

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Background

What is the King County Ferry District?

The King County Ferry District is an independent government agency created to expand transportation options through water taxi services. King County Council members are the Ferry District Board of Supervisors.

The Ferry District funds and oversees the operations of two existing routes under the name King County Water Taxi, and is implementing demonstration routes in other King County communities. The Ferry District contracts with public and private agencies for operations; these partners currently include the King County Marine Division, Washington State Ferries and Argosy Cruises.

Why was the King County Ferry District created?

The King County Ferry District was created to develop and oversee water taxi service to provide more transportation options. Water taxis (sometimes called “passenger or foot ferries”) can play an important role in helping to relieve traffic congestion while reducing harmful greenhouse gas emissions. When major construction begins on the Alaskan Way Viaduct and State Route 520, these transit services will provide valuable travel alternatives to thousands of passengers.

Water taxis can also promote economic development and provide tourism opportunities. And, they can provide an alternative mode of transportation when weather shuts down major thoroughfares, such as during the record snowfall that pummeled the Puget Sound region during December 2008 and the heavy rainstorms that flooded highways only weeks later. Finally, water taxis have served major roles in disaster relief. Water taxis played a critical role in the evacuation of the downtown Manhattan area on 9/11 and continued to move commuters to and

How do I get information about the King County Ferry District?

Find out more about the King County Ferry District:

www.kingcountyferries.org

info@kingcountyferries.org

Phone: 206.296.1020

from Manhattan until the subway was repaired and service restored. They also rescued people from the Hudson River when a commercial airplane carrying 155 passengers was forced to make an emergency landing in the river.

How is the King County Ferry District funded?

The King County Ferry District is funded by 5.5 cent (per \$1,000 assessed value) property tax which was levied beginning January 1, 2008 to fund ferry-related service and capital projects. This amounts to approximately \$22 per year for a \$400,000 home. The state passenger ferry account, federal grants, passenger fares, advertising and other promotional activities provide additional revenue.

What is the King County Water Taxi?

"King County Water Taxi" is the name for the services provided by the King County Ferry District. King County Water Taxi services currently include:

- Water taxi service between West Seattle and Downtown Seattle
- Water taxi service between Vashon Island and Downtown Seattle

Free transit shuttles (routes 773 and 775) in West Seattle. Plans are underway to enhance transit connections to Vashon Island.

The King County Water Taxi is also implementing demonstration services to other communities in King County (see future service below).

Operations

Where do King County Water Taxis operate?

The King County Ferry District currently operates two routes:

King County Water Taxi: West Seattle/Downtown Seattle route

King County Water Taxi 2009 service between West Seattle (Seacrest Park) and downtown Seattle (Pier 55) runs April 5 through October 31, 2009. Year-round service is scheduled to begin in 2010. The service provided on this route was previously referred to as the Elliott Bay Water Taxi.

King County Water Taxi: Vashon Island/Downtown Seattle route

When the Washington State Legislature cut funding for passenger ferry service, the King County Ferry District stepped in to ensure passenger ferry service continued between Vashon Island (Vashon Ferry Terminal) and downtown Seattle (Pier 50).

The Ferry District is also implementing demonstration routes to other King County communities. (See future service below.)

Will there be schedule changes to the King County Water Taxi's West Seattle and Vashon routes?

The King County Ferry District is planning for year-round service on the West Seattle/Downtown Seattle route in 2010. The Ferry District is also exploring the feasibility and cost effectiveness of adding an additional trip in each direction during the peak travel periods, and options for periodic weekend and special events service for the Vashon Island/Downtown Seattle route.

What types of vessels will be used on the routes?

The King County Water Taxi (the "Sightseer") currently used on the West Seattle/Downtown Seattle route is a two-deck vessel with a passenger capacity of 250.

The Vashon Island/Downtown Seattle route utilizes the 250-passenger, single-deck, mono-hull vessels "Skagit" and "Kalama".

The vessels currently in operation have accessible restrooms, adequate shelter and wheelchair tie-downs as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). However, access from street level to vessel decks for passenger ferries may still be a challenge for some customers because boat ramps providing deck access can be dramatically affected by tides. Please ask for assistance or call (206) 623-1445 ahead for tidal information.

The King County Ferry District is currently reviewing competitive bids and plans to lease up to three new vessels. One would serve the Vashon/Downtown Seattle route, one for the West Seattle/Downtown Seattle route and one as a standby vessel. The new leased vessels are expected to begin serving the Vashon/Downtown Seattle route the summer of 2009 and the West Seattle/Downtown Seattle route in 2010. The Ferry District plans to eventually purchase new vessels for operation on these routes and future routes as approved by the Ferry District Board of Supervisors.

How will the water taxis be maintained?

Vessel maintenance will be conducted with an eye toward safety, cleanliness and convenience for passengers. Maintenance is currently included as part of the service agreements with operators. In 2009, vessel maintenance for the Vashon/Downtown Seattle passenger service will be managed by the King County Department of Transportation, Marine Division, through a combination of in-house and contracted maintenance support.

