

Ferry Rate Comments H through M

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Jennifer Rogers

From: Henry Rose <henryrose@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 27, 2023 3:35 PM
To: Ferry Comments; Commissioners
Subject: Bicycles on the Guemes Island Ferry

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Commissioners and Ferry leaders -

Thank you for all of the efforts that go into providing safe and dependable transit to and from Guemes Island.

I'd like to offer some perspective on the proposed change to charge for bringing a bicycle across the Guemes Island ferry. I understand the need to restructure fares in response to financial needs for the county. I also understand the intention to reduce the complexity for ferry staff when collecting fares. I'll add that I believe the biggest challenge the Guemes ferry faces is congestion. The cost of a ride is less important to me and my family than the growing concern that we just won't be able to get on a ferry.

I'd like to share these observations about the proposal:

1. In this plan ferry workers will be tasked with determining who has a bicycle and whether they've paid the bicycle fare. The nature of bicycles is much less binary than one might imagine. For example - what about a folding bicycle? And if that folding bicycle is in a bag? If a folding bicycle in a bag is charged - then should a bicycle inside of a vehicle be charged as well?
2. Presumably the reason to charge for bicycles is that they consume deck space. As a daily commuter on the ferry I assure that there are many more roll-on carts than there are bicycles and each of those carts consumes more deck space. Should the county be charging for those carts?
3. As demand for the ferry increases we should be finding the most efficient ways to use the resources we have. As such we should be encouraging people to cross on the ferry using any means other than a vehicle.

Thank you,
Henry Rose

Jennifer Rogers

From: Ian Woofenden <ian.woofenden@mindspring.com>
Sent: Monday, March 6, 2023 1:39 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Guemes Ferry Fare Proposal

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I've been using the ferry for 44 years.

Many others have undoubtedly commented on the surprisingly large increase in fares proposed. I'll echo the dismay at residents who are faced with dramatically increased costs at the same time that property taxes have gone up significantly.

In addition, I'll add that:

- Mention has been made (maybe a bit threatening) that if you don't raise rates, you'll have to decrease service. I'm strongly in favor of decreasing service. A large portion of islanders did NOT want the ferry hours extended years ago, and I am part of that contingent. Let's have fewer runs, a simpler schedule, and lower costs.
- The ratio of costs for cars, bicycles, and pedestrians seems quite out of whack. I can see that perhaps some base rate per person, regardless of transport method could make sense.

I can't make sense of the fact that a pedestrian takes up a few square feet on the boat and weighs a few hundred pounds, a bicyclist takes up perhaps 10 square feet and adds another 20-80 pounds, while a typical car takes maybe a few hundred square feet and weighs a thousand or more pounds, but the rates in no way reflect the differences between the burden of these three types of users.

The current and proposed rates lay a larger proportional burden on pedestrians and bicyclists, and essentially subsidize people using cars. Meanwhile, congestion in ferry lines and pressure for larger boats and more runs is almost entirely an issue with cars, not people without cars.

With all the analysis and numbers thrown around, and the thousands spent on consultants, I have yet to see any analysis or proposals that reflect these realities.

- Let's have a simpler and more logical fare structure. The idea of having different punch cards for different seasons, charge for bicycles (punch card and a separate debit card payment each time or ??), and using larger increments for oversize vehicles all seem like more trouble and cost for users, and more work and bad feeling for staff to deal with.

Thanks for listening,

Ian Woofenden

Jennifer Rogers

From: Ian Woofenden <ian.woofenden@mindspring.com>
Sent: Friday, June 9, 2023 11:55 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Guemes Ferry Rates

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In all the conversation about Guemes ferry rates, I have yet to see a rationale for the ratio between pedestrian, bicyclist, and car fares.
Please point me to any discussion or rationale that I may have missed.

Without quibbling too much about the exact numbers, it seems like a reasonable estimate to say that:

- The average pedestrian takes up about 5 square feet of deck space and weighs about 200 pounds
- The average bicyclist takes up about 10 square feet of deck space and weighs about 250 pounds
- The average car takes up about 100 square feet of deck space and weighs about 4,000 pounds

Averaging the peak and non peak proposed fares:

- Pedestrian: \$5
- Bicyclist: \$6.13
- Car & Driver: \$12.88

Allowing that there are other factors, I'm wondering why the ratio between car & driver and pedestrians/bicyclists weight and deck space is in the 10+ to 1 range, while the proposed fare differential is in the 2 to 1 range. It seems like in other transportation business, weight and volume are the primary metrics by which costs are set. What's different about the Guemes ferry?

It also seems that cars are the primary reason for long ferry lines and wait times, the rationale for a larger ferry, and perhaps more staff time/numbers and management issues.

I'm thinking that either pedestrians and bicyclists are paying much too much, or car drivers are paying much too little.

A more reasonable ratio between the two seems fairer to me, and would likely reduce car congestion and other associated problems.

Sincerely,

Ian Woofenden

Jennifer Rogers

From: Ian Woofenden <ian.woofenden@mindspring.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 14, 2023 7:55 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Guemes Ferry Rate Disparity

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My question is why there is such a wide disparity in the rates between pedestrians and bicycles vs. cars.

A car (which takes as much space as maybe 20 people and 10 bikes) is being charged the same as 1.4 passengers. I can't make sense of it.

A passenger costs an average of \$5. (Adding a bicycle costs \$1.13 more, average.) Adding a car costs only \$7.88 more average. What!?!?

While I understand that the dollars have to work out, I don't think the money should be generated by asking a disproportionate share from any category of user, or giving any category a huge break.

It seems to me that the rate structure subsidizes cars at the expense of passengers, who take up much less space. This increases car congestion, long lines, and demand for more service/larger boat.

Ian Woofenden

Jennifer Rogers

From: Jacki Mayo | The Mayo Home Team <jacki@mayohometeam.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 9, 2023 4:30 PM
To: Ferry Comments; Commissioners
Cc: guemesferry@gmail.com
Subject: Guemes Ferry Rate Increase

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I am a Realtor in Skagit County. I live and do a lot of business on Guemes Island. I have lived on the island for over a decade. I have moved people to Guemes Island. It is a special place in your County, with good tax-paying citizens. There is a large Guemes retirement community that has prepared for retirement and has picked Guemes Island to call home. There are generational families that live and work here and throughout Skagit County. Young families that want to raise their families here, their children attend schools and partake in sports throughout the county.

It seems to me that the county commissioners have bad feelings about our island. Their perception seems to be we are a burden to the county and the rest of the county is supporting us. That was very apparent at the chamber presentation "The State of the County" where it was asked, "how long are we going to support 600 people". The cost of the road restoration due to the beavers, the South Shore Road that is slowly sluffing away not to mention the burden of a new ferry.

We are a gem in your county. A draw that brings tourists that spend money in your county. The ferry is a part of your transportation system which Guemes residents contribute to through:

- Guemes residents will contribute \$787,521 to the Road Fund for 2023, through property taxes, based on a total Guemes Island property valuation of \$605,785,292 for 2023.
- With the sale of a property, 1.7% of state excise tax goes to Public Works
- Guemes residents contribute more in other areas who are benefiting from Public Works road Improvements
- Guemes residents will also contribute \$595,609 to the general Skagit County fund in 2023.

Capping the use of the Road Fund contribution at \$750,000 annually is less than what Guemes residents are presently contributing.

Property taxes on Guemes just took a whopping 30% on average. Along with other increases in property taxes throughout the county should more than cover the increase in O&M.

Since your unfair and hardship-imposing proposal increase, I have had phone calls from very upset people that fear they will have to move. People that planned for their retirement and to spend the rest of their days on Guemes Island. Those people are now faced with too many additional costs and if the ferry increase proposal goes through they will have to sell. Then I ask what it will do to property values on Guemes Island. Time will tell but I suspect they will take a

significant hit in value. Properties will then be overassessed and it will take years to readjust and many will be forced to move and get less than previously assessed market value.

There seems to be an undue process in a mismanaged system. Commissioners are not supposed to do this to their residences nor should they think poorly of any area of their county. I don't understand where this thinking has come from. I don't understand why other county ferries are handled differently and seemingly better. These are areas that need to be examined rather than an undue financial burden imposed on county citizens.

This ferry increase imposed on Guemes residences is not the solution. Let's work together to find a better, more palatable solution for your county transportation system and operating and management costs going forward.

Jacki Mayo

The Mayo Home Team

RE/MAX Gateway

Phone: 360 770-1670

She/Her, AHWD, CRS, MRP, PSA, VAMRES, SFR

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Jennifer Rogers

From: Jackie O'Neil <jackieaoneil330@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 9, 2023 10:06 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Ferry rate proposals

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My name is Jackie O'Neil I am a resident, voter, and taxpayer who's lived on Guemes Island since 1988. Since then we have survived many ferry issues. How can you justify or explain the percentage increase to seniors and others who have fixed incomes?

Jennifer Rogers

From: Jackie Wittman <jackieowittman@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, March 10, 2023 11:11 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: SKAGIT COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS FERRY DIVISION 2023 GUEMES ISLAND FERRY FARE INCREASE

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*To: Skagit County Commissioners: Ron Wesen, Lisa Janicki, Peter Browning
Public Works Director/County Engineer: Grace Kane P.E.
Ferry Operations Division Manager: Captain Rachel Rowe
1800 Continental Place
Mount Vernon, WA. 98273*

*Re: SKAGIT COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS FERRY DIVISION
2023 GUEMES ISLAND FERRY FARE INCREASE*

*From: Jackie Wittman
5617 Paradise Road
Anacortes WA 98221*

Dear Commissioners, Director, and Captain,

This is written to express my dismay and frustration regarding the proposed ferry rate increase. As a long time Guemes resident, it is apparent that the county hires outside consultants for hundreds of thousands of dollars to provide justification to the county to get what they want. Ultimately the islanders pay the price. This time it has really gotten out of hand!!

This rate increase will significantly impact my frequency of travel to and from the island. Since Guemes Island is a rural residential island, there are no medical facilities, retail stores, and other services that mainlanders enjoy without added expense or forethought. In the past this has not been a problem since it seemed like the price to be paid for living on an island. However I believe that by extending the hours years ago, this has put undue strain on the island. Not only has it increased wear and tear on the ferry, it has allowed for some homeowners to place their properties in short term rentals thus putting additional strain on emergency services, water demand, and disrespectful visitors who use the island as their playground without consideration of the impact.

In addition, as an owner of 3 horses, these rate increases will increase the cost of veterinary care, farrier care, and hay deliveries. Horses add to the rural character of the island. Not only are they helpful in slowing speeding traffic on island roads, horse manure is appreciated by many island gardeners who also contribute to the island character.

Since I am sure you are receiving many complaints about the fare increase, how about considering a different solution? Perhaps consider a slight increase in the rate for full time residents who are also registered to vote in Skagit County. Thereby those who are not so dependent on frequent travel may contribute more to the ferry fund. Or reduce the schedule so as to reduce the cost of operations and maintenance. You may recall that an islander covered the scaffold/stanchion with black plastic and a sign that read Guemes Mourns when the commissioners decided to extend ferry hours. Once again we are mourning.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Hopefully you will reconsider this proposal and begin to think of another way. Mackinac Island anyone ;) ??

Sincerely,
Jackie Wittman

Jennifer Rogers

From: Jacqueline Trevillion <jacquelinetrevillion@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, February 26, 2023 9:32 AM
To: Ferry Comments

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I suggest the county make all bridges and major highways into toll ways. That would be FAIR to all skagit taxpayers. This huge increase for our 5 minute ferry ride is an outrageous and unacceptable burden.

Sincerely,

A full-time guemes resident

Jennifer Rogers

From: Jake Choiniere <jharley@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 9, 2023 10:04 AM
To: Ferry Comments; Commissioners
Cc: guemesferry@gmail.com
Subject: Ferry rate increase proposal comment

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I am a Guemes Island resident at 6731 Guemes Island Rd, where I live with my wife and two school age children.

I have great concern regarding the proposed ferry rate increases.

First, the data used to inform these increases are flawed:

- There are wrong assumptions regarding projected operating costs
- There are wrong assumptions regarding projected revenue due to inclusion of pandemic era revenue dips
- The notion that the road fund contribution must be capped at a particular amount is completely arbitrary
- Does not take into account massive property tax increase for our homes for 2023 (roughly 30% for us) and associated contributions to the road fund

Second, we are already paying much more for what we get in terms of per-mile and per-hour ferry service relative to other places. Increasing the cost further while not improving service is unacceptable.

Third, I am very opposed to the notion of trying to charge for bicycles. We should be encouraging lower car traffic. Major problems with charging for bicycles:

- How will this not complicate the ticketing process and reduce efficiency?
- Are you going to charge for wheelbarrels and grocery carts?
- What about dogs?
- What about bicycles hanging off the back of cars?

Fourth, the proposed increases will present very meaningful impediments to basic activities of daily living disproportionately for working families, who will also be trying to absorb property tax increases, recent increases in cost of goods and services, etc.

The proposed rate increase plan must NOT be enacted, and more time should be taken to consider alternatives that will be more fair and equitable.

Thank you,

Jake Choiniere

Jennifer Rogers

From: Commissioners
Sent: Friday, March 10, 2023 9:45 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: FW:

From: Kit Marcinko <kit.marcinko@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 9, 2023 4:52 PM
To: Commissioners <commissioners@co.skagit.wa.us>
Subject:

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Skagit County Commissioners:

My complaint with you is in regard to the proposed dramatic increase in the Guemes Island ferry fares. I have been a resident and property owner on Guemes for over fifty years and have never seen such a lack of transparency and misappropriation of ferry fare increases to fund county roads and future ferry projects. Don't we islanders pay increasingly large amounts of property tax to the county, enough to fund this critical transportation system? Please stop thinking of the county's beautiful island as just a retreat for the very wealthy and a cash cow for short-sighted planners to fix the rest of our neglected county roads.

Increasingly concerned ~
James Marcinko

James Marcinko
6517 West Shore Drive

Anacortes, WA 98221



Jennifer Rogers

From: Jan Smiley <janbsmiley@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 9, 2023 3:22 PM
To: Ferry Comments; commisioners@co.skagit.wa.us
Subject: Guemes Island Ferry fares

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As a full time resident on Guemes Island, I strongly urge you to fully consider the impact of the proposed fare increases:

- The average percent rate increase across all fare classes is over 113%, meaning most of the fares more than double.
 - Average % rate increase by rate class:
 - Adults: 80%
 - Senior/Disabled/Youth: 105%: ask yourself: is that fair & equitable ?
- These exorbitant fare increases, in addition to current inflation rates and economic challenges would create financial hardships beyond what anyone should face all at the same time.
- The burden of the fare increases target frequent riders (multi trip card purchases), families, seniors, disabled, and youth. Please ask yourself: is that fair & equitable? This fare increase targets the most vulnerable of the population

Other have already pointed out the arbitrary nature of the Road Fund cap, the lack of transparency and inconsistent communication that has plagued this process, as well as the amount of property tax Guemes residents already contribute to the Road Fund (\$787,521 for 2023); therefore I won't go into details about those here.

