

February 11, 2024

Governor Jay Inslee
Office of the Governor
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Representative Jake Fey
415 John L. O'Brien Building
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504

Senator Marko Lias
Chair, Transportation Committee
305 John A. Cherberg Building
PO Box 40421
Olympia, WA 98504

Representative Andrew Barkis
427A Legislative Building
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504

Senator Curtis King
Ranking Member, Transportation Committee
414 Legislative Building
PO Box 40414
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Governor Inslee, Chair Lias, Chair Fey, Ranking Member King and Ranking Member Barkis:

The Washington State Ferry system is in crisis. We are local elected officials from ferry communities across all corners of Puget Sound joining together to call upon state lawmakers to make robust investments in Washington State Ferries (WSF) to urgently restore full ferry system service.

Ferries are an essential part of our local communities. They bring tourists to our homegrown small businesses, hotels and restaurants. They transport our residents to life-saving medical appointments. They provide access to family and cultural connections. They get people to and from their jobs.

Right now, the Service Contingency Plan has the fleet operating at only 15 vessels, while WSF relays that 26 vessels are needed to operate at full service and allow for necessary planned maintenance. This drastic reduction in service is resulting in significant impacts on our residents and businesses who rely on ferry service.

We thank the Washington State Legislature for making investments in the ferry system in recent years to stabilize the ferry workforce and to preserve and maintain vessels. **We thank Governor Inslee for his leadership in continuing and enhancing these investments to address both long and short-term issues facing the WSF ferry system in the proposed supplemental transportation budget.** We fully support the investments in the Governor's budget, and we urge additional investments to address the immediate needs our communities are facing because of reduced service.

We recommend the following priorities to build and preserve vessels, ensure full staffing, and provide short-term solutions to address service gaps.

Vessel Construction, Preservation, and Electrification Five new hybrid-electric ferries must be built as quickly as possible to restore ferry fleet capacity and full system service. Adequate funding for preservation and maintenance of aging vessels must also be a budget priority to ensure existing vessels continue to operate to avoid further service interruptions. We also support resources to ensure vessel electric conversion and charging facilities to meet our state climate goals.

Workforce Development Retaining existing ferry crew, recruiting new staff and addressing upcoming retirements are vital to restoring and enhancing ferry service. We support the following workforce development initiatives:

- Provide training opportunities and scholarships to promote existing deck and engine room crew
- Add dispatch and vessel crew staff
- Create a new workforce development program in Kitsap County

Actions to Address Immediate Community Needs Supplementing WSF service with state-funded local options and exploring creative solutions to is necessary while ferry communities across the state wait for the ferry fleet to be fully restored. We recommend state funding to:

- Maintain Kitsap passenger-only ferry service
- Fund additional King County Water Taxi Service between Seattle and Vashon Island
- Continue Operate the San Juan Crew Shuttle
- Conduct studies of passenger-only service, the next class of ferry vessels and the economic impact of ferries on our local, regional and state economy

Action must be taken to preserve our marine highway system for our residents, businesses, and visitors. Please ensure ferries and ferry communities are a priority in the Transportation Budget.

Sincerely,

Counties

Island County

Commissioner Janet St. Clair

Jefferson County

Commissioner Kate Dean

Kitsap County

Commissioner Katie Walters
Commissioner Christine Rolfes

King County

Executive Dow Constantine
Councilmember Dave Upthegrove, Chair
Councilmemembr Teresa Mosqueda

Pierce County

Council Chair Ryan Mello

San Juan County

Council Chair Jane Fuller
Council Member Christine Minney
Council Member Cindy Wolf

Skagit County

Commissioner Lisa Janicki
Commissioner Peter Browning
Commissioner Ron Wesen

Snohomish County

Councilmember Megan Dunn

Cities

City of Anacortes

Councilmember Ryan Walters

City Of Bainbridge Island

Mayor Joe Deets

Deputy Mayor Jon Quitslund

Councilmember Ashley Mathews

City of Bremerton

Mayor Greg Wheeler

Councilmember Jane Rebelowski

Councilmember Jeff Coughlin

Councilmember Anna Mockler

Councilmember Michael Goodnow

City of Des Moines

Mayor Traci Buxton

Matt Mahoney

Ports

Port of Bremerton

Commissioner Cary Bozeman

Commissioner Axel Strakeljahn

Port of Port Townsend

Commissioner Carol Hasse

Port of Silverdale

Commissioner Caleb Reese

Town of Friday Harbor

Mayor Ray Jackson

City of Port Orchard

Mayor Rob Putaansuu

City of Poulsbo

Mayor Rebecca Erickson

Councilmember/Deputy Mayor Ed Stern

Council Member Gary McVey

City of Seattle

Mayor Bruce Harrell

Councilmember Rob Saka

Councilmember Robert Kettle

Public Utility Districts

Kitsap Public Utility District

Commissioner Debra Lester