

BACKGROUND

1. INTRODUCTION

This Draft Long-Range Plan (Draft Plan) is intended to guide WSDOT Ferries Division (WSF) future service and investment decisions through the year 2030. Developed with extensive input from the public as well as stakeholder groups, the Plan outlines service options and corresponding funding plans that will allow WSF to provide sustainable ferry service in the Puget Sound area. This is a Draft Plan for public review and comment (see side note). The Plan comes in two pieces:

- The document you are reading is a Draft Long-Range Plan that presents key findings and the draft action plan.
- Technical Appendices present additional detailed backup for the Draft Plan and supporting information.

The WSF Draft Long-Range Plan responds to specific legislative direction, and when complete will become a part of the Washington State Transportation Plan (WTP). The WTP is required by state and federal law and forms the basis for setting the state transportation system's investment priorities.

This Draft Long-Range Plan is organized into the following major sections:

1. Background
2. Our Customers: Ridership and Demand
3. Customer Service: Level of Service Standards
4. Operations: Adaptive Management Strategies
5. Draft Long-Range Plan
6. Environmental Considerations
7. Next Steps

1.1 WSDOT Ferries Division (Washington State Ferries/WSF)

Since its creation in 1951, WSF has become the largest ferry system in the nation. Over 23 million people currently ride on WSF annually. WSF operates 22 vessels and 20 ferry terminals throughout Puget Sound, from Point Defiance in the south to Sidney, B.C. in the north (see Exhibit 1). Commuters, employers, students, commercial shippers, and tourists all count on WSF for safe, reliable transportation across the Puget Sound.

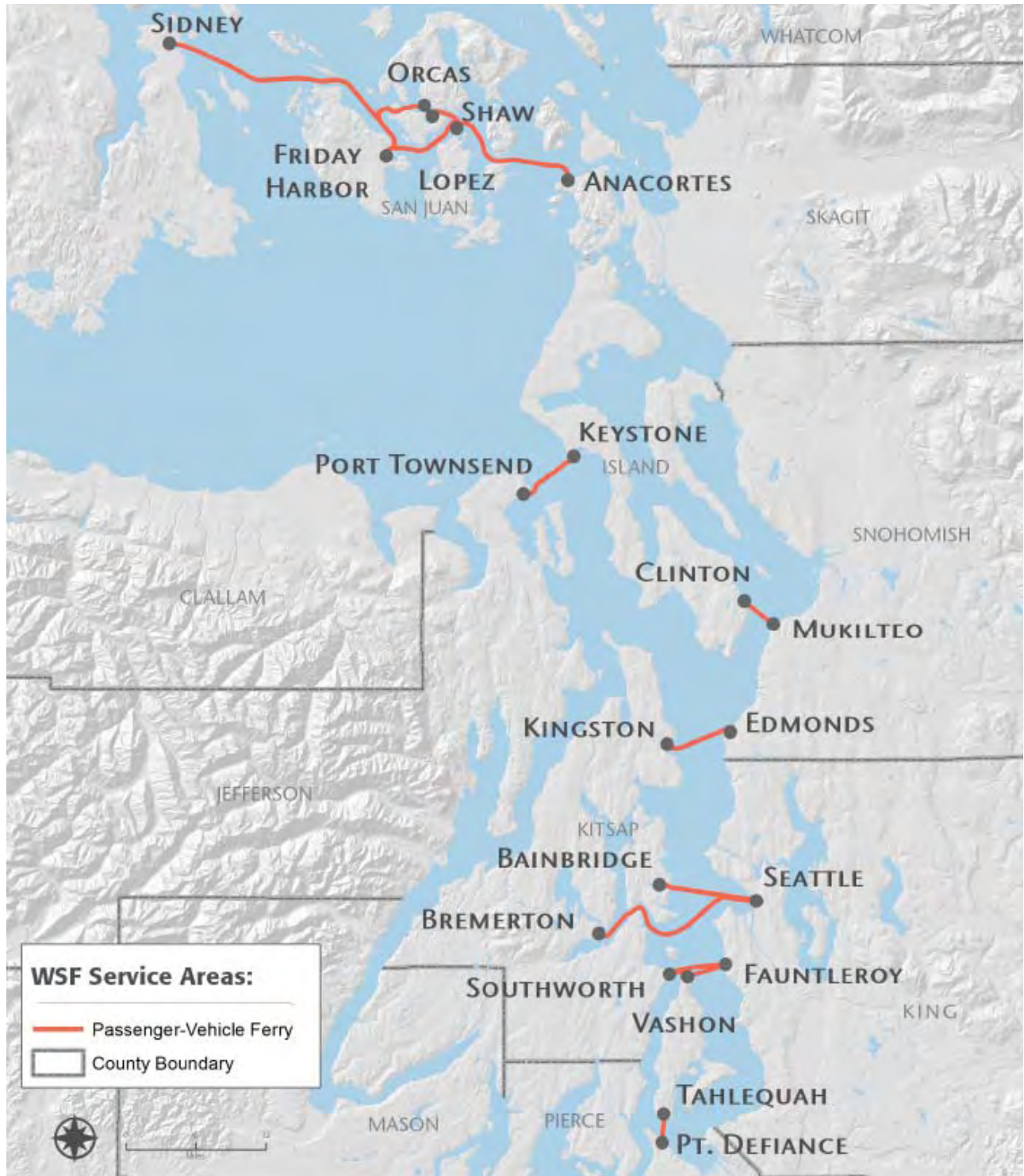
Is this the Final Plan?