The people most impacted by transportation cost increases are the people that need to commute every day, the people of working age, often with families, the people that run small businesses on and off the island, the teachers and nurses that serve across the county, the cleaners, the landscapers, and everyone else that keeps the local economy humming along. And let's not forget all of the older and possibly retired residents on fixed incomes who have to use the ferry several times weekly to shop and get to appointments.

The current proposal is based on a ferry that is already scheduled to be replaced. Ask yourself: does that make any sense? Please take time to develop a clear and transparent set of alternatives will ensure that the plan is thorough and considers engagement of the community and all stakeholders. We are looking for a plan that is sustainable and equitable now and into the future.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Jan Smiley
Full Time Guemes Resident

Jennifer Rogers

From: Commissioners
Sent: Monday, April 24, 2023 8:16 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: FW: Please Approve the Guemes Island Ferry Workers' Latest Contract Counteroffer

From: cedarwaxwings@gmail.com <cedarwaxwings@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, April 23, 2023 10:41 AM
To: Commissioners <commissioners@co.skagit.wa.us>
Subject: Please Approve the Guemes Island Ferry Workers' Latest Contract Counteroffer

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Dear Skagit County Commissioners:

I am asking you to approve the Guemes Island Ferry Workers' latest contract counteroffer.

It's unbelievable to me that the Guemes Island Ferry Workers' need to work this hard to receive a fair contract.

I remember a few years back when the county spent more money on the anti-union negotiator lawyer than a fair contract would have cost.

What a waste of taxpayer money! But here we are again.

Why is the county offering ferry workers a 2 percent wage increase for 2023 and 2024, but offered workers in other county departments increases of 3 percent?

These ferry workers are highly skilled and qualified workers. The majority of the crew are credentialed Merchant Mariners. The crew makes 4,224 round trips a year between Anacortes and Guemes Island -- not including after-hours trips for medical emergencies and power outages, for which they all stand ready. They maintain the vessel and the terminal. They regularly train in first aid, shipboard emergencies, and hazardous materials handling and transport.

I urge the county to do the right thing and approve the crew's contract counteroffer.

Thank you,

Janet McKinney

17858 Wood Rd
Bow, WA 98232

March 10, 2023

Skagit County Board of Commissioners
1800 Continental Pl..
Mt. Vernon, WA 98273

RE: Proposed Guemes Ferry Fare Increase

Dear Commissioners,

I have lived on Guemes Island for more than 50 years. My husband and I have raised our sons on the island. In all the years that we have lived here, never before have we been presented with such an outrageous fare proposal. The County has a resolution that has been in place for years to establish the fares working with the ferry committee and other relevant parties. The resolution has been a reasonable way to establish the fares in an equitable and transparent manner. Why has the resolution been ignored?

The island provides several generous revenue sources to Skagit County: money from fares, property taxes, and real estate sales taxes. The present fare proposal would have dire consequences to the residents, especially young families and people with fixed incomes, forcing many of them to have to leave their homes. Islanders are willing to pay their fair share, but we expect a fare structure that is reasonable. I hope that you re-evaluate your proposal.

Sincerely,

Janice Veal

Jennifer Rogers

From: jasonkrapf1125@hotmail.com
Sent: Thursday, March 9, 2023 6:24 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Cc: Commissioners; guemesferry@gmail.com
Subject: Fare increase

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My name is Jason Krapf I have been a resident on guemes for 25 years. I work full time on the island as a general contractor. I use the ferry on average about 4 trips a week that is 208 a year. About 10-20trip punch tickets a year. That cost \$1960.00. I understand that the rate increase will change that to \$3920.00 . That is alot of money to pay to just go to town to get supplies. I have a wife and two kids and she has to go to town about the same amount for various things. So 1 household will now spends \$7840.00 on the ferry. That is way to much.

As a general contractor it is getting harder to get subcontractors over to do work on island,because of the rate and long lines that can take hours. This increase will not help. It will drive the price of service up even more.

The increase that has been proposed is gouging, it is unreasonable high, I would think a 15% or even 20% increase is more reasonable.

Jennifer Rogers

From: jayne mardesich <jaynem19@yahoo.com>
Sent: Saturday, March 11, 2023 5:04 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Cc: Commissioners; guemesferry@gmail.com
Subject: Proposed ferry rates

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As a local registered nurse, I worked throughout the Covid 19 pandemic. I even received a raise—3%. The fact that you are now considering a nearly 100% increase in our fares for the Guemes ferry is hard for me to take in. The ferry has always been considered part of the road system in Skagit County. Our fares supplement this system, but should not be expected to cover all of the costs involved. Bridges in the county are repaired and rebuilt, yet I have not seen tolls placed on them. In addition, our property taxes have skyrocketed this year. I have been on this island for 60 years. Unlike the San Juan islands, Guemes has always been a place where people can live and go to work, not just vacation or spend two weeks out of the year at their “cabin”.

I would propose a much more modest increase, preferably tied to the actual cost of living increase locally. Commuter cards should be much less expensive than a regular fare, as those of us that live and work locally are already paying the exorbitant and ever increasing property taxes. Let the visitors pay more.

I would also encourage you to forget the different and confusing vehicle categories. Keep it as is—car and oversized. As far as the proposed change to 10’ increments, I can only imagine what that will do to our costs for having the roofer, gutter installer, or carpenter come to repair our homes—that cost will surely be passed on to us.

Thank you for your consideration of these issues. My hope is that a solution can be found that will be agreeable to all.

Sincerely
Jayne Mardesich
Sent from my iPad

Jennifer Rogers

From: Jeff & Laurie Conwell <brushflys@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, February 26, 2023 9:18 AM
To: Ferry Comments; Skagit County Public Works
Subject: Fwd: Proposed Guemes Island Ferry Fare Increases

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----- Forwarded message -----

From: Jeff & Laurie Conwell <brushflys@gmail.com>
Date: Sun, Feb 26, 2023 at 9:12 AM
Subject: RE: Proposed Guemes Island Ferry Fare Increases
To: <commissioners@co.skagit.wa.us>

Ron Wesen, Skagit County Commissioner

Peter Browning, Skagit County Commissioner

Lisa Janiki, Skagit County Commissioner

1800 Continental Place, Suite 100

Mount Vernon, WA 98273

RE: Proposed Guemes Island Ferry Fare Increases

Dear County Commissioners:

We are writing to express our concern about the potential 71% increase in fares for the Guemes Island Ferry.

As frequent ferry passengers, residents of Guemes, we are aware of how many island residents ride the ferry daily to get to and from their jobs, and/or shop in Anacortes, Mount Vernon, and other locations in Skagit County.

As you know, the Ferry is the only way to get to and from the island; residents can't choose an option that costs less. The structure of the fare increases currently under consideration create the risk of making island residency too expensive for working families who commute, and those of more limited means. The island community should continue to be a place where people of all income levels can make their home.

We would encourage the County to look for other solutions. A possible option: proof of residence (Guemes or Skagit County) to purchase a reduced rate punch card. Easily, verified by the county worker at the point of sale with a driver's license. Or possibly a bike fee for non-county residents. Any variation on these ideas would be appreciated.

We would encourage a formation of a task force to study the multitude of options prior to enacting a dramatic fee increase. The task force should include residents of Guemes to bring their concerns directly to the task force and Commissioners. Taking these steps would help to ensure that the island remains affordable and accessible to all residents, while we also understand the increased costs of running this ferry service.

Thank you for your service as County Commissioners.

Sincerely,

Jeff and Lauren Conwell

Jennifer Rogers

From: Commissioners
Sent: Monday, February 27, 2023 9:06 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: FW: Proposed Guemes Island Ferry Fare Increases

From: Jeff & Laurie Conwell <brushflys@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, February 26, 2023 9:12 AM
To: Commissioners <commissioners@co.skagit.wa.us>
Subject: RE: Proposed Guemes Island Ferry Fare Increases

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Ron Wesen, Skagit County Commissioner

Peter Browning, Skagit County Commissioner

Lisa Janiki, Skagit County Commissioner

1800 Continental Place, Suite 100

Mount Vernon, WA 98273

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Thank you for your service as County Commissioners.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Rogers

From: Skagit County Public Works
Sent: Monday, February 27, 2023 8:23 AM
To: Rachel Rowe; Grace Kane
Subject: FW: Proposed Guemes Island Ferry Fare Increases

From PW inbox

Shayna

From: Jeff & Laurie Conwell <brushfllys@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, February 26, 2023 9:18 AM
To: Ferry Comments <ferrycomments@co.skagit.wa.us>; Skagit County Public Works <pw@co.skagit.wa.us>
Subject: Fwd: Proposed Guemes Island Ferry Fare Increases

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----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Jeff & Laurie Conwell** <brushfllys@gmail.com>
Date: Sun, Feb 26, 2023 at 9:12 AM
Subject: RE: Proposed Guemes Island Ferry Fare Increases
To: <commissioners@co.skagit.wa.us>

Ron Wesen, Skagit County Commissioner

Peter Browning, Skagit County Commissioner

Lisa Janiki, Skagit County Commissioner

1800 Continental Place, Suite 100

Mount Vernon, WA 98273

RE: Proposed Guemes Island Ferry Fare Increases

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As frequent ferry passengers, residents of Guemes, we are aware of how many island residents ride the ferry daily to get to and from their jobs, and/or shop in Anacortes, Mount Vernon, and other locations in Skagit County.

As you know, the Ferry is the only way to get to and from the island; residents can't choose an option that costs less. The structure of the fare increases currently under consideration create the risk of making island residency too expensive for working families who commute, and those of more limited means. The island community should continue to be a place where people of all income levels can make their home.

We would encourage the County to look for other solutions. A possible option: proof of residence (Guemes or Skagit County) to purchase a reduced rate punch card. Easily, verified by the county worker at the point of sale with a driver's license. Or possibly a bike fee for non-county residents. Any variation on these ideas would be appreciated.

We would encourage a formation of a task force to study the multitude of options prior to enacting a dramatic fee increase. The task force should include residents of Guemes to bring their concerns directly to the task force and Commissioners. Taking these steps would help to ensure that the island remains affordable and accessible to all residents, while we also understand the increased costs of running this ferry service.

Thank you for your service as County Commissioners.

Sincerely,

Jeff and Lauren Conwell

Jennifer Rogers

From: Jeff & Laurie Conwell <brushflys@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, March 10, 2023 9:49 AM
To: Commissioners; Ferry Comments
Subject: Furure Bike fees on Guemes Ferry

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Why not make bikes free with passeger punch card (for locals)? Then charge \$10 to \$15 for individual passenger tickets, i.e. visitors to the Island with their bikes. That encourages locals to use bikes; however, maximizes revenue from the daytrippers.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Jeff and Laurie Conwell

Jennifer Rogers

From: Mary Parker-Hale <mparkerhale@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 24, 2023 1:48 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Comment re 2023 Ferry Fare Proposal

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Please offer a **Resident Discount** for people whose primary residence is located on Guemes Island.

Unlike tourists and visitors, Guemes residents depend on the ferry to acquire goods and services from the mainland that sustains island life, and thus the ferry and parking rates should reflect this. Tourists and visitors should pay the maximum fare compared to island residents.

Also, resident discounts and senior/disability discounts should be separately applied such that senior/disabled residents receive the maximum combined benefit.

Jeff & Mary Hale

Jennifer Rogers

From: Jeff Spada <doleo68@yahoo.com>
Sent: Friday, March 3, 2023 2:35 PM
To: Commissioners; Ferry Comments; Lisa Janicki; Ron Wesen; Peter Browning
Subject: Proposed Fare Structure

CAUTION: This email originated from an external email address. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender, you are expecting this email and attachments, and you know the content is safe.

Skagit County Commissioners,

I am writing to express my grave concern with the proposed fare increases for the Guemes Island Ferry. While I expected and understand the need for a fare increase; the proposed numbers are extreme to put it mildly. I am a full-time Guemes Island resident on a fixed income; and the proposed numbers create a significant hardship.

I appreciate the desire to increase the amount of road funds to be used for repairs; however the ferry is part of the transportation system, so the use of those funds in support of the ferry was and continues to be a valid use of civic funds. Also, it appears that the proposed fare structure was drafted looking solely at the numbers without any consideration to the actual human impact on Guemes Islanders who are still Skagit County residents. Also, this isn't a state ferry spending hours going island to island in the Salish Sea. The Guemes Island ferry is a simple five minute trip across the channel.

The significant fare increase under consideration creates financial hardship for working families/commuters and people with limited income, thus making island residency too expensive. The fare study doesn't take into account that this island community is comprised of families of all income levels, from people living paycheck to paycheck, to those of us on a fixed income, as well as, those living in mansions.

This proposal also didn't take into consideration that many Guemes Island residents including myself have seen an increase of 50% or more on their property taxes since 2022. The property tax increase and proposed ferry fare hike combined creates a extreme financial burden to many residents.

As part of the fare structure, the multi-ride cards should be more beneficial (residential discount) for full-time islanders versus weekenders and/or (peak season) summer residents and visitors. The proposed 50% non-peak and over 106% peak increases for the "punch card" (while breaking down the cost does end up less per trip than single purchase) are still an extreme increase and burden on Skagit County residents.

In conclusion, while I understand and accept that the fares need to be increased, I urge the commissioners to take the human factor into account and realize that this is not just simply balancing a spreadsheet; and that increases of up to 173% are not only unreasonable but unrealistic. Let's work together to find a mutually acceptable solution that solves the financial issues while still serving our community. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Spada

Guemes Islander

Jennifer Rogers

From: Jesper Lind <jesper.lind@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, February 25, 2023 10:10 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Fare changes

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Hi!

I'd like to comment on the proposed surcharge for bikes.

1. Bikes are very environmentally friendly - so I feel the new fees are discouraging a great way of commuting. And goes along with the motive of the electric ferry of course.

2. Wheelbarrows and rolled oversize luggage take roughly the same space as a bicycle, and I see no charge for them.

Proposal: Ideally I'd like to see bikes be free to bring aboard, but as a compromise I propose \$1 for a bike and \$1 for wheelbarrows or similarly sized cargo carrier such as grocery carts at peak season only.

I also propose that a passenger punchcard would include bringing a bike at no extra cost.

