



GUEMES ISLAND FERRY NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2026



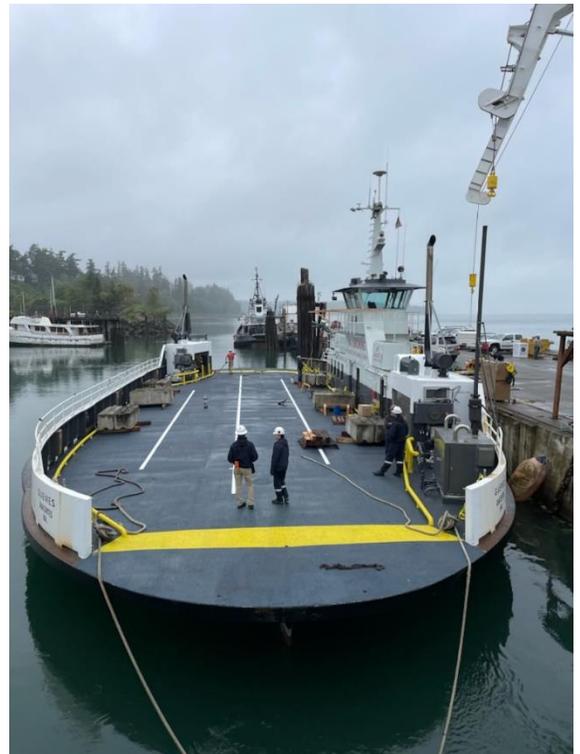
Hello, Spring (Almost)!

We're halfway through March already, with just a couple days left until the spring season! I know the time change has already been a welcome reprieve for us after those long winter nights.

[Pier-Side Maintenance Scheduled for May 4 - 17, 2026](#)

The dates for the upcoming pier-side maintenance have been set, and the vehicle ferry will be out of service Monday, May 4th, through Sunday, May 17th. The last ferry run before going out of service will be at 8:00 p.m. on Sunday, May 3rd. Passenger-only service will be provided by Arrow Launch beginning May 4th, at 6:30 a.m., and will operate on the ferry's regular non-peak sailing schedule.

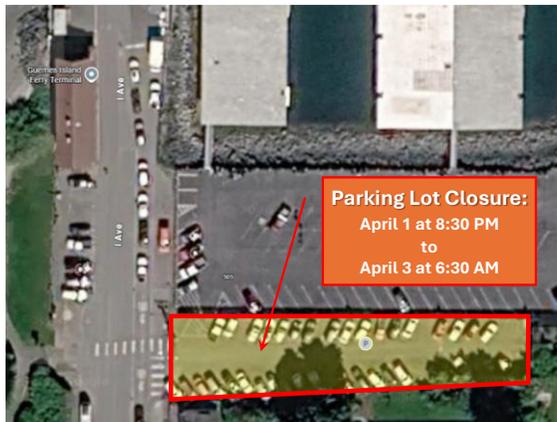
Since August 2025, we have included announcements about the upcoming pier-side maintenance for the M/V Guemes this spring and it was discussed during the virtual community meeting on January 28, 2026. Pier-side maintenance means the work will be completed while the vessel remains in the water, but the impact of this maintenance period is similar to when the ferry is out of service for a "haul-out" or "drydock" period. The work on the vessel will be performed at the contractor's facility but will not require the vessel to be drydocked.



The U.S. Coast Guard requires 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.

No Bus Service During Pier-Side Maintenance

Skagit County and Skagit Transit discussed transportation options for Guemes Island during the scheduled pier-side ferry maintenance period in May. Following a review of this year's ferry maintenance period, Skagit Transit determined it cannot support operating a temporary shuttle due to fleet availability and island infrastructure constraints.



Upcoming Parking Lot Closure

The parking lot closest to the Anacortes ferry terminal will be closed starting at the close of business on Wednesday, April 1st through Friday, April 3rd at 6:30 a.m. in order to conduct routine parking lot maintenance. **Any cars left behind during this time will be subject to towing.** The pedestrian walkway to/from the 6th and K Street parking lot will remain open and available for use.

2026 Ferry Fare Schedule Update – Public Hearing Scheduled

The County Commissioners adopted the 2026 fare schedule via [Resolution #R20250259](#), which went into 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.

The public hearing has been scheduled for Tuesday, April 20th, at 1:30 p.m. in the Commissioners' Hearing Room at 1800 Continental Place, Mount Vernon. The public can also join the meeting via Zoom at the link on the [Commissioners' website](#) or by watching on TV21. The proposed adjusted fares schedule will be published on our website on Thursday, March 26. Written comments on the proposal can be sent to ferrycomments@co.skagit.wa.us.