No, this is the Draft version of the WSF 2030 Long-Range Plan. It was released for public comment on December 19, 2008. A final version of this Plan will be presented to the Legislature on January 31, 2009, following a public comment period that will include a series of public hearings.

Information on meeting times and locations as well as summary materials can be found online at <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/ferries/planning/ESHB2358.htm> or by calling 206-515-3411.



Exhibit 1
Ferry System Service Area and Routes



As part of the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), WSF serves two primary transportation functions.

Marine highway. WSF is an essential part of the highway network in Western Washington. Its 200 miles of marine highway provide links between urban areas on the east side of Puget Sound, growing communities on the Kitsap Peninsula, and more rural destinations on the Olympic Peninsula and the San Juan Islands. For communities on Vashon Island and the San Juan Islands, WSF is the only link to the mainland for personal and commercial vehicles.

That commercial vehicle connection is essential; Vashon and San Juan Island communities depend on ferries to transport goods—including basic supplies and local products—to and from the wider market. WSF makes special efforts to support commercial traffic.

Transit service provider. Ferries are also high-capacity people movers. WSF is the second largest transit system in Washington State, behind King County Metro. Ferry terminals connect passengers to many modes of transportation besides personal driving, including pedestrian, bicycle, vanpool, bus, trolley, and commuter rail.

1.2 Purpose of the Long-Range Plan

WSF is releasing this Draft Long-Range Plan at an historic point in Washington's marine transportation. The culmination of new legislative direction, new leadership, and new information about ferry system customers provides a unique opportunity to set an entirely new direction for the ferry system.

The goal of this Draft Long-Range Plan is to assess the needs of ferry customers and develop a service and capital program that is responsive to those needs, while providing policy makers with the right information to develop a long-term solution that addresses WSF's financial sustainability.

To meet this goal, the Draft Plan must respond to the legislative direction and identify service adjustments and demand management strategies that allow WSF to respond to growth in demand while ensuring that the State's assets are utilized to their fullest.

In the 2007 legislative session, the Legislature passed Engrossed Substitute House Bill (ESHB) 2358 and its biennial transportation budget, which contained specific policy and operational directives related to how WSF is currently providing service and how it should be planning to meet the needs of ferry communities in the future.



A number of the specific tasks called out in ESHB 2358 required WSF to take a fresh look at how ferry services might be delivered in order to support current and future customers, while recognizing the State's significant financial challenges.

Given the current economic conditions and the scale of the funding needs that the State is facing in the highway program, in addition to the continuing ferry needs, it became clear that it would also be necessary to consider the implications of a future where state funding could not realistically keep up with the needs of the ferry system.

As a result of these challenges, this Draft Plan puts forward two different visions of a future for WSF for consideration:

1. Plan A. This option assumes that the State will continue in its current role as owner, operator, and principal funder of ferry services in the Puget Sound region. Current level of service remains with operational strategies implemented over time and several new vessels coming online. This plan contains a significant budget shortfall that will require new revenues.
2. Plan B. This option recognizes that the State may not be able to provide new revenues to meet the evolving needs of all ferry customers and communities, and looks at marine transportation very differently. It proposes an alternative where the State takes responsibility for the core marine highway system and a locally-funded entity or entities would take responsibility for a new marine transit system. This option assumes operational strategies would be implemented over time. It also contains a budget shortfall, but it is significantly smaller than Plan A.

Both of these options provide a framework for decision-making around service and capital investments. The Draft Plan must address the critical challenges facing WSF.

Long-term Funding. Much has changed since the last Long-Range Plan for WSF was completed in 1999; most profoundly the voter approval of I-695 and the subsequent legislative implementation of the I-695 budget cuts, which substantially reduced dedicated funding for the ferry system. For the last 10 years, the Legislature has filled the funding gap created by the I-695 budget cuts by allocating transportation funds that would have otherwise supported the highway system to WSF. In light of the continuing needs of the state highway system, borrowing from that the highway system to support WSF is not a sustainable long-term funding approach.

Role of Fares in Long-term Funding. One of the impacts of the lost funding has been a significant increase in fares over a relatively short period of time. Since 2000, fares have increased between 37% and 122%. WSF's operation is 70 percent supported by fares (2007 fiscal year), compared to 60 percent in fiscal year 2000.