Jesper Lind

Jennifer Rogers

From: Commissioners
Sent: Tuesday, May 23, 2023 12:46 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: FW: Hello Commissioners

-----Original Message-----

From: Jesus Sanchez <jguemes50@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 23, 2023 11:29 AM
To: Commissioners <commissioners@co.skagit.wa.us>
Subject: Hello Commissioners

#####

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#####

As a resident of Guemes and well over 40 yrs in public service having worked as a cabinet member serving three Governors and king County Executive Hill, as Director of Executive Administration, and managing Public Works for City Of Shoreline, I know only too well the importance of taking care of your employees by providing and supporting a living reasonable wage given the high costs we are facing today and foreseeable future. Please support the ferry employees by taking a leadership role , providing for a reasonable wage, and showing that you care. They are out in the rain, snow , heat etc and their attitudes are positive but it cannot be sustained when they feel leadership is not listening

Sent from my iPhone

- To state the obvious, there is only one road to Guemes Island. It happens to be water.
- The less than 1 mile crossing of this road is a marine highway. This highway provides Skagit County with a property tax base of \$605,785,292 and a resulting contribution of \$787,521 to the road fund.
- Equal treatment should be applied by the county for use of this marine highway, just as in many other instances in Skagit County where there is only one way to get from Point A to Point B. Specifically Sammish Island has only one point of access for its residents. The Road Fund pays for numerous bridges, roundabouts, pedestrian crossings, culverts, and other projects with limited access (see current funded projects). A yet unfunded proposed project is a docking facility on Sinclair Island, servicing 70 residents. Is there a formula applied to the everyday, ongoing use of any of these services?
- As in the fable, "The Three Billy Goats Gruff", is there anywhere else in the county **except crossing the Guemes Channel**, that subjects its users to an additional toll paid by a **specific vehicle** and **specific passenger(s)** each and every time it is used?
- Perhaps the Commissioners should mandate and apply the same formula imposed on the use of the Skagit County Marine Highway to roads throughout the county. This would provide significant and continual revenue to the Skagit County Road Fund.
- **We submit that the problem isn't that Guemes Island ferry users aren't paying their FAIR/FARE share, the problem is that the Road Fund is inadequate for the many needs of the residents of Skagit County. The Commissioners should shift their focus on how to solve this systemic problem.**
- Regarding additional proposals to offset shortfalls of the fare box, especially the draconian idea of charging for parking: Where else in the county is pay parking applied? Skagit County bus "park and rides", courthouse, airport, train station? How could you possibly add insult to injury, by punishing those who are trying to save on fares, simply to be burdened with parking fees? Additionally, what consequences are you not considering? Will you extend the Skagit County Bus System to Guemes so we can pay the minimal bus fare to cross? What about the public relations nightmare with the City of Anacortes and neighborhood residents?

We contend that the users of the Skagit Marine Highway understand that fares need to adjust with changing economic conditions. However, it is wrong to pit one community against another.

We all pay for many projects we will never use, buses we will never ride, inefficiencies in administration, expenses that we have no control over (climate change), and unexpected economic conditions that no one can avoid or predict (ie COVID).

We believe the Commissioners have an obligation to the residents, voters and taxpayers of Guemes Island to reconsider these excessive increases and come up with more viable solutions.

Sincerely,

Jim and Janet Casey, Property Owner on Guemes Island since 1978

Jennifer Rogers

From: Jim Casey <jcasey@moa-build.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 30, 2023 9:21 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: SKAGIT COUNTY Public Works Ferry Division, 2023 Guemes Island Fare Increase

CAUTION: This email originated from an external email address. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender, you are expecting this email and attachments, and you know the content is safe.

*From: Jim Casey & Kayla Swallow
7171 Island View Road
Anacortes Wa. 98221*

Dear Commissioners, Director, and Captain:

We hope to accurately portray in this letter our extreme disappointment in the proposed increase to rates for the Guemes Island Ferry. We are currently in the process of building our long term home on Guemes (Jim is a second generation islander, his family has owned land on Guemes since the 1970s). As a working class, young family we know that this drastic and unprecedented increase to the fares will impact not only us, but also our neighbors. Neighbors who are living on a retirement fixed income, neighbors with school age kids who take the ferry multiple times a day for sporting events and other extracurriculars. Neighbors who rely on the ferry as their **only** means of transportation to and from their jobs.

We anticipate seeing the following consequences if this hike in rates continues:

- Trade workers will likely no longer be willing to come and work on the island, and if they do, it will be a steep increase to the cost of services.
- Parking on both sides of the ferry will become problematic as more people will be forced to walk on

The biggest consequence will be a change in ridership habits. Island residents will become more selective about trips into town, resulting in less spending in the local economy, especially for small businesses. Currently, we plan for one walk on punch card and one car and driver punch card a month per each adult in our household. With these increases, we would both choose to walk on as often as possible. If as many other residents take this course of action as we are anticipating the ferry will receive less revenue in the long term. For our family in particular, we know that we will have to change the way we run our small business, and that the increased cost of transportation will be passed on to the consumer, which could mean lost business opportunities.

We understand, the ferry rate needs to change in order to keep up with cost of living adjustment. What we ask is that the County Commissioners serve constituents well, and apply a realistic increase gradually to avoid severe economic knock on effects Likewise, we hope that the Commissioners would take note of who this proposed increase really affects (working families), and consider creating higher rates on weekends vs during work week when families are taking the ferry. This could capitalize on the tourism coming to and from Guemes Thursday-Sunday.

It would be an absolute shame if this proposed increase to ferry rates would cause people who have called Guemes home for many, many years to be priced off the island. Remember, Guemes is not only a community of wealthy retirees. We are home to a considerable number of essential workers who build homes, stock shelves and care for the ill and elderly. The island residents should not suddenly be forced to pay the price for poor planning and a lack of leadership

Sincerely,

Jim Casey and Kayla Swallow

Jennifer Rogers

From: joan petrick <petrickjoan@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, March 10, 2023 10:26 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Proposed ferry rates

CAUTION: This email originated from an external email address. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender, you are expecting this email and attachments, and you know the content is safe.

It seems that the proposed ferry hikes are based on inflated figures and many are wondering exactly what these figures are and where they came from. An outlier year? A real average of the last five years? Where are the real figures?

That concern being said, let me state how the proposed increase will affect me personally, a senior on a fixed income, whose property taxes increased by \$1946.18 this year! Your proposed walk on ferry pass will increase \$1 less than double the senior pass now for non peak season. So if I purchase four of those it would cost me \$362. But you're going to charge me peak prices even though I live here all year???? Those four passes would cost me \$448!!!! Seriously?

I try not to drive across much since I am fortunate to still be able to walk across easily. But that will change in my future as I am already a senior. So you want to raise the drive on from 156 to 275 or 326 peak!!!!!! I can't fit that in my budget! What is a senior to do?

As a long time, full time Guemes resident I have watched ferry management over many years. I have also watched the commissioners' views on Guemes. Both seem to lack good judgment based on actual facts and figures. The real facts and figures often seem distorted when compared with findings from the ferry committee and outside studies such as the one done in Pierce County most recently.

We've asked for hard facts and figures. Can you actually show them to us to justify your ridiculous rate increases?

Joan Edwins Petrick

Jennifer Rogers

From: Michael-JoAnne Gray <guemesgrays@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 29, 2023 3:39 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: REVISED - PLEASE USE THIS LETTER "Ferry Comments From A Senior"

CAUTION: This email originated from an external email address. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender, you are expecting this email and attachments, and you know the content is safe.

My former email was sent on Sun Mar 26th at 4:17 pm from this same email address. Please replace this letter for that one, as I accidentally omitted some solutions at the end.

Dear Commissioners, Director, and Captain:

Guemes Island is my home. I have been riding the Guemes Island Ferry for over 60 years. I am now a retired senior who lives full time on the island with my husband; we feel so thankful to live in an open space area outside the busy nature associated with cities. When we decided to make Guemes Island our permanent home - while on this earth and from where we wish to exit when leaving this world - we did so with an astute understanding of ferry commute and island living. Even as we age, we have no interest or intentions to move off the island before we pass away. Although it takes more time to get to and from regular doctor appointments, physical therapy sessions, dental visits, and shopping for essentials by waiting for the ferry, we have always accepted this longer investment of time to conduct our daily lives, as it is balanced by the rewards of living in a peaceful and rural environment.

Here are my concerns about the proposed ferry fare increases for seniors – I respectfully request your review and consideration:

- As seniors, my husband and I are on a fixed income; the dramatic increase in the senior ferry fares will have a significant impact on us financially.
- The ferry fare for the senior/disabled multi-ride passes is the hardest hit category, at an increase up to 143% (only exceeded by vehicles 30-40 ft at 173%). It is unimaginable that the County would do this to your senior/disabled vulnerable population.
- The fare increase applied to the senior/disabled category, our most vulnerable population on the island, is equivalent to that assessed oversized vehicles at 143%. I find this to be deplorable and ask the County to please review, per some suggestions as listed below.
- As a result of these ferry fare large increases for seniors, my husband and I will be forced to change our current elective ridership. As for our necessary ferry rides for health care, we will be incurring a dramatic fare increases which presents a grave concern.
- As we continue to age, my husband and I mobility will lessen our ability to walk on the ferry, thus we will not be able to take advantage of the lower passenger fares to commute. As a result, we will not only have to incur the increase costs out of necessity to take our vehicle, but will also now incur a 143% fare increase over and above that which currently exists.
- The ferry is our only mode of transportation. We pay taxes for all of Skagit County's roads, bridges, and the Guemes Island ferry. We do not have any other transportation options – it is our ROAD to our homes.

Below are my recommendations for your review, which I respectfully request your consideration to implement modifications to your proposed fare increases:

- Provide a reasonable ferry fare increase for the senior/disabled/youth fares, not the highest fare increase. Over the past decades, a higher level discount for seniors/disabled/youth was rightfully implemented – it is a policy that should continue.
- It is admirable that consideration is being given for a needs-based fare (based on the HUD very low-income levels by family size). However, senior couples who do not qualify at the \$36k income level break are greatly impacted with the proposed 76% – 143% fare increase. Guemes Island is not a community of rich seniors, nor are we a community of impoverished seniors. Rather we have modest income seniors who will be greatly impacted with only a small percentage that will be helped through the needs-based fare. I request your review of the percentage of discount as applied historically be continued for the senior/disabled multi-pass fares.
- There should be a needs-based fare (per HUD guidelines), ALONG with a discounted rate for seniors/disabled matching the discount structure of the past.
- I do not believe that implementing the same historical discount to senior/disabled category, as done over the past decades, will have a noticeable impact on the overall fare collections. The daily commuters are not seniors, which is where you get a large majority of your revenues.
- I understand that the ferry fares need to be increased. I recommend that reasonable increases be applied in an incremental approach over the next 5 years, and then capped for another 5 years for another evaluation.
- I recommend that the County start out the first year with small and reasonable fare increases; then wait to make adjustments to future year increases until such time that the lower cost and associated savings of the electric ferry can be realized and determined.
- I recommend that the County not implement the toll booth – use those funds towards operational costs and implement a simple cost-effective fare collection system.
- Extend the higher percentage of rate increases to those riders who do not live on Guemes Island full time. This can be monitored in a number of efficient means, such as proof of residency on ones' driver's license.

In summary, please do not dramatically increase the cost for full time residents to utilize their only means of transportation to their home, especially our senior population. Rather, I respectfully request that you direct your greatest ferry fare increases to non-residents, visitors, and tourists.

Respectfully,

JoAnne Gray, Full Time Senior Resident

Jennifer Rogers

From: Michael-JoAnne Gray <guemesgrays@hotmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, June 15, 2023 9:28 PM
To: Ferry Comments; Commissioners
Subject: JoAnne Gray Ferry Comments

CAUTION: This email originated from an external email address. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender, you are expecting this email and attachments, and you know the content is safe.

Dear Skagit County Commissioners, Public Works Director, and Ferry Captain:

Guemes Island is my home. I have been riding the Guemes Island Ferry for over 60 years. I am now a retired senior who lives full time on the island with my husband. When we decided to make Guemes Island our permanent home, we did so with an astute understanding of the ferry commute and island living. Even as we age, we have no interest or intentions to move off the island. Although it takes more time to get to and from regular doctor appointments, physical therapy sessions, dental visits, and locations for essential shopping by waiting for the ferry both ways, we have always balanced this longer commute time with the rewards of living in this peaceful and rural environment.

I have listed my concerns about the new proposed ferry fare increases for seniors below and respectfully request your review and consideration:

- As a senior living on a fixed income, the dramatic increase in the senior ferry fares will have a significant impact financially on my husband and I.
- The ferry fare for the senior/disabled multi-ride passes is the hardest hit category, at an increase up to 143% (only exceeded by vehicles 30-40 ft at 173%). It is unimaginable that the County would do this to its senior/disabled vulnerable population.
- The fare increase applied to the senior/disabled category is equivalent to that assessed on oversized vehicles at 143%. I find this to be deplorable and ask the County to please consider a fair increase.
- As a result of these large ferry fare increases for seniors, my husband and I will be forced to change our current elective ridership. When we must ride the ferry for necessary health care, this large ferry fare increase presents a grave financial concern.
- As we continue to age, my husband and my mobility will lessen. As a result, we may not be able to walk on the ferry to take advantage of the lower passenger fares to commute. We find the 143% fare increase over and above that which currently exist to be very unfair.
- The ferry is our only mode of transportation. We pay taxes for all of Skagit County's roads, bridges, and the Guemes Island ferry. We do not have any other transportation options – it is our ROAD to our homes.

Below are my recommendations for your review, which I respectfully request your consideration to implement modifications to your proposed fare increases:

- Provide a reasonable ferry fare increase for the senior/disabled/youth category, not the highest fare increase. Over the past decades, a larger discount was rightfully implemented for seniors/disabled/youth – it is a policy that should continue.
- It is admirable that consideration is being given for a needs-based fare (based on the HUD very low-income levels by family size). However, senior couples who do not qualify at the \$36k income level break are greatly impacted with the proposed 76% – 143% fare increase. Guemes Island is not a community of rich seniors, nor are we a community of impoverished seniors. Rather we have modest income seniors who will be greatly impacted with only a very small percentage that will be helped through the needs-based fare and request that the County make a fair increase for the senior sector.

- There should be a needs-based fare (per HUD guidelines), ALONG with a discounted rate for seniors/disabled matching the discount structure of the past.
- I do not believe that implementing the same historical discount to senior/disabled category, as done over the past decades, will have a noticeable impact on the overall fare collections. The daily commuters are not seniors, which is where you get a large majority of your revenues.
- I understand that the ferry fares need to be increased. I recommend that reasonable increases be applied in an incremental approach over the next 5 years, and then capped for another 5 years for another evaluation.
- I recommend that the County start out the first year with small and reasonable fare increases; then wait to adjust future year increases until such time that the lower cost and associated savings of the electric ferry can be realized and determined.
- I recommend that the County not implement the toll booth – use those funds towards operational costs and implement a simple cost-effective fare collection system.
- I recommend that the County extend the higher percentage of rate increases to those riders who do not live on Guemes Island full time. This can be monitored in several efficient means, such as proof of residency on ones' driver's license.

In summary, please do not dramatically increase the cost for full time residents to utilize their only means of transportation to their home, especially our senior population. Rather, I respectfully request that you direct your greatest ferry fare increases to non-residents, visitors, and tourists.

Kind regards,

JoAnne Gray

Full Time Senior Resident

Jennifer Rogers

From: john hopkins <johnjuliehopkins@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, January 22, 2023 9:11 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Comments on rate study

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Thanks for holding the public meeting on the proposed rate study. The ferry committee still thinks it would be useful if the committee could have a working session with the contractor to discuss the many issues they are reviewing. The committee has been involved in past studies and by representing ferry users we think we can provide a unique perspective and provide historical background.

