

Skagit County Ferry Replacement Project Timeline

Rachel Rowe, Ferry Operations Division Manager

Skagit County Public Works Department

16 November 2025

2012 – FERRY REPLACEMENT DISCUSSION BEGAN

December: The Board of Skagit County Commissioners adopted the Guemes Island Ferry 14-Year Ferry Capital Improvement Plan.

- Replacement year of 2020 was included.
- Vessel replacement value was listed at \$20million.

2013 – SKAGIT COUNTY RESEARCHED VESSEL REPLACEMENT SCENARIOS

April: Skagit County hired Elliott Bay Design Group to conduct a replacement study that looked at 3 different replacement scenarios (and the total ownership cost of each) to determine the most economic replacement scenario.

Replacement Option	Total Ownership Cost
Option A: Immediate vessel replacement	\$19.54 million
Option B: Delay vessel replacement for 10 years	\$21.50 million
Option C: Delay vessel replacement for 18 years	\$26.74 million

November: Elliott Bay Design Group released the M/V GUEMES Ferry Replacement Plan.

- The report concluded that immediate or near-term replacement of the M/V GUEMES with a new vessel would minimize the overall cost of ownership and provide environmental improvements in operation.

2014 – ALL-ELECTRIC FERRY CONCEPT INTRODUCED

March: Skagit County Public Works was first contacted by EESImarine with an all-electric ferry concept for a potential replacement vessel.

November: EESImarine requested a formal meeting with Skagit County to present all-electric technology and introduce a potential funding mechanism through the Department of Commerce.

2015 – SKAGIT COUNTY RESEARCHED ELECTRIC TECHNOLOGY FOR VESSEL REPLACEMENT

January: EESImarine and team of naval architects, battery systems manufacturers and electric propulsion manufacturers met with Public Works to present the “EZEferry,” an all-electric, zero-emissions ferry.

- Brian Young, Clean Energy Sector Lead, Washington State Department of Commerce, introduced a potential funding mechanism through the Department. They are trying to generate interest in clean energy projects.

May: The world’s first all-electric vehicle and passenger ferry, the “Ampere,” entered service in Norway powered solely by battery packs and completely free of emissions.

September: EESImarine gave the “EZEferry” presentation to the Pacific Northwest Section of SNAME (Society of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers).

- The presentation was well received, and after this meeting, interest in the all-electric ferry concept grew.

October: The Guemes Island Ferry Committee asked the EESImarine team to give the “EZEferry” presentation at their quarterly meeting on Guemes Island.

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December: EESImarine & Art Anderson Associates gave an informational presentation to the Board of Skagit County Commissioners on the all-electric ferry concept, the “EZEferry.”

- At the presentation, the Washington State Department of Commerce encouraged Skagit County to apply for funding through Clean Energy Fund 2.

The Board of Skagit County Commissioners signed a resolution (R20150428) directing Public Works to conduct an all-electric feasibility analysis and pursue funding for vessel replacement.

2016 – ELECTRIC PROPULSION FEASIBILITY STUDY

January: Skagit County Public Works tasked Art Anderson Associates (on-call naval architecture and marine engineering firm) to conduct a propulsion/power feasibility study for all-electric propulsion for the Guemes Island Ferry route.

February: Skagit County applied for, and was denied eligibility, for the Washington State Department of Commerce Clean Energy Fund 2.

Ockerman Automation Consultants, in Anacortes, WA, and Siemens Industry contacted Skagit County to introduce their companies and provide Skagit County with information on the “Ampere” ferry project in Norway.

- Skagit County requested an informational presentation be given to the Board of Skagit County Commissioners for the purpose of discussing all-electric technology and the “Ampere.”

March: Public Works met with Guemes Island Ferry Committee to discuss the project.

April: Public Works met with Guemes Island Ferry Committee to discuss the project.

June: Art Anderson Associates presented the final Propulsion & Power Study to the Board of Skagit County Commissioners.

- The study concluded that, based on power requirements, all-electric propulsion is highly feasible, and should be considered, for the Guemes Island Ferry route.

Ockerman Automation Consultants and Siemens Industry presented their concept of an all-electric ferry to the Board of Skagit County Commissioners.

- In attendance were Guemes Islanders, ferry crew, representatives from PSE, Congressman Rick Larsen’s office, Senator Maria Cantwell’s office, and Lee Stole, reporter from KOMO-NEWS, who aired a television story about the all-electric ferry concept.

Public Works met with Guemes Island Ferry Committee to discuss the project.

October: Public Works met with Guemes Island Ferry Committee to discuss the project.