Aging Asset Base. WSF's fleet is among the oldest of any major ferry operator, with four vessels retired on an emergency basis in 2007. Eight more vessels are to be retired over this planning horizon. In addition, many of the current terminal facilities were built in the 1940's and 1950's and have had few improvements beyond basic maintenance and preservation. WSF is facing a significant recapitalization effort in the next 20 years related to aging vessels and facilities.

Long Lead Times for Capital Investments. A long-range capital plan is necessary because decisions about ferry service have long-term implications. There are significant lead times required to build new vessels or improve terminals, so WSF must anticipate the future need for such improvements today. Once built, WSF capital assets are long lasting, with vessels having an anticipated lifespan of 60 years.

Growth, Ridership Demand, and Service Needs. Although WSF serves over 23 million riders annually, ridership is down over 11% since its peak in 1999. While there is population growth expected in many of the communities served by WSF, it is not clear precisely how this will translate into increased demand for ferry service. Ridership has declined from 2000 to 2006 throughout the system, despite population growth in counties serviced by WSF ranging from 14% growth in Island County to 4% in Kitsap County during the same period of time. By 2030 total demand is projected to increase by 36% over 2006 ridership, which was that last full year of regular service before the disruptions caused by the emergency retirements of the Steel-Electric Class vessels. Over this same period vehicle demand is expected to increase 30% overall.

The Washington State Ferries Financing Study

The 2006 Legislature requested the Joint Transportation Committee (JTC) to study the ferry system's finances in order to facilitate policy discussions and decision-making.

The resulting study included 23 recommendations, many of which were incorporated into ESHB 2358.



A full copy of the report is available online at:
<http://www1.leg.wa.gov/documents/LTC/jtc/Ferries/Ferry%20Finance%20Study%20Final%20Report%20January%202007.pdf>



2. POLICY FRAMEWORK

ESHB 2358 Requirements

For a complete list of legislative requirements included in ESHB 2358, the biennial transportation budgets, and other recent legislation, please see Appendix A.

Organizationally, WSF is a Division of WSDOT, which is a cabinet agency reporting to the Governor. The Governor is ultimately responsible for setting the policy and operational goals for the organization and holding WSF accountable for meeting these goals. In addition to the Governor's office, ferry service and investment decisions are guided by the following:

- The State Legislature passes laws about ferry service, sets the biennial budget for ferry operations and maintenance, and appropriates funds for WSF's capital needs. The Legislature's Joint Transportation Committee (JTC) reviews and researches transportation programs and issues to better inform state and local government policymakers.
- The Washington State Transportation Commission (WSTC) provides a public forum for transportation policy development. It reviews and evaluates how the entire transportation system works across the state, and issues the state's 20-year Transportation Plan. As the State Tolling Authority, the WSTC sets tolls for state highways and bridges, and fares for WSF. Its seven members are citizens appointed by the Governor.
- The Washington State Department of Transportation integrates ferry service with other parts of the highway system and has many other transportation responsibilities in the Puget Sound region and around the state.

2.1 Washington Transportation Plan

The WSF Long-Range Plan will become a part of the WTP, a blueprint for transportation programs and investments in Washington. State and federal law require that the WTP be updated regularly. The current WTP was adopted by the Transportation Commission in 2006 and covers the period 2007-2030. The WSF portion of the plan has not been updated since 1999.

The WTP addresses every mode of the state's transportation system. WSF's Draft Plan is guided by the same goals which federal and state law prescribe for the WTP, including safety, congestion relief, asset preservation, system efficiency, environmental protection, and consistency with land use plans.

2.2 ESHB 2358 The “Ferry Bill”

Passed by the 2007 Legislature, Engrossed Substitute House Bill (ESHB) 2358, the “Ferry Bill,” fundamentally changes the policy direction guiding long-range planning efforts for the ferry system. The Legislature found that the state did not have good information about ferry customers and directed WSF to pursue adaptive management practices in its operating and capital programs. Adaptive management is a process for continually improving management policies and practices by learning from the outcomes of operational programs and adapting them to improve customer service. The Legislature directed WSF to pursue adaptive management practices in order to keep costs as low as possible while continuously improving the quality and timeliness of service.

ESHB 2358 and associated budget provisions specifically spelled out a list of tasks and a timeline that were designed to begin to address the questions raised in the 2006 Ferry Financing Study (see sidebar), and to develop an information base that could support the ultimate question of how to address the long-term funding needs of the ferry system. Specifically, ESHB 2358 and transportation budget provisions are designed to:

- Provide new and improved information: Examples of improved information requirements include a customer survey; credible ridership forecasting; a review of WSF’s Life Cycle Cost Model (LCCM), which is used to determine capital preservation requirements; JTC Ferry Policy Working Group reviews of WSF’s capital and operating costs; and pre-design study requirements for terminal improvement and preservation projects.
- Develop strategies to minimize costs or increase revenues: WSF was directed to consider operational strategies and pricing policy changes; undertake a study of potential terminal co-developments with private sector partners; and to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of one-way toll collection.