One Year of Electronic Ticketing!

The electronic ticketing system, provided through Anchor Operating Systems, launched last year for passenger tickets on March 19, 2025. It's been a great year learning the new system with our riders, and we appreciate everyone taking the time to provide feedback so we can continue to improve the system. We will continue to make changes as we need to so, please keep sending us your thoughts to the ferry comments email!

We wanted to reflect a bit on the benefits of the electronic ticketing system over the past year, and where we believe the system will continue to benefit the Ferry Division in the future! Here are just a few of the benefits we have seen, along with our riders:

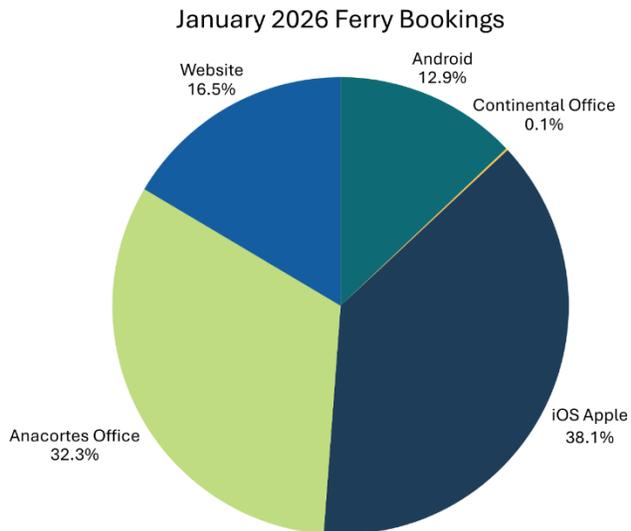
1. Increased convenience for purchasing ferry tickets

The new ferry mobile app and online website have allowed riders to purchase tickets ahead of arrival at the ferry terminal, which has reduced the need to make those purchases at the ticket office. We have seen our percentage of online sales for ferry tickets increase to 97% of our total ticket purchases in February, including purchases made on the kiosk.

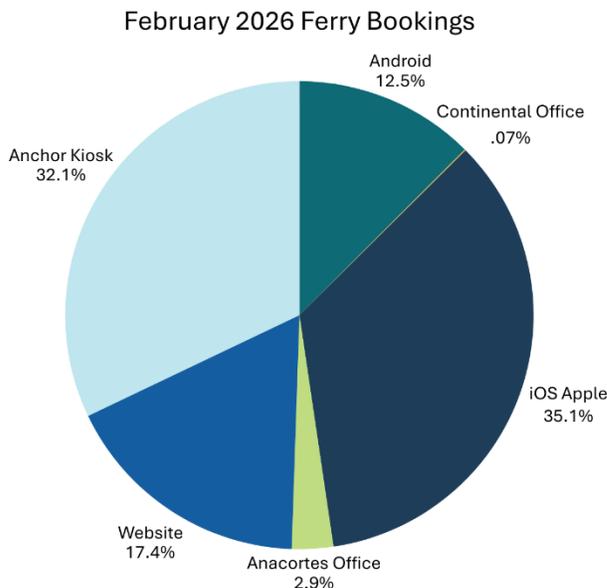
This benefit has been especially appreciated by our business customers as they can purchase bulk tickets for staff riding the ferry before they arrive at the terminal!

We have also been able to purchase a ticketing kiosk for the lobby of our Anacortes terminal which allows riders to buy tickets at the terminal without waiting for a staff member to be available. The kiosk sells tickets in both English and Spanish and is A.D.A. accessible.

As you can see from the data below, the kiosk has been a huge support for the Anacortes office. In January, 8,102 transactions took place at the ticket office, which accounted for 32% of overall bookings. In February, ticket office transactions were reduced to 487 or 3% of our overall bookings.



Location of Booking	Booking Totals
Android	3,240
iOS Apple	9,548
Continental Office	36
Anacortes Office	8,102
Website	4,128
Total	25,054



Location of Booking	Booking Totals
Android	2,130
iOS Apple	5,994
Continental Office	12
Anacortes Office	487
Website	2,967
Ferry Kiosk	5,476
Total	17,066

2. No more losing your paper ticket

Under the previous system, if a rider purchased a paper ticket, such as a paper multi-ride punch card, and that ticket was lost in the mail or slipped out of your wallet, those purchased rides were lost. The Ferry Division did not have a way to track your purchased tickets, so if you lost your paper ticket, there was no way to recover the rides you purchased.