We would like to point out that raising rates across the board may or may not increase total revenues. As families budget for ferry usage, they will tend to adjust ridership in order to stay within their budgets as rates go up. It is possible a smaller rate increase may bring in more revenue than a larger increase as less adjustments in ferry usage may occur.

John Hopkins
Ferry Committee

Jennifer Rogers

From: john hopkins <johnjuliehopkins@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 6, 2023 8:55 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Fare increase

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At the 2/28 hearing I opposed replacing the 65% formula with an arbitrary cap and also said now is the time to reduce the surcharge, the following are additional comments.

For your study on fares, you provided a long list of guidelines to the contractor. There was only one question that needed to be asked,-what level of fares will bring in the most revenue? The contractor's proposed drastic increase in fares will cause significant hardship on ferry riders and will probably not raise much additional revenue as patterns of ridership will change. A perfect lose/lose situation.

The general impression that Guemes Islanders do not pay their fair share is false. We pay many different taxes to the county plus other taxes to the State and Feds, some of which gets returned to the county. If you total up just the taxes paid directly to the county by Islanders it is an estimated \$1.8 million. This includes property taxes (road fund and other county), our portion of sales tax that goes to the county, and the portion of the excise tax that goes to the county. (In 2022 \$26 million of real estate was sold on the island) We may underpay in some areas, ferry, but due to our high property tax base and our demographics will are overpaying in other categories, such as county government and county jail. Our \$1.8 million contribution more than covers all services received including ferry and indicates we are paying our fair share.

In your newly created vehicle needs based category, one can buy a 5 trip ticket for \$85. This means 20 trips will cost \$340. The cost of a 20 ticket regular pass will cost \$332. This isn't how I think a needs based system would work.

John Hopkins
Ferry Committee

Jennifer Rogers

From: john hopkins <johnjuliehopkins@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 31, 2023 9:21 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Comments on fare proposal

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Dear Commissioners,

Thank you for listening to the islanders' comments and making significant changes in the latest proposal. Phasing in the increase over five years so this year's increase is about 14% for most categories is appreciated. Retaining the 65% formula so fares will continue to be based on ferry operating costs is essential. Changing the 5-years used to analyze data to 2-1-2 will require making forecasts and we think it is essential that we be able to review these forecasts before they are finalized.

In changing the rates for oversized vehicles a thorough analysis was done by looking at rates in various other ferry systems. We think this same type analysis should be done for the surcharge. How does our surcharge compare to other ferry systems?

In the extra revenue section there was a discussion on paid parking. Since Anacortes does not have any paid parking, I think charging for parking will create more problems than it's worth. Drop the idea of paid parking. Having a sponsor for the new electric ferry, whether for carbon credits or just green PR, may have potential and should be pursued.

A needs based category was created allowing users to buy a convenience 5-trip punch card at the senior rate. Can they buy a normal punch card at the senior rate?

Will bike users be able to use their walk-on punch cards? Does this mean a separate transaction will then have to be done for the bike?

John Hopkins
GIFC

Jennifer Rogers

From: John Rose <johnmcbrose@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 9, 2023 10:48 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Guemes ferry fare

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I urge consideration of two actions that would significantly mitigate the impact of higher fares.

First, institute regular bus service on the island. We have happily used the bus during haulout times. A regularly available bus would make it possible for us to avoid bringing a car onto the ferry. It would certainly help when we have guests arriving during busy summer months. A Transportation Benefit District could be used to subsidize bus service, That option has challenges but could be a method of allowing infrequent ferry users to pay a significant share, while gaining the benefit of having a bus available when they could use it.

Second, bicycles should be encouraged as an alternative to cars. The environmental benefits are worthwhile as are the benefits for expanding the capacity of the ferry.

--

cell: 206.484.0400

Jennifer Rogers

From: JOHN STRATHMAN <strathman14430@msn.com>
Sent: Monday, February 27, 2023 4:09 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Guemes Island Ferry Fare Proposal

CAUTION: This email originated from an external email address. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender, you are expecting this email and attachments, and you know the content is safe.

Dear Skagit County Commissioners:

I have been a full-time, year around resident of Guemes Island since 2014. The ferry to our island is our lifeline to goods and services and the rest of the world. The service that the ferry crew and Manager Rowe provides is wonderful. Despite many challenges, including undeserved negative criticism, the ferry serves the Guemes community in fine fashion. I am definitely a fan.

I am writing today to add my voice to the many others that you will hear from that oppose the proposed ferry fare hikes. Of course, no one wants to pay more than required for anything. We are paying more for nearly everything of late. We want things and by nature, we want someone else to pay for them. I accept the need for fare increases, just not a 71% increase. We want the ferry crew to be fairly compensated, diesel fuel costs more, everything costs more. I agree that users of the ferry should bear more of the cost.

I am concerned, however, that many residents of the island, especially retirees, working island residents that commute to jobs off-island, young families with school-aged children, and folks with limited incomes will be impacted financially. For many that call Guemes home, riding the ferry is not a discretionary decision. For many others, namely summertime visitors, it most certainly is.

I believe that full-time Guemes Island residents and Skagit County property owners (taxpayers) deserve special consideration when it comes to fares. Guemes Island is a tourist destination. Ferry usage balloons between Memorial Day and Labor Day. Ferry lines are long in those months. It is islanders that clean the beaches, maintain the hiking trails, and host events that attract visitors. We deal with a huge influx of people, a crowded ferry, long wait times to ride it, and more traffic on our roads during peak season. I see the "tourists" as a potential source of needed fare revenue.

I propose that full-time Guemes residents and property owners be allowed to purchase punch cards at much lower off-peak rates and use them during the rest of the year. An analogous preferential treatment of resident status occurs with the purchase of fishing licenses - non-residents pay more. Another analogy would be the high season rates charged by hotels and resorts - you pay more when the demand is greater. I suggest that summertime visitors pick up the lion's share of the proposed rate increases. Someone that visits Guemes on holiday is not going to feel the pain of a ferry ride nearly as much as those that have to ride 5 days a week to go to work.

Another suggestion is to raise rates for oversized vehicles. A lot of ferry traffic is box trucks, dump trucks, septic tank pumpers, semis, huge Rvs and the like. Presumably, contractors working on the island pass ferry expenses on to their clients. That's fair. If you want a load of gravel, you pay for it.

My property taxes leaped from \$4,653 in 2022 to \$6,468 in 2023! That's a 39% increase in a single year! That's a hard pill to swallow, made more bitter by the egregious recommendations in the KPFF study.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John Strathman
5902 Section Avenue
Guemes Island

Jennifer Rogers

From: Julia Pingree <jping008@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 6, 2023 10:39 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Cc: Commissioners; guemesferry@gmail.com
Subject: Ferry Fare Changes

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I have lived on Guemes for many years traveling to my job at Island Hospital daily for over 15 years. I had a car on the Anacortes side and the Guemes side for convenience. It worked out well. Now, I am retired and cannot or rather will not leave my newer car on the Anacortes side as my old car was stolen! I don't feel it is safe in the parking lot anymore. In increasing the fare for the ferry I will not be going to town very often as I am living on a fixed income. I oversee the Food Pantry at the island's Church which is supported by donations from the Islanders. It is used by the Islanders. I have seen an increase in use because of inflation as well as the haulout. I predict that the fare increase will affect the use and donations to the Food Pantry. More use, less donations. We need to take care of our neighbors. Please consider the effect of how this increase will affect the Islands population.

Julia Pingree
Islander Voter

Jennifer Rogers

From: julie.derouche@icloud.com
Sent: Saturday, March 18, 2023 1:32 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Ferry rate increase purposal

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#####

In regards to the purposed fare increases. I am apposed. I have been living on Guemes Island for 43 years. I live a very simple lifestyle and have very limited funds.
After the last increase which was done in a similar fashion, have a meeting, (check) that's done, do what we intend to do...and watch folks walk-on and leave a car on both sides, very expensive to do as well..
At least the ones who can go off island once a month.
I don't understand why there hasn't been gradual increases?
Why in my business if I doubled the price most people would walk away.
The very wealthy would still buy, but that's not the majority of us.
Spending so much on a study is ridiculous, reminds me of elections where the only one who wins are the advertisers!
If you do go through with this nonsense, please (and here's the nasty word ' subsidies '), the ones who need it.

Sincerely,
Julie deRouche
6563 Nootka Ln.
Guemes Is., Wa.

Jennifer Rogers

From: john hopkins <johnjuliehopkins@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 6, 2023 8:53 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Comments of ferry fare increases

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In light of the drastic proposed fare increases I submit the following comments.

The projected expenses for 2023 of \$3,169,000 and by inference the expected level for the next few years overstates the expenses. As you know, the haulout has a great impact on the yearly expenses. The contractor used 50% of this year's haulout expense in the 2023 data and left 50% for next year. With the new boat in 2025 there should not be another haulout until 2027, which will be the new electric ferry reducing haulout expenses. Therefore, the 2023 haulout expense should be spread over at least four years, meaning only 25% of this year's haulout expense should go into 2023.

Thank you, Julie Hopkins, Guemes Island

Jennifer Rogers

From: Kaitlin Schofield <kaitlinschofield@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 27, 2023 9:30 AM
To: Ferry Comments; Commissioners
Cc: Lisa Janicki; Ron Wesen; Peter Browning; Rachel Rowe
Subject: Proposed Guemes Island Ferry fare increase

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Ron Wesen, Skagit County Commissioner

Peter Browning, Skagit County Commissioner

Lisa Janicki, Skagit County Commissioner

1800 Continental Place, Suite 100
Mount Vernon, WA 98273

RE: Proposed Guemes Island Ferry Fare Increases

Dear County Commissioners:

We are writing to express our concern about the proposed 71% increase in fares for the Guemes Island Ferry. My family has lived on the island full-time since 2017, but have family history dating back to the 1960s. We value and appreciate the ferry and its crew who safely get us to/from the island as needed.

As frequent ferry passengers, we are aware of how many island residents ride the ferry daily. The ferry is the only way to get to and from the island; residents can't choose an option that costs less. The structure of the fare increases currently under consideration create the risk of making island residency too expensive for working families who commute, and those of more limited means who must run errands on the mainland. The island community should continue to be a place where people of all income levels can make their home.

We would encourage the County to look for other solutions. At the very least, it needs to better understand the problem it is trying to solve. And a better understanding of its budget.

The Skagit Valley Herald reported "*This year, the county expects to send \$1.4 million in road fund revenue — about 10% of the road fund's budget — to subsidize the costs of running the ferry, said Rachel Rowe, who heads the county's ferry division.*" Ms. Rowe appears to be in error, by a wide margin. The road fund budget in 2023 is \$32,808,795. \$1.4 million is slightly more than 4% of the roads budget.

According to the county budget posted [online](#), the 2022 road fund expense budget as modified was \$36,238,546. The 2023 preliminary expense budget for roads is \$4 million less than the budget in 2022. Perhaps if this year's budget matched last year's, there would be funding both to maintain the commitment to the Guemes Island community, and fund other County road priorities.

Before approving a massive fare increase, we would request that the County explore all of the following options:

- Alternative fare structures that significantly reduce costs for working families, and those of more limited means. Additionally, a reduced-rate for full-time island residents (confirmed via State Drivers License/ID card, perhaps) who wish to purchase punch cards versus posted rates for tourists/infrequent visitors;

· Look for ways to reduce operating costs. In the 2021 study, one of the objectives is to strengthen financial policies and enhance predictability and create transparency. This current fare proposal accomplishes none of these stated objectives.

· Increase property taxes to more adequately fund all County road priorities, including the ferry operations, and have all County residents share the burden. Afterall, the Guemes Ferry is our road home and island residents could argue that they don't frequent roads in say, the eastern part of the county, yet our taxes still support them. That is the nature of tax dollars at work.

Taking these steps would help to ensure that the island remains affordable and accessible to everyone, including those who have lived here for many years and would find increased fares present them with an undue financial hardship.

Thank you for considering this request, and these alternatives to blanket increases to the fares for the Guemes Island Ferry.

Sincerely,

Kaitlin and Jennifer Schofield

Jennifer Rogers

From: Karen Lamphere <klampher@yahoo.com>
Sent: Friday, March 10, 2023 2:31 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Guemes ferry rate proposal

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Dear Commissioners,

We retired to Guemes in 2016. We purchased a small house for \$273,000. It is now worth over \$600,000 and our property taxes have doubled.

Now the ferry rates are going way up. We are on a fixed income and this will definitely be a burden. Since Guemes doesn't have any services we have to leave the island on a regular basis for shopping and medical appointments.

My other concern is about services coming to Guemes such as landscaping, tree trimming, home repair, etc. It looks like it will cost a lot more for trucks with trailers. It may prevent many businesses from even providing service to Guemes, or those costs will raise the price we pay for these services.

Please keep in mind the burden this exorbitant rate increase will have on the senior population here.

Thank you,
Karen Lamphere
5237 W. Shore Rd.

[Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android](#)

Jennifer Rogers

From: kshill <kshill13824@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, March 10, 2023 1:38 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Cc: Commissioners; guemesferry@gmail.com
Subject: Guemes Island Ferry Rate Proposal

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To Skagit County:

Please **REJECT** the proposed Guemes ferry rate increase package.

While some adjustments may be needed, this proposal is **TOO MUCH, TOO SOON.**

1. The immediate and ongoing impacts would be counterproductive. Businesses, employees and residents would be harmed:

The proposed fares would discourage businesses such as building contractors and suppliers from continuing to do business on the island. A construction company owner would not be happy to pay nearly **triple** the current rate, \$123 from \$45, for a 40' truck, and neither would the customer.

Employees who commute for work either on the mainland or the island may not be able to afford to keep their jobs. Many of these jobs are in service industries, which are typically at the lower end of the wage scale, so those employees would be impacted disproportionately. Asking these employees to pay **more than double in a single price hike** (\$400 from \$196) for a 20 trip vehicle and rider card is unconscionable.

Residents who need regular access to the mainland would also suffer. Because the island has no medical services, people have to travel to the mainland for routine and urgent care. People with cancer, heart disease and other disabling conditions can have frequent appointments. Higher fares would be especially bad for low income patients and lower income residents. Asking seniors and disabled people to pay **67% more in a single price jump for a single trip** is outrageous.

2. The proposed fare hikes pile on top of one another, creating severe, sudden shocks.

For example, increasing the vehicle length increment from five feet to ten feet is unreasonable. Today, a 41' vehicle would pay for 45' at current rates. Under the proposal, the same vehicle would pay for 50' : **five additional feet that it doesn't occupy on the ferry deck at a higher price.**

Passengers with bicycles would also experience the fare pile-on effect. Raising passenger fares AND charging for bicycles is not reasonable. If anything, bicycle use should be encouraged.

3. Guemes Island residents already contribute substantially to the ferry budget.

Through our property taxes, we pay many hundreds of thousands of dollars into the road fund annually. We also pay ferry fares. We are not a community that is being coddled or subsidized, as was suggested by County Commissioner Wesen on February 28. The contribution to the ferry budget from the road fund should NOT be reduced.

