

FINAL BILL REPORT

ESB 6325

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Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Authorizing additional state ferry vessels.

Sponsors: Senators Oke, B. Sheldon and T. Sheldon.

Senate Committee on Transportation

House Committee on Transportation Policy & Budget

Background: Passenger-only ferry service first began in 1986 with service from Seattle to Bremerton. Expanded service to Bremerton and Vashon Island began in 1990.

A 1989 study conducted by the Puget Sound Council of Governments reviewed cross-sound travel through the year 2020 and identified the Southworth to Seattle and the Kingston to Seattle passenger-only ferry routes as promising, based on criteria evaluating cost effectiveness, time savings, non-duplication of service, and ability to relieve congestion. The ridership analysis for these routes showed that an expanded passenger-only ferry program could serve as a transportation demand management measure, changing travel behavior from use of the single-occupant vehicle to high occupancy passenger vessels.

It is predicted that a Seattle-Kingston passenger-only ferry route would reduce congestion on the Seattle-Bainbridge and Edmonds-Kingston routes as well as traffic demand on the SR 305 corridor. Direct passenger-only service from Southworth to Seattle would reduce congestion on the Fauntleroy/Vashon/Southworth route and reduce traffic demand on the SR 16/I-5 corridor.

Four new passenger-only vessels would bring the total fleet of high-speed, low-wake vessels to six and allow Washington State Ferries to deliver the program identified in the Transportation Commission's 1993 Passenger-Only Implementation Plan. Two 350-passenger vessels each would serve Seattle-Southworth and Seattle-Kingston and allow 30-35 minute crossings and departures every 45 minutes during the peak periods.

Summary: Legislative intent to construct additional passenger-only ferries and supporting terminals to serve the Southworth to Seattle and Kingston to Seattle routes is declared.

The Department of Transportation (DOT) is authorized to construct a maximum of four passenger-only ferry vessels with technology that will respond to the service demands of a Southworth-Seattle and Kingston-Seattle route and the necessary terminal and docking facilities.

The acquisition, procurement and construction of vessels and terminals must be carried out in accordance with existing competitive bid procedures using an Invitation For Bid (IFB) process which results in a contract award to the lowest responsible bidder, unless the Secretary of DOT determines in writing that the IFB is either not practicable or not

advantageous to the state. If the latter occurs, DOT is authorized to use a competitive Request For Proposals (RFP) procurement process that allows evaluation of technical and performance factors (such as maintainability, reliability, commonality, cost of spare parts, etc.) in addition to price.

DOT's authority to construct new vessels and terminals is contingent on an appropriation in the 1998 transportation budget or an omnibus appropriations bill. The appropriation must not reduce the current level of funding for the maintenance and repair of vessels and terminals currently in service.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	25	24
House	88	9

Effective: June 11, 1998