



Washington State
Department of Transportation



Washington State Ferries Service Contingency Plan

APRIL 2026



Washington State Ferries

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INTRODUCTION

Washington State Ferries (WSF) is the largest ferry system in the United States. A part of the state highway system, it has 21 vessels connecting communities from Tacoma to the San Juan Islands.

We are committed to increasing service while also growing and modernizing our fleet. In early 2025, Gov. Bob Ferguson directed WSF to focus on service restoration. With this renewed concentration, and with the hard work of our Vessel Maintenance, Operations and Planning teams, we returned to 18 vessel domestic service in summer 2025 – several years earlier than previously expected. Before the governor’s new direction, service restoration was on hold until the arrival of new hybrid-electric ferries, the first of which is expected in 2030 (see Appendix A: Vessel Availability for more details).



Since the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been publishing annual plans detailing service levels and contingency plans for providing the best service possible within existing constraints. This 2026 Plan update explains service levels with a focus on the summer sailing season and how we intend to operate if a ferry becomes unavailable due to either crewing shortages or unscheduled vessel or terminal maintenance. Each disruption is dynamic, and while this Plan will guide our work, we’ll consider recent service decisions downsizing routes when making operations decisions. Ultimately, the goal is to be honest with customers and transparently share how we plan to provide as much service as possible.

Service in 2025

A return to 18-boat domestic service helped boost our annual ridership to 20.1 million in 2025. That’s nearly 1 million more riders than the year before, a 5% increase. It’s also the first time ridership topped 20 million since 2019. We also added about 7,000 sailings while cancelling about 400 fewer than in 2024. Canceled sailings due to crew shortages dropped by almost 70%. That improvement reflects our recent investment in building and supporting our workforce.

During 2025, we were able to schedule full service on all domestic routes except for Port Townsend/Coupeville, which only operated two-boat service four days a week during the summer instead of the regular daily two-boat service from Mother’s Day to Indigenous People’s Day; and Anacortes/San Juan Islands, where the lack of a fifth vessel for international service in summer resulted in a missed domestic trip. Full service enabled the 1 million increase in ridership mentioned above.

Taking a closer look at each restored route, the results were more mixed. Two routes – Fautleroy/Vashon/Southworth (Triangle) and Seattle/Bremerton often operated with reduced service on alternate schedules. While the Seattle/Bremerton route saw the largest ridership increase in the system (31.9% from 2024 to 2025), the Triangle route had a much smaller increase (4.7% from 2024 to 2025). The smaller increase is likely due to intermittent periods of two-boat service on the route during service disruptions, as well as more limited pandemic-era ridership losses compared to other routes. Other routes with service disruptions often had reduced capacity as well; for example, the use of the 90-car Sealth in place of a larger 124-car Issaquah-, 144-car Super- or 144-car Olympic-class vessel also had an effect on capacity and customer experience.

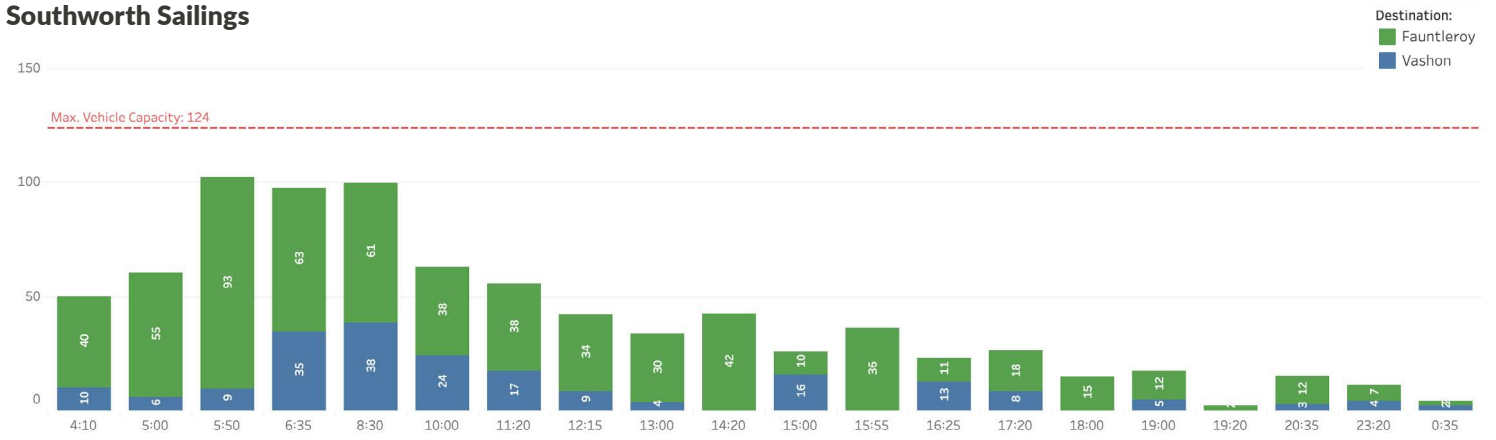
WASHINGTON STATE FERRIES SERVICE CONTINGENCY PLAN

Because of the reduced capacity on the Triangle route during periods of 2025, we took a closer look at utilization on the route. The graphs below show the average number of vehicles per sailing when service on the route was limited to two vessels; in this case, the week of Nov. 3, 2025.

Fauntleroy Sailings



Southworth Sailings



Vashon Sailings



The first graph, for Fauntleroy departures, shows the three sailings that were over capacity during the traditional afternoon peak commute time. The second graph, for departures out of Southworth, shows there were no sailings that met maximum vehicle capacity. For Vashon departures, in the third graph, the six sailings at or near capacity are spread throughout the day. Analyzing these types of utilization and ridership trends is our standard practice, especially when faced with unplanned service disruptions. As described below in the Service Plan section, ridership data is imperative to making service decisions.

