

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 Liias  
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 Liias, 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 Charlotte Garrido

Commissioner Katie Walters

Commissioner Christine Rolfes

### **King County**

Executive Dow Constantine

Councilmember Dave Upthegrove, Chair

Councilmember Teresa Mosqueda

### **Pierce County**

Council Chair Ryan Mello

### **San Juan County**

Council Chair Jane Fuller

Councilmember Christine Minney

Councilmember Cindy Wolf

### **Skagit County**

Commissioner Lisa Janicki

Commissioner Peter Browning

Commissioner Ron Wesen

### **Snohomish County**

Councilmember Megan Dunn

## **Cities**

### **City of Anacortes**

Councilmember Christine Cleland-McGrath  
Councilmember TJ Fantini  
Councilmember Carolyn Moulton  
Councilmember Ryan Walters

### **City Of Bainbridge Island**

Mayor Joe Deets  
Deputy Mayor Jon Quitslund  
Councilmember Ashley Mathews

### **City of Bremerton**

Mayor Greg Wheeler  
Councilmember Jennifer Chamberlin  
Councilmember Jeff Coughlin  
Councilmember Michael Goodnow  
Councilmember Anna Mockler  
Councilmember Jane Rebelowski

### **City of Des Moines**

Mayor Traci Buxton  
Councilmember 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  
Commissioner Rick Slate

### **Town of Friday Harbor**

Mayor Ray Jackson

### **City of Port Orchard**

Mayor Rob Putaansuu

### **City of Port Townsend**

Mayor David J. Faber  
Deputy Mayor Amy Howard  
Councilmember Owen Rowe  
Councilmember Ben Thomas

### **City of Poulsbo**

Mayor Rebecca Erickson  
Councilmember/Deputy Mayor Ed Stern  
Councilmember Gary McVey

### **City of Seattle**

Mayor Bruce Harrell  
Councilmember Rob Saka  
Councilmember Robert Kettle

## **Public Utility Districts**

### **Kitsap Public Utility District**

Commissioner Debra Lester