

# SERVICE ALERT



The Guemes Island Ferry is committed to providing ferry service during the COVID-19 pandemic; however, we have made some operational changes. We understand this may be a long notification to read through, but we want to make sure we address any questions and concerns you might have during this unprecedented time.

The situation changes regularly, and we may still need to make some tough calls about our sailing schedule in the future. We had originally anticipated making schedule changes as early as March 27; fortunately, we were able to move crew around to fully staff our regular sailing schedule. As of today, March 24, 2020, we will continue to operate on our current sailing schedule. We'll announce any future schedule changes at least one week in advance when possible.

Here are some answers to some frequently asked questions:

- 1) I received a notice saying that the Guemes Island Ferry system is not collecting fares; what does that mean?
  - There is no charge to ride the ferry until further notice; we are not collecting any forms of payment. Eliminating the exchange of cash, credit cards and punch cards allows us to adhere to social distancing recommendations and keep our crew protected so they can continue to work. We realize lost revenue is an issue; however, right now our top priority is the health and safety of our ferry community.
- 2) Wait; what about punch cards?
  - You cannot use punch cards, and we are not selling them. We realize you might be concerned about the expiration date of unused or partially used punch cards. We will address that soon.
- 3) Is the sailing schedule going to change, and how much advance notice will we have?
  - Our goal is to maintain the current sailing schedule as long as we can. Schedule changes will be announced at least one week in advance when possible. We fully understand we are transporting essential personnel to important jobs. That is why we are taking extra precautionary measures to protect our workers, so that we can continue to operate.
- 4) Will you cancel runs? If so, which ones?
  - Again, we need to take this day by day. If we need to reduce service, the last two runs of the week nights and the last three runs on Fridays and Saturdays would be evaluated for elimination first.
  - So far, we have not seen a drop in vehicle ridership; however, we'll continue to evaluate ridership to decide if we need to reduce frequency of service to one run each hour with doubles in between if needed.
- 5) How else is COVID-19 impacting ferry service?
  - We are working to follow distancing orders. We're asking vehicle drivers and passengers to please stay in vehicles with the windows rolled up and for walk-on passengers to maintain 6 feet of distance from other passengers and the crew.
  - We need crews to run the vessel, so we have to consider possible illness-related reductions in staff. We are following the health officer's guidelines and doing everything we can to protect our workers. Bottom line, we need crew to run the vessel. Illness-related reductions in staff could result in service reductions. We have to plan for worst-case scenario which could mean going down to one shift per day instead of two and operating

only 10 hours per day. Again, we are not there yet, and we will advise of schedule changes as soon as possible.

- You can help us by ONLY traveling for essential purposes.
- 6) What is considered essential travel, and how will you enforce it?
- On March 23, Governor Inslee placed a stay at home order on all Washingtonians. During his press conference, he called for essential travel only, and defined essential travel as things like getting groceries, visiting the doctor and going to work at an essential place of business. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list, but you get the idea. For more information, check out <https://coronavirus.wa.gov/whats-open-and-closed>. We as ferry staff have no way to enforce the Governor's orders; however, we ask that you consider the health and safety of our ferry community in your travel choices.
- 7) What precautionary cleaning measures are being taken to protect crew and the public?
- We are following recommendations from our Public Health Department and the CDC. Our crews are vigilant about routinely cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces in crew and public spaces on the vessel and in the terminal.

We understand that you'll continue to have questions and concerns. We're committed to sharing information with you, but we may not have all of the answers right now. Every action we are taking prioritizes the health and safety of our workers and the ferry community.