



# GUEMES ISLAND FERRY NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2026



## Thanks for joining the annual community meeting!

The Skagit County Ferry Division appreciates all our community members joining the 2025 annual community meeting in January. We had great questions and feedback, and we're looking forward to scheduling the 2026 annual meeting this July or early August. Once we have a date, we will share more information!

The presentation slides from the community meeting are available on the [ferry website](#). We will also be posting additional information shortly regarding questions that were emailed or asked during the meeting but were not answered at that time.

### 2026 Ferry Tickets & Fare Schedule Update

The County Commissioners adopted the 2026 fare schedule via [Resolution #R20250259](#), which took effect on January 1, 2026. The Commissioners and staff identified an error in the oversized vehicles calculations during the adoption process. A public hearing will be held for consideration of an updated fare schedule correcting the error. Once the public hearing has been scheduled, a notice will be sent out via the listserv. The only change that will be proposed is for oversized vehicle rates.

All tickets purchased in 2026 will expire after December 31, 2026. We are often asked why there is an expiration date for tickets, and it is tied to the fare schedule adopted each year. Tickets purchased under the 2026 fare schedule, and costs therein, expire after 2026 because a new fare schedule will be in effect starting January 1, 2027.

### New Ticket Kiosk is Live!

If you haven't seen it yet, the Ferry Division installed a new self-service ticketing kiosk inside the Anacortes Terminal earlier this month. We encourage all riders to continue using advance purchase options through the Guemes Island ferry app or the online website; however, the kiosk is now launched and ready for use inside the Anacortes ferry terminal for in-person ticketing purchases.

The self-service kiosk offers several key benefits:

- Purchase of all general, oversize, and multi-ride passes,
- Ticket lookup to view remaining rides or validity,
- Kiosk availability throughout all ticketing lobby hours (when the terminal is open to the public), including crew break periods when the ticket office has typically been closed,
- Credit / debit card, Apple Pay, and Google Pay options supported, and
- Ticketing options available in both English and Spanish.

Ferry crew members will be available to assist riders during the transition to the new kiosk. As a reminder, cash is not accepted at the Anacortes ticket office but will still continue to be accepted at the Skagit County main office at 1800 Continental Place, Mount Vernon, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Appointments are not required, but helpful. Please call (360) 416-1400 in advance so we can be sure we have someone here to help you.

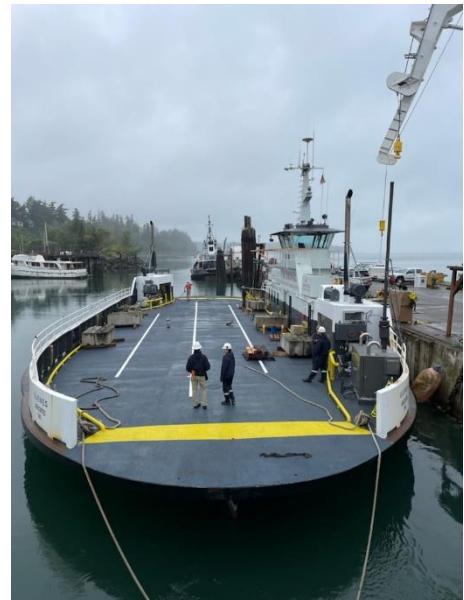
We want to thank our Ferry Division Assistant Manager, Lee Fisher, for his work to launch the new kiosk and ensure we continue to improve our ferry and ticketing experience for riders! He has also launched a new reader board inside the Anacortes terminal to provide important updates on ferry service to riders. Check it out the next time you're in the terminal office!

## 2026 Upcoming Projects

We had a chance to look back on our 2025 highlights in the January edition of the newsletter, so this month we are going to be looking forward to our anticipated ferry projects this year!

### ***Pier-Side Maintenance (Shipyard) – April or May 2026***

The Ferry Division will open the submitted bids for the spring pier-side maintenance period on March 16<sup>th</sup>. The term “pier-side maintenance” seems to have caused confusion. Although this work will be completed while the vessel remains in the water, it is similar in impact to what the community knows as a “haul-out” or drydock period. The work on the vessel will be performed at the Contractor’s facility. Once we have been able to evaluate the bids, we will be able to share more detailed timing specifics for when the ferry will be out of service. We estimate the work will take place sometime between late April and Memorial Day. While the vessel will be at a shipyard, **the work will not require the vessel to drydock.**



The U.S. Coast Guard is requiring the County to replace four small sections of steel on the vessel deck forward of the car deck. This was called out during the 2025 drydock; however, if done at that time, the ferry's return would have been delayed even further. Other maintenance items will be addressed during this time as well, including a full replacement of wiring connected to the transmission controls that caused a shutdown in June of this year.

A couple of FAQs for the pier-side maintenance period from our community meeting below:

**1. Why do we have to do our maintenance period so close to summer?**

The U.S. Coast Guard requires us to complete the car-deck steel replacement within one year of the last drydock. We were not able to release this project for bid earlier, which shortened the available window for scheduling the work. Under normal circumstances, our maintenance periods occur in late February, March, or early April. Given the regulatory deadline and the timing of the bid process, the shipyard period now falls closer to summer than usual.

