

Kitsap Transit

Connecting Communities

PRESS RELEASE

Kitsap Transit Gears Up for Southworth Fast Ferry Launch, Wins \$2.25 Million Grant for Redevelopment of Southworth Ferry Terminal

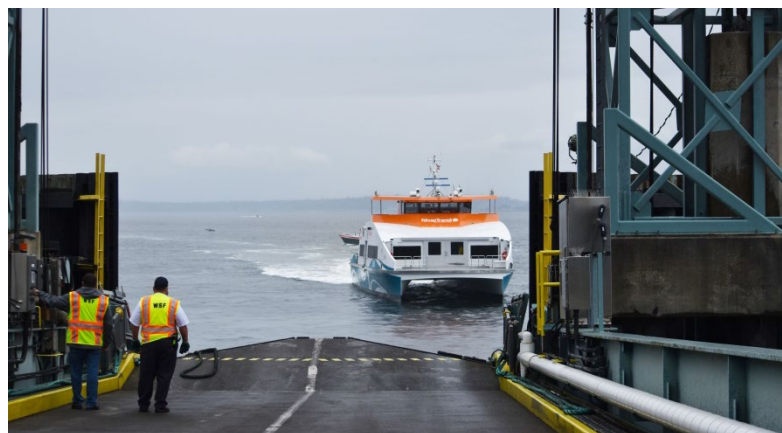
October 16, 2020

Media Contact: Sanjay Bhatt, 360-824-4926, sanjayb@kitsaptransit.com

BREMERTON, Wash. – Kitsap Transit is gearing up for the launch of Southworth Fast Ferry Service in 2020 without a spare vessel based on community feedback in an online survey that closed today.

When asked whether Kitsap Transit should launch the Southworth-Seattle service this year without a spare vessel, 76 percent of respondents supported moving ahead, while 18 percent said the agency should wait until it had a spare vessel. The rest were unsure.

“We wanted the community to weigh in on this question because they’re the ones who will be most impacted when the vessel has a mechanical issue,” said John Clauson, Executive Director of Kitsap Transit. “The community has spoken. Meanwhile, we’re working with Washington State Ferries to ensure this service is successful and has room to grow for decades to come.”



M/V Enetai docking at Southworth Ferry Terminal.

Survey Results

The survey, which opened on October 1, received more than 880 responses from the community – with overwhelming support for launching service this year without a spare vessel (see table below).

Should Kitsap Transit launch the Southworth-Seattle Fast Ferry service this year without a spare vessel?

	Respondents	Yes	No	Unsure
All areas	883	76%	18%	6%
Kitsap County	795	76%	18%	6%
South Kitsap*	660	79%	15%	6%

*ZIP codes 98322, 98353, 98359, 98366, 98367, 98378, 98384, 98386

Kitsap Transit anticipates being able to start the service in 2020, as it promised voters four years ago, with the M/V Enetai, a 255-passenger bow-loader. But it has not received a delivery date for the sistership, M/V Commander. The shipyard under contract, Nichols Bros. Boat Builders on Whidbey Island, is behind schedule due to disruptions stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Without a delivery date for Commander, Kitsap Transit sought the community's preference on whether to launch the Southworth Fast Ferry service this year without the spare vessel. In that case, when the Enetai breaks down, customers would need to find alternatives such as Washington State Ferries' (WSF) Southworth-Vashon route and King County Water Taxi's Vashon-Seattle route.

Enetai and Commander will be the primary vessels operating Kitsap Transit's Southworth-Seattle and Kingston-Seattle routes. If the bow-loader on the Southworth route breaks down, the other will be pulled from the Kingston route; the M/V Finest will serve as the spare vessel on the Kingston route.

Despite the occasional challenges of weather and mechanical issues, Kitsap Fast Ferries provides a highly reliable service: After adjusting for factors beyond its control such as weather and Seattle terminal shutdowns, the service's reliability in 2019 was 99 percent, and so far this year, 99 percent.

Preventive maintenance is key to this track record. The Puget Sound Regional Council recently awarded \$593,064 in federal funds to Kitsap Transit for preventive maintenance of its fast ferries. The funds pay for a wide range of preventive maintenance work to preserve and extend the life of the ferries.

With the launch of Southworth Fast Ferry service on the horizon, Kitsap Transit is finalizing plans with Washington State Ferries for traffic management of buses, boarding of walk-on passengers and raising and lowering of the transfer span at the Southworth Ferry Terminal. Once an agreement with WSF is signed and Kitsap Transit's crews complete training on the Enetai, Kitsap Transit will be in a strong position to announce a launch date.

Redevelopment of Southworth Ferry Terminal

Meanwhile, Washington State Ferries is leading a multi-year redevelopment of the Southworth Ferry Terminal. Kitsap Transit, in partnership with WSF, applied for and won a \$2.25 million grant from the Federal Highway Administration for its portion of the preliminary engineering and design work.

The preliminary work led by WSF will consider several areas, including:

- Replacing the timber trestle with concrete and steel, the dock and transfer span
- Constructing a new shoreside terminal building
- Providing shore-side electrification infrastructure
- Adding a second berthing slip for WSF and Kitsap Transit ferries to use
- Providing ADA-accessible sidewalks

The preliminary engineering and design work is slated to begin in 2023; there are no funds earmarked for construction at this time.

About Kitsap Transit

Kitsap Transit has been operating friendly, convenient public transit since 1983. The transit agency for Kitsap County carried more than 3.8 million riders in 2018 across a multi-modal system of routed buses, passenger ferries, paratransit shuttles, vanpools, and worker/driver buses for the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard.

Hablar español?

Por favor llame al 1-800-501-7433 durante las horas normales de oficina. El personal de servicios al cliente se conectará con un intérprete para ayudarle a responder sus preguntas.

Nagsasalita ka ba ng Tagalog?

Paki-tawagan ang numero 1-800-501-7433 normal na oras ng trabaho. Customer Service kawani ay kumonekta sa isang taga interpretor upang tulungan sagutin ang iyong katanungan.

##