4. The Guemes Ferry is part of our overall traffic structure and should not be singled out for excessive taxes and fees. As a comparison, people who must use a particular bridge, freeway overpass or road to get to work, home, medical care, etc. typically don't pay separate fees for using those public assets.

Should this proposal be approved, my ferry use habits would certainly change: fewer trips and more walking on rather than driving. I suspect that many others would respond the same way, leading to significantly more parking pressure on the mainland side.

I concur with the importance of regular income/expense reviews. Of course the ferry needs to be financially viable, with safety, reliability and proper treatment of the hard-working, dedicated crew. This fare proposal doesn't disclose where the increased fare revenue would actually be used. This proposal is **drastic, lacking in transparency and excessive**. It should be **REJECTED**.

Respectfully,

Karen Shill
7243 Channel View Drive
Anacortes, WA 98221-9085

Jennifer Rogers

From: kshill <kshill13824@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 12, 2023 3:13 PM
To: Commissioners; Ferry Comments; guemesferry@gmail.com
Subject: Guemes Island Ferry Proposed Rate Increases

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To: Skagit County Commissioners: Ron Wesen, Lisa Janicki, Peter Browning
Public Works Director/County Engineer: Grace Kane P.E.
Ferry Operations Division Manager: Captain Rachel Rowe
1800 Continental Place
Mount Vernon, WA. 98273

Re: SKAGIT COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS FERRY DIVISION
2023 GUEMES ISLAND FERRY FARE INCREASE

When faced with difficult organizational decisions, I have always found it useful to refer to the Mission Statement of the organization struggling with the decision. This is the best way to determine if a proposed change squares up with the fundamental purpose of the organization.

If a proposed decision conflicts with the Mission Statement, it should be rejected or modified to comply fully with the Mission Statement. Here, of course, I am referring to Skagit County and KPFF promoting substantial changes to the Guemes Island Ferry rate structure. I see lots of daylight between the County's Mission Statement and the rate change proposal.

To follow up my previous comments on this matter, I have a basic question and would appreciate a reply:

How do Skagit County and KPFF justify this proposal in light of the County's mission statement (below, as it appears on the County website)?

Sincerely,

Karen Shill
7243 Channel View Drive
Anacortes, WA 98221

Skagit County Mission Statement

Skagit County is a very special place to live, with beautiful and diverse communities and extraordinary natural resources. Skagit County Government proudly serves the people, businesses, communities and organizations in this special place, guided by these principles:

- We will partner with our customers, based on mutual respect and trust, to protect and plan for the health safety and welfare of current as well as future citizens.
- We will assist our customers, based on fairness and justice, to understand and comply with the intent of Federal and State regulations as well as our own.

- We will support and honor our employees in their efforts to be progressive and innovative in improving the efficiency and quality of services to our customers.

OUR MISSION is to be recognized as a premier county in Washington State for providing professional leadership, operational excellence, timely assistance, and maximum efficiency in service delivery to our customers.

Jennifer Rogers

From: Skagit County Public Works
Sent: Monday, May 1, 2023 12:35 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: FW: Guemes Island Ferry

From: kshill <kshill13824@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, May 1, 2023 12:05 PM
To: Commissioners <commissioners@co.skagit.wa.us>; Skagit County Public Works <pw@co.skagit.wa.us>
Cc: Alex.Ramel@leg.wa.gov; Debra.Lekanoff@leg.wa.gov; Liz.Lovelett@leg.wa.gov; guemesferry@gmail.com
Subject: Guemes Island Ferry

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ATTENTION:

Skagit County Commissioner Ron Wesen
Skagit County Commissioner Peter Browning
Skagit County Commissioner Lisa Janicki
Skagit County Public Works Director Grace Kane
Guemes Island Ferry Manager Rachel Rowe

CC:

Washington State Representative Debra Lekanoff
Washington State Representative Alex Ramel
Washington State Senator Liz Lovelett
Guemes Island Ferry Committee

Today's sudden strike of the Guemes Island Ferry is the latest and most egregious testament to the years of dissension and mismanagement that have rendered the ferry **UNRELIABLE**. While I wish the ferry crew had not made the decision to strike in this way, I understand their grievances.

IT IS BEYOND HIGH TIME FOR SKAGIT COUNTY to conclude contract negotiations in such a way as to:

- * Pay the ferry workers fairly so as to attract and retain good crew members;
- * Maintain the ferry properly so that it doesn't shut down suddenly due to mechanical problems (such as those that occurred right after the ferry came out of its expensive, but not extensive enough, 2023 maintenance haulout);
- * Ensure emergency service to Guemes Islanders; and
- * Ensure reliable service for island and mainland workers, commuters, businesses, students, seniors and others who rely on the ferry to get them to work, school, etc.

The ferry problems are bad enough. When you add the outrageous fare increases that Skagit County is seeking, a portrait of poor management and horrible public relations becomes glaringly obvious.

Many people, including myself, have submitted comments to the County Commissioners regarding this situation. Here, I will add another point:

My husband and I have paid thousands of dollars in permit fees to Skagit County for our house addition project, which is underway but has a long way to go to be usable. Now our building contractors and suppliers can't get here because of the ferry strike. In the past, they couldn't get here because of sudden shutdowns due to maintenance and staffing issues. **This is bad for business, both on the mainland and on the Island.** It harms our building contractor, subcontractors and suppliers. **It harms us personally** for having spent a large amount of money for an asset we can't use because the ferry is unreliable.

Skagit County needs to get serious about a contract with the ferry workers and about better ferry and dock maintenance so that it can deliver reliable ferry service. That would be in everyone's best interest.

Please take this situation seriously and act to resolve it soon.

Sincerely,

Karen G. Shill
7243 Channel View Drive (Guemes Island)
Anacortes, WA 98221
kshill13824@gmail.com
509-951-6845

Jennifer Rogers

From: Commissioners
Sent: Monday, April 24, 2023 8:11 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: FW: To thank and support Captain Rachel Rowe and Director Grace Kane

From: Katharine Finks <kfin@earthlink.net>
Sent: Saturday, April 22, 2023 5:48 AM
To: Commissioners <commissioners@co.skagit.wa.us>
Cc: Skagit County Public Works <pw@co.skagit.wa.us>
Subject: To thank and support Captain Rachel Rowe and Director Grace Kane

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Dear Lisa Jainicki, Peter Browning, and Ron Wesson,

Thank you for your adult-in-the-room professional leadership. You are responsive to us citizens of Guemes Island and you deserve our respect and cooperation!

I hope that you rise above the angry calls concerning the VERY RARE problem of the off-duty ferry last week. We all know the sudden and strong frustration when something goes wrong, but we should also know that after we solve that particular problem (which people did) it is time to see the big picture: **The great majority of the days of the year** those of us who chose to live on an **island** have safe and reliable transportation overseen and made possible by Captain Rachel Rowe and the whole staff. How irresponsible and downright mean to suddenly call for her firing!

Our family has been full time on Guemes since 2005 and have benefitted from all the upgrades in communication. It seems to us that there is massive planning always going on in the background to maximize service despite all the difficulties. We anticipate the new ferry and feel we are being kept up on the planning of that. We realize that everything costs, and the question of how to fairly charge and how to fairly pay are never going to be perfect but we have every reason to believe that you are trying your best! We want the staff on the ferry to feel secure and respected and able to continue, too.

I hope that this message reaches each commissioner as well as Rachel and Director Kane. Please don't give up on us! Thank you for your service!

Sincerely,

Katharine Finks
5998 Dunthorne Rd.
360 588 9192
(and my neighbor Cindy Gunnell who asked me to speak for her as well)

Jennifer Rogers

From: Kathy Malley <kathy@snowmesa.com>
Sent: Friday, March 10, 2023 5:46 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Cc: commissioner@co.skagit.wa.us; guemesferry@gmail.com
Subject: Guemes Island Fare proposal

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To Commissioners Wesen, Browning and Janicki;

The current proposal for your consideration regarding the Guemes Island Ferry fare increase should be denied. Fare increases for island residents ranging between 50% - 143% is both indefensible and unsustainable. Instead, I'd encourage you to direct your staff to work with the Guemes Island Ferry Committee and other interested stakeholders to develop a long-term, equitable solution for the revenue needed to operate and maintain the Guemes Island Ferry.

Good government solutions – ones that are durable and work over a long period of time -- tend to be the ones built with the involvement of the people directly impacted. Since the 2023 budget for the Guemes Island Ferry has been adopted without a rate increase, I ask the County to take the time needed to develop a proposal that works for the County *and* island residents.

Given that we don't know what the operational costs of the new ferry will be, I believe taking a phased approach to fare and long-term revenue needs should be considered. This could include:

1. A more modest fare increase of 10-15% in 2024 to provide some additional operating revenue. Any fare increase should:
 - a. Prioritize affordability for island residents through punch card purchases that retain flat year-round price.
 - b. Have a modest impact on oversized vehicles to ensure farm, ranching, construction and other services that island residents rely on do not skyrocket.
 - c. Encourage bicycles and smaller cars: for bicycles keep the costs the same as passenger fare since bikes make good use of the deck space, filling in spaces where cars do not fit. For smaller cars, move to 15 or 16' length limit, rather than the proposed 14' since cars we consider small (i.e. Prius) are longer than 14'.
2. Continue collecting the surcharge, but repurpose a portion of it for operating and maintenance costs for at least a few years until the new boat comes online and we have a better sense of its operating costs.
3. Explore the creation of a ferry district to create a steady flow of income specifically for the ferry and help offset the potential loss of income from the MVFT. This would require a change to the RCW, which now limits revenue from ferry districts for passenger-only boats. There was a legislative proposal in 2017 to fix this; it was passed by the Senate, but didn't make it out of the House. I believe a Ferry District is a more equitable approach to revenue creation. Rather than full time residents having to shoulder the bulk of fare increases, all properties on the island, regardless of whether someone is there 1 week of the year or 52 weeks of the year will pay a portion of their property taxes to support ferry costs. Obviously this on top of the significant portion of our taxes that already go to the County Road Fund, so a Ferry District and its associated levy have work in tandem with keeping fares modest.

I'm sure there are other ideas to consider for long-term revenue needs, fare models and ways to increase ridership. The Guemes Island Ferry Committee and island residents have worked with the County in the past to create viable solutions and I'm sure it can be done again.

As you know the ferry is literally a lifeline to the 800 or so people who live on the island. Please engage meaningfully with Island residents to develop a viable solution that maintains an affordable, well run county ferry.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kathy Malley
6469 Edens Road
Guemes Island

Jennifer Rogers

From: Kathy Whitman <kmdwhitman@msn.com>
Sent: Friday, February 24, 2023 8:10 PM
To: Ferry Comments; Commissioners
Subject: Guemes Ferry comments

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To: Skagit County Commissioners and Ferry Comment webpage

Please reject the Guemes ferry rate increase proposal.

I am a full-time resident of Guemes Island. I have read the proposal and am concerned about several points:

1. An average 71% fare increase is excessive. This has far reaching impacts and cannot be approved.
 - a. I do not see where a drop in ridership is anticipated with the high fee.
 - b. The impact on regular commuters is only addressed with the punch pass and does not consider the individual financial impact.
 - c. Those on fixed incomes are also ignored with the proposal.
2. The review used a 5-year period but did not give adequate consideration to the impacts of COVID including the period where no revenue was collected and ridership pattern changes. The COVID impacts have provided false information patterns which were not addressed.
3. The new ferry promises decreased cost of operation which is not reflected in the document.
4. Any decision about a % goal should focus solely on the ferry operation and not consider an indexed adjustment to cost of living or inflation.
5. With a large fee increase, it will result in more cars remaining overnight in Anacortes and further contributing to the parking shortage that already exists. This is likely result in a demand for larger parking lots.

I do support a SMALL increase. While the study has lots of information, and history, and diagrams... it fails to consider many of the tangent issues as noted above.

Most homes on Guemes Island have new 2023 assessments and tax bill that are substantially higher than in the past. I do not know the average percentage but have heard 35% increase mentioned. Those are new dollars coming to the county of which some should be used to put additional funding into roads while allowing the ferry fees to stay under control.

I am unclear about how the Vessel Replacement Surcharge is being considered. It appears that the new ferry is fully funded without using the surcharge funds. At the completion of the new ferry, there should be some legislation that could direct those surplus funds back into the ferry operation.

I do support parking improvements. Some are noted in the report. On the Guemes side it would be to mark spaces to utilize all space efficiently. The abandoned vehicles and rusty bicycles require county attention to allow the spaces to be used in an active way. On the Anacortes side the damage and vandalism to unattended vehicles should be addressed with an active surveillance system.

Please reject this proposal.

Kathy Whitman
7822 South Beach Lane
Anacortes, WA 98221
206-334-1573

Jennifer Rogers

From: Commissioners
Sent: Thursday, March 9, 2023 4:25 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: FW: Guemes Island Ferry Rates

-----Original Message-----

From: Kate Hetterle <kmhetterle@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 9, 2023 4:20 PM
To: Commissioners <commissioners@co.skagit.wa.us>
Subject: Guemes Island Ferry Rates

#####

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Dear Commissioners, We have owned our property on Guemes since 1989. We have been paying taxes to contribute to Skagit County roads/transportation since 1989. We feel it is unjust that most ferry fare categories will see a 100% or more increase. This proposed fare increase will affect us on a very personal level. We will have to consider selling our home of over 30 years if the fares increase 100% or more in most categories. We have been working on our Guemes home for over 30 years and have always planned to live out our retirement years in our home. If the current fare increase proposal goes through we will very likely have to leave our home. Please listen to the voices of the Guemes tax paying residents and let's work together for a just outcome. Thanks, Katy and Bart Hetterle 7228 Holiday Blvd Anacortes, WA 98221 (Guemes Island)

Sent from my iPhone

Jennifer Rogers

From: mcalistkg <mcalistkg@frontier.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 7, 2023 7:11 PM
To: Ferry Comments; Commissioners
Subject: Guemes Ferry Fare Proposal

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Long Term Ferry Sustainability

The county's proposed cap on ferry spending and resulting fare increase almost doubles our ferry costs and would be a financial burden for many residents especially low-income folks, families, and commuters. The rate hike will cause me and most other residents to use the ferry less in general and walk on instead of driving. Revenues will continue to drop, and I suppose fares will have to increase again. At some point the whole concept of the county providing the ferry will not be sustainable.

Public Information Effort

More public input on the fare increase implications and the advice of the ferry committee could be useful to the county. Also, the residents would better understand the funding challenges if they were better informed. The Public Works Dept. decision to hold county meetings off island and not to attend ferry committee meetings on island caused much less public participation.