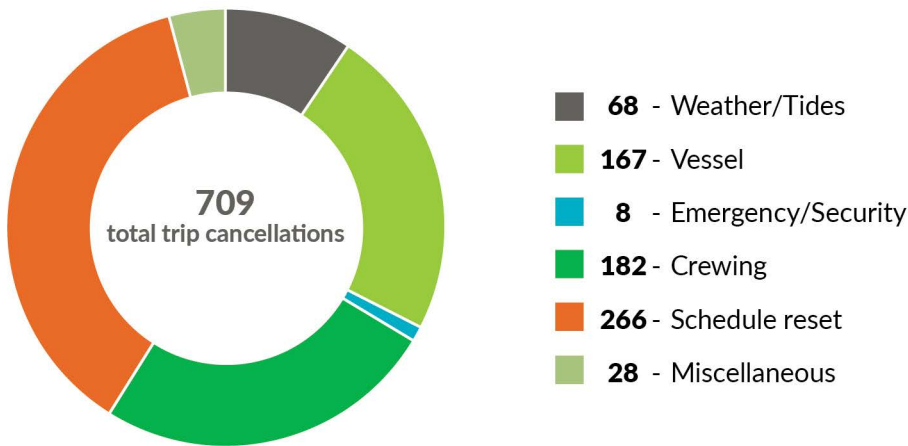
Goals of the Service Contingency Plan (SCP)

The SCP focuses on how we intend to provide service over the next four-to-five years, until new vessels are constructed and delivered, as well as how we intend to provide service in the event of unplanned disruptions. There are numerous reasons a vessel might be taken out of service. Similarly, a terminal might become inoperable because of mechanical failure. Service disruptions also occur when there is a lack of crew available to operate a vessel.

The graphic below shows the breakdown of cancellations for July to September 2025 (fiscal year 2026, quarter one). In that quarter we scheduled 41,020 trips, with 709 cancelled. Schedule resets because of severe delays caused 36% of trip cancellations, 29% were due to lack of crew and another 24% were because of vessel mechanical issues. The number of scheduled trips fluctuates depending on whether we are operating on an alternate schedule (i.e. a two-boat schedule for the Triangle route). While operating under the SCP, the goal is to complete 95% of its scheduled sailings. We generally operate over 95%, with most months between 96-97%.

Number of cancellations and reasons for cancellations

Fiscal Year 2026, Quarter 1



The goals of the Service Contingency Plan are to:

- Provide a measure of **predictability** about service levels we plan to operate until new vessels arrive.
- Be **transparent** about decisions, considerations and priorities when service adjustments are necessary.
- Provide **consistency** in service to enhance reliability for customers.
- Outline how we will **communicate** with customers, community members and other partners.

These goals are consistent with our focus on three strategic priorities:

- **Service excellence**
- **Improved communication**
- **Empowered people**

Our work is guided by these three strategic priorities. Along with our values – serve, grow, trust, respect and navigate – these priorities help create a positive WSF culture focused on customer service. Together, they act like a compass, guiding our decisions and actions. This approach helps us work toward our ultimate goal of building Boats Communities Trust.

Our focus for 2026 is **service excellence, clear communication** when challenges arise and being prepared to reliably support the region during periods of high demand.

SERVICE PLAN

Two key pillars of our service planning efforts are vessel and crewing availability. As described in more detail below, a major service challenge in recent years has been crewing; however, as WSF’s fleet ages, service reliability decreases. Vessel constraints are discussed in more detail, below.

Thanks to a robust workforce development pipeline, we expect crewing levels to continue increasing, which will help decrease the number of trips cancelled due to lack of U.S. Coast Guard required crew. However, vessel constraints will continue until new ferries enter service. Until that happens, we can reliably operate 17 or 18 vessels, depending on the season. During the spring shoulder, summer and fall shoulder seasons (peak), 18 ferries are needed. The late fall, winter and early spring seasons (off-peak) require 17 vessels. Most maintenance and preservation are pushed to these off-peak seasons to accommodate keeping vessels in service in the peak seasons. This practice helps with reliability when we need the vessels in service the most.

Vessels are assigned to provide the following service:

Route	Contingency Plan: 17 (off-peak) or 18 (peak) vessels	Full Service*
Anacortes/San Juan Islands	4 vessels, including 1 interisland-only vessel	4 vessels including 1 interisland-only vessel
Port Townsend/Coupeville	1 vessel late fall through winter to early spring; 2 vessels early spring through summer to late fall	1 vessel late fall through winter to early spring; 2 vessels early spring through summer to late fall
Mukilteo/Clinton	2 vessels	2 vessels
Edmonds/Kingston	2 vessels	2 vessels
Seattle/Bainbridge Island	2 vessels	2 vessels
Seattle/Bremerton	2 vessels	2 vessels
Fauntleroy/Vashon/ Southworth	3 vessels (2-boat service on winter weekends)	3 vessels (2-boat service on winter weekends)
Point Defiance/Tahlequah	1 vessel	1 vessel
Anacortes/Sidney	No service	1 vessel (spring/summer/fall)

*Full Service includes service to Sidney, British Columbia, and requires 19 vessels in summer, 18 in spring and fall “shoulder” seasons and 17 from late fall to early spring.

As important as it is to have enough boats, we must also have the right classes of vessels available to match terminal infrastructure. Specifically, we require two 64-car Kwa-di Tabil-class vessels to operate peak season service at Port Townsend/Coupeville; and three 124-car Issaquah-class ferries to maintain full three-boat service at the Triangle.

Because of necessary vessel maintenance and preservation work, we may not be able to always operate three-boat service on the Triangle route. When the three 124-car Issaquah-class vessels aren’t available, we will use the 90-car *Sealth* to maintain three-boat service. The *Sealth*, while smaller than the other Issaquah-class vessels, is fast enough to maintain the three-boat schedule. When ferries of appropriate size and speed are not available, the Triangle route will operate on the two-boat schedule with a third unscheduled “bonus” boat. Based on planned maintenance and preservation needs, we anticipate the Triangle route will operate on a two-boat schedule with a third unscheduled “bonus” boat for approximately five weeks in the fall and winter seasons.

