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## Shilshole ferry may get trial in 2009 or 2010

By Michael Harthorne

The King County Ferry District is looking at a number of possible new routes for water taxis, including one that would run from Shilshole in Ballard to downtown, for trial runs in the next two years.

The goal is to have the Ballard route ready for demonstration in summer 2009, but it may be pushed back to summer 2010 said Kjris Lund, executive director of the King County Ferry District.

Lund said the district wants to make sure everything is set up well on the land-side of the project, such as how riders will get to and from the ferry's launching point in Ballard, before the route is made operational.

"We're making sure as we plan the system, we're planning it smart," she said.

One concern with the Ballard route is that its location at Shilshole would place it far away from the majority of Ballard residents with minimal bus service to accommodate them.

Lund said the goal is not to have ferry users drive to Shilshole to use the ferry, and she is advocating the creation of new bus and shuttle services to Shilshole, which the ferry district has funding for.

The new ferry route would likely take just as long as a bus trip to downtown from Ballard and would cost a bit more, \$3 one way, but it would also have an "it factor" that would attract more riders, Lund said.

"Advantages would be that it encourages more people to use mass transit to get to work," she said. "There are a lot of people who use the bus and like the bus, but there are people who don't. This could be an alternative to that."

The Elliott Bay Water Taxi, on which the Ballard ferry would be based, started 10 years ago connecting West Seattle to downtown and has been growing ever since.

Ridership of the Elliott Bay Water Taxi increased by 15 percent from 2007 to 2008 and has grown by 70 percent in the past five years Lund said.

Like the Water Taxi, the Ballard ferry would start operations during commuting hours and slowly add more trips based on its success.

Other possible new routes are planned for Renton, Kirkland, Des Moines and Kenmore. The goal of these new ferry routes is to expand the transit options of residents in King County, Lund said.

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