Oversize Vehicles

I have a lightweight utility trailer (31 ft long with tow vehicle) and currently pay \$39 dollars a trip peak rate. I use the trailer once or twice a month to haul brush or building materials. Many residents use these small trailers for homeowner projects. The proposed change puts me in the 30 ft to 40 ft category and I would have to pay \$123 each trip. This is 3 times the current rate and unfair. Since the trailer uses the deck space of a 14 ft long vehicle the fair rate would be an additional \$21 (14 ft vehicle new rate) plus the tow vehicle at \$25 for a total of \$46.

The end result is that I could not afford to take the trailer on the ferry at the new rates, and the \$39 I currently pay will be lost revenue. What purpose does that serve? Also 5 ft or less increments should be used to determine oversize rates. Using 10 ft increments as proposed puts my 17 ft long 1/2 ton pickup with 14 ft single axle lightweight trailer in the same category as a fully loaded 39 ft long multi-axle commercial truck which could weigh as much as 40 tons.

Thanks for reading this and considering my comments.

Kelley McAlister
Guemes Island Resident

Jennifer Rogers

From: KM Pope <kelpdodger@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, February 24, 2023 4:38 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Ferry rate hike

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It is extremely unfair to the people of guemes island to propose a very huge rate increase for our ferry.
This is a very short ferry ride.
There has to be other options.

To: ferrycomments@co.skagit.wa.us

We live on the island and have looked at the material we could find from the county and from Guemes Island organizations and residents to explain the large fare increase.

It looks unreasonable and we have some questions:

How has ferry revenue decreased while ferry lines and waiting times have increased?

Has revenue for the road fund increased with the growth of the county and tax revenues?

Was the reduced fare intake during the covid disruption used to determine the increase.

Are separate punch cards going to be needed for peak and non-peak trips?

Were other things considered?

Having a methodology for increases that is more reliable than what led to this predicament.

Revenue from the 20% property tax increase on April 30, (One day before the 100% fare increase)

Property and local business tax revenues and development on the island.

How the fare increase would affect the proportion of vehicles versus walk-ons.

The added cost for every public and private service that uses the ferry.

Giving enough time for people, especially those who need to use it every day, to react to the change.

Larry and Wanda Johanson

larryjohanson@outlook.com

Guemes Island

Jennifer Rogers

From: Laura Anglin <tlanglin@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 27, 2023 1:01 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Proposed Guemes Farr fare increase

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I believe the majority of Guemes residents understand and agree with the need to raise fares, but a proposed 71% increase on top of a much larger property tax across the board is hard to manage for majority of residents.

Should not the fare increase be gradual or at an accumulated cost of living increase since last fare hike? Skagit County has increased their property tax revenue in 2023 substantially, has that been taken into consideration for the road revenue of which Guemes ferry operates under?

At the very least full time Guemes residents should have a 15% discount off your proposed rates.

Regards,
Laura Anglin

Sent from my iPhone

Jennifer Rogers

From: Grace Kane
Sent: Wednesday, March 1, 2023 9:45 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: FW: Guemes. (I know you saw that and rolled your eyes)

From: Laura K Ferguson <laurakferg@hotmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 27, 2023 9:51 AM
To: Skagit County Public Works <pw@co.skagit.wa.us>; Commissioners <commissioners@co.skagit.wa.us>; Lisa Janicki <ljanicki@co.skagit.wa.us>; Ron Wesen <ronw@co.skagit.wa.us>; Peter Browning <pbrowning@co.skagit.wa.us>
Subject: Guemes. (I know you saw that and rolled your eyes)

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Hello,

I, like everyone else, am writing to you regarding the fair increase proposal for Guemes Island. First off, I would like to say that I one hundred percent understand that I choose to live there. I choose to work off island. I choose to send my child to school in Anacortes. We are in fact a suburb of Anacortes. Maybe that is why this seems so difficult. We are special on Guemes. We are different. But sometimes it feels like we are also not listened to because we are the "Guemes People". We fight. We argue. We don't like change.

But, we are also moms, dads, kids and functioning citizens of Skagit County who deserve not to be priced and over charged out of our ability to live here. I have a great job. My husband is a mail man. We work hard but the cost of living is insane for everyone right now. By raising the cost, for us to be able to get home, so substantially it will greatly impact our lives in a negative way. I think that you will begin to see people walking on a lot more and you will not in fact make the money from the residents of the island.

Sometimes it feels like you forget that its not just tourists on Guemes. Sure, if I was going away for a weekend and had to pay \$20-\$25 to get to a sweet little island in the San Juan's, I wouldn't think twice about it. But, what about the mom who just needs to get her kid (and his 400 pounds of gear) home from baseball, football and basketball and doesn't want to walk on in a wind and rain storm.

My car has been broken into three times. I have had one car stolen. Gone. Bye. And my gas has been syphoned out of my truck two times this month. So no. I don't want to park on the Anacortes side and walk on because that is an expense to me too.

I believe that if you would acknowledge our concerns. If you would consider giving islanders. Permanent residents a discount. The gesture would go a long way and would be much appreciated.

I have lived here 20 years and I have learned we rarely win when voicing our opinions to the commissioners. I hope this time that doesn't happen. I hope you listen and really take into account the individuals that you are affecting. We are not just numbers. Please stop to consider that.

Thank you for your time,

Laura K Ferguson
5096 Guemes Island Rd
Anacortes, Wa 98221

Jennifer Rogers

From: Lawrence Verbano <lverbano@hotmail.com>
Sent: Friday, March 10, 2023 4:05 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Guemes ferry fare increases

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The proposed fare increases of 100% or more for most categories of ridership on the Guemes ferry are exorbitant with no justifiable background data available to the public before the increases take effect. The time frame for these fare increases has been very short and doesn't allow adequate time for public input.

Cost-cutting measures should include the scanner-based ticketing system as advocated by Steve Orsini rather than the more expensive ticket-booth system by eliminating the need for a purser.

These measures, as well as others outlined by Mr. Orsini's letter to the commissioners warrant careful consideration. The current method for ferry fare calculation should stay in place as it has worked well and fairly in the past.

Lawrence Verbano

Jennifer Rogers

From: Leo Osborne <milkwoodstudio@hotmail.com>
Sent: Friday, March 24, 2023 11:46 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: leo e osborne, ferry issues

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Greetings,

I have had a nice talk with a communications person with Skagit County who gave me this address to write to. I am 75 and have lived on Guemes Island since 1993 and have paid real estate taxes to the county for those years.

I have to say that I am appalled and spiked by the action of the County to raise our ferry rates to over 100 percent.

I think this is criminal and reflects poorly on YOU, our elected officials, as attempting to do this. No one has ever heard of such an increase in anything, let alone our travelling costs to the mainland for whatever purposes, be it work, supplies, medical needs, etc!!!!

You need to figure out other ways to get money. How about charging more to visitors to Guemes and letting the full -time residents receive a discount by use of a card or something to identify us as those who LIVE here and are dependent on the ferry which we love and especially the crew folk who serve us so wonderfully!

30 years I have been here and I know about other ferry systems near us, much like ours that are doing fine and are being charged less than we are to provide service to their island homes. I do not understand why Skagit County feels that they need so much more money from us to provide the service that we now have.

I have been here long enough to have seen the County change our hourly schedule to make later night runs during the week so that more people could live here and commute to Seattle for working days, thus giving more funds to the county thru real estate taxes, which have also doubled!!!! Well, the island was against that change, but the county did it anyway. You have been getting much more money from the new and large homes that have been built here since that time and now with people working from home, they for the most part do not need to commute to Seattle.

These increases have created situations where folks who can, make b n'b spaces in their homes and this has brought more traffic to the island to the point where we can have 3 hour waits sometimes in the summer because of long lines of vehicles coming here to stay.

I will not go on, but please know that I am outraged at this proposal, and it is hard to believe that Skagit County could even consider this....it is simply WRONG.

Sincerely, a concerned resident
Leo E. Osborne
and my wife Jane Lane

Jennifer Rogers

From: Leo Osborne <milkwoodstudio@hotmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, May 28, 2023 10:47 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: rate increases

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Greetings,

I am Leo E. Osborne and have lived full time on Guemes since 1993. I am now 75 years old. This promised increase in ferry rates is HUGE and totally unexpected and I feel like we are being taken advantage of. There are similar ferries in Washington State that provide the same kind of service at fair rates and they get enough money to provide the ferry service and crews. Why can we not be the same?

Maybe you would consider going back to the last ferry on Mon-Thurs to be at 6:30pm. This would decrease the runs by at least 12 per week, thus saving the county money\$\$\$\$\$\$ We were told back years ago when it changed that it was because of letting folks live on Guemes and commute to work at long distance. NOW, since Covid most people work from home and that is one reason that we have so much ferry traffic now, so there is no real need for late evening ferries for commuters!!!! This will not change.

I truly love our ferry and crew, they are great people with good personalities and they are our county servants and they please us.

I strongly feel that you as our county voted into office "servants" should look deeper into this issue. I understand that a lot of money was spent, our money, to get financial evaluations done...that was a waste as you could have done this without their obviously stupid math.

This entire issue is very distressing to me and from what I see and hear to most ALL of the fulltime residents on Guemes. Can you not make a provision for full time residents to pay less than visitors and summer folk who come to stay in bnb units now here on island.

Sincerely,
Leo E. Osborne
Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows

Jennifer Rogers

From: Les Eelkema <laegto67@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 7, 2023 7:48 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Cc: Bonnie Eelkema
Subject: Proposed Guemes ferry price increases

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Dear County Commissioners:

I am writing to ask that you reconsider any proposed ferry fare increases until these increases can be studied further. We feel that the proposed increases are unfair and will put a hardship on Bonnie and I, as well as many others. We are retired and on a fixed income. We feel we are an easy target because we are served by a county ferry, and costs are very easy to track. I'm sure there are many other Skagit communities and areas of 600-800 taxpayers that aren't being asked to pay extra because their roads do not service as many people as higher density areas. We moved to Guemes because house prices were comparable to others in the rural Skagit County, and much more reasonable than the San Juans and the city of Anacortes. We are retirees and live on a fixed income. We, like the majority on Guemes, are not 1%'ers. We pay almost \$1000 a month in Skagit County property taxes. We also pay over \$200 a month in ferry fares to live on Guemes. That adds up to \$14,000 per year that we are paying Skagit County to live on Guemes. If fares are increased at the rate KPFF proposes, our ferry costs (compared to our current usage) would increase to \$4582, or over \$16,500 per year!

In closing, I ask you to reconsider how you determine an equitable fare increase. Islanders are willing to partner with you in dialogue and planning to determine a fair increase. I readily admit that current inflation rates must be dealt with. A 10%-15% increase at the most should bring us to a reasonable catch-up point. So please reconsider and be reasonable in considering fare increases.

Thank you for your time!
Sincerely,
Les and Bonnie Eelkema

Sent from my iPad

March 9, 2023

Dear Captain Rowe and Commissioners Wesen, Janicki, and Browning,

This letter is in response to the proposed Guemes Island Ferry fare schedule revisions. Unlike many on Guemes Island, I do not oppose fare increases on principal, and I believe that riders do need to pay a “user fee” that reflects increasing costs of operation. My concerns are in four primary areas: (1) implementing a fare increase all at once; (2) the lack of any meaningful analysis or method for implementing a needs-based discounted fare; (3) the chilling impact of rate increases for commercial vehicles on the area’s economy; and (4) the adoption of a fixed dollar-value cap on County Road Fund expenditures in support of the ferry program.

I have spent my career in public service, including infrastructure finance and public budgeting, and so the basic issues the County faces are familiar to me, as are the attitudes of many Guemes residents. I have reminded the community in public meetings that the County had to balance its 2023 budget with \$9M from reserves, and that the budget for County Roads was reduced by \$3M in the 2023 budget: this is the troubling context for ferry fare schedule decisions. Guemes Island ferry rates need to increase to help address the challenging condition of the County budget. That said, in my experience, any kind of adjustment to user fees needs to be consistent over time and gradual. Both of these are needed in order to avoid public relations debacles and/or triggering reductions in demand when elasticities of demand are sorely tested. The County did Guemes Island residents a service by not raising rates during the COVID-induced recession (and there would have been an outcry if rates were increased during that period). However, the result of not increasing base rates for many years is that the proposed fare increases to address shortfalls are, in fact, draconian – even if they get the fares to the same place they would have been if the fares had been reduced slowly over time. The shock is too great for people to adjust to readily and it creates real hardship for many riders.

A review of the County’s overall 2023 budget indicates that the line item tied to ferry revenues in the County Road budget was not increased significantly over 2022 revenues (I see only a \$47,500 increase). The County Road budget was balanced in the 2023 budget without the requested rate increase; there is insufficient resolution in the data to determine if cuts in operation costs were adopted or not. That said, the KPFF slide deck indicates an operating budget of \$3.169M is required in 2023 after unspecified “base year adjustments” to the adopted 2023 budget, which is in line with the most recent “Ferry Fare Revenue Target Report”. There is no discussion in the KPFF materials of the fare increase being needed to offset otherwise-required (adopted) cuts in the ferry operations budget. That leaves the impression that there is *time* – the County and Commissioners have time to implement a “catch-up” schedule of more gradual fare increases without jeopardizing the 2023 operating budget. A more modest increase of 10% a year, or maybe 15% in the first year, 10% in the second year, 5% increases for a 3-5 years, and increases at the rate of inflation every year thereafter would bring the fare contributions up at a manageable pace for most riders.

There are riders for whom even these modest increases would be a hardship. The KPFF study was woefully inadequate with respect to assessing and accounting for those needs. There are probably several methodologies that could have been explored to both quantify the extent of need and different methods of addressing the need for a special fare schedule, and it is deeply concerning that the Commissioners have not been presented with alternative approaches to take into consideration in adopting a new fare schedule. Older age should not be a determinant of need, of course: there are many wealthy retirees on Guemes Island, whose "fixed income" is generous. But the number of school-age children could be a valid criterion, even if a family is above low-income thresholds. Census data, other County programs that reflect income, other County or State eligibility requirements, etc. could determine the average "pool" of riders who might need a reduced fare. The total revenue generated by this "pool" could then be the basis for determining how other fares might need to be adjusted to reach reasonable targets for overall fare revenue (not increasing any fare category by more than 15-20%).

The increases proposed for commercial vehicles based on larger increments of length, while perhaps in keeping with Washington State Ferry norms, are likely to make it much less possible to get work done on Guemes Island. This will have a negative impact the local economy, and I see no analysis of the potential reductions in usage associated with these increases. In theory, commercial entities would pass the increased costs on to customers on the Island, and to the extent this is the case, purchases of goods and services will likely be reduced to keep overall project costs from skyrocketing. In practice, there are already some firms that just won't bother with an expensive ferry ride and more firms would be expected to make this choice under the proposed increases. This will greatly reduce competition and the range of goods and services offered to Island residents who would otherwise be injecting resources into the local economy. Adopting a fare schedule that makes it hard for small businesses to serve a ready and willing clientele seems like it can only harm the overall revenue base for the County.