There may be times when we must assign a smaller vessel to maintain service frequency. For example, in early 2026 the 90-car *Sealth* was used on the Triangle, Mukilteo/Clinton, Seattle/Bremerton and Seattle/Bainbridge routes, resulting in a capacity reduction for these routes. Other examples could include using a 144-car Super- or Olympic-class vessel on the Edmonds/Kingston or Seattle/Bainbridge Island routes.

There may also be times when we are forced to reduce service below the 18-vessel peak/17-vessel off-peak baseline.

When this is necessary, we will reduce service to:

1. Two boats at Fautleroy/Vashon/Southworth.
2. One boat at Seattle/Bremerton.
3. One boat (shoulder/summer when the route has two vessels) at Port Townsend/Coupeville.

Operating reduced service affects customers and ferry-served communities. With that in mind, we will only operate reduced service when absolutely necessary, for as short a time as possible. The priority for above reduced service list is to provide as much capacity as possible, and to match service to ridership.

Restoration of service to Sidney, British Columbia, remains projected for 2030, when a vessel certified for operation in international waters becomes available without disrupting domestic service.

Unplanned Service Disruptions

When a vessel unexpectedly goes out of service, our first priority is the safety of our passengers and our crews. In the rare event that a ferry breaks down while in transit, our focus is first to move to a dock as soon as possible so that passengers can disembark. Crews are then dispatched to help a vessel's engine room crew troubleshoot the problem. The Coast Guard will also be notified so they can assess the situation.

How quickly we can restore service after a vessel breaks down depends on several variables, including: the nature of the problem, whether we have parts immediately available for repair, whether the repair will require a dry dock, whether dry dock space is available and more. If it is determined the issue is not quickly resolvable after 24 hours, we will consider moving our service relief vessel (if available) or moving vessels around the fleet.

In general, during the **first 24 hours** following a vessel taken out service, the route where the vessel is assigned will operate without that vessel. The reasons for this are twofold:

- **We need time to make an assessment** as to whether the cause for removal can easily be fixed or will last more than 24 hours. Often, vessels can be repaired within hours.
- **It is a logistical challenge to move a vessel within a few hours**, especially when a ferry has a mechanical breakdown on a route far from Eagle Harbor. We need time to assemble crews to move vessels to new routes, and our customers need to plan accordingly.

There are a couple of exceptions to the general rule that vessel reassignments will not occur within 24 hours of a vessel's removal from service:

- **We will restore service as quickly as possible on routes already on reduced service, or if the route has only one vessel serving it.** On routes where service has already been reduced, it is necessary to maintain service to ensure essential transportation connectivity and not strand passengers. This may require same-day vessel moves and a reduction in service on other routes.
- **We can rearrange some schedules on multi-destination routes with more than two vessels.** In the San Juan Islands, alternate schedules are available allowing us to reassign existing vessels to cover important connections to island communities.

In general, **24 hours after** a vessel has been taken out of service and when a relief vessel is available, the relief vessel will be put into service. Our ability to shuffle vessel assignments may be limited, and provided it can work the route, the relief vessel would likely be substituted directly for the missing vessel. If it cannot, then the relief vessel would be assigned to another route and a vessel would be taken from that other route.

When a relief vessel is not available, we must make difficult decisions about reallocating vessels. To do this, we do our best to take into consideration several factors, including but not limited to:

- **Minimal service:** A minimum of one vessel needs to remain on any given route to maintain basic transportation connections.
- **Alternative routes:** We consider whether an affected ferry route has an alternative through another ferry route (such as passenger only ferries from King County Metro or Kitsap Transit Fast Ferry) or highway access.
- **San Juan Islands interisland service:** We will generally prioritize interisland service over mainland service in the San Juan Islands.
- **Traffic/ridership:** We consider how many people use the route, its utilization rate and mix of traffic. On routes with higher commuter traffic, a service disruption on a weekend is more tolerable than a service disruption on a weekday. On some routes serving recreational destinations, it is often more crucial to maintain full capacity on weekends, especially in the summer season.
- **Special events:** Community events and their economic effect are considered (e.g., Seahawks games, summer festivals).
- **Reservations:** Our current reservation system does not allow for redistribution of reservations to other sailings. We may temporarily adjust the reservation system's business and operational rules until normal service is restored and the traffic effects are resolved. To the extent possible, we will prioritize travel for customers holding a reservation for any sailings during the service day over customers traveling from the same terminal without a reservation.
- **Vessel capacity:** We must consider the capacity of each vessel to carry vehicles and passengers, especially on high-demand routes. In the case of special events or peak summer season, we must balance the vessel capacity with frequency (i.e., one larger vessel instead of two smaller vessels).
- **Resources:** Crew availability, the ability of other vessels to operate safely and efficiently on other routes, and the availability of maintenance resources (Eagle Harbor, drydock) are all factors in service decisions.
- **Costs:** Each vessel has a home port, and this location is considered as it affects cost. It typically costs \$14,000 per boat move, plus additional ongoing costs to operate vessels away from its home port.
- **Other factors:** Terminal construction work and nearby highway projects are some of the other factors considered. Most terminal disruptions are resolved within hours, but in the rare cases when they are not, we have a terminal contingency framework to guide those decisions. See Appendix C for details.
- **Duration of disruption:** How long a disruption lasts has a direct effect on many other factors, including traffic/ridership, resources, reservations, costs, etc.

SERVICE DURING FIFA WORLD CUP EVENTS

Seattle is a host city for the 2026 FIFA World Cup. Six matches will take place in Seattle, and the region will see significant visitation associated with the event. There are nine “Fan Zones” in Washington state, including one in Bremerton, where fans can gather to watch matches and celebrate. In addition, seven matches will occur in Vancouver, British Columbia, and significant travel between Seattle and Vancouver is expected.

