

## Ferry Ridership Declines Continue

Ridership on the Washington State Ferries in the Puget Sound region decreased last year for the eighth time in nine years. The combined Puget Sound ferry ridership in 2008 was 20.4 million distributed over six auto-routes and one passenger-only route. This was about 730,000 fewer than 2007, a decrease of 3%.

Figure 1 shows 2008 ridership broken down by route and by rider type. The Bainbridge Island-Seattle route served the most riders by far with over 6 million. Edmonds-Kingston, Mukilteo-Clinton, Bainbridge-Seattle and Fauntleroy-Southworth-Vashon routes carried roughly the same amount of vehicles — between 1.7 and 2.1 million — but Bainbridge-Seattle had many more walk-ons. In fact, the Bainbridge-Seattle (approximately 3 million walk-ons) and Bremerton-Seattle (approximately 1.5 million walk-ons) routes represented almost 70% of all walk-ons since they link directly to the Seattle’s central business district with its high employment density and connecting transit infrastructure.

Figure 2 shows the total ridership by route as well as change from 2007. Edmonds-Kingston saw the greatest percentage decrease at 5%, followed closely by Point Defiance-Tahlequah. Bremerton-Seattle was the only route to gain riders, increasing by 1%. There was a noticeable shift from vehicles to walk-on. System-wide, riders who drove on decreased by 6% from 2007 to 2008 while those who walked on increased by 4%.