Finally, it's clear that KPFF was tasked with experimenting with different "caps" on County expenditures for ferry operations, and that they established the proposed fare schedule on an arbitrary cap level. From an outreach perspective, providing no rationale or justification for the alternate caps or the selected cap creates room for a great deal of skepticism and criticism. Assuming that some cap is appropriate and adopted (as opposed to a "share" formula which is always subject to niggling about what expenses constitute what component of cost), it is inherently flawed to fix that cap at a dollar value going forward. Operation costs will continue to increase with inflation, and so fare increases would have to outpace inflation and would assume an increasing proportion of the total revenue stream. That may be intentional, but it is not good policy. To keep fares increasing at no more than the rate of inflation after a catch-up period (as described above), the County contribution needs to also increase at the same rate.

Thank you for taking these comments into consideration.

Lisa Charnock
6241 South Shore Road, 98221

March 23, 2023

Dear Captain Rowe and Commissioners Wesen, Janicki, and Browning,

This is a second letter in response to the proposed Guemes Island Ferry fare schedule revisions, specifically following your March 14, 2023 Work Session. I want to thank you for recognizing the need to phase in fare increases and for pursuing a meaningful needs-based fare, and I appreciate the shift to a fare-setting methodology that includes forecasted expenses.

Although the meeting's sound quality was challenging, I did come away with the impression that there was discussion about possible service cuts in the event that there are future shortfalls. I would like to address these cuts and the application of prospective needs-based fares, from the perspective of the Commissioners' overarching policy goals. Choices will have to be made over time regarding ferry operations, and it seems important for the Commissioners to consistently articulate their overall vision for the future of Guemes Island. Are policies going to be adopted that will make it more conducive for young families to live on the island, or less conducive? Does the County want to see Guemes Island become essentially an enclave for wealthy retirees and vacationers, or a vibrant all-age community? Ferry fare and schedule decisions have a disproportionate impact on the viability of island life for families, and as a result they do more to shape the demographics of this area than is normal for County policies about road expenditures.

When I attended my first Guemes Island Ferry Committee meeting, a vote was being taken about changing the bylaws. I was disturbed that the existing bylaws limited participation to people who register to vote on the island – I was sitting next to a young woman who owns property and brings her family to the island as often as possible, but who lives in Anacortes because she cannot accommodate her children's extracurricular activities based on the existing ferry schedule. She was frustrated that by excluding her from participation in the actions taken by the Ferry Committee, her voice was silenced with respect to ferry schedules. Sadly, the changes to the bylaws were not adopted, and this young mother's voice remains unvalued and unheard on the island. I hope you will listen. First, as I said in my previous letter, I believe it is good policy to extend need-based fares to families with school-age children irrespective of income (or with a different income threshold): we want to encourage families to live on the island and not price them out due to having to drive, sometimes more than once a day. Secondly, if it comes to removing runs to cut costs, please do not listen to voices that say that evening runs don't serve the majority of islanders. These runs may not have the most volume, but they are critical to families with school-age children, whether served by the Anacortes School District or home-schooled, because kids' activities and social engagements often extend well into the evening. If anything, these runs need to be expanded, not reduced. Imagine if your kids, or kids you know, could not play sports or participate in arts performances because they had to go home on the 6:00 ferry – we've learned from the COVID pandemic how detrimental that is to children's well-being. One family that I know raised their kids on the island before evening ferry runs were instituted, and they had to row their kids over to

maintain a social life and ability to join school activities – probably not a reasonable expectation, if we agree that it is advantageous to encourage people to raise their children on the island. (It is a naïve notion, but it crossed my mind that perhaps the *Straight Arrow* could be contracted for evening walk-on runs if that is less expensive than running the *Guemes* for car travel? It seems like an option families could adapt to, as they do during the haul-out).

I hope that you will direct your consultants to take a family-focused approach to the remainder of their analyses, and that you will adopt a fare structure and any needed schedule changes with the objective of encouraging families to live on the island rather than raising more barriers. Thank you for taking these comments into consideration.

Lisa Charnock
6241 South Shore Road, 98221

May 2, 2023

Dear Commissioners Wesen, Janicki, and Browning, and Public Works Director Kane,

I have debated whether there was any value in writing in response to the strike yesterday by Skagit County ferry employees, knowing that you would be flooded with responses and that most of us in the community have little or no idea what is really going on in the negotiations. The communication that the Commissioners sent out yesterday implied that the IBU is at fault for not coming to the table. At the same time, the IBU has made convincing points about both the paucity of the County's offer and the disingenuousness of the County's lead negotiator moving from negotiation to mediation. I won't pretend to know what's behind all of the public stances, but I have not seen any public information that delineates why the negotiations have come to an impasse, nor have I seen a description of the specific dispute that requires mediation rather than negotiation to resolve it. If the "dispute" is that the County won't bring salaries up to benchmarks such as raises to other county workers or other workers with the same skills in other public jurisdictions, this does not seem to be a valid subject for mediation, which requires that all parties reach a "less-than" outcome. If, instead, despite an offer of comparable wages, the IBU is asking for something more or different, then perhaps this is a dispute for which mediation is the right response. Information (that does not breach any required confidentiality in the labor negotiations) to the public would go a long way in helping the community truly understand what is at stake and why, and whether mediation is a reasonable option at this point due to a legitimate dispute.

The fact that the workers felt a need to strike despite their status as emergency employees indicates that things have, in fact, gotten very bad. They knew that they would risk losing the support of many islanders, which they have. Such a loss of trust and faith is a very high price to pay, and I doubt the decision was taken lightly. Honestly, I am not upset with the workers – I've been thinking for some time that it appeared the only way they would get the County's attention was to strike, and I've admired their willingness to avoid that last-ditch choice. They have not lost my confidence or my trust. Now that they have taken this extreme and last-ditch action to highlight the severity of the problem, I sincerely hope the County will look long and hard at the Union's requests and dig deeper into the County's reserve in order to direct the County negotiator to rethink his stance. But that's just one person's opinion, in the absence of all the relevant information.

What I do know is this: Captain Rowe is taking the brunt of the community's ire with this situation and with the ferry fare increase, and I don't see the Commissioners or County management managing the public relations of these situations in a way that would minimize the impact on her, or address the community's and the workers' anger. We need Captain Rowe. Her expertise, her hard work, her leadership in the electric ferry project—all of these make her a unique resource that deserves better support from the County. For example, to the extent that the IBU is correct that there have been serious mistakes in scheduling staff (which was exemplified by the recent staffing-related ferry shutdown), can there be a communication that

lays out exactly what happened and who was responsible? The community immediately assumes it was Captain Rowe, but is that actually the case?

Over the years, Captain Rowe has shown enormous patience in her willingness to try to work with a community that has a history of being ill-informed and highly critical. The Guemes Island Ferry Committee is not a particularly representative group, given the limitations on whom they allow to vote and the fact that they don't solicit input from community members who are not in line with their way of thinking. From what I've seen, they are spearheading what amounts to a smear campaign against Captain Rowe: I'm afraid that this community is now smelling blood in the water and is circling for the kill. This is potentially the biggest point of failure in what has been a series of very bad developments in the context of the ferry operations: allowing Captain Rowe to take all the blame for both the labor dispute, the fare increases, and for any management decisions that were not in her control is a grave mistake. Please make an effort to set the record straight and to restore her good reputation. It will take a lot of work to counter the misinformation that is permeating the island's various social media sites. While this work should have started years ago, at this moment the County should do everything it can to avoid the risk of losing such a valuable and committed employee.

Thank you for taking these comments into consideration.

Lisa Charnock
6241 South Shore Road, 98221

Jennifer Rogers

From: Liz Hartley <lraemont@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, March 6, 2023 10:21 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Guemes ferry fares

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Hello,
Please consider the perspectives of the frequent ferry users before implementing such drastic fare increases. Guemes Island is not a wealthy enclave. Most will have to make significant sacrifices in their budgets to afford these increases. Ridership will decrease. More people will walk on rather than drive, thus reducing fare revenues. Penalizing those of us who bike by charging extra just because WSF does this makes no sense. Every time a car goes across, that car is adding to the cost of maintaining county roads, as well as contributing to global warming. Strongly consider reducing trips per day rather than increasing fares so much. If fares must go up, do so incrementally. A 70% average increase beginning in May is a sudden shock to us, especially when property tax bills due April 30th are thousands of dollars more than 6 months ago. Where is basic humanity in this scenario? We are people just like you, trying to survive in hard times. We are elderly, we are young families, retired folks on fixed incomes, commuters, essential services workers. We are also voters. Please work with us, we have many ideas and suggestions and I believe we can compromise so that an equitable solution is made.
Liz Hartley

Sent from my iPhone

Jennifer Rogers

From: delores steele <lorriesteele@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 2, 2023 10:06 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Fare increase proposal

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Dear Skagit Co. commissioners,

I live at 5521 No Name Rd.

I've lived on Guemes for 43 years full time.

The recent proposed fare increase to the ridership on the ferry is a very hard hit for those like me who are retired and living on a fixed income.

It is simple too much too soon.

While riding the ferry is part of the charm of living on Guemes a more gradual increase would be easier to swallow.

I realize that making this decision you have much to consider but first and foremost please consider what this means to the ridership.

Surely there are ways to make up cost in other ways without penalizing the most vulnerable population.

For me personally, I would be forced to reduce my crossings even more than I already do.

I hate the thought of being priced off the island but it is a thought I am now living with.

Sincerely, Lorrie Steele

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows

Jennifer Rogers

From: Lu <2lemew@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, March 10, 2023 8:57 PM
To: Ferry Comments; Commissioners
Cc: guemesferry@gmail.com
Subject: Ferry fares

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No doubt we are strongly opposed to the proposed extreme fare increases. We understand that costs of doing business continue to rise (and fares need to rise) but inflation is what, around 7%, nowhere near the proposed percentage increases to the fares. Also with the property tax increases for some on the island raised by 40%. It seems the county wants to run out the middle class and gentrify the island so it brings in more \$\$ for the county.

Please keep in mind this island has very limited services- residents are required to leave the island on a regular basis for supplies, medical care, entertainment etc. We will keep this simple, pointing out my main concerns about the proposed Guemes ferry fare increases

- * How working class residents that are required to leave the island on a daily basis will be able to afford the high fare- especially in the summer! \$25 per trip? \$125 per week? Many may struggle to afford to buy a \$332 punch card, much less a \$400 pc that would save them some \$\$.

- * How will retired residents that live with a fixed income afford the fares, granted they might not have to go to town several times a week but perhaps some do. Still the same issue with the punch card prices.

- * A few years back, the ferry commission wanted to encourage walk-ons and bikes. Now it appears that has changed- especially with the senior passes charging over 100% more during peak times?

- * Any punch card cost savings for residents during peak season to avoid even higher fares will be taken away with a peak season punch card.

- * A toll booth? Why on earth? Is it a cost-saving strategy? I don't think so. The ferry crew enjoys their walks up the line to collect fares, they certainly will not enjoy sitting in a toll booth all day!

We were very pleased with most of the Guemites that spoke at the meeting last week and agree with 98% of their concerns and suggestions (except the date nite idea to increase ferry use and a couple others). Since Covid, we have seen nothing but increased ridership year-round on the ferry. The winter days when we could get in line 10 minutes before the ferry arrived and expect to get on that ferry are gone.

Lastly, if the fares do increase to the proposed amounts, We are certain ridership will decrease substantially and there goes your increased revenue. And we residents take offense to the county commissioners complaining that the Fonk Road repairs (for 60 residents) can't be accomplished due to the high cost of the Guemes Ferry (for 900 residents).

Enough said and thank you for listening

Sincerely,

Lu & Jim LeMieux

7365 W Shore Dr

Have owned property here since 1996

--
Lu

Jennifer Rogers

From: Lynda Mills <lmills4@hotmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 28, 2023 6:44 AM
To: Ferry Comments; Commissioners
Cc: Lynda Mills
Subject: Feedback on Proposed Guemes Ferry Increase

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Ron Wesen, Skagit County Commissioner
Peter Browning, Skagit County Commissioner
Lisa Janiki, Skagit County Commissioner

Dear County Commissioners,

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the proposed fare increase for the Guemes island ferry.

My family have been residents on the island since 1976 and I have been a resident on my own property since 2014.

The Guemes ferry is our only means of public transportation to the mainland where we must travel for work, groceries, services, medical appointments, etc. It is our lifeline.

It was quite distressing to read that the county is considering an exorbitant increase of 71% to the ferry fares. This proposed increase would be a financial burden to the residents of Guemes and particularly to working families and retirees on limited incomes. It is likely this increase would require that residents make fewer trips due to the increased cost. Has the county considered the impact on revenue from decreased ferry usage? I did not see this data point considered in the study.

For further consideration, perhaps an alternative fee structure would be feasible to relieve financial pressure on residents. Perhaps a tiered rate structure. For example, a fee for island residents (with proof of residency) and a higher rate for tourists, infrequent travelers and work trucks (oversized and commercial) who could more easily bear the cost of higher rates as their ferry trips are less frequent.

If this increase is approved, it should be implemented over a period of time e.g., 2-4 years while the county adjusts budgets and provides time for residents to prepare financially.

I sincerely appreciate your consideration of alternative solutions to ease the significant cost increase and the impact to island residents.

Thank you.

Lynda Mills
5140 South Shore Drive

Lynette and Manuel Mattke
4457 S Shore Drive
Anacortes, WA 98221

March 21, 2023

Commissioner Ron Wesen
Commissioner Peter Browning
Commissioner Lisa Janiki
1800 Continental Place, Suite 100
Mount Vernon, WA 98273

Re: Proposed Guemes Island Ferry Fare Increases

Dear Commissioners Wesen, Browning, and Janiki,

As proud Skagit County residents, we are writing to you to express our concerns about the proposed fare increases for the Guemes Island Ferry. The proposed increases are dramatic and will, combined with the current effects of inflation, hit many Guemes Island residents hard.

For Guemes residents and visitors, the ferry serves the same function as bridges or roads across Skagit County. If it weren't for the tanker ships going through the Guemes Channel, that would otherwise be a viable solution, but cannot be due to the needs of the Anacortes refineries. Roads and bridges in the County are toll-free, yet Guemes Island residents are now being asked to shoulder a significant burden for the costs of the Ferry.

While we support reasonable fees for the Ferry, including reasonable periodic increases that align with cost of living increases, the proposed changes to pricing, vehicle lengths and electronic kiosks go well beyond such reasonable solutions. As a result, we ask that you:

1. Phase reasonable price increases in over multiple years, and align them with cost of living increases to make them viable for hard-working families living on the Island.
2. Maintain discounts for bulk purchases, and/or introduce subscription pricing for frequent ferry users.
3. Maintain current vehicle length increments.
4. Make bicycle crossings free to encourage biking instead of vehicle usage.
5. Cancel the planned kiosks and instead implement an easy-to-use barcode or transponder scanning solution similar to the State's Good to Go program.

The current proposal is punitive to the hard-working families, taxpayers and voters on Guemes Island and unfairly burdens them with significant costs that no other County residents are expected to bear. We hope you will consider this request and our suggestions, and that you will significantly revise the proposal before it is implemented.