December: The Board of Skagit County Commissioners adopted the 2017 Skagit County budget which included \$165,000 for the Skagit County Ferry Replacement Design Studies.

2017 – DESIGN STUDIES, CONCEPT DESIGN & SEARCH FOR GRANT FUNDING

February: Skagit County issued a Request for Qualifications for naval architecture and marine engineering services for the Skagit County Ferry Replacement Project, Project #ESMVGUEMES.

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April: Skagit County requested a Call for Projects for the County Ferry Capital Improvement Program (CFCIP), administered by the County Road Administration Board (CRAB).

May: Public Works met with Guemes Island Ferry Committee to discuss the project.

August: Commissioners approved contract with Glosten for naval architecture and marine engineering services for the Skagit County Ferry Replacement Project.

Public Works held community meeting on Guemes Island to introduce Glosten and Phase I Scope of Work.

September: Public Works met with Guemes Island Ferry Committee to discuss the project.

October: Public Works met with Guemes Island Ferry Committee to discuss the project.

November: Held public forum on Guemes Island to discuss the project.

Public Works met with Guemes Island Ferry Committee to discuss the project.

December: CFCIP funding application, for \$7.5 - \$10 million, submitted to CRAB.

Design studies complete to include Capacity Study, Transportation System Assessment, Concept Design Report, preliminary cost estimates and concept structural and general arrangement drawings. By the end of 2017, concept design was complete.

2018– ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT, SEPA REVIEW & SEARCH FOR FUNDING

January: Public Works held public forum on Guemes Island to discuss the project.

February – July: BERK Consulting performed an Environmental Assessment & SEPA review for the Project.

February: WA State Capital funding requests submitted through the state legislature.

March: Public Works met with Guemes Island Ferry Committee to discuss the project.

April: CRAB approved Skagit County's funding request, at \$7.5 million (based on BCC preference for no ferry district), through the CFCIP; funding conditional upon the propulsion system being electric or plug-in hybrid and subject to legislative approval in 2019.

Public Works held public forum on Guemes Island to discuss the project.

May: Public Works met with Guemes Island Ferry Committee to discuss the project.

June: Board of Skagit Commissioners approved a Ferry Replacement Surcharge, effective August 1, 2018. Estimated annual revenue is \$235,000.

July: Skagit County submitted funding request for \$10 million through the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) program.

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Public Works held a partnership round table with local partners such as City of Anacortes, Dakota Creek, SCOG, Samish Indian Nation, PSE, Glosten, OPALCO, Berk Consulting, WSDOT, EDASC, WSDOT, and Guemes Island residents. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the project and ideas for how we can all work together.

September: Public Works met with Guemes Island Ferry Committee to discuss the project.

October: Skagit County presented the Ferry Replacement Project at the Infrastructure Assistance Coordinating Council (IACC) for feedback on possible funding sources for the project.

December: Skagit County was advised that the Project was not selected for BUILD funding.

2019– PRELIMINARY DESIGN EFFORTS & AGGRESSIVE SEARCH FOR FUNDING

January: Skagit County presented the Ferry Replacement Project to:

- Innovation Norway at the Port of Anacortes;
- Passenger Vessel Association (PVA) Annual Convention in New Orleans; and
- WA State Transportation Committee.

Public Works held public forum on Guemes Island to discuss the project.

February: Board of Commissioners decided on vessel size following a presentation by Public Works & Glosten. Commissioners elected to build a 28-car ferry. Following the meeting, Glosten started redesigning a 28-car ferry.

Skagit County hired BERK Consulting & KPFF Consulting Engineers for an operations & service analysis that considers current and future ferry service in preparation of a new vessel coming online in 2022.

Skagit County hired AHNE, PLLC, to provide lobbying services before the WA State Legislature to assist with matters related to funding the Ferry Replacement Project.

WA State Capital funding requests submitted through the state legislature.

March: Skagit County submitted \$10 million funding request for the Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) program.

April: Public Works met with Guemes Island Ferry Committee to discuss the project.

May: Governor Jay Inslee signed the state operating budget which authorized CFCIP funding in the amount of \$375,000 per year for 20 years for the Ferry Replacement Project. Skagit County was also authorized for \$1.5 million from the WA State Capital Construction Budget for the shore side charging infrastructure.

WSDOT authorized federal funding from the Ferry Boat Program (FBP) annual allocations (2015 through 2018) in the amount of \$1.12 million for project.

Skagit County presented the project to the Skagit Council of Government's (SCOG) Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). Funding request for \$500,000 from the Surface Transportation Block Grant was later denied.

