

Ferry Ridership in the Central Puget Sound Region

Ridership on state and county ferries continues to grow in the central Puget Sound region.

Annual ridership on the Washington State Ferries (WSF) in the region increased by 1% in 2017 compared to the previous year.

This growth in ridership, while smaller than prior years, continues the trend of straight annual increases seen in the last five years.

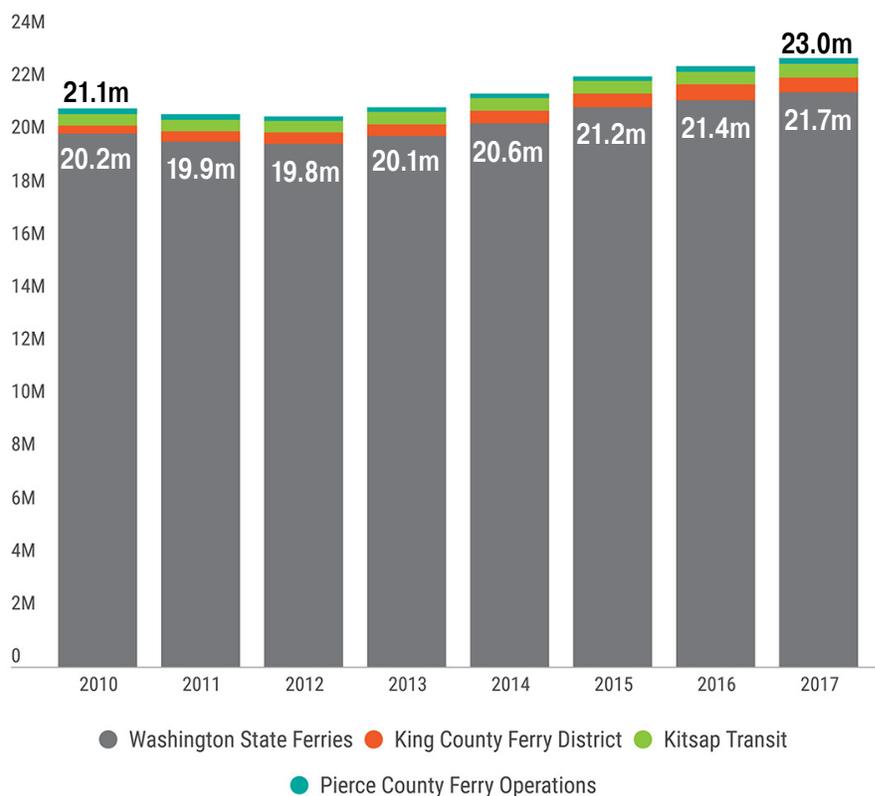
Ridership grew on each of the six WSF auto-routes from 2016 to 2017. The largest increase in ridership was seen on Pt. Defiance-Tahlequah route, with a 4% increase in 2017 compared to 2016.

The Bainbridge-Seattle route continues to be the busiest, accounting for 30% of WSF ridership in the central Puget Sound region in 2017.

Ferry ridership on county-provided routes has experienced strong growth as well.

Since 2010, ridership on all county-provided ferry services has increased 38%. To meet growing demand, county-level operators have increased service frequency and, in some cases, have launched new services (such as Kitsap Transit's Bremerton to Seattle fast ferry service). Pierce County saw the largest annual increase in ridership on county-provided services, with an 8% increase in ridership in 2017 compared to 2016.

