

Notice of Public Comment Opportunity

Proposal Information

Publish date:	March 26, 2018
Proposal name:	Ferry Vessel Replacement Surcharge
Documents available at:	www.skagitcounty.net/ferry
Lead Agency:	Skagit County Public Works Department
Contact Person:	Rachel Rowe, Ferry Division Manager
Written comment deadline:	Friday, April 27, 2018, at 4:30 p.m.

Description

The Board of Skagit County Commissioners has determined that the M/V Guemes has reached the end of its useful and economic life and needs to be replaced.

The Board is considering implementing a ferry vessel replacement surcharge (per RCW 36.54.200) of \$1.00 per adult passenger fare sold, \$0.50 per senior/youth/disabled passenger fare sold, \$1.00 per motorcycle fare sold, \$2.00 per vehicle fare sold and \$5.00 per oversize vehicle fare sold. Frequent-user punch card prices would be adjusted and discounted accordingly.

Other proposed changes to the fare schedule include extending the expiration of vehicle punch cards from 90 to 120 days and eliminating the fee for bicycles.

More details can be found online at skagitcounty.net/ferry. This proposal may be approved, modified, or rejected by the Board of Skagit County Commissioners. Your views for or against this matter are invited by attendance, representation, or letter.

How to Comment

Email comments are preferred and must be sent to ferrycomments@co.skagit.wa.us with the proposal name (“Ferry Vessel Replacement Surcharge”) in the subject line. Include your comments in the body of your email message rather than as attachments. Paper comments must be printed on 8½x11 paper and mailed or delivered to:

Comments on proposed “Ferry Vessel Replacement Surcharge”
Skagit County Public Works Department
1800 Continental Place, Mount Vernon WA 98273

All comments must be received by the April 27 deadline and include your full name and mailing address.



Skagit County vessel replacement surcharge Q&A

Skagit County Board of Commissioners

Ron Wesen, District 1

Kenneth A. Dahlstedt, Chair, District 2

Lisa Janicki, District 3

Why begin collecting funds for a new ferry when it is far from clear yet that Skagit County will find or raise the money to construct a new vessel?

We know that the current vessel will not last forever, and that one day we will need to replace the M/V Guemes. The same goes for all of the other equipment Skagit County owns. For example, when we buy a dump truck, we know one day we will need to replace it. It is financially prudent to establish a replacement fund for all Skagit County equipment before it needs to be replaced – and the ferry is no exception. In fact, many people do this in their own budgets: Put a little cash away in a rainy-day fund, or a savings account, in preparation for future emergency expenditures – like fixing a leaky roof or replacing a broken appliance. Collecting funds now for a new ferry means we have a savings account specifically set aside for that purpose when the time comes for new vessel construction.

Are the funds being collected specifically to be applied to a new vessel? If so, will those funds be set aside and used only for that purpose, or will the funds be used wherever Public Works chooses?

Yes, funds collected would only be used for a new vessel. Per [RCW 36.54.200](#), “Revenues generated from the surcharge may only be used for the construction or purchase of ferry vessels and to pay the principal and interest on bonds authorized for the construction or purchase of ferry vessels.” By law, Public Works cannot use ferry surcharge funds for any other purpose.

Will those funds be audited and the balance reported periodically?

Skagit County’s financial statements are audited on a yearly basis, and the fund balance can be reported any time.

If the remaining funds are not found and a new ferry not built, will the surcharge funds be returned to us?

No. We know that we will have to build a new ferry sometime in the next decade. The M/V Guemes will not last forever. Any surcharge funds collected will be set aside in a dedicated account to pay for the cost of a new vessel.

How long will the surcharge be in effect?

That’s up to the Skagit County Board of Commissioners to decide. We should have instituted a replacement surcharge in 1979, when the current vessel went into service. Because that didn’t happen, we are bearing the full cost of replacement today.

Is there a total amount you intend to raise with the surcharge?

No. The proposed surcharge is estimated to generate \$245,000 per year toward construction of a new vessel. If the surcharge remains in place at the proposed rate, in 40 years, Skagit County could have \$9.8 million set aside for vessel replacement.

Once a new ferry is built will the surcharge be removed?

Again, that’s up to the Skagit County Board of Commissioners to decide. It would be prudent for Skagit County to keep a surcharge in place to build a fund for the next ferry replacement.

Can you provide me another example of a bridge, road or other infrastructure project in Skagit County where the users of that infrastructure were assessed a portion of the cost?

All bridges, roads and infrastructure in Skagit County are directly paid for by the users through property, gas and/or sales taxes. In some cases, residents are assessed a portion of the cost if they benefit from special services above and beyond basic taxpayer-funded infrastructure. That occurs all over the state and nation, not just Skagit County.