With respect to pricing policy, the Legislature provided specific direction to evaluate options for using pricing as part of an adaptive management approach to help regulate demand while maintaining an awareness of the impact of fares on communities and users. ESHB 2358 requires that “the department shall annually review fares and pricing policies applicable to the operation of [WSF]...the department shall develop fare and pricing policy proposals that must:

- Recognize that each travel shed is unique, and might not have the same farebox recovery rate and the same pricing policies;



- Use data from the current customer survey conducted by the WSTC;
- Develop with input from affected ferry users by public meetings and hearings and by review with affected ferry advisory committees, in addition to the market survey;
- Generate the amount of revenue required by the biennial transportation budget;
- Consider the impacts on users, capacity, and local communities; and
- Keep the fare structure as simple as possible.

While developing fare and pricing policy proposals, WSF must consider the following:

- Options for using pricing to level vehicle peak demand; and
- Options for using pricing to increase off-peak ridership.

The other significant change in pricing policy direction is that the language in the new legislation places a greater emphasis on the desirable outcomes of changes in fare rules. This change provides substantial flexibility to WSTC and WSF to focus on pricing options that might support “adaptive management practices in its operating and capital programs so as to keep the costs of the Washington state ferries system as low as possible while continuously improving the quality and timeliness of service.” (ESHB 2358)

Other Related Studies

ESHB 2358 identifies specific topics for study and requires new levels of cooperation and collaboration among the Legislature (through the JTC), the WSTC, and WSF. Through ESHB 2358 and the State’s 2007 Transportation Budget, the Legislature has identified a number of additional studies to be undertaken, all of which have informed this plan:

- Customer Survey. ESHB 2358 required the WSTC to conduct a study of ferry customers that includes information on recreational, walk-on, vehicle, and freight customers and their reactions to possible operational strategies and pricing policies; allows opportunity for Ferry Advisory Committee¹ input; and is updated every two years

¹ RCW 47.60.310 established Ferry Advisory Committees to be appointed by county legislative authorities in counties serviced by WSF, except for Vashon Island where a community council appoints the members.

- Long-term Funding. The 2007 Transportation Budget included a proviso requiring the WSTC to conduct a long-term funding alternatives study that would make recommendations for how to address the gap between dedicated ferry revenues and operating and capital needs (section 206(2)).
- Vessel Study. The 2007 Transportation Budget requires the JTC to make recommendations regarding the most efficient timing and sizing of future vessel acquisitions beyond those currently authorized by the Legislature.

In addition to these ESHB 2358 efforts, another planning study that has been underway concurrently with this effort, the Puget Sound Regional Council's (PSRC) Passenger-only Study, will have implications on the potential future for WSF.

- PSRC Passenger-only Ferry Study. In 2006, the PSRC Policy Board determined that there was a need for regional coordination around the issue of the long-term role for passenger-only ferry services in the Central Puget Sound region. The State Legislature had recently directed WSF to abandon its passenger-only program and discontinue passenger-only service on the Vashon-Seattle route. According to the PSRC, "the study will provide the technical basis to strengthen Destination 2030 policies, programs, projects, and criteria by improving:
 - Coordination of state, regional, and local ferry system investments
 - Integration of ferry operations with transit, roadway, and non-motorized improvements
 - Guidance for ferry-oriented development and land use near ferry terminals
 - Planning to address local land use and transportation impacts in ferry terminal communities
 - The technical capabilities in the area of ferry system demand forecasting, and travel demand modeling and analysis, that will aid in prioritization of projects and programs."

The study is slated for completion in early 2009, with additional work expected to integrate the study results into the regional transportation plan update (Destination 2040).

2.3 What factors must WSF consider in developing this Plan?

In developing these Draft Plan options, WSF must also consider other factors and guidelines for the future of the ferry system. Not all of this



guidance takes the form of law or mandate, and frequently it reflects multiple, often-conflicting priorities that WSF must take seriously and endeavor to balance as it plans to meet demand in the future. Guidelines for ferry service include the following:

WSF should charge prices that are reasonable. The WSTC sets policies that establish WSF's fare structure. In addition to fiscal and environmental considerations and the directions provided in ESHB 2358, the WSTC may, but is not required to, consider the "desirability of reasonable rates for persons using the ferry system to commute daily to work and (for) other frequent users who live in ferry-dependent communities."

WSF should act responsibly with regard to the natural environment. WSF has been an active partner in efforts to protect the natural environment, recently as host of a pilot study of alternative fuels, and on an everyday basis in its efforts to encourage transit use and vehicle sharing. This is in keeping with the Legislature and the WSTC's charge to "conserve nonrenewable natural resources including land and energy (RCW 47.01.071)."

