities for additional and ancillary revenue
- ▶ Recommend fare policies for existing operations while

planning for replacement.

The consulting team will develop a recommended rate schedule along with a recommendation for fare policy and financial planning.

KPFF will also take into account Skagit County's plan to implement electronic ferry fare collection by the end of 2023.

In their evaluation of the rate structure, the consultants will consider fare options for diverse ridership and vehicle types, the ratio of walk-on to vehicle fares, payment strategies and streamlined discounts, and the potential for adding more scheduled runs to both the peak and nonpeak schedules.

Draft rate schedule public hearing planned for Feb. 28

Consultant KPFF will present its preliminary recommendations for Guemes Ferry fare increases at a public hearing in February.

The hearing is set for 10 a.m. Tuesday, Feb. 28, at the Skagit County Board of Commissioners Hearing Room, 1800 Continental Place, Mount Vernon.

Interested residents may also participate via Zoom using the following link: <https://bit.ly/SkagitBoCCMTg>.

SHARE COMMENTS BY MARCH 10

- ▶ **By email:** ferrycomments@co.skagit.wa.us
- ▶ **By mail:** Skagit County
ATTN: Commissioners' Office
1800 Continental Place
Mount Vernon, WA 98273

Ferry Fare FAQs: Find answers to your questions

Why do fares need to be increased?

Simply put, we need to increase fares in order to maintain our current level of service and reduce the financial impact to the County's Road Fund. Each year, nearly \$1 million is taken from the road fund to subsidize ferry operations.

Skagit County Public Works is proposing to increase ferry fare rates in the spring of 2023. This proposal represents the first substantial increase in fares for operating costs since 2015. A vessel replacement surcharge was implemented in 2018; however, revenue from that surcharge can only be used to fund vessel replacement.

What makes up the 'operating costs' for the ferry system?

"Operating costs" means all actual daily running expenses (which include fuel & wages), regular & routine maintenance costs, and administrative expenses associated with the use and operation of all physical parts of the ferry system.

What other revenues fund the ferry service besides user fares?

Several main sources fund ferry service: Passenger and vehicle fares, state subsidies, and the Public Works Road Fund. No capital expenses are currently funded through or included in operations. Capital expenditures are paid by the Public Works Road Fund and grants.

What is the process for increasing ferry fares?

Skagit County Public Works will work with stakeholders and the consultants to bring a fare proposal before the Board of Commissioners. Public Works will draft a resolution



BE THE FIRST TO KNOW

Get the draft rate study emailed to you. It's simple:

- Go online: skagitcounty.net/ferry
- Click the green EMAIL UPDATES box
- Enter your email address, then click submit

that will be given to the Board. Following a public hearing, the resolution will be placed on the Board's agenda for approval.

What have the Commissioners said about the rate study?

The Board of Commissioners hosted a public open house on January 3, 2023. A video recording of the meeting is available online at <https://vimeo.com/786711328>.

Will there be a reduction in service?

Our fare proposal is designed such that with ridership similar to

2022, we can recover enough fare-box revenue without service reductions. If the increase does not pass, a service reduction is one of the tools we may use to balance operating costs.

If fares increase, will I still have to pay the replacement surcharge?

The vessel replacement surcharge in Resolution R20180123, approved by the Board in 2018, is expected to remain in place. Part of the scope of work for the consultants is to figure out if the surcharge amount is appropriate in planning for vessel replacement in the future. Surcharge money is used exclusively toward the future purchase of a new ferry.

What happens to fares when the new ferry goes into service?

With the increased cost of goods and services, we cannot guarantee lower non-salary operating costs for the new vessel. Even though the new electric vessel will not need as much diesel fuel to operate, the county will need to plan for battery replacements every 10 years or so.

2022 Ferry performance metrics published

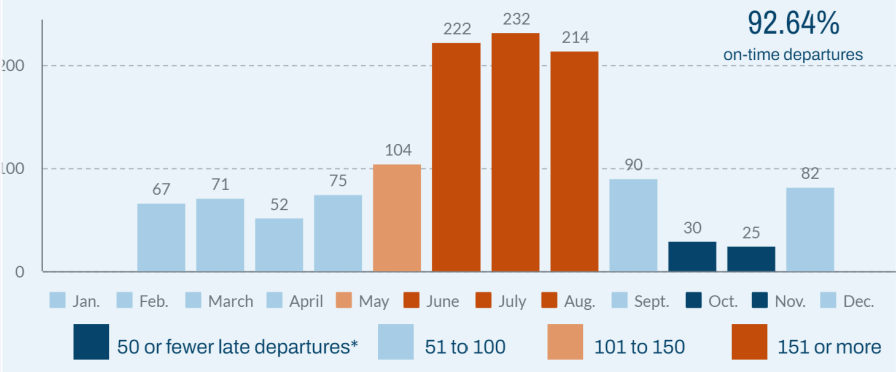
In 2022, the on-time performance of the M/V Guemes improved by nearly 6 percent compared to the 2021 on-time metrics. Last year, 92 percent of departures were on time compared to 87 percent in 2021.

Improving on-time performance was a priority for the Ferry division as a result of rider feedback.

How did we make that happen? First, we have strictly enforced the cutoff for ticket sales at one minute prior to sailing. We also do not accommodate late arrivals. Riders and vehicles must arrive on time or wait until the next sailing.

Our ferry crews want the vessel to sail on time, every time. Next

On-time performance



View the entire performance metrics scorecard at www.skagitcounty.net/ferry

year our goal is to sail on time 95 percent of the time.

Other highlights from 2022 include our 99 percent reliability rating, meaning the ferry com-

pleted all but 62 of its scheduled runs. Missed runs were due to ice and snow removal, weather, mechanical issues, or medical or emergency services.



Skagit County Public Works
Ferry Division
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