How much will it cost to ride a water taxi?

The King County Ferry District annually adjusts Water Taxi fares. Fares vary depending on the route and type of customer. The King County Water Taxi will participate in regional fare integration initiatives whenever possible.

King County Water Taxi: West Seattle/Downtown Seattle route:

- Full fare is \$3.00 (one-way)

- Fare with a valid Metro transfer is \$1.00
- Children age 5 and under ride free
- PugetPass, ORCA transit pass and e-purse, Regional Reduced Fare Permit, U-Pass, and Saturday/Sunday Day Pass are accepted
- Boarding is on a first come, first serve basis. No advanced ticket sales are available.

King County Water Taxi: Vashon/Downtown Seattle route:

- Full fare is \$8.70 round trip. (Fares are collected at Seattle; no fares are collected at Vashon.)
- Commuter 10-round trip card is \$73.60.
- Monthly passes for 31 round trips is \$117.80.
- Senior (\$4.35/round trip) and youth (age 6-18; \$7.40/round trip) discounts are available.
- Children age 6 and under ride free.
- ORCA transit pass and e-purse are accepted
- Tickets are available at terminals or advance ticket purchases are available online at www.wsdot.wa.gov/ferries/wave2go up to seven days prior to travel.

Do fares cover the operating costs of the water taxis?

Fares covered about 39 percent of the operating cost of the West Seattle/Downtown Seattle route in 2008. The remaining costs are covered through a county-wide property tax levy (5.5 cents per 1,000 assessed value), the state passenger ferry account and federal grants. It is anticipated that fares collected on the Vashon/Downtown Seattle route will cover about 20 percent of the operating cost under the service contract with Washington State Ferries.

How often will the water taxis operate?

Service on the King County Water Taxi's Vashon/Downtown Seattle route includes two weekday trips in each direction during morning and evening commuting periods. For detailed schedule information visit:

<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/ferries/schedules/upcoming/index.cfm?route=sea-vapo>

Service on the King County Water Taxi's West Seattle/Downtown Seattle route is provided seven days a week, April through October. The 2009 sailing season will begin on April 5th and end on October 31st. For additional information, visit the King County Department of Transportation, Marine Division website:

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/transportation/kcdot/Marine.aspx>

Will parking be available?

There is no on-site parking available near any of the terminals, but free shuttle service or connections to landside transit are available.

Free shuttle services (Routes 773 and 775) are provided in West Seattle between Seacrest Dock and the Admiral District, Alki Point and West Seattle Junction. There is also limited on-street parking adjacent to the Seacrest Dock. In downtown Seattle, short and long-term paid parking is available near Pier 55 in the vicinity of Spring Street.

For the Vashon/Downtown Seattle route, parking is available about one block away from the terminal, and park-and-ride lots are available on Vashon Island for the convenience of passengers. On the Seattle side, there are short and long-term paid parking available near Colman Dock.

Will the water taxis be coordinated with bus service?

Free shuttle service is available to King County Water Taxi riders in West Seattle. The King County Ferry District is planning future routes which will also include free shuttle service to connect riders to landside transit destinations.

The Ferry District works closely with King County Metro to coordinate schedules. In 2009, the King County Water Taxi will accept PugetPass, ORCA transit pass and e-purse, Regional Reduced Fare Permit, U-Pass, and Saturday/Sunday Day Passes.

Can I bring my bike on the ferry?

Bikes are allowed on-board both routes. There is a \$1 surcharge for Vashon riders bringing their bikes on-board.

Where can I get information about operations, schedules, parking, etc?

Information about the King County Water Taxi is available here:
<http://www.kingcounty.gov/transportation/kcdot/Marine.aspx>

For information about the King County Ferry District and the proposed demonstration routes:
<http://www.kingcountyferries.org>

Future Service

What are demonstration routes?

In addition to the King County Water Taxi's Vashon and West Seattle services, the King County Ferry District is implementing up to five future demonstration routes, with sufficient funding to convert these demonstration routes into permanent service. Routes include:

- Kenmore/Seattle
- Kirkland/Seattle
- Renton/Seattle
- Ballard (Shilshole)/Seattle
- Des Moines/Seattle

During the demonstration phase, each of the routes will be operated for a two-year period, with a third year for transition for those routes designated to become permanent as determined by the Ferry District Board.

How will the demonstration routes be chosen?

Routes will be determined by the King County Ferry District Board of Supervisors.

When will the demonstration routes be operating?

Technical analysis and community involvement for the new demonstration routes is currently underway, with service scheduled to begin in 2010.

Will the demonstration routes become permanent?

Each route will operate for a two-year period to assess performance and other operational factors prior to making decisions about permanent service.

How do I provide comments about route selection, vessel selection, schedules or passenger amenities?

Public and community involvement planning is underway. Please regularly visit the website at www.kingcountyferries.org to learn about opportunities for public input and to sign up to be on the mailing list.