



## PRESS RELEASE

# Kitsap Transit ferries carried more than 1.22 million passengers in 2024

*Extra state-funded sailings, more commuters fuel growth*

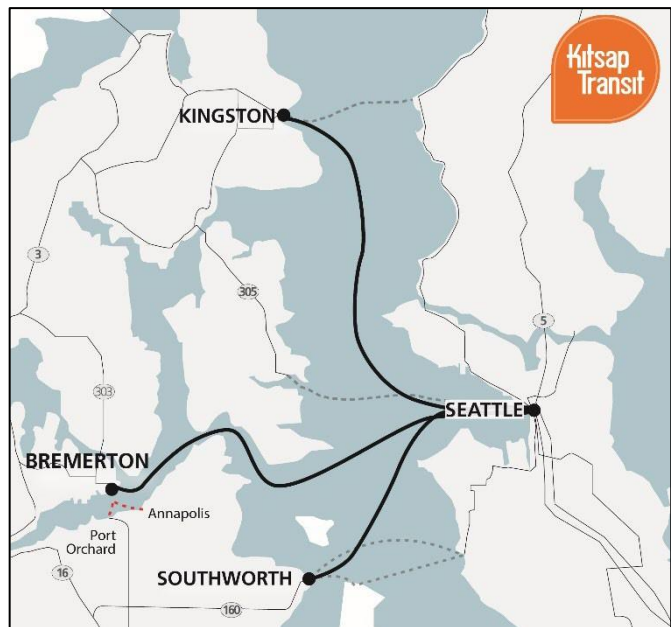
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BREMERTON, Wash. – Kitsap Transit’s passenger-only ferries carried a record 1.22 million riders in 2024, 12% more than the previous year.

Ridership on Kitsap Fast Ferries, which operates three routes from the Kitsap Peninsula to downtown Seattle, grew 11% to 854,529 riders. Meanwhile, ridership on Kitsap Transit’s Local Foot Ferry services, which connects Bremerton to Port Orchard and Annapolis, rose 16% to 374,336 riders.

All five ferry routes operated by Kitsap Transit carried more riders than they did in 2023. The Southworth Fast Ferry service saw the most growth – a 21% annual gain (Table 1).



“We’re pleased to see ridership continue to grow on our cross-sound fast ferries,” said John Clauson, Executive Director of Kitsap Transit. “We would expect more growth in 2025 as more employees return to working in downtown Seattle.”

## Factors Driving Ridership Growth

The expansion of the Bremerton Fast Ferry schedule in December 2022 to 40 daily sailings on weekdays has been a key factor driving Kitsap’s ferry ridership growth since 2022: Washington State Ferries (WSF)

pays Kitsap Transit to operate an extra seven roundtrips on weekdays and, from October to April, seven roundtrips on Saturdays. (Kitsap Fast Ferries operates typically on Saturdays from May through September.) The state committed to funding the sailings until WSF can restore its two-boat service cut on the Bremerton/Seattle route during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a result, ridership on the Bremerton Fast Ferry in 2024 was 68% higher than in 2022.

Not all this growth was due to the additional state-funded sailings. Pandemic-era capacity limits on transit were dropped in July 2021, and ridership grew as employers called more workers back to job sites. Kitsap Transit also invested in the first-ever marketing campaign for Kitsap Fast Ferries in 2023.

These factors help explain ridership growth across Kitsap Transit’s ferries: The Kingston Fast Ferry’s ridership in 2024 was up 46% over 2022. The Southworth Fast Ferry, the newest of the three cross-sound routes operated by Kitsap Transit, launched in March 2021. Since 2022, ridership on the Port Orchard Foot Ferry and Annapolis Foot Ferry has grown 22% and 57%, respectively.

To look up statistics on each route and average loads by sailing, visit [kitsaptransit.com/ferry-dash](https://kitsaptransit.com/ferry-dash).

