

PUGET SOUND REGIONAL COUNCIL PRIORITY PROJECT LIST

NARRATIVE PROJECT INFORMATION - October 2011

Project Sponsor: *King County Marine Division, operator of the King County Water Taxi
On behalf of the King County Ferry District*

Project Name: *Downtown Seattle Passenger Only Ferry Terminal*

Project Location: *Seattle Waterfront*

What type of project is it: Support Centers X Corridors Serving Centers

Plan Consistency:

- Transportation 2040 project number: _____
- Is the project consistent with the Transportation 2040: Yes X No

• **Project Description -**

On behalf of the King County Ferry District and other regional passenger-only ferry service providers, King County is presenting this project to support the design and construction of a new downtown Seattle passenger-only ferry service permanent shoreside facility. This project would be an appropriate addition to the ten year list of priorities being submitted for consideration of possible future funding by the Governor's Connecting Washington Task Force.

As a leader in regional passenger-only ferry operations, the King County Marine Division presently operates two year-round water taxi routes from downtown Seattle - West Seattle and Vashon Island. The Vashon Island route provides weekday commuter service, while the West Seattle route provides all-day, seven day a week service during the months of April through October and commuter service during the winter months. In the King County Ferry District's second year of year-round ferry service, system wide ridership has shown year-to-date growth between 2010 and 2011 of 17.5%, with projected ridership to top 370,000 for the year.

The downtown Seattle passenger-only ferry facility would provide a permanent home to the King County Water Taxi and would represent a central hub for regional passenger-only ferry operations, connecting other Puget Sound communities with the Seattle central business district. This terminal would support the expansion of passenger-only ferry operations and take advantage of the regional waterways that we are blessed with in the Puget Sound area. Other operators currently serving, or planning to serve, the area include the: Port of Kingston's SoundRunner ferry, Kitsap Transit's passenger-only fast ferry, and Port Townsend's vessel; all which use, or plan to use, the downtown Seattle docking facilities in the next two years.

The establishment of a central Seattle waterfront home, or passenger hub, for multiple ferry systems would connect many diverse regional riders with employment opportunities and provide transit connections in downtown Seattle. This facility would directly support the establishment of a waterborne mass transit system as a viable alternative mode of transportation, contributing

to road congestion mitigation. It would enhance the goal of regional mobility and further the high quality of life in the Puget Sound area, consistent with ideals of Transportation 2040.

Passenger-only ferry systems supported by an efficient passenger terminal hub on the Seattle waterfront would allow more residents of serviced communities to consider ferries to downtown Seattle a realistic, environmentally friendly option for commuting to work as the transport time over water is greatly reduced over car ferry and car ferry/bus connections. The facility would represent a hub for land-based transportation connections, further expanding the rider's options for potential employment. The facility would also promote the flow of local tourism from the waterfront to regional destinations, with tourists utilizing the ferry systems to explore serviced communities, adding tourism revenue and additional jobs.

Although passenger-only ferry operations are currently using the facility located at Pier 50, which is leased from Washington State Ferries, this facility does not represent a long-term solution. It does not have the needed capacity or flexibility to accommodate a robust passenger-only ferry system, plus Washington State Ferries has design plans that would eliminate this facility as part of their Terminal Preservation Project starting in 2015. The project would align with the Seattle waterfront project and provide a regional hub on the Seattle waterfront with growth opportunities.

Passenger-only ferries provide an efficient means of commuting and encourage enhanced opportunities for active transportation such as bicycling as well. Ferries typically promote the use of bicycles, with existing leased vessels having a capacity of eighteen bikes per vessel per sailing. Existing King County service encourages tourists and downtown residents to walk or bike and explore the beaches of Alki or the rural roadways of Vashon Island.

Accessibility and mobility represent an increasingly vital area that passenger-only ferries and a new downtown Seattle facility would address. With the Alaskan Way Viaduct closure and demolition looming, West Seattle and Vashon Island residents need permanent and efficient transit alternatives to present choices and help get riders to work circumventing the growing congestion through Fauntleroy, West Seattle, and the West Seattle Bridge. This is not only a short term challenge, as the elimination of the Viaduct will forever change the traffic flow through this area. The downtown Seattle facility would create a seamless multi-modal transportation system that would support the efficient and free movement of passengers.

Project Status & Timeline

The downtown Seattle passenger-only ferry facility project is in its planning stages, with consultants to the King County Ferry District preparing a scope of work to study alternative locations, ridership forecasts, and operational and environmental options. This planning effort must necessarily align with the Seattle waterfront initiatives. When funded, construction could start within the next three years.

While this project is not specifically listed in Transportation 2040, it is consistent with the concepts related to passenger-only ferries contained therein, supporting regional growth opportunities and offering efficient alternatives to present commuting options.

Additional Comments- N/A