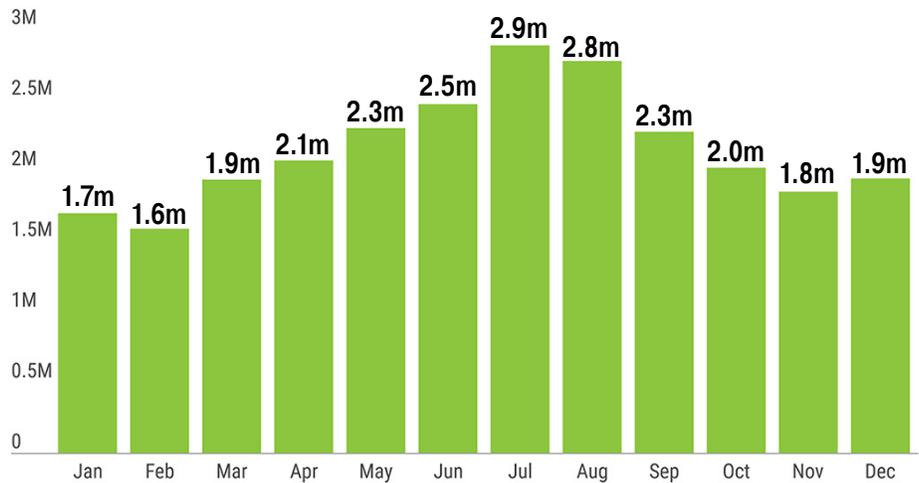
Ferry Ridership in the Central Puget Sound Region, 2010-2017



Ridership is highest during the summer

Ridership on the ferry system mixes commuters and recreational travelers. Ridership varies by month and by route but, in general, the highest ridership months for the ferry system are June through August. In 2017, ferry ridership between June through August accounted for over 30% of the total ridership on the system.

Monthly Ferry Ridership, 2017

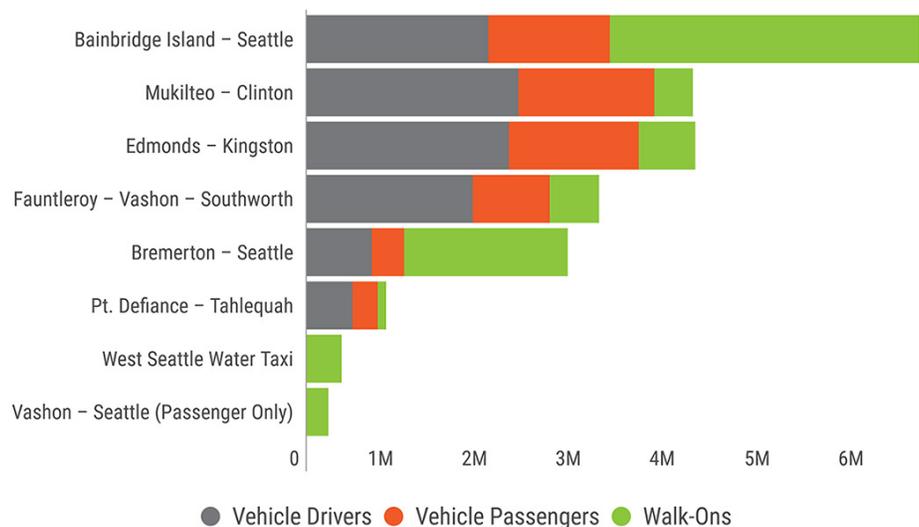


Share of walk-on and auto passengers varies by route

Walk-on passenger volumes vary greatly by route. The two routes with the largest walk-on volumes serve Colman Dock in Downtown Seattle from Bremerton and Bainbridge Island. Bainbridge Island carried over 3 million walk-on passengers in 2017, approximately 51% of its total ridership. The Bremerton route carried over 1.7 million walk-on passengers, 63% of its total ridership. Walk-on trips made up roughly 10-17% of the total annual ridership for the remaining Washington state ferry routes. Approximately 33% of all ferry passengers in the Puget Sound region were walk-on passengers in 2017.

Ferry service between Mukilteo and Clinton (Whidbey Island) carried more vehicles in 2017 than any other route, followed closely by the Edmonds-Kingston route. In all, 90% of the total passengers on the Mukilteo-Clinton route accessed the ferry by automobile, the highest share of vehicle access in the system.

Access Mode to Ferries, 2017



What's Next?

Ferry routes will continue to connect the communities across the Puget Sound and are a critical link between people and the services they need. The more recent growth in both the supply and demand for passenger-only ferry service will be important to understand as the region continues to grow.

In this context, Washington State Ferries is currently finalizing its long-range plan to better understand and plan for the ferry system's changing needs through 2040. More details on this plan are available here: <https://www.wsdot.wa.gov/ferries/planning/long-range-plan/the-plan>.

Data sources: Washington State Ferries, FTA National Transit Database