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July: Skagit County submitted funding request for \$8.5 million for second round of BUILD funding.

Skagit County submitted funding request for \$10 million to the Public Works Trust Fund for a low interest loan program. That funding request was later denied.

Skagit County was advised that the project was not selected for INFRA grant funding.

Public Works held community meeting on Guemes Island to discuss the Ferry Replacement Project and the operations and service analysis with Glosten, BERK and KPFF.

August: Skagit County was advised that the project was not selected for funding through the Public Works Trust Fund.

September: Skagit County met with our local WSDOT team to discuss the project's unique challenges regarding complying with federal funding Buy America requirements.

Skagit County presented the project at the Pacific Maritime Magazine Conference in Seattle.

November: Skagit County was advised that the project was not selected for the second round of BUILD funding.

Skagit County presented the project at the Marine Log Ferries Conference in Ft. Lauderdale, FL.

Public Works held public forum on Guemes Island to discuss the operations & service analysis with BERK and KPFF; Glosten was in attendance to discuss the Ferry Replacement Project with folks after.

December: A hydrographic survey of the ferry terminals was performed by David Evans & Associates to determine the appropriate draft for the new vessel.

2020– FINALIZE PRELIMINARY DESIGN, RFIs & BEGIN CONTRACT DESIGN

January: David Evans & Associates submitted final hydrographic survey of ferry terminals and PND progressed terminal design to a preliminary level; awaiting information on the shore charging equipment before finalizing.

February: Skagit County de-obligated federal funding from the Ferry Boat Program due to a lack of additional federal grants and the cost to administer the Buy America requirements for the vessel battery-electric systems, many of which are not readily available in the U.S.

Public Works Staff met with state senators in Olympia. A marine battery tax exemption bill (HB 2486) was introduced; Skagit County worked with the state lobbyist and provided support for the bill. Representative Debra Lakanoff was the sponsor of the bill.

March: Glosten tasked with the Department of Commerce Electrification of Transportation Systems (ETS) grant program on behalf of Skagit County. Glosten and Skagit County worked to finalize RFI development.

April: RFIs finalized and prepared for release. Effort continued on the application for the Commerce ETS grant program, due June 1.

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Governor Inslee signed HB 2486 exempting marine battery sales and installations (both for vessel and on shore) from sales tax.

May: RFIs issued with a due date of June 30. Effort continued on application for the Commerce ETS grant program, due June 1.

June: Commerce ETS grant submitted June 1. Glosten managed the RFI effort and communication with participating vendors. Responses were due June 30, and Skagit County received responses from over 20 vendors around the world.

Skagit County was contacted by the Public Works Board about possible funding for shovel-ready projects. This inquiry resulted in the County being informed no funds were available.

July/August: RFI response evaluation, presentations and Q&A with Vendors.

Glosten continued work to finalize preliminary design for the vessel, shore side electrical and terminal improvements. Glosten drafted procurement method recommendations/strategies for consideration regarding how to procure shore-side electrical system, vessel battery system, automated charging plug, system integrator, and associated equipment and support.

September: Futureship, subcontracted by Glosten, conducted a hull optimization study. Study ran approximately 10,000 different hull configurations to achieve the most efficient hull model and reduce operating cost.

Procurement methodology discussion continued for electrical systems integrator.

October: Glosten submitted preliminary design deliverables and updated cost estimate; currently awaiting Skagit County review and comments.

December: WA Dept. of Commerce awarded \$989,521 for the shore side electrical systems and charging infrastructure. The grant requires a 1:1 local match.

2021– PERMITTING, ESI SELECTION & CONTRACT DESIGN

January: Preliminary design of the vessel was completed.

Internal discussions continued on procurement methodology. The project presents unique challenges; best value bidding (rather than an exemption to bidding) should be considered if available.

Glosten requested proposals for an Environmental Consulting firm for permitting the terminal improvements and the infrastructure necessary to support automated charging of the vessel.

February: Glosten selected Confluence Environmental Company to assist with permitting for the project. The permitting process begins.

Preliminary design of terminal improvements nearing completion.

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House Bill 1502 was introduced which would add a new section to RCW 36.32 allowing bests value bidding criteria to be considered by any county for the procurement and design of electric ferries.

Skagit County requested \$500,000 from the WA State Capital Construction budget and \$7,000,000 from the Transportation Budget to obtain remaining funding necessary to commit to the project's next phase (contract design and bidding).

March: Preliminary design of the shore side charging equipment and terminal upgrades was completed. Skagit County and Glosten present the preliminary design to BCC, which included a cost estimate of \$19.5M for the entire project and a timeline projecting the new vessel would enter service between Q4 2023 and Q4 2024.