In developing the Draft Long-Range Plan, WSF assessed any capital project or service changes under consideration to ensure there are no "fatal flaws" from an environmental perspective. Environmental impacts of specific capital facility projects are evaluated during the project's design development stage when WSF conducts a detailed environmental review as part of the State Environmental Protection Act (SEPA) or National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA).

WSF should plan with an awareness of financial constraints. The ferry system operates in a financially constrained environment. WSF lost a significant share of its dedicated capital and operating funding in 2000 and must share resources with the highway program to balance its budget.

WSF should respect the land use and growth management plans of local governments, while staying mindful of its primary mission and its role as a state agency. WSF serves local communities, which have a strong interest in planning for and managing their own growth and development. State law is clear on the need for WSF to cooperate with local planning processes. To this end, WSF makes long-range demand projections based on the regional growth forecasts that result from a cooperative process among local jurisdictions.

WSF's role in growth management is a responsive one. Local and regional planning organizations make policy decisions to shape growth: the resulting pattern of future trips is a consideration in ferry service planning. This balance of interests is reflected in state law:

“Although [WSDOT] shall consult with local governments when setting level of service standards, the department retains authority to make final decisions... [The] department shall consider the necessary balance between providing for the free inter-jurisdictional movement of people and goods and the needs of local communities using these facilities” (RCW 47.06.140).

WSF should plan facility improvements and service to facilitate connections with other modes of transportation. State law refers to the WTP as “a statewide multimodal transportation plan” (RCW 47.06) and specifies that each modal plan should emphasize “the improvement and integration of all transportation modes to create a seamless intermodal transportation system for people and goods” (RCW 47.06.040).

WSF should consult with the public as it develops ferry plans or policy changes. State law (RCW 47.60.330) requires that ferry users be consulted before major service or fare changes through public hearings, surveys, and standing Ferry Advisory Committees. WSF also consults with ferry terminal neighbors and other interested parties before changes are implemented.



3. FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

When voters approved I-695 in November 1999 and the Legislature codified the MVET tax reductions during the 2000 legislative session, WSF lost approximately 20% of its operating support and approximately 75% of its dedicated capital funds.

In immediate response, WSF enacted a series of staff and service cuts that when combined with spending operating reserves allowed the system to survive through June 30, 2001. During the 2000 session, the Legislature provided a \$20 million transfer from the General Fund that allowed for fewer service cuts than originally proposed.

To address the long-term funding needs of the ferry system, the Legislature and Governor undertook two major efforts prior to the enactment of ESHB 2358. In 2000, the Legislature established a Joint Legislative Task Force on Ferries (JTFF). The Task Force was charged with addressing the following key issues:

- Establishing appropriate levels of operating cost recovery (farebox recovery target).
- Exploring opportunities for cost and service reductions.
- Evaluating the feasibility of privatization and public-private partnerships.
- Assessing short-term and long-term capital funding needs of the system.

The Legislative Task Force report was approved by the Task Force members on January 15, 2001 and it contained nine major recommendations, which focused primarily on opportunities to reduce costs and improve the financial performance of the operating program. The most widely discussed recommendation was for WSF to increase the farebox recovery rate from 60% to 80% over six years.

At the same time as the JTFF effort, the Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation (BRCT), which was tasked to review the entire structure of the state's transportation system, released their recommendations. The recommendations included a confirmation of the JTFF recommendations, plus a long-term goal of reaching 90% farebox recovery.

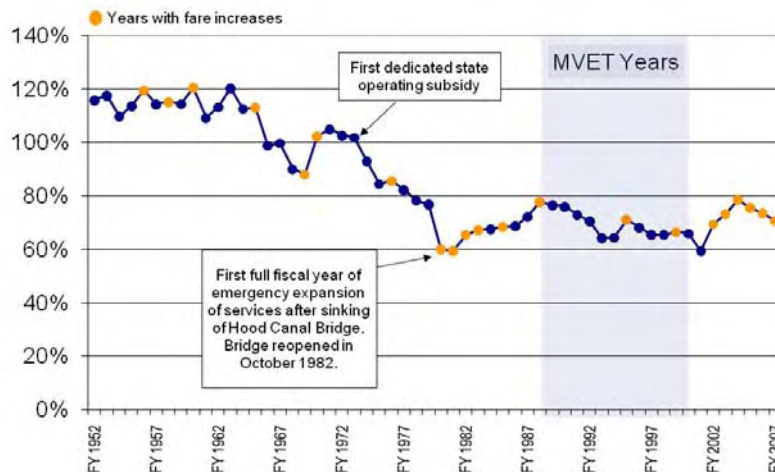
Neither the JTFF nor BRCT recommendations addressed specifically how to replace the lost MVET funding. With respect to funding, both efforts largely focused on using the fare policy to begin to stabilize the operating funding situation but suggested that the Legislature needed to develop a long-term funding solution for WSF.

