



# **NORTH SOUND TRANSPORTATION ALLIANCE (NSTA)**

## **FOCUS ON FERRIES WORKSHOP REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS**

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*Final report date: June 4, 2018*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The North Sound Transportation Alliance (NSTA) is a coalition of citizens, elected officials, and agency staff from Washington State's five northwestern-most counties: Whatcom, Skagit, San Juan, Island, and Snohomish. NSTA strives to improve ways for people to travel in the region by pursuing the following objectives: 1) Collect travel and system data to identify needs; 2) Improve regional connections and sustain and expand services; 3) Enhance mobility through sustainable, equitable, and innovative transportation solutions; 4) Inform the public about transportation services to enhance awareness of the regional transportation network.

The goal of the **April 13, 2018 Focus on Ferries Workshop**, held in Mt. Vernon, Washington was to **develop a list of action items** for NSTA regarding regional ferry travel and service. The discussion addressed three questions:

- How do we make "door to door, not shore to shore" happen?
- How do we accommodate and plan for future ridership growth?
- How do we address ferry service sustainability as a community?

### **BACKGROUND**

Prior to the discussion, participants were informed of regional ferry projects and related developments.

Lauren Craig from King County Water Taxi updated participants on an upcoming Puget Sound Passenger Ferry Conference to discuss similar issues in the greater Puget Sound region.

Ray Deardorf, Planning Director for WA State Ferries discussed ridership, long-range planning, and sustainability within the state fleet.

Angi Mozer from the Port of South Whidbey presented plans for the upcoming Mukilteo ferry park & ride and planning for pedestrian access.

Brian Wood from Island RTPo listed the top concerns of Island County planners regarding the Clinton Park & Ride and non-motorized access to the ferry, Ferry Dock Road improvements, the Mukilteo multimodal project, overhead passenger loading, and the WA State Ferries long-range plan.

Dan Berentson from Skagit County Public Works updated the participants on the electric ferry pilot project currently seeking funding to replace the aged Guemes Island ferry.

## STRUCTURE OF THE BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Participants at the workshop were broken into three groups. Each group addressed one of the questions listed above. The groups were encouraged to brainstorm potential solutions regardless of feasibility or cost. Individuals developed ideas on their own, shared these ideas in groups of two and four, and then created a list as a larger group. These ideas were refined in a series of exercises. Members of each group were able to provide feedback and add to the list for every question.

The first round of discussions focused on overall objectives, and the second round refined this list into actionable items.

## OBJECTIVES

The group identified primary objectives for ferry service in the region:

- Analyze existing and needed ferry connections in the region.
- Increase passenger ferry traffic.
- Support alternative services such transportation network companies (TNCs) like Uber and Lyft to provide last-mile access for travelers without their own vehicles.
- Improve modal connections between ferries, transit, and rail.
- Focus improvements on the need to accommodate ridership growth in a sustainable manner.

## SOLUTIONS FOR OBJECTIVES

### Analyze existing and needed connections

1. Map out common origins and destinations and show what routes exist and their associated travel times. From this identify missing connections.
2. Perform a gap analysis with staff/students to track travel times on various ferry plus transit routes.
3. Survey commercial traffic to determine if pricing can incentivize off-peak commercial travel movements.
4. Integrate regional long-range plans to create a wholistic vision.

### Increase passenger ferry traffic

5. Grow passenger deck capacity.
6. Increase passenger ferry service with quicker turnarounds for faster service.
7. Provide long-term parking at ferry terminals.
8. Invest in charging stations at ferry terminals to allow electric vehicle owners to leave their vehicles and allow them to charge.
9. Prioritize ferry access options for carsharing, vanpools, etc.
10. Develop a state Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) program for smaller employers (e.g. Whatcom Smart Trips).
11. Provide “guaranteed ride home” services at ferry terminals for passenger travelers to use in emergency situations.
12. Implement a marketing campaign that promotes different public and private options for last mile of travel when taking the ferry within the region.
13. Move away from the vehicle as the primary service model for ferries – remove any language that requires a certain percentage of travelers use the car mode to guarantee ferry funding.

## **Support transportation network companies (TNCs) like Uber and Lyft to provide last-mile services**

14. Research TNC deployment in other smaller urban and rural areas to glean key lessons on how to partner with these business and incorporate services into a larger mobility platform.
15. Create statewide incentives to expand TNCs and car sharing.
16. Encourage TNCs to include services that better fit people's lives (e.g. allow transport of pets, incorporate bike racks on vehicles, etc.)
17. Change TNC registration rules so vehicles have a region-wide license, not a license per city.
18. Coordinate with TNCs to market their services as part of special event promotions.
19. Create dedicated parking/drop-off areas for TNCs at ferry terminals.
20. Subsidize TNC base pay in rural areas to incentivize service.

## **Improve regional modal connections**

21. Develop an interlocal agreement between regional transit agencies and ferry providers to plan schedules together.
22. Expand the reservation system to serve all routes.
23. Develop smart phone technology that incorporates transportation options throughout the region, similar to Results WA. (e.g. sponsor a hackathon to develop an app that links the ferry reservation system with transit routing and planning).
24. Increase bicycle capacity on transit buses serving ferry routes.
25. Look at popular ferry runs to determine how delays can be reduced to better meet transit schedules.
26. Operate a demand response ferry terminal service that feeds into the larger transit network.
27. Run a pilot project with a small passenger van to serve between Anacortes Ferry Terminal to Skagit Station.
28. Use radios for continuous communications between ferry and transit operators.
29. Provide bus service dependent on ferry arrival and independent of the rest of the transit schedule.
30. Study the feasibility of a bus riding on the ferry for continued service.
31. Operate more buses.

## **Improvements for growth and sustainability**

32. Look at different service options - increased routing, frequency, and use of different modes.
33. Provide direct service to center destinations (e.g. direct ferry routes to Everett).
34. Return to a more nimble model for moving passengers around the sound, like the Mosquito Fleet.
35. Provide more boats, including backups for when mechanical issues develop.
36. Investigate special district funding like in Kitsap County.
37. Plan staggered ferry boat investments.
38. Consider new funding models to replace gas tax.

## **ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS/FEEDBACK**

Following the conference participants and those who were unable to attend were asked to submit responses to this draft report with additional suggestions and/or feedback regarding regional ferry

service. The following issues were brought up outside the workshop but still should be considered within the scope of this effort:

- Maintain a reliable, sustainable WA State Ferries system by:
  - Continuing to build new boats while not replacing old boats
  - Strive for a minimum of two reserve boats
  - Look to construct hybrid-electric ferries for all new construction
  - Construct at least one SOLAS boat to provide service reliability
  - Cover all annual core maintenance costs on boats and start to pay for deferred vessel maintenance.
  - Continue earthquake terminal remodels at ferry terminals
  - Add an extra holding slip in Anacortes and an extra vehicle slip in Friday Harbor.

## **NEXT STEPS**

This list will be shared with the intention to move forward with projects in 2019.

## **MORE INFORMATION**

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