



Nov. 13, 2007

## **Ferry District adopts work plan and funding for Vashon ferry, Water Taxi, and 5 demonstration routes across Lake Washington and Puget Sound**

**Nearly a century after a “Mosquito Fleet” of small boats linked the communities that ring Lake Washington and Puget Sound, the Board of the King County Ferry District today adopted a 2008 work plan, budget, and funding for operation of Vashon passenger-only ferry service, year-round operation of the popular Water Taxi, and five demonstration routes crossing those same bodies of water.**

“The Elliott Bay Water Taxi and the Vashon passenger-only ferry are proven successes, taking cars off our roads and giving commuters better choices to get where they need to go,” said Board member [Dow Constantine](http://www.kingcounty.gov/constantine) (<http://www.kingcounty.gov/constantine>). “I am pleased that we have secured a stable funding source to keep these vital services going—and I’m excited about the opportunity to expand that success throughout the county.”

“Passenger ferries will play a critical role in our economic infrastructure, linking our major employment centers in the event of natural disasters and other disruptions to our transportation network,” said Board vice-chair [Jane Hague](http://www.kingcounty.gov/hague) (<http://www.kingcounty.gov/hague>).

The state Legislature in 2003 authorized counties to create local ferry districts whose sole source of revenue is a property tax assessment. Eighteen speakers testified at a public hearing Nov. 8 in favor of the District’s funding plan, proposed by County Executive Ron Sims as a levy of 5.5 cents per thousand dollars of assessed valuation per year. The Ferry District Board today adopted that plan, which will generate \$18.3 million per year to fund:

- **Passenger-only ferry service linking downtown Seattle with Vashon Island.** Washington State Ferries currently operates the Vashon passenger-only ferry, but the Legislature in 2006 voted to end state funding for passenger-only ferries on June 30, 2007. The Legislature agreed to extend the Vashon service if King County would assume financial responsibility for the Vashon ferry by July 1, 2008, and assume full operation of the route in July 2009.
- **Year-round operation of the Elliott Bay Water Taxi** linking downtown and West Seattle, starting by 2010.
- **Five future demonstration routes** linking Seattle with the local shoreline communities of Kirkland/Eastside, Kenmore/North Lake Washington, Shilshole/North Puget Sound, Renton/South Lake Washington, and Des Moines/South Puget Sound, with funding sufficient to turn successful demonstrations into permanent routes.

All routes will be supported by shuttle services to deliver commuters to docks and connect them with park-and-ride lots and other modes of transportation.

“Several of the proposed projects this levy will support could have a profound impact on the communities I represent on the ferry board, said Board Chair [Larry Gossett](http://www.kingcounty.gov/gossett) (<http://www.kingcounty.gov/gossett>). “From the University of Washington south to SR-520, I-90 and the neighborhoods that border Renton, there are thousands of commuters who would benefit from leaving their car at home and taking a ferry or water taxi.”

“Providing convenient alternatives to the single occupancy vehicle commute is vital for congestion relief,” said Board member [Larry Phillips](http://www.kingcounty.gov/phillips) (<http://www.kingcounty.gov/phillips>). “Our new passenger only ferries will provide an important step forward in giving commuters choices. The Shilshole demonstration route in particular will provide commuting relief to Seattle residents, especially during viaduct demolition.”

“We are all tired of struggling through traffic on our region’s most congested roads, like SR 520, I-405 and I-5,” said Board member [Julia Patterson](http://www.kingcounty.gov/patterson) (<http://www.kingcounty.gov/patterson>). “Ferry service provides one more transportation option that is reliable, on time, and faster than getting in your car.”

“The Ferry District will allow North County residents to commute to Seattle on the open water of Lake Washington without the hassle of being stuck on traffic on SR 522,” said Board member [Bob Ferguson](http://www.kingcounty.gov/ferguson) (<http://www.kingcounty.gov/ferguson>).

Former Port of Seattle Commissioner Jack Block, Sr., at Thursday’s public hearing credited the District with “a strong and a bold move to advocate the rebirth of the Mosquito Fleet.” Officials from the cities of Kenmore, Des Moines, and Renton testified they are eager to participate in demonstration routes. Patti Mullen, executive director of the West Seattle Chamber of Commerce, applauded the concept of year-round Water Taxi service, saying, “The Elliott Bay Water Taxi will be providing the community with a gift — the gift of a reasonable commute.”

The Metropolitan King County Council created the [King County Ferry District](http://www.metrokc.gov/council/ferry_district.aspx) ([http://www.metrokc.gov/council/ferry\\_district.aspx](http://www.metrokc.gov/council/ferry_district.aspx)) on April 30 to expand transportation options for county residents through provision of waterborne transit services. All 9 members of the County Council sit as the Ferry District Board.