We will make several adjustments to our normal contingency framework during the World Cup:

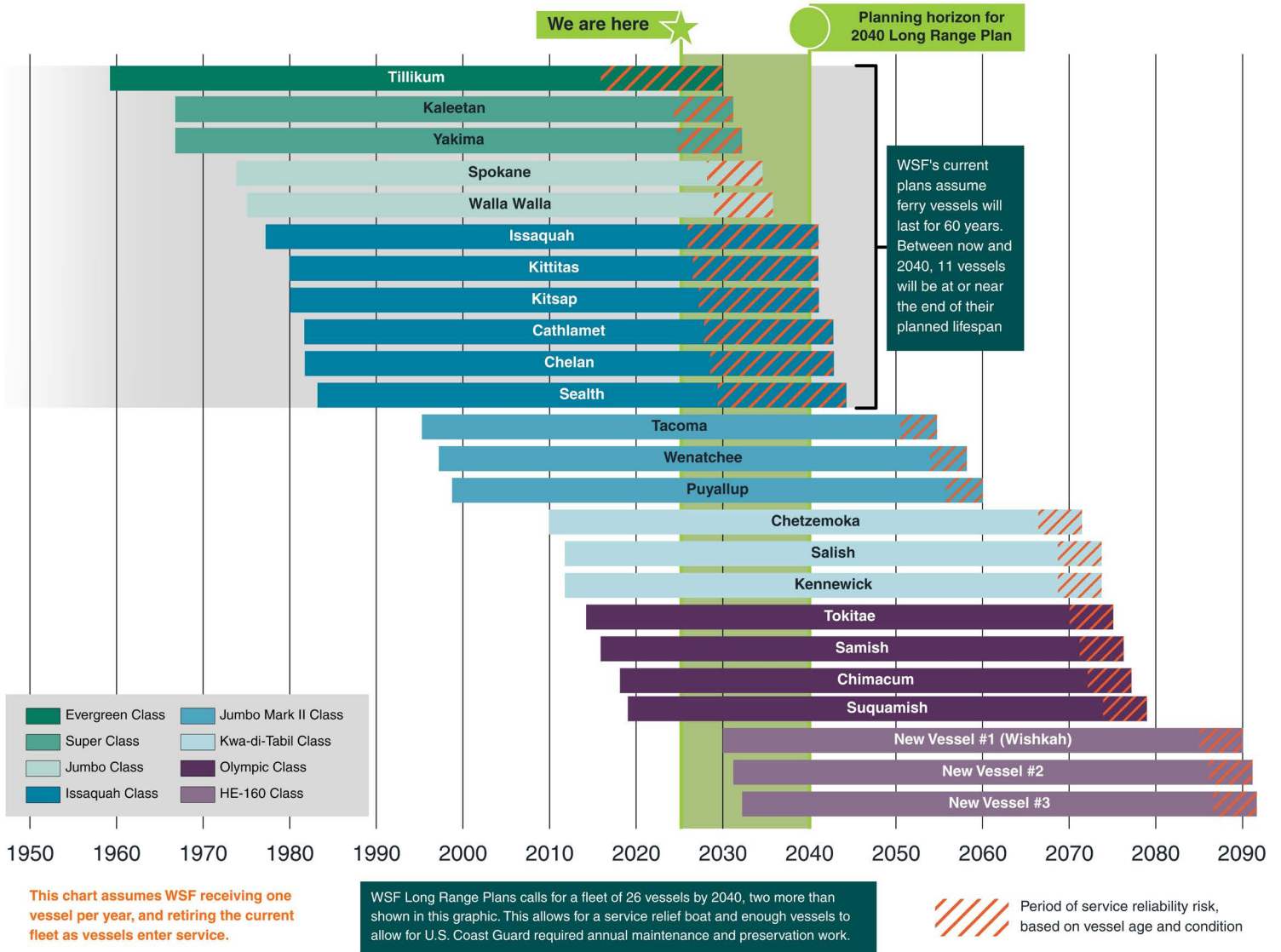
1. **Relief vessels.** We will have 20 of our 21 vessels available for service during the six weeks of the tournament. With 18 vessels needed to maintain full summer service, this means we will have two vessels available in relief in case a vessel must be removed from service. This will provide us with the flexibility to deploy an appropriate relief vessel if needed. These vessels will be docked at our Eagle Harbor Maintenance Facility.
2. **Additional vessel crew.** We will have additional crew on standby at Eagle Harbor, where our relief vessels will be positioned, allowing quick response to any vessel-related issue in Central Puget Sound.
3. **Additional terminal staff.** We will have additional staff at terminals to assist passengers and manage crowds.
4. **Relaxing of the “24-hour rule.”** Because we will have relief vessels available, and to maintain service on Central Puget Sound routes where the heaviest event-related ridership is likely to occur, we may respond to issues more quickly by deploying a relief vessel. This includes the Seattle/Bremerton, Seattle/Bainbridge Island and Edmonds/Kingston routes.

VESSEL CONSIDERATIONS

Our vessels operate more than 20 hours each day, 365 days a year. This puts stress on the fleet, which is complicated by additional factors:

- Aging vessels:** The fleet's average age is 35 years old. Half the fleet is more than 30 years old, including five of 21 that are more than 50 years old. This aging fleet requires more maintenance to deal with problems such as steel corrosion, replacing or repairing obsolete equipment, and preservation projects that have been deferred, leading to a higher risk of vessel breakdown. See Figure 1, below, for a graphic depiction of the ages of the vessels in the fleet.

Figure 1 - WSF Fleet



- Limited spare vessels:** With only 21 vessels and an aging fleet requiring additional maintenance, we do not always have a standby vessel for emergency relief. Even when one is available, unscheduled repairs can quickly consume this extra capacity, and there will be periods when we will lack enough vessels to operate even the “baseline” level of service. When new vessels join the fleet starting in 2030 (see the bottom three bars of the graph in Figure 1), we will begin net gaining vessels, which will add flexibility in the fleet.