With the new system, lost tickets can be recovered. You can also look up your tickets on your mobile app or computer, or through the kiosk in the Anacortes lobby! No more losing rides you already purchased.

3. Reduced inaccuracies at the ferry terminal

The new system ensures our staff can scan all vehicle and passenger tickets accurately and verify those scanned tickets with the hand count taken onboard the vessel. Ferry revenue recovery is incredibly important to ensure we can continue to fund ferry operations.

4. Easier reporting for the Ferry Division

Anchor Operating Systems provides the Ferry Division with different reports of ticket purchases, purchase methods, number and type of tickets purchased, timing of those purchases, and scanned tickets. We can run reports in real-time to access information we couldn't before, and without waiting for data to be entered by administrative staff.

While we still hand count each vehicle and passenger rider on the vessel itself from Anacortes and Guemes Island, these reports on scanned tickets and ticket purchases reduce some of the backend data inputs that Public Works accounting staff was doing prior to the new system. The reports are used to monitor purchasing and ridership trends and to submit for different types of grants.

For example, now that we have the electronic ticketing system we can accurately account for the Youth Ride Free program, bringing in revenue for this program to the Ferry Division and eliminating the cost of kids riding the ferry for Guemes Island families.

5. More to come!

Over the past year, the main priority for the Ferry Division has been to ensure the electronic ticketing system is working well for our riders. The finance staff within Public Works are still diving into the reporting and documentation features to better understand all the ways these reports can be used for transparency, financial auditing, and grant applications.



We look forward to continuing to expand the type and frequency of information we can publish for interested Guemes Islanders on our website to improve our communication and information sharing on behalf of the Ferry Division.

We also will be continuing to work with Anchor on the yearly cost for the system. The rates we pay may be negotiable and the finance staff will be prioritizing how to reduce the rates we are paying to Anchor.

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 flaps are being replaced, we can offer passenger-only service between Cap Sante and Guemes Island. Unfortunately, while the Guemes flaps are being replaced, we will not be able to offer ferry service because the bridge on the island side will be unavailable.



This priority project has not gone out for bid, but we will keep you posted on a timeline for construction. We are currently working through the shoreline permitting process with the City of Anacortes before we can go to bid. Summer is ideal for best weather and plenty of daylight; however, we realize this is also the busy season. The worn hinge pins and warped flaps are causing additional noise during loading and unloading, so waiting until winter is not favorable. We will do our best to prioritize safety, efficiency, cost, construction schedules, and service demands.

This is a maintenance project to replace the flaps due to age, corrosion, and wear. The aprons still need to be replaced, as they were constructed in 1979-1980. A capital project for the full replacement of the aprons will also include recoating the bridges and updating the hydraulic and electrical systems at both terminals. The county has received a federal grant for \$5.79M. This year, the county will contract a design and environmental consultant, with construction possibly by 2028.

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 fifth meeting in March and the meeting materials and summary will be available on the [TAG website](#) soon. Members have narrowed down the type of propulsion designs they will be evaluating further for consideration by the County Commissioners. During the March meeting, the TAG discussed the results of the matrix evaluation method for each propulsion study and have narrowed down the options to consider further to preserving the current ferry, building a diesel hybrid boat, or modeling a new boat after the Whatcom County Lummi Island design.

The TAG intends to continue narrowing down this list during the April 13th meeting and will start working on the final report to present to the County Commissioners.

Value Engineering

Skagit County has selected AECOM to conduct an independent Value Engineering / Risk Assessment (VERA) study focused on the ferry's propulsion system and shoreside charging infrastructure. AECOM will perform the study following Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Value Engineering guidelines and methodology for conducting a Value Engineering / Risk Assessment (VERA) study. They will partner with Elliott Bay Design Group to provide independent ferry expertise.

The VERA study will focus on opportunities to reduce project costs, evaluate alternative technologies and configurations, identify and develop response strategies to projects risks, and confirm whether the current design approach remains the most appropriate for advancing the Guemes Island Ferry Replacement Project.

The VERA study will be completed by the end of May, 2026. The total contract amount is \$230,893 and is funded by Move Ahead Washington (MAWA) funding. As a reminder, the TAG is not involved in this process.

Contact Information for Customer Support and Services

Guemes Island Ferry Business Office
500 I Avenue, Anacortes, WA 98221
Phone: (360) 416-1466
Email: ferrycomments@co.skagit.wa.us
Website: www.skagitcounty.net/ferry

The ferry business office is open Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Please note, our phone number has recently changed. If you call our business office outside business hours, or if there is no answer during business hours, please leave us a voicemail. We return voicemails by the next business day.

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