April: Preliminary design reports for the project were released. These included:

- Preliminary Design Report
- Preliminary Vessel Cost Estimate
- Preliminary Shore Side Cost Estimate
- Shore Side Preliminary Design Drawings
- Preliminary Contingent Vessel Cost Estimate
- Additional Preliminary Design Documents

The Governor's budget included \$474,000 requested for the shore-side charging infrastructure for the project. It did not include \$7M requested for vessel construction.

May: Skagit County decided to pursue the U.S. DOT RAISE (Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity) grant, with a request for \$10.5M.

Skagit County presents the project to the Northsound Transportation Alliance.

House Bill 1502, allowing best-value bidding for counties building electric ferries, was signed by the Governor and will become law on July 24.

June: Skagit County presented the project to Senator Cantwell's office, with an event at the ferry terminal scheduled for July 6.

July: Senator Cantwell included the project in her requests for the THUD (Transportation, Housing, & Urban Development) bill.

House Bill 1502 became law, and Skagit County issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) to select an Electrical Systems Integrator for the project. Proposals due September 16, on which date nine proposals were received. There were three proposals from Canada, four from Europe, and two from the U.S.

Skagit County submitted the RAISE grant application for \$10.5M.

September: Senator Cantwell's office submitted \$2.5M for the project under the FTA, who communicated that Skagit County was not an eligible recipient of FTA funding.

Confluence Environmental held a permitting pre-application meeting with the City of Anacortes on September 16.

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October: Senator Cantwell's THUD bill awarded Skagit County \$2.5M through transit infrastructure grants. Because Skagit County was not an eligible FTA recipient, WSDOT kindly agreed to be the recipient of the award and administer it to the county.

November: The Skagit County Board of Commissioners signed Resolution R20210241, on November 29, designating selection of the electrical systems integrator for the project.

Skagit County was notified the project was not selected for the RAISE grant.

December: Public Works presented the Electrical Systems Integrator Selection process to the Board of Skagit County Commissioners.

2022– PERMITTING, GRANT FUNDING & CONTRACT DESIGN

January: The City of Anacortes hosted the first neighborhood meeting for the shoreline permit on January 6, 2022.

February: A funding request was submitted for the MOVE AHEAD WASHINGTON (MAWA) package for \$14M.

March: Skagit County was notified the WA State Legislature approved the MAWA package, which included \$14M for the project. This brought total grant funding received to date to \$24M, with an additional \$1M local match required.

March – May: Contract design of the vessel, with 90% plans and specifications delivered May 2022.

May – December: Skagit County review of plans and specifications. Public Works worked simultaneously to finalize grant contracts with WA Department of Commerce for the shore-side charging infrastructure and WSDOT for the MAWA funds for the vessel. Some design changes to the shoreside electrical system were needed to finalize specifications around shore side batteries versus vessel batteries.

2023– VESSEL BID PACKAGE & ONGOING PERMITTING

January – August: Vessel construction bid package preparation. A redesign of the ship's electrical system was required after learning in September that Spear, a company whose batteries were included in the ESI's proposal, went out of business.

September: Skagit County issued the bid package for vessel construction, with an engineer's cost estimate of \$19.5 – 22.M. Bids were due December 4. During the bid process, Addendum No. 3 rescheduled the bid opening date to December 18.

November: Glosten delivered 90% plans for shoreside infrastructure and terminal modifications.

December: A public bid opening was held on December 18, 2023, at 2:00 p.m., and two bids were received:

- | | |
|--|-----------------|
| • JT Marine Inc. | \$24,385,471.72 |
| • Ice Floe, LLC dba Nichols Brothers Boat Builders | \$22,898,450.53 |

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2024 – BID REJECTION, ONGOING PERMITTING

January: The Board of Skagit County Commissioners signed Resolution R20240013 on January 22 rejecting all bids for the Guemes Island Ferry Electric Ferry Project.

Initiative 2117 to repeal Washington's Climate Commitment Act (CCA) was introduced. Skagit County could have potentially lost \$14M previously awarded for the project had the CCA been repealed.

February: The county submitted a request for an additional \$10M for the project.

March: The final transportation budget included \$10M for the project, with the caveat it would not be available until the results of Initiative 2117 were known.

April – October: Permitting continues for compliance with federal, state, and local requirements, but the rest of the project was paused while Skagit County awaited the results of the initiative.

November: The initiative didn't pass, which brought total grant funding for the project to \$37M (not including the \$1M local match required).