Our vessels are highly regulated by the Coast Guard and must meet stringent requirements before they are allowed to carry passengers. Some of these requirements include an underwater inspection twice every five years, an annual safety inspection, quarterly random inspections and additional testing of sprinkler systems and marine evacuation systems. Scheduling these tests and any related maintenance projects is often a delicate negotiation between a vessel's maintenance needs, its assigned route's service needs and the scarce availability of drydock space in the Puget Sound region. Shipyard capacity in the region is very limited with other vessels taking priority over WSF, like military ships in the region. We must schedule drydock periods well in advance and often our partner shipyards have minimal or no flexibility on scheduling to accommodate emerging needs. Annual system reviews for the USCG-issued Certificate of Inspection (COI) expiration date are non-negotiable and we are unable to defer this date to increase flexibility when we are short of vessels.

We are often able to shift vessels around, juggle maintenance needs and reallocate resources across the system to ensure a minimal loss of service in the event of unplanned maintenance. However, with only 21 vessels and typically no service relief vessel, taking a vessel out of service for repairs is more complicated.

Based on current planned maintenance at our Eagle Harbor Maintenance Facility and commercial shipyards, we expect to have between 17 and 18 vessels available at any given time over the next few years, with the number of vessels available varying throughout the year due to maintenance requirements and scheduling. However, recent experience has shown we have, on average, one or two vessels out of service for unplanned maintenance or repair at any given time. Accounting for unplanned out-of-service time further reduces vessel availability and complicates the process of scheduling needed maintenance for the fleet.

Another consideration we must weigh is what route vessels can serve. Some vessels are too large or too small for the ridership or terminal conditions on some routes; see Table 1 for more details, in the Preseason Planning and Setting Seasonal Service Levels section, below.

CREWING CONSIDERATIONS

Vessel crewing varies by class, with smaller vessels like the Kwa-di Tabil class requiring fewer crew members and larger vessels like the Jumbo Mark II class requiring more personnel. Total crew on a vessel while it is in service could range from 10 to 16 crew members, with a typical range of 12 to 15, depending on the vessel and route. Each vessel has two or three deck shifts and two 12-hour engine room watches a day. Fleetwide, between 578 and 653 crew are needed every day. Our crews are broadly divided into deck crew, those who steer and navigate the vessel, load vehicles and monitor, clean the passenger cabin and are trained to help passengers in an emergency; and engine crew, who are responsible for the vessel's propulsion and other mechanical systems.

We are budgeted to staff vessels with just enough crew to meet the Coast Guard-minimum COI requirements. This means if even one crew member is missing, the ferry may not be able to sail. The USCG sets these minimum levels to make sure there is enough crew to carry out essential emergency functions. The Legislature recently allocated additional funding for us to increase crewing above the COI requirements; we are currently working to implement these increases.

Crew required for each vessel class

	Jumbo Mk II	Jumbo	Super	Olympic	Issaquah	Evergreen State	Kwa-di Tabil
Captain and Mates	3	3	3 ^a	2 ^b	2	2	2
Able-Bodied Sailors	4	4	4	5 ^c	4	4	4
Ordinary Sailors	4	3	3 ^d	4 ^c	3	2	3 ^e
Licensed Engineers	2	2	2	2	2	1	1
Oilers & Wipers	2	2	2	2	1	2	2

Notes:

a – Super class: One mate not needed late fall to early spring, Anacortes/San Juan Islands route only.

b – Olympic class: One additional mate is required on the Seattle/Bremerton route.

c – Olympic class: One AB and one OS are not needed when the passenger capacity is reduced to 50% and the sun deck is closed.

d – Super class: One OS not needed at low passenger loads and the promenade deck is closed.

e – Kwa-di Tabil class: One or two OSs not needed when passenger capacity is reduced to 50%.

Deck crews are assigned to a specific route regardless of which vessel is assigned and work only while the vessel is in service, while engine crews are assigned to a vessel 24 hours a day every day of the year, regardless of which route the vessel is on or whether the vessel is in service. The number of licensed and unlicensed deck crew needed in our workforce to reliably operate different numbers of vessels in service is shown in the table below.

Vessels in Service	Licensed and Unlicensed Deck Crew Members Required
15	710
16	733
17	770
18	791

We have determined that we'll need to hire 60 entry-level deck hands (ordinary sailors) and 36 able-bodied sailors every year in perpetuity to keep 18 vessel service and maintain the baseline level of service. At the same time, we need to continue developing licensed deck officers (mates and captains) through recently implemented programs that support workforce development.

Even when we can hire and train crew to reach full staffing levels, last-minute relief requests can still lead to canceled sailings. At the beginning of every sailing season all watches are crewed. As relief requests come in, our dispatchers work tirelessly to fill open jobs to allow vessels to sail on time. However, when an employee requests relief at the last minute – wakes up sick, has a childcare challenge, gets a flat tire on the way to work – it takes time to find a replacement and dispatch another crew member to the ferry. Regardless of the reason for the crew absence, it is not safe or legal to sail without a full crew.

On average we receive 190 relief requests a day, for both deck and engine room crews, with some of the relief requests coming just before the start of a shift. This number fluctuates wildly depending on the season and circumstances. Last-minute relief requests can be challenging, but with the boost in the pipeline for hiring and training deck crews, the more recent challenge has been filling relief requests for engine room crews (see Appendix B, Crew Availability, for more details on sailing cancellations because of crew shortages).

PRESEASON PLANNING AND SETTING SEASONAL SERVICE LEVELS

We operate four seasonal schedules:

1. Summer (mid-June to late September)
2. Fall (late September to end of December)
3. Winter (January to mid-March)
4. Spring (mid-March to mid-June)

The Port Townsend/Coupeville route has a shoulder season spanning parts of spring and fall, from around Mother's Day in mid-May through Indigenous Peoples' Day in early October.

The Anacortes/San Juan Islands route operates on a two-season schedule: peak (summer) and off-peak (winter, spring, fall).

For each seasonal sailing schedule, we work across departments to determine how to provide service on each route and when each of its 21 vessels will undergo its required maintenance. Both the "where" and "when" come with a significant number of constraints. For example, a vessel may be too large to physically fit in a particular terminal, or a vessel may be too slow for a particular route, making it a bad fit to maintain the sailing schedule and on-time performance (see Table 1 on next page).