3.1 Historical Context

While the farebox recovery recommendations from both the JTFF and the BRCT were controversial in ferry-served communities, it is worth putting these recovery targets into a historical perspective.

In the years prior to the loss of MVET funding, the Transportation Commission had been working from a general operating principle that fares should be adjusted to maintain a minimum 60% farebox recovery target (i.e. operating revenues must recover 60% of operating costs, with the balance coming from state tax sources). As presented in Exhibit 2, however, the distribution of responsibility for funding operations between the users and taxpayers was not always a 60/40 proposition.

**Exhibit 2
Farebox Recovery Rates over WSF History**



The portion of the cost of operations funded from fare revenues has shifted from more than 100% to the 60% level during the MVET years. The transition from over 100% to 60% cost recovery represented a gradual but steady decline that benefited ferry users.

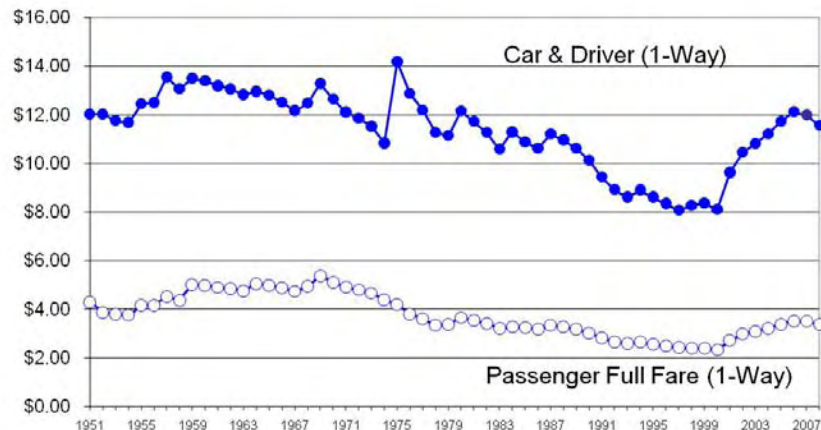
To improve the farebox recovery rates, it was necessary to implement substantial increases in customer fares. In fact, since the loss of MVET, fares have increased between 37% and 122% depending on the route. These large fare increases did push the recovery rate close to 80% in fiscal year 2004, but since then, cost increases (primarily rapid increases in fuel prices) and relatively modest fare increases have pushed the recovery rate back down closer to 70%.

Another useful historical comparison is to see how these significant recent fare increases have changed the price of ferry services in relation to previous years. Exhibit 3 shows that the fare increases



have brought the cost of ferry services back up to a level that is more in-line with historical levels. In fact, prior to the loss of MVET prices were at their lowest levels in history, when adjusted for inflation.

Exhibit 3
Historical Fares Adjusted for Inflation (\$2008)



3.2 Funding for WSF Post I-695

Since the loss of MVET funding in the middle of the 1999-2001 Biennium, the Legislature has been subsidizing the funding gap with transfers from general transportation resources, primarily the Motor Vehicle Account and the Multimodal Account. The funds in these accounts are subject to appropriation every two years and are allocated based on funding priorities among all of WSDOT and other transportation agencies. WSF shares these limited resources with the highway system.

Over the course of the last nine years, WSF has received a total of \$300 million in general transportation funding to backfill operations. These transfers have been necessary despite the large increases in fare revenues during this period. In fact, the cumulative impact of the fare increases is estimated to have raised approximately \$130 million during this same period.

As discussed earlier, the magnitude of the necessary transfers of general highway funding to WSF has been significantly influenced by the higher cost of fuel during this period.

On the capital side, the transfers from available transportation discretionary funds have varied from biennium to biennium. In total, more than \$350 million has been appropriated from these general transportation funds to replace lost MVET funds. During this period,

WSF has been the recipient of some project-specific funding from both the Nickel Gas Tax Package and the Transportation Partnership funding package (\$0.09 gas tax increase).

3.3 What is WSF Doing to Keep Costs Down?

Given the funding challenges facing WSF, steps have been taken to reduce costs as much as possible without jeopardizing safe, reliable and efficient service. The focus on managing costs has included three significant efforts: (1) cost containment strategies designed to reduce operating and capital costs immediately; (2) updating the Life Cycle Cost Models to ensure that preservation funding is optimized; and (3) reviewing and revising terminal design standards to ensure future terminal improvements are appropriately sized.