Sincerely yours,


Lynette and Manuel Mattke

Jennifer Rogers

From: Mark D Spahr <spahr@fidalgo.net>
Sent: Monday, March 6, 2023 9:25 PM
To: Ferry Comments; Commissioners
Cc: guemesferry@gmail.com
Subject: Proposed Guemes Ferry Rates

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While we understand and support the need for periodic, equitable and fair rate adjustments to address increased costs of the Guemes Ferry, we urge the County Commissioners to consider several “wrong messages” the proposed rates are sending:

- Since Guemes residents overwhelmingly use multi-ride passenger and vehicle cards, **Guemes residents are facing much higher percentage increases than non-residents** who purchase single ride tickets. Yet the residents' usage pattern is fairly uniform throughout the year, the peaks which are so costly, come from non-residents. **Guemes residents pay into the County Road Fund** (ours increased by 22.2% from 2022 to 2023) **while many non-resident visitors to Guemes do not contribute to the Road Fund.**
- **Senior citizens are hit with the highest percentage rate increases** (a senior 25 ride card, peak charge is 143% over current rates). There are many low-income seniors who live on Guemes. Transit agencies usually give a 50% reduction for senior riders.
- The percentage increase for walk-on passengers is higher than for vehicle and driver, **thus favoring vehicles over walk-ons.**
- **The rates favor single occupancy cars over bicycles.** Four to six bikes and their riders may take up the same deck space as one vehicle (though bikes rarely displace any vehicles, since they are put to the side). The proposed peak rates would charge \$40 to \$60 for the bikes/riders compared to \$17 for a single occupancy vehicle. We choose to ride bicycles when we go shopping in town, using a senior 25 ride card. **The proposed peak rate would increase our cost from \$1.84 to \$7, a 280% increase.**

Please consider whether these messages represent your goal of enhancing life, character and diversity of Skagit County. We believe the proposed rates will result in more seniors and low-income families needing either to move off Guemes, or put more pressure on the two food pantries which are already serving those in need.

Since we agree some fare adjustments are needed, we suggest smaller annual adjustments after you analyze the impact of the substantial increase in the Road Fund tax referenced above.

Mark and Cecilia Spahr

Jennifer Rogers

From: Mark D Spahr <spahr@fidalgo.net>
Sent: Wednesday, March 15, 2023 8:00 PM
To: Commissioners
Cc: Ferry Comments; guemesferry@gmail.com
Subject: Guemes Ferry did not charge Fares 2020

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At the March 14 meeting discussing proposed Guemes ferry rate increases, Commissioner Ron Weson asked how long fares were not charged during Covid. Checking our 2020 calendar no fares were started March 23 and ended on May 5. During those 43 days many commercial operators and contractors took advantage of not paying, so there were logging trucks, gravel and sand stockpiled and other construction materials. Many non-residents from urban areas chose to live on Guemes during this time also increasing non-revenue producing ferry traffic. 43 days represents about 12% of the year, however because of the increased commercial and trucking traffic, the no payment gap probably resulted in a greater than 12% reduction in revenue for Skagit County. Guemes Islanders do not know who at Skagit County made the decision to offer free ferry service.

Mark and Cecilia Spahr

Jennifer Rogers

From: Mark A <mark@markandterri.com>
Sent: Saturday, April 8, 2023 12:14 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Re: Guemes island ferry fee schedule.....New fee structure thoughts

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Hello again,

So we just reviewed the newly proposed ferry fee schedule. Wow. Ok, I understand that the consulting firm is trying their best to come up with a proper increase.....however this seems a bit over the top.

Lets take an example. My wife and I love camping....as I am sure many of you do also. Honeslty this is a big reason for our move to the PNW 3 years ago. We have a camper that we tow behind our F150. Currently we pay \$52 to bring it across behind our truck. Not ideal for a 1-2 night camping trip....but we space our trips out to be able to use it.

Under the newly proposed schedule....we honeslty may as well sell our new trailer. It would cost us over \$250 to brint it across during peak season and \$173 off peak...meaning camping in the winter. Neither are affordable for us or most living on the island. We saved years for our new trailer....and we live in a doublewide manufactured to be able to afford having the trailer. However, having to pay that much to get away for a night or 2 just will not make sense.

I am not singling our myself just to whine. We are merely a tiny example of how these fees will impact the lifestyles of so many on the island. Many have said it before, but how would you like to pay \$25-30 to drive to the end of your road each evening? Well, that is what we are looking at.....not too mention taking away our ability to enjoy small pleasures like a camping trip.

Regards,

Mark & Terri Antonino

On Tue, Feb 28, 2023, 12:12 PM Mark A <mark@markandterri.com> wrote:

Hello

My wife and I are newer residents to Guemes Island, living here now for about three years. The comments today were fantastic and we appreciate everyone's attendance, considering that this meeting was scheduled during our ferry outage which, in all honesty, made it that much harder for a larger attendance to be there.

As numbers and statistics are great... I think we need to discuss real numbers. Considering the new ferry fee schedule, it would cost a couple \$33 to drive across. If you're thinking that revenue will not decline with the fare increase... That number alone should be staggering. Now if you take that and multiply it by 20 days a month for those that work full-time... \$660 a month is outrageous just to get to work and back. We are not even considering the cost of fuel and vehicle maintenance that everyone experiences.

Secondly, let's think about tourism on the island. Let's say a family of four decides to come over to see the island and possibly have a bite to eat. Realistically, in most cases, they will stop doing that if it's going to cost them an additional \$49 to make the trip. Why even bother when they can just stay in Anacortes and grab a bite to eat there and not spend

an additional \$50 to ride one and a quarter miles across the channel... a six minute ferry ride. Sure, if they were making this an outing for the day and they were going to ride the ferry for one and a half or two hours then maybe it makes sense... but not for a six minute ride.

My wife and I live on a fixed income. We volunteer two days a week at the Anacortes senior center and go to church on Sundays. As hard as it would be... We may need to consider not volunteering at the senior center because going back-and-forth will just get too expensive. We are definitely not rich and we live on a budget and as it is now we walk across as much as possible even when it's pouring rain and freezing cold because we don't have or more importantly don't want to spend the extra finances, especially on the days that we need to go across for volunteering. Like so many, we already try to combine the majority of our needs into fewer visits, because having to ride a ferry is already an additional expense that the majority of the counties population do not experience.

These are only a few examples of how this fare increase will impact both local residents and tourism. Add a minimum Island residence. Should receive a substantial discount over those visiting for the day. We are already going to absorb. Huge increases to have servicemen and trades come over when any of us need property, maintenance or services. So in essence, we are already absorbing a huge chunk of the increase, since the majority of businesses place upon us those additional fees to come to service our properties.

We ask that the county seriously considers how this will impact the local residence and put themselves in our shoes. How would you like to pay \$25-\$35 every day to drive down your street? We are already paying for and contributing towards county roads... Yet it seems as if Guemes island residents are being burdened for all the ferry costs, or the good majority of them... Which makes no sense if the ferry is truly part of the county road system.

Sincerely and in appreciation

Mark Antonino
602-705-4500.

--

Mark Antonino, REALTOR® Realty ONE Group Cell: 602-705-4500 Fax: 480-355 3370 MarkandTerri.com
about.me/antoninos

Jennifer Rogers

From: Mark A <mark@markandterri.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 28, 2023 12:12 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Guemes island ferry fee schedule

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Hello

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Sincerely and in appreciation

Mark Antonino
602-705-4500.

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Mark Antonino, REALTOR® Realty ONE Group Cell: 602-705-4500 Fax: 480-355 3370 MarkandTerri.com
about.me/antoninos

Jennifer Rogers

From: Mark Johnson <mark@snowmesa.com>
Sent: Friday, March 10, 2023 3:47 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Comment on 2023 Guemes Ferry Fare Proposal

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Dear Skagit County,

Thanks for the opportunity to comment on the proposed fare increases for the Guemes ferry. The main point I'd like to make is about the size of the proposed increases. I primarily pay my fares by using both passenger and vehicle/drive punch cards. The average increase of 71% (and even for peak season multi-trip punch cards; in some cases the fares will more than double) are too much to implement in one fell swoop. It's inconceivable that a utility company or a public transit organization would double their rates all at once. Typically, increases like this are made over a number of years. Similarly, I don't think the State of Washington would double the cost of car tabs and I don't think oil companies would double the cost of gasoline. And if any of these agencies would do what you're proposing to do, there would be a lot of anger and push-back by the public who must consume these resources and services.

So my ask would be that you go back to the drawing board to revisit your proposal and come up with a solution that is more fair and one that's implemented more gradually over a longer period of time. It's inevitable that the fares have to increase, but to increase so much at once will be painful for a lot of people. Moving forward with the proposed fare increases, by means of a process that doesn't seem very transparent or inclusive, doesn't seem like good government.

Thanks for your time and consideration.

Mark Johnson

March 9th 2023

Regarding the Proposed Guemes Island Ferry Fare Increase

To whom it may concern,

I have reviewed the proposed fare increase, and although I agree with the need for an increase due to the additional burden it is putting on the County Road Fund, I believe your increase percentages are way out of line and place an unreasonable burden on the ferry riders.

A 15% to 20% increase given current inflation and allowing for a couple of years since it was adjusted would seem reasonable. A 75% increase which is what is proposed in my category, is going to add close to **two thousand dollars annually** to my ferry cost. This is only the ticket cost and **does not include the knock-on costs** of services, construction and others that will be passing their additional cost on to us.

Given that a year ago we began paying a surcharge to help with the purchase of a new ferry, and in addition we have seen a dramatic increase in our property taxes, this increase will place an undue burden on us all at this time.

Thank you,

Mark Lascelles, Island Resident

Jennifer Rogers

From: Commissioners
Sent: Monday, March 20, 2023 10:55 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: FW: Guemes Island Ferry fare changes.

From: Mark Linnemann <mark@guemesislandresort.com>
Sent: Friday, March 10, 2023 5:58 PM
To: Commissioners <commissioners@co.skagit.wa.us>
Subject: Guemes Island Ferry fare changes.

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Dear Commissioners,

As the owner and operator of the only two retail operations on Guemes Island this dramatic increase is going to have significant impacts on both businesses, the Guemes Island General Store and the Guemes Island Resort. This should concern you not only because of decreased tax dollars from our operations on Island , but also from retail establishments across the county. From the tourists that we bring from around the county, state and country.

I think a fare move this extreme that focuses the increases on the business community and the island residents, will cause a decline in ridership that may be very counter productive to raising revenues. I think that it would be in the best interest of all stakeholders to look at the operational costs of the ferry service before looking at how to raise fares. Once a third party audit has been conducted I think you will have a better understanding of how to reduce costs of the operation. Then sharing your findings with the community and looking at how you can adjust the current fare / road fund percentage model to provide more adequate and sustainable funding. We all know that the rates need to go up due to higher costs and inflation. But I think that looking at waste and operational losses should come first.

During the window that the ferry missed its percentage marks. It should be considered that gave free rides for an extended amount of time(covid), hired and released new positions that did not bring added operational value and had record fuel instability. I should say here that the idea of a toll booth should really be analyzed and rethought. I predict that it will increase operational costs and will significantly slow the selling and loading of the boat. If the concern is money management then providing cash sales from the current office may be a better approach. Their you already have locked money storage and a secure location.

The increases to fare costs will likely prevent both of my businesses from being able to hire and retain employees from off island. Which is already very difficult due to the current ferry fares and non acceptance of cash. Maintaining reduced fare option through reasonable walk on punch cards for island residents and workers will keep the island desirable as a place to live and work. The loss of reasonably priced punch cards will prevent us from being able to maintain services at the current levels which will lower our taxable income. Which will in turn prevent us from drawing and servicing off island guests who will likely go to other islands and places for their vacations and nights out. Also due to the heavy increases on service and delivery trucks it will raise the cost of goods. This will further diminish and likely reduce our island patrons ability to purchase goods and services from us. I don't think this will raise ridership. At a time when Guemes Island General Store is still struggling to recover from the pandemic, it is an enormous hurdle and It may push us toward closing our doors permanently. Which will make the island a less desirable place to buy a vacation home or live.

Incase you weren't aware we regularly host events that fill boats with attendees. These attendees are fares you receive in addition to residents and tourists. These are the kinds of riders that will help you meet revenue targets through traffic volume. If the walk on fare doubles in price then people will stop coming to our events and this will further diminish our ability to operate. As well as diminish your revenue.

One of the first things we will likely need to drop will be gasoline sales. Currently we pay rates from our vendor that are on par with gas prices in Anacortes. Once we add our significant fuel system overhead cost then our prices are significantly above off island prices. Factor in huge and sudden increases to the trucking fares it will make our gasoline unappealing to all our customers. This will likely increase the transport of small gas containers which will pose an increased policing and safety concerns aboard the MV Guemes.

Slow and thoughtful changes will bring the county the best results. If you look at the large tax base that Guemes Island is for the county, you can equate it to the golden goose. It is better to let the goose continue to lay her eggs to support the county for years to come, instead of killing it for short term losses.

I am sorry that my letter is rushed but the time given for response has been extremely short and necessary information from the county has been limited.

I appreciate your time and hope that you all will give this slow and deliberate consideration.

Sincerely,

Mark Linnemann

Guemes Island Resort /
Guemes Island General Store

Jennifer Rogers

From: Mark Madden <mtsmark44@outlook.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 26, 2023 6:05 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Cc: Commissioners
Subject: Proposed Guemes Ferry Fare Rate Increase

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State law RCW 36.82.070 provides that County Road Funds may be used for operations and maintenance (O&M) of roads, bridges, or ferries. For the past many years, Guemes Island ferry O&M costs have been shared by the Skagit County Road Fund, the State, and ferry fares paid by the ferry users. Other users of roads and bridges in Skagit County have not contributed to O&M costs for roads or bridges by tolls or any other passage fare collections. Only ferry users pay additional transportation costs above taxes on property and fuel.

The Skagit County Public Works Department currently projects Guemes Island ferry O&M costs will be over \$750K above the current planned budget. They propose this funding gap be paid solely by the Guemes ferry users with fare increases averaging 71%. They claim their proposal is necessary for the Road Fund to maintain the service levels of roads and bridges in the remainder of Skagit County. The roads and bridges in the remainder of the County have also experienced inflationary increases. The Guemes ferry rate increase will shift County transportation cost increases to a minority group of citizens for the benefit of the majority.

For over 5 years ferry fares have paid over half of Skagit County obligations for Guemes ferry O&M costs. The fare rates covering the fare contribution have been based on a five-year average cost basis to smooth the annual change. The annual ferry O&M annual cost fluctuation is high. However, is not desirable to fluctuate ferry fares up and down each year.

The proposed ferry rate increase is based on a very high O&M year of cost instead of an average cost year. In this past year ferry O&M costs have experienced record high inflation, sky high diesel costs last fall, and a second month of drydock repairs in 9 months. Yet the future O&M costs are projected to be 25% lower than the average when the new electric ferry is in service. Ferry fare rates should be based on an actual ferry O&M cost, not the highest peak ferry O&M