For example: Residents in designated dike districts pay an additional assessment toward maintenance and repair of levees along the Skagit River. Those residents directly benefit from properly maintained levees, so they share that cost; other county residents do not pay because they receive no direct benefit. Local Improvement Districts or Transportation Benefit Districts are another example of users being assessed a portion of the cost for road, bridge or other infrastructure projects. In 2016, residents living along Colony and Legg roads entered into a funding agreement with Skagit County for the establishment of a railroad quiet zone. The Blanchard Quiet Zone Project benefits those residents by lowering the noise of passing trains, and as such, the residents agreed to raise a portion of the funds needed for construction of the project.

Specifically regarding ferry infrastructure costs, the Washington State Ferries include a ticket surcharge to be used for replacement of their vessels. The surcharge went into effect in October 2011 on every ticket issued, including multi-ride and monthly passes.

PROPOSED RATE SCHEDULE

SKAGIT COUNTY FERRY SYSTEM			
FARES	RATE SCHEDULE (INCLUDES SURCHARGE)		SURCHARGE AMOUNT
	NON-PEAK	PEAK	YEAR-ROUND
PASSENGER	Oct 1 thru May 19	May 20 thru Sept 30	Jan 1 thru Dec 31
Adult Passenger	\$4.00	\$5.00	\$1.00
Senior (65+yrs)/ Disabled / Youth (6-17yrs) Passenger	\$2.50	\$3.00	\$0.50
Age 5 & Under	Free	Free	\$0.00
PASSENGER FREQUENT USER PUNCH CARD (Valid for 1 year from Purchase Date)			
25 Trip Adult Passenger	\$87.00		\$20.00
25 Trip Senior / Disabled / Youth Passenger	\$48.00		\$8.00
VEHICLE			
Motorcycle (Including Rider)	\$7.00	\$9.00	\$1.00
Motorcycle w/ Senior / Disabled Rider	\$6.00	\$8.00	\$1.00
Vehicle & Driver (Under 20 feet including overhang)	\$12.00	\$14.00	\$2.00
Vehicle & Senior / Disabled Driver (Under 20 feet)	\$10.00	\$12.00	\$2.00
VEHICLE FREQUENT USER PUNCH CARD (Valid for 120 Days from Purchase Date)			
20 Trip Vehicle (under 20') & Driver	\$205.00		\$35.00
20 Trip Vehicle (under 20') & Senior / Disabled Driver	\$160.00		\$24.00
20 Trip Motorcycle & Rider	\$120.00		\$18.00
20 Trip Motorcycle & Senior / Disabled Rider	\$103.00		\$18.00
VEHICLE CONVENIENCE PUNCH CARD (Expires upon next fare adjustment)			
*NON-PEAK 10 Trip Punch cards are not valid for use during the peak season			
PEAK 10 Trip Vehicle (under 20') & Driver		\$140.00	\$20.00
PEAK 10 Trip Vehicle (under 20') & Senior / Disabled Driver		\$120.00	\$20.00
*NON-PEAK 10 Trip Vehicle (under 20') & Driver	\$120.00		\$20.00
*NON-PEAK 10 Trip Vehicle (under 20') & Senior/Disabled Driver	\$100.00		\$20.00
OVERSIZE VEHICLES & VEHICLES W/ TRAILERS (INCLUDING DRIVER)			
Vehicle over 20 ft to less than 25 ft	\$18.00	\$21.00	\$5.00
Vehicle over 25 ft to less than 30 ft	\$24.00	\$28.00	\$5.00
Vehicle over 30 ft to less than 35 ft	\$30.00	\$35.00	\$5.00
Vehicle over 35 ft to less than 40 ft	\$37.00	\$44.00	\$5.00
Vehicle over 40 ft to less than 45 ft	\$45.00	\$54.00	\$5.00
Vehicle over 45 ft to less than 50 ft	\$54.00	\$65.00	\$5.00
Vehicle over 50 ft to less than 55 ft	\$64.00	\$77.00	\$5.00
Vehicle over 55 ft to less than 60 ft	\$74.00	\$89.00	\$5.00
Vehicle over 60 ft to less than 65 ft	\$86.00	\$104.00	\$5.00
Each 5 ft increment over 65 ft	\$7.00	\$7.00	\$1.00
Over width charge (over 8 ft, 6 in)	Double Length Charge		\$0.00
MISCELLANEOUS			
Stacked Logging Truck	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$5.00
Extended Run (1 run at end of day) plus fare	\$120.00	\$120.00	\$0.00
Guemes Special (crew call out) plus fare	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$0.00
Charter Rate (3 hr min) plus fare	\$1,200.00	\$1,200.00	\$0.00
\$ per hour, each additional hour	\$400.00	\$400.00	\$0.00