Cost Containment

WSF has undergone a thorough review of its current operating practices and staffing levels. This effort has resulted in administrative staff reductions, fuel conservation measures, and cutting expenses for non-urgent items. Together, these measures have identified and implemented cost savings as follows:

- Staff reductions: \$1.5 million (25 budgeted positions)
- Fuel conservation: \$3.7 million
- Reductions in other operating costs: \$2.2 million
- Reduction in consultant costs: \$37 million

Updated Life Cycle Cost Model

As directed by the ESHB 2358, WSF continues its efforts to update its Vessel Preservation Life Cycle Cost Model (LCCM). Work completed to date includes a review and update of the vital systems' cost factors and replacement intervals. Currently, a review of the existing inspection process is being done to support the requirement that all assets in the LCCM be inspected and the LCCM updated to reflect actual asset condition every three years. The outcome of this review is to provide recommendations:

- Improving methods of condition assessments by using best industry practices
- Concerning methodology and resources needed to compile inspection data for analysis and conversion into useful management information
- Making economic analyses such as Least Life Cost Analysis that support vessel preservation investment decisions

Life Cycle Cost Model

Maintenance assumptions used in this analysis have been developed using the following Life Cycle Cost Model (LCCM) guidance in recent legislation:

ESHB 2358

WSF must maintain a Life Cycle Cost Model that (section 10):

- Is used in developing preservation funding requests.
- Uses available industry standards or department-adopted standards when standard life cycles are not available.
- Is updated when inspections are made to reflect asset condition.
- Does not include systems that aren't replaced on a standard life cycle or that are not yet built.
- Is updated at least every three years.

SSB 6932

The Life Cycle Cost Model will (section 4):

- Be used in estimating future terminal and vessel needs.
- Be the basis for developing the budget request for terminal and vessel preservation funding.

2007 Transportation Budget

- WSF to update LCCM no later than August 1, 2007 (section 225 (8)(c)).
- JTC to review updated LCCM (section 205 (1)(b)(ii)).
- JLARC to ensure LCCM complies with requirements in bill (section 108 (2))



The goal of these efforts is to ensure that vessel preservation funding is invested wisely for the best return in terms of vessel material condition, by replacing systems only when their condition requires it. When funding is limited, the highest priority needs of vital systems are preserved within their life cycles, and the high cost, non-vital systems such as passenger deck renovations and topside painting, are deferred.

The terminal Life Cycle Cost Model underwent an extensive update in 2007, which focused on bringing all of the condition ratings up to date and reassessing when assets would need to be replaced. This effort resulted in a net savings of \$106 million over the legislative 16-year financial plan.

Terminal Design Standards

Terminal design standards were reviewed and updated to ensure that terminal facility planning is consistent with the direction in ESHB 2358 and that facilities were being appropriately sized. These revised standards were used in the development of conceptual-level terminal improvement needs identified in this plan.

Terminal Design Standards are based on the following assumptions:

- Operational strategies will be implemented where appropriate
- Improvements in the efficiencies of loading and off-loading will be made where possible
- Major alternatives will be evaluated using a business case evaluation.

Terminal design standards are divided into the following elements:

Vehicle Holding Sizing: The holding space required within the paid area is based on the largest vessel capacity of the route. There needs to be enough holding space in the paid area for one sailing worth of vehicles plus standby vehicles. HOV/preferential loading vehicles have separate holding spaces based on the utilization at each terminal.

Terminal Program: Each terminal has specific spaces that are required in order to safely and efficiently operate a ferry terminal. These spaces have been identified in terms of function, size and location.

Terminal Building Sizing: The terminal building is divided into two separate functions, the public waiting area and the staff areas. The public waiting area is sized based on the type of route (commuter, summer travel & tourist, mix). The difference in these types of routes is how long a customer is waiting; commuters typically arrive very close to the scheduled departure times vs. tourists who

may arrive several hours before the scheduled departure time. More space is needed to accommodate customers that are waiting longer. The staff areas are determined using the State Department of General Administration's standards for type of employees and space they require.

Customer information: Information Technology System (ITS) equipment will be installed at critical travel decision points regarding reservations/capacity information and proposed alternative routes. The current WSDOT standards for highway information technology will be used.

Business case: The business case process is an objective, repeatable, quantitative approach to alternatives analysis. It is intended to determine the lowest life cycle cost solution for a given problem. Alternatives are identified and evaluated in terms of costs associated with each alternative. Costs include capital and operating as well as risks and benefits to the customer. See Appendix B for a more detailed discussion of terminal design standards.

How has the financial outlook influenced the development of the Draft Plan?

The current and future financial challenges have had a profound impact on the approach to this planning effort. It has forced WSF to take a completely fresh look at both what it is doing and how it is doing it. This plan proposes some significant changes in how WSF does business and how customers will interact with the system in the future, while maintaining its commitments to providing the best possible service throughout the system given funding constraints.