Figure 1. 2008 Daily Ferry Ridership, Persons

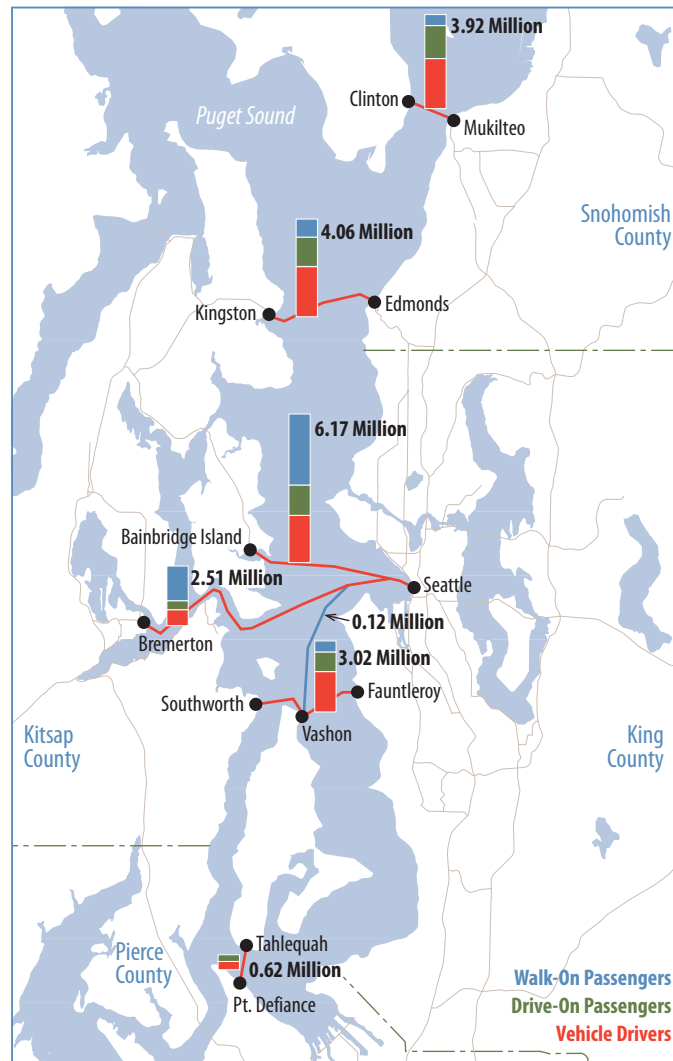
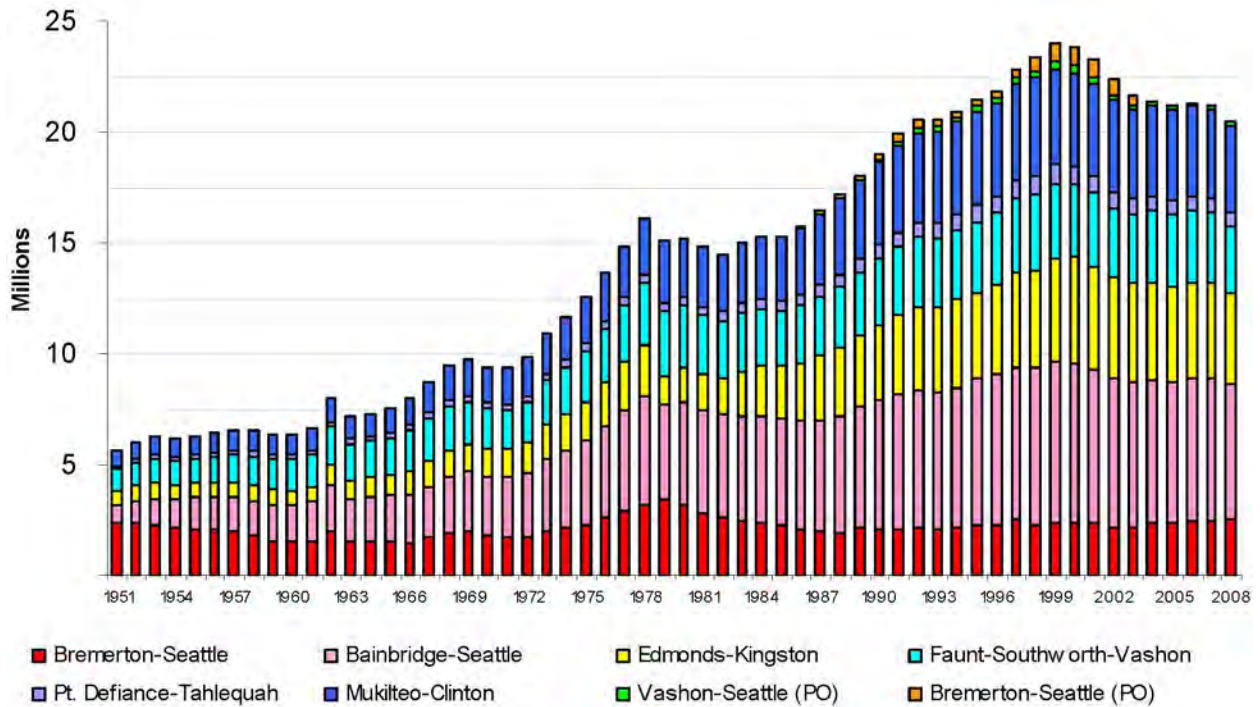


Figure 2. Ferry Ridership Change, 2007–2008

Ferry Route	2007	2008	Difference	% Difference
Bainbridge–Seattle	6,406,406	6,169,403	-237,003	-3.7%
Edmonds–Kingston	4,291,333	4,057,904	-233,429	-5.4%
Mukilteo–Clinton	4,032,624	3,915,274	-117,350	-2.9%
Fauntleroy–Vashon–Southworth	3,135,028	3,021,925	-113,103	-3.6%
Bremerton–Seattle	2,497,799	2,510,141	12,342	0.5%
Pt. Defiance–Tahlequah	652,317	617,424	-34,893	-5.3%
Vashon–Seattle Passenger Only	125,043	119,247	-5,796	-4.6%
All Puget Sound Ferries	21,140,550	20,411,318	-729,232	-3.4%

Historical ferry ridership growth from 1951 to 2008 is shown in Figure 3. Regional ridership peaked in 1999 at 24 million and has been decreasing gradually since then due to various factors including multiple fare increases, rising gas prices and the recent economic conditions. Certain other historical events can be observed in the ridership volume chart, notably the spike in ridership for the 1962 Seattle World’s Fair and the subsequent decline in ridership following the sinking of the Hood Canal Bridge in 1979.

Figure 3. Puget Sound Ferry Ridership, 1951–2008



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