<b>TABLE 1. RIDERSHIP COMPARISON, 2023 AND 2024</b>				
	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>Change</b>	<b>% Change</b>
<b>Fast Ferry Routes</b>	<b>769,732</b>	<b>854,529</b>	<b>84,797</b>	<b>11%</b>
Bremerton/Seattle	517,270	563,833	46,563	9%
Kingston/Seattle	106,375	113,390	7,015	7%
Southworth/Seattle	146,087	177,306	31,219	21%
<b>Local Ferry Routes</b>	<b>323,085</b>	<b>374,336</b>	<b>51,251</b>	<b>16%</b>
Port Orchard/Bremerton	216,101	248,056	31,955	15%
Annapolis/Bremerton	106,984	126,280	19,296	18%
<b>KITSAP FERRIES TOTAL</b>	<b>1,092,817</b>	<b>1,228,865</b>	<b>136,048</b>	<b>12%</b>

### **High Reliability, On-Time Performance**

Systemwide, Kitsap Transit’s ferry services maintained 99% reliability and 97% on-time performance in 2024. Reliability is the percentage of scheduled sailings that were operated. On-time performance is the percentage of sailings that arrive within 5 minutes of the expected arrival time. As you might expect,

unanticipated canceled sailings bring the reliability score down, and late sailings bring the on-time performance score down. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

<b>TABLE 2. RELIABILITY &amp; ON-TIME PERFORMANCE, 2024</b>		
Route	Reliability	On-Time Performance
Bremerton/Seattle	98%	92%
Kingston/Seattle	95%	97%
Southworth/Seattle	100%	88%
Port Orchard/Bremerton	100%	100%
Annapolis/Bremerton	99%	100%
<b>SYSTEMWIDE</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>97%</b>

Last August, Kitsap Fast Ferries hit a rough spot when it had no spare vessels for the Kingston/Seattle and Southworth/Seattle routes because of an unexpected defect in the primary vessels’ jet propulsion systems. The situation resulted in 111 canceled sailings in August on the Kingston/Seattle route, which had the lowest reliability (95%) in 2024 among the five ferry routes.

Kitsap Transit had applied to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Passenger Ferry grant program to build a new fast ferry to replace M/V Finest, an aging spare vessel assigned to the Kingston/Seattle route that has had multiple mechanical issues.

In September, the FTA announced Kitsap Transit would receive the \$13.4 million federal grant, which will cover 80 percent of the new ferry’s \$17.5 million cost. A new fast ferry will incorporate cleaner diesel engines and could resemble Kitsap Transit’s bow-loading vessels M/V Enetai and Commander, each of which has capacity for 250 passengers.

This year, Kitsap Transit plans to request qualifications from marine engineering firms interested in helping with these design upgrades and serving as its representative during vessel construction. After that process is completed, Kitsap Transit plans to request bids from shipyards that would construct the new vessel.

At the same time, Kitsap Transit is planning to build its own marine maintenance facility to handle some repairs that require hauling a vessel out of the water. This project will reduce the time and cost of taking Kitsap Transit’s ferries to private shipyards, shortening the time it takes to return a vessel to service.

Kitsap Transit has completed a siting study and selected a preferred local alternative for the facility. The next steps include a federally required environmental impact study and preliminary engineering.

### **Fare Increases on Kitsap Fast Ferries**

Fares on Kitsap Fast Ferries went up for the first time on October 1, 2024, in response to ongoing inflationary conditions and the growing urgency to preserve the long-term sustainability of the Marine

Services fleet and facilities.

The regular fare for trips departing Seattle increased by \$2, from \$10 to \$12, and will rise to \$13 on October 1, 2025. The regular fare for trips departing Bremerton, Kingston and Southworth remains \$2.

Despite the fare increase, Fast Ferry ridership in the last three months of 2024 was essentially the same as or slightly higher than the same period the previous year.

As the state Legislature convenes for its biennial session, Gov. Jay Inslee's proposed budget includes about \$6 million in WSDOT funding to support the extra fast-ferry sailings on the Bremerton/Seattle route through 2027. Kitsap Transit cannot continue to operate these sailings without the Legislature providing the funding required to maintain them.

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#### **About Kitsap Transit**

Kitsap Transit has been operating friendly, convenient public transit since 1983. The transit agency for Kitsap County carried more than 3.84 million riders in 2019 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.