4. PLANNING PROCESS

4.1 Technical and Policy Review Teams

The process for developing this plan was designed to meet the participation requirements that were included in ESHB 2358 and to ensure that the best available internal and external technical resources were brought to bear on the analytical needs of the project. Toward this end, the plan development effort included four distinct groups:

- Technical work teams. Technical work teams organized around subject matter expertise, including: demand forecasting; terminal design standards; operating strategies; pricing strategies; and finance. These teams were comprised primarily of WSF staff and augmented with consultant support where appropriate. Given the importance of the demand forecasting effort, an expert review panel was also integrated into that work element.
- JTC Staff Group. ESHB 2358 called for a high degree of review and participation among the key participants in the study efforts. To ensure effective communication and collaboration, the JTC Staff Group was formed and met bi-weekly since the summer of 2007. The Staff Group was comprised of representatives from the Governor's Office, House and Senate Transportation Committees, the JTC, WSDOT, WSF, the Office of Financial Management and the WSTC.
- Transportation Commission Ferries Subcommittee. There was a particular need for coordination between WSF and the Transportation Commission, given the Transportation Commission's role in fare setting and shared responsibility to make pricing and operational strategy recommendations to the Legislature. As a result, a three-member Subcommittee of the State Transportation Commission met monthly with WSF project leadership team on policy and technical issues.
- Joint Transportation Committee Ferry Policy Group. ESHB 2358 created a policy oversight committee comprised of members of the Senate and House Transportation Committees and the Governor's Office. This group met on a bi-monthly basis for progress briefings and to provide feedback on the work products as they were developed.

The work of these groups and the participation of stakeholders was critical to the development of this Draft Long Range plan, and WSF appreciates the time and effort of everybody involved. For a complete list of participants, please see Appendix C.

4.2 Public Outreach and Stakeholder Involvement

As part of the long-range planning process WSF has consulted with ferry customers, planning organizations, agency stakeholders and the general public. The following groups and resources have provided input into the planning process, and encouraged stakeholders and the public to submit ideas and stay current on the planning process.

Local Agency Review Team. The Local Agency Review Team is a consultative body comprised of individuals from agencies and organizations with a vested local interest in the ferry system and convened for the purpose of advising WSF on technical and policy issues associated with the development of a revised Draft Long-Range Plan. The Local Agency Review Team has been designed to keep WSF's agency partners informed about technical and policy work and help WSF understand the local community, and agency needs.

Public Ferry Advisory Committees. WSF meets with the chairs of the Ferry Advisory Committees quarterly to provide an update on the development of the Long-Range Plan, solicit feedback, and consult on upcoming public meetings in ferry-served communities.

Public Meetings and Workshops. Twenty-six public meetings were held in ferry-served communities in 2008. These meetings, held in the spring, summer, and fall, were to solicit input from the public as WSF was developing the foundational concepts for the Long-Range Plan. Ten additional public hearings are planned for January 2009 to gather input on the Draft Plan. See the sidebar on page 18 for a comprehensive list of 2008 public meetings.

Briefings to Community Groups, Local Leadership, and Regional Planning Organizations. WSF staff attended over 60 meetings regarding the Long-Range Plan, not including the public meetings and workshops mentioned above. These meetings were requested by community groups, city and county councils, and regional planning organizations.

Web Page. WSF maintains a web page connecting the public to the latest information on the Draft Plan. Users can download materials and public comment summaries from all 26 of the public meetings held so far, including a video feed of the presentation used during the fall. The web page makes it easy to submit public comments and get in touch with WSF staff. It also connects the public to related web pages, including the WSTC and JTC sites. The webpage address is: www.wsdot.wa.gov/ferries/planning/ESHB2358

2008 Public Meetings to Date:

- Mar. 24, Bainbridge
- Mar. 25, Kingston
- Mar. 26, Southworth
- Mar. 27, Coupeville
- Mar. 31, Bremerton
- Apr. 1, Anacortes
- Apr. 2, Friday Harbor
- Apr. 3, Vashon
- Jun. 17, Whidbey Island
- Jun. 18, Port Townsend
- Jun. 19, Anacortes
- Jun. 23, Bainbridge
- Jun. 24, Kingston
- Jun. 25, Vashon
- Jun. 26, San Juan Islands
- Jun. 30, Bremerton
- Jul. 1, Southworth
- Sept. 24, Bremerton
- Sept. 25, Edmonds
- Oct. 2, Bainbridge
- Oct. 6, San Juan Islands
- Oct. 7, Keystone
- Oct. 13, Vashon
- Oct. 14, Mukilteo
- Oct. 15, Anacortes
- Oct. 16, Southworth



Email List Serve. WSF maintains an email list serve of those who have expressed specific interest in learning more about the long-range planning efforts. This includes a quarterly e-mail from Assistant Secretary for Ferries regarding progress on the plan, and a weekly update from him that addresses current ferry issues, including updates on the draft planning process.

Next Steps. A thirty-day comment period follows the release of this Draft Plan. During this period, WSF will host ten public hearings in the communities it serves, and will continue to communicate through the methods outlined above.