We set a seasonal schedule at least two months in advance. This timing is essential to support preparation of sailing schedules, vehicle reservations, crew bidding for watch assignments, determination of tidal cancellations and vessel assignments.

The guidelines we attempt to adhere to during this planning phase include:

- Scheduling no more than three vessels to be out for planned maintenance at any given time.
- Assuming at least one vessel will be unavailable due to unplanned maintenance at any given time.
- Noting which routes are operating on reduced service, as this may dictate the assignment of larger vessels to partially mitigate fewer sailings, or to not assign a smaller-than-normal vessel.

Other considerations – including contracting, crewing and training needs, the capacity of our maintenance facility at Eagle Harbor, budgetary concerns and public or community commitments, among others – are part of the initial planning process and can take some time to complete and involves representatives from all parts of the organization.

Table 1: "Fit" of Vessel Classes to Routes

					Route:										
					South	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	North
					Point Defiance-Tahlequah PD-TAL	Fauntleroy-Vashon-Southworth FVS	Seattle-Bremerton SEA-BR	Seattle-Bainbridge SEA-BI	Edmonds-Kingston ED-KING	Mukilteo-Clinton MUK-CL	Port Townsend-Coupeville PT-KEY	Anacortes-San Juan Islands ANA-SJ	San Juan Interisland ANA-SJ 4	Anacortes-Sidney ANA-SID	
Size	Big	Jumbo Mark II	202	Tacoma	Seattle	Oversize for route	Oversize for route; lengthy loading and unloading	More capacity than needed	Meets demand	Meets demand	Oversize for route	Will not fit in Keystone Harbor	Oversize for route; lengthy loading and unloading	Oversize for route; lengthy loading and unloading	No SOLAS
				Wenatchee	Seattle										
				Puyallup	Kingston										
	↓	Jumbo	188	Spokane	Edmonds	Oversize for route	Oversize for route; lengthy loading and unloading	More capacity than needed	Meets demand	Meets demand	Oversize for route	Will not fit in Keystone Harbor	Oversize for route; lengthy loading and unloading	Oversize for route; lengthy loading and unloading	No SOLAS
				Walla Walla	Seattle										
	↓	Super	144	Kaleetan	Seattle	Oversize for route	Poor operational fit; lengthy loading and unloading.	Good fit for route	Moderate overloads	Moderate overloads	Poor operational fit; lengthy loading and unloading	Will not fit in Keystone Harbor	Good fit for route	Poor operational fit. More capacity than needed	No SOLAS
				Yakima	Anacortes										
	↓	Olympic	144	Tokitae	Mukilteo	Oversize for route	Good fit for route	Good fit for route	Moderate overloads	Moderate overloads	Good fit for route	Will not fit in Keystone Harbor	Good fit for route	More capacity than needed	No SOLAS
				Samish	Anacortes										
				Chimacum	Seattle										
Suquamish				Mukilteo											
↓	Issaquah 124	124	Issaquah	Fauntleroy	More capacity than needed	Good fit for route	Good fit for route	Severe overloads	Moderate overloads	Good fit for route	Will not fit in Keystone Harbor	Good fit for route	More capacity than needed	Issaquah, Kitsap, Kittitas, Cathlamet: No SOLAS	
			Kitsap	Seattle											
			Kittitas	Fauntleroy											
			Cathlamet	Fauntleroy											
			Chelan	Anacortes										Chelan: SOLAS (currently expired)	
↓	Issaquah 90	90	Sealth	Bainbridge Isl.	Good fit for route	Good fit for route	Moderate overloads	Severe overloads	Severe overloads	Moderate overloads	Will not fit in Keystone Harbor	Winter: Good fit for route Spring to Fall: Moderate overloads	Good fit for route	No SOLAS	
↓	E-State	87	Tillikum	Friday Harbor	Poor operational fit	Too slow to keep schedule.	Too slow to keep schedule	Can't meet demand. Too slow to keep schedule	Severe overloads	Moderate overloads. Too slow to keep schedule	Will not fit in Keystone Harbor	Too slow to keep schedule	Good fit for route	No SOLAS	
↓	Kwa-di Tabil	64	Chetzemoka	Pt Def	Good fit for route	Poor operational fit. Too slow to keep schedule.	Too slow to keep schedule	Can't meet demand. Poor fit to terminal	Severe overloads	Severe overloads. Too slow to keep schedule.	Good fit for route	Severe overloads. Too slow to keep schedule.	Fall to Spring: Lengthy loading and off-loading Summer: Moderate overloads. Lengthy loading and off-loading.	No SOLAS	
			Salish	Pt Town											
			Kennewick	Pt Town											

Key: Good fit for route. Vessel not ideal but is acceptable. Vessel can work the route but it's not optimal due to vessel size/speed. Vessel does not work on the route

CUSTOMER INFORMATION AND SERVICE DISRUPTION COMMUNICATIONS

To allow customers enough time to plan their travel, we work hard to communicate any service disruptions to the traveling public and to the broader community. We share service information and context around service disruptions, and provide travel information in the following ways:

- **Text or email alerts:** [Travel alert bulletins](#) or rider alerts are sent to customers who have subscribed for this service. Customer service web agents are on staff from 4:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. to send out alerts. In the overnight hours, our operations staff can send out limited rider alerts if needed.
- **Customer contact center:** Customer Service is open daily from 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and can be reached by calling 206-464-6400 or 888-808-7977. Agents are also available to respond to emails at wsfinfo@wsdot.wa.gov.
- **WSDOT app and online travel tools:** The WSDOT app includes ferry schedules, real-time maps and service bulletins. We also provide several trip planning tools which customers find particularly useful during periods of reduced service including:
 - Sailing [schedules by route](#).
 - A [real-time map](#) showing the position and status of every vessel in the fleet.
 - [Terminal, wait time and camera information](#).
- **Social and traditional media:** Rider alerts automatically post on the WSF website, and on our X (formerly known as Twitter) and Bluesky accounts. Additionally, our communications team monitors social media accounts Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and answer customer questions about service delays and disruptions. They staff a 24/7 media hotline and contact media outlets as needed to share details on breaking news.
- **Emails to elected officials and interested parties:** For major service impacts, we send emails to affected legislators, local elected officials and Ferry Advisory Committee members so they can share information with their constituents and fellow community members.
- **Highway signs and information:** Customer service staff work with WSDOT highway operations to update messages on the Highway Advisory Radio system and variable-message signs that are accessible from state routes leading to ferry terminals.
- **WSF Weekly Update newsletter:** We send out a weekly newsletter that often provides more in-depth information about vessel and crew availability constraints, past and future service disruptions and sailing schedule changes. Customers can view each newsletter and subscribe to the [Weekly Update online](#).