**2. Will there be passenger-only service?**

Yes, we plan to contract with Arrow to provide passenger-only service. Arrow Lauch will operate on the ferry's regular nonpeak sailing schedule.

**3. Can you schedule other maintenance projects during this maintenance period so it's all done at the same time?**

At this time, we don't have any additional projects ready for construction that can be completed during this shipyard period. In the future, we will continue looking for opportunities to combine work when it's possible to reduce the number of outages. However, many projects depend on factors outside our control—such as available funding, required permits, and environmental “fish windows” for in-water work—so we can't always align project timing.

**4. Will there be Skagit Transit bus service?**

We have reached out to Skagit Transit to discuss if bus service will be available during the pier-side maintenance. We do not have an answer yet to this question, but we will update riders as soon as we can.

**5. How will you ensure the maintenance period will not be delayed like the drydock in 2025?**

We've reviewed the factors that contributed to the extended timeline for the 2025 drydock, and we're incorporating those lessons into our planning for future haul outs. This includes strengthening project scheduling, improving communication expectations with contractors, and refining our oversight processes during shipyard work. While some variables are outside the County's control, we are taking steps to reduce the risk of delays and cost impacts wherever possible.

## ***Apron Flap Replacement***

The Ferry Division will be replacing the flaps on the Anacortes and Guemes Island bridge aprons. These are the parts of the bridge at the very end that raise up and down to meet the ferry and help load and unload cars and passengers.

We expect this project to take three working days to finish. While the Anacortes flap is being replaced, we can offer passenger-only service between Cap Sante and Guemes Island. Unfortunately, while the Guemes flap is being replaced, we will not be able to offer ferry service because there is not an available bridge to use on the island side.



This is a maintenance project to replace the flaps due to age, corrosion, and wear.

## ***Ferry Replacement Project***

### Temporary Technical Advisory Group (TAG) Report

The TAG is obligated to provide a final report with recommendations on the replacement or refurbishment of the Guemes Island ferry to the Board of County Commissioners by August 31, 2026.

The group held its fourth meeting in February and the meeting materials and summary are available on the [TAG website](#). Members have narrowed down the type of propulsion designs they will be evaluating further for consideration by the County Commissioners. They intend to evaluate each design based on a matrix scoring card to objectively decide which design will be the best fit for Skagit County.

### Value Engineering

The Ferry Division is working to select a consultant for a value engineering study and risk assessment of the current all-electric vessel design and bid package to evaluate how to best reduce the cost of the project to meet our available budget and address risks. Once we have more information on this effort, we will share it. As a reminder, the TAG is not involved in this process.

## ***Shoreline Permit Application***

We have made a few changes to our shoreline permit application with the City of Anacortes. We have removed the following proposals within the permit application:

- **Toll Booth** – adding a toll booth in the queuing lanes to support ticket purchasing was not supported throughout feedback from ferry riders. The toll booth would have taken up space for cars waiting for the ferry and made it difficult for buses to turnaround in the parking lot.

- **New Holding Lane Retaining Wall** – an additional holding lane would have helped offer more space in the queuing area for cars waiting for the ferry; however, the new lane would require us to rebuild the retaining wall along the shore. The cost for the retaining wall construction was prohibitive when compared to the benefits of the additional space.
- **Shoreside Battery Storage and Ferry Charging System** – these two items will only be needed if the County decides to pursue an all-electric ferry. Because we do not have the funding currently for an all-electric ferry, we have removed these items from the permit application. If we decide to build an all-electric ferry, we will apply for another shoreline permit for these items.

We are continuing to move forward with other items in the permit that include improving the Anacortes parking lots and queuing lane revisions. Our next step will be to resubmit our application to the City of Anacortes later this month.

### ***Parking Lot Improvements***

The Public Works Department is working on improvements for the conditions of both parking lots at the Anacortes terminal and the parking area on Guemes Island. The Anacortes lots have not been resurfaced since 2005 or 2006, the cement curbing is failing, and there are issues with enforcing parking lot rules. The Guemes Island parking lot has a graveled surface, and the stormwater runoff flows directly to the shoreline area.

We anticipate resurfacing the Anacortes parking lots this year, or in early 2027. The parking lot closest to the Anacortes queuing lanes needs to be reconfigured to address ADA concerns and enhance public safety and security. If any changes are made to the configuration of the Anacortes parking lot, there will still be the required number of ADA spots available. The City of Anacortes has additionally requested we manage our parking lots so the Ferry Division is evaluating the use of a contracted parking management company.

There will be no construction or updates to the Guemes Island parking lot in 2026, but we are working on the design of the lot to help fix the runoff issues and improved traffic circulation and access.

The source of funding for the Anacortes parking lot improvements is Skagit County Road Fund. For the design of the Guemes Island parking lot improvements, we have obligated federal Ferry Boat Program (FBP) funding.

**Feedback? We'd love to hear from you!**

*If you have thoughts, ideas, or feedback on our monthly newsletter, Jenn Rogers,*

*Communications Manager, would love to hear from you! You can e-mail her at [jrogers@co.skagit.wa.us](mailto:jrogers@co.skagit.wa.us)*