With operations spanning the Salish Sea from Tacoma to the San Juan Islands, our customer service staff prioritizes sending out information on the highest-impact situations in a fast-moving marine operating environment.

CONCLUSION

We are committed to improved communication with our customers and communities. This means being upfront when disruptions occur, explaining why they happen, and being clear about what we are doing to reduce their impact. Transparency is essential to rebuilding confidence.

While service disruptions are an inevitable reality of most mass transit systems, we hope this Service Contingency Plan offers passengers insight into the many trade-offs we must make and how these difficult decisions are made, while also providing clarity into what service customers can expect.

2026 will be about steady progress, honest communication and building toward a future where one unexpected breakdown doesn't ripple across the entire system.

APPENDIX A: VESSEL AVAILABILITY

Vessel availability is a major constraint. In 2015, we had 24 vessels; since then, we have retired five vessels and added two. Our fleet now consists of 21 vessels ranging from eight to 67 years old. Our [2040 Long Range Plan](#), delivered to the Legislature in 2019, says 26 vessels are necessary to provide reliable service on every route as well as out-of-service time for necessary vessel inspection, maintenance and preservation work. We presently have funding for up to three new ferries. In 2023, the Legislature changed state law to allow us to expand our new vessel build program out of state, which provides additional opportunity to build new vessels more quickly. Even with these changes, the first new vessel likely won't enter service until 2030. We signed a contract with Eastern Shipbuilding Group, which will begin cutting steel for the first new vessel in summer 2026.

Operating full service on every route requires 19 vessels in the summer, 18 in the spring and fall "shoulder" seasons (generally Mother's Day to Indigenous Peoples' Day) and 17 in the late fall/winter/early spring. Throughout 2023, we operated with 14-16 vessels in service for extended periods of time, and in 2024 and 2025 operated with 15-16 vessels in service the entire year. Due to the increasing age of the fleet and a long history of deferred vessel maintenance, we believe planning for a baseline of 17 vessels in service, with up to 18 available during the peak season, is the most reasonable projection for the next four years. With limited vessel availability, we will be unable to operate full service on every route until new vessels are constructed and delivered.

APPENDIX B: CREW AVAILABILITY

We are affected by the global shortage of mariners, and competition with other maritime companies to hire. In recent years, we have faced staff shortages that are unprecedented in our 75-year history. In 2019, our [2040 Long Range Plan](#) recommended that our workforce must be further strengthened with more active recruitment, development and retention to ensure reliable service. Since then, the effects of an international shortage of mariners, attrition due to the COVID-19 pandemic and other factors, and retirement due to the aging demographics of the workforce have combined to reduce staffing below levels necessary to reliably operate the system.

As part of the “generational transformation” that the Washington State Department of Transportation has been discussing since at least 2016, 50% of our most credentialed deck and engine room employees are retirement eligible in the next five years. Recognizing the need, the state has provided robust funding recently for recruiting, hiring and training new employees. The new funding has allowed us to also create new programs to move non-licensed employees to get licensed, but, due to USCG requirements around the amount of training and days at sea for each position, takes time.

With an estimated shortfall of 21,000 mariners worldwide, this is not just a WSF issue. BC Ferries, the Alaska Marine Highway System and the Massachusetts Steamship Authority are all canceling sailings due to crewing. And importantly, BC Ferries and other international ferry systems can hire crew from other nations, something U.S. ferry systems are precluded from doing by the 1920 Jones Act.

As in 2024, in 2025 we saw crewing-related cancellations steadily subside thanks to an increasing number of available crew, and efforts by WSF with support from the state funding. In 2025, We operated roughly 7,000 additional sailings and recorded about 400 fewer cancellations compared to the prior year. Canceled sailings due to crewing dropped by almost 70%.

APPENDIX C: TERMINAL CONTINGENCY FRAMEWORK

As mentioned in the Unplanned Service Disruptions section, disruptions at terminals are often resolved within hours. In the rare cases when they are not, we have a terminal-by-terminal contingency framework (see Figure 2, below). The options listed for each terminal are a starting point, as each disruption may force us to consider other options; for example, the possible reroutes in the figure do not take into account pilotage licenses (which may not allow a captain to simply sail to another terminal). The options listed in the figure are also based on a mechanical failure at the terminal.

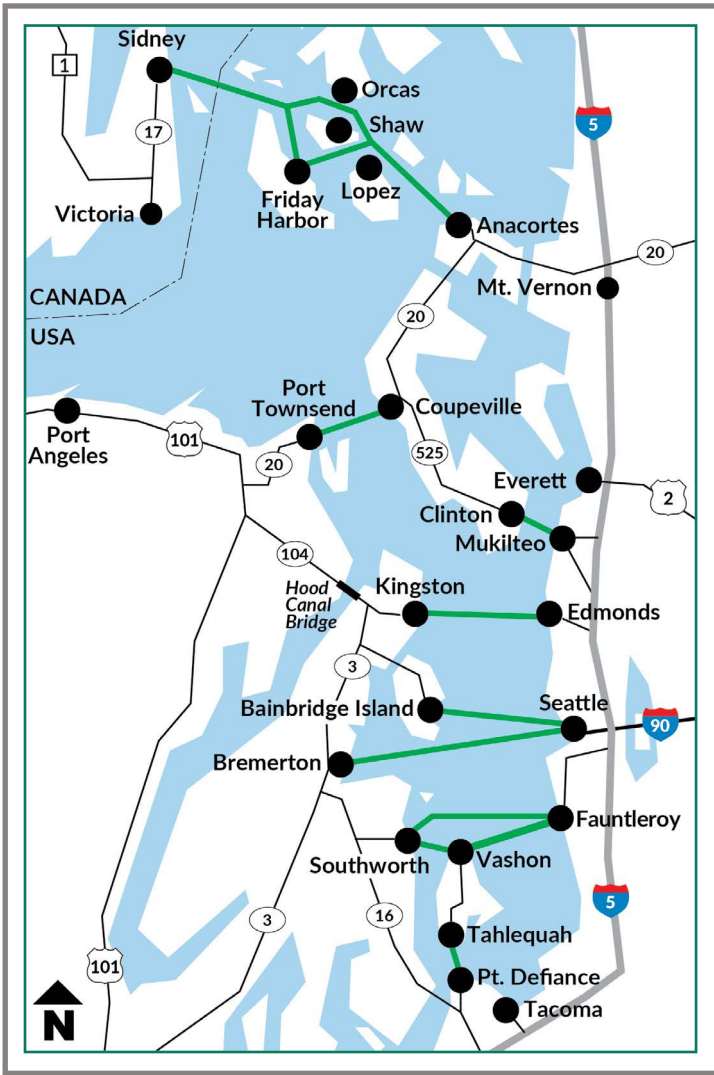
When the problem is mechanical or electrical, we will dispatch a crew from our Eagle Harbor Maintenance Facility on Bainbridge Island to inspect and assess the situation. In most cases, the problem can be easily fixed, but how quickly the terminal can get back “online” is dependent on a number of factors, including:

- **The distance between Eagle Harbor and the breakdown.** For example, Eagle Harbor crews can reach the Bainbridge Island and Bremerton terminals much more quickly than they can Friday Harbor, which takes about six hours from door to door.
- **Tools and equipment.** Technicians will bring with them a variety of tools and equipment to make terminal repairs, but if a specialized instrument or part is needed, they will have to obtain it from another source.

If terminal repairs cannot be made quickly, we must make some difficult decisions about whether we can and should reroute traffic to other terminals. Some criteria to consider include the estimated duration and effects of the disruption; whether there is an alternate route available to customers; the characteristics of the route; and the availability/suitability of an alternate terminal. The number of slips available for a vessel to dock at plays a huge role in whether or not a terminal is a suitable home for a vessel.

Because every situation is highly dependent on a number of variables, it is difficult to predict with complete accuracy how we will respond in the event of a terminal closure. However, we can make some educated guesses: if a train derails in Edmonds and blocks access to that terminal, we might decide to return passengers to Kingston so they can take alternate routes. In rare cases, we might partner with other public transit agencies or even private transportation providers to help passengers get to their destination. Regardless of the situation, we will always put passenger safety at the top of our priorities.

Figure 2 - WSF Terminal Contingency Options



Anacortes: 2 vehicle slips, 2 tie-up slips, overhead loading

If a vehicle slip fails, use other vehicle slip but there will be delays when vessels conflict.

Bainbridge: 2 vehicle slips, 1 tie-up slip, overhead loading

If a vehicle slip fails, use other vehicle slip. Move passengers onto car deck for overhead failures.

Bremerton: 2 vehicle slips, overhead loading

If a vehicle slip fails, use other vehicle slip. Move passengers onto car deck for overhead failures. Will need alternate for overnight tie-up if one slip is not available.

Clinton: 2 vehicle slips

If a vehicle slip fails, use other slip. Will need alternate for overnight tie-up if one slip is not available.

Coupeville: 1 vehicle slip

No service until repaired.

Edmonds: 1 vehicle slip, overhead loading

No service until repaired. Move passengers onto car deck for overhead failures.

Fauntleroy: 1 vehicle slip

No service until repaired or consider moving service to Seattle.

Friday Harbor: 1 vehicle slip, 1 tie-up slip

If the vehicle slip fails, passenger traffic could be accommodated until repaired using the tie-up slip.

Kingston: 2 vehicle slips, 1 tie-up slip, overhead loading

If a vehicle slip fails, use other slip. Move passengers onto car deck for overhead failures.

Lopez Island: 1 vehicle slip

No service until repaired.

Mukilteo: 1 vehicle slip, overhead loading

No service until repaired or consider moving service to Edmonds. Move passengers onto car deck for overhead failures.

Orcas Island: 1 vehicle slip

No service until repaired.

Point Defiance: 1 vehicle slip

No service until repaired.

Port Townsend: 2 vehicle slips

If a vehicle slip fails, use other slip. Will need alternate for overnight tie-up if one slip is not available.

Seattle: 3 vehicle slips, overhead loading

If a vehicle slip or overhead fails, use other slip.

Shaw Island: 1 vehicle slip

No service until repaired.

Sidney, British Columbia: 1 vehicle slip

No service until repaired.

Southworth: 1 vehicle slip

No service until repaired or consider moving service to Bremerton.

Tahlequah: 1 vehicle slip

No service until repaired.

Vashon Island: 2 vehicle slips, 1 tie-up slip

If a vehicle slip fails, use other vehicle slip but there will be delays when vessels conflict. Will need alternate for overnight tie-up if one slip is not available.

APPENDIX D: PREVIOUS SERVICE PLANS

We released our COVID-19 Service Restoration Plan in March 2022 and an update in February 2023. The plan described the process by which we would increase our service to meet increasing demand as the ferry system recovered from the immediate effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, as ridership rebounded and responded to ongoing crew and vessel availability challenges exacerbated by the pandemic. Now, as more years separate us from the pandemic and we better understand some of the systemic challenges related to crew and vessel availability, it's clear it will take longer to restore all routes to full service, especially before we add a new ferry to the fleet in 2030.

In 2024, a Service Contingency Plan replaced the COVID-19 Service Restoration Plan and provided a framework for service decisions over the next several years. The 2025 Service Contingency Plan was an update to that document, and this document is an update to the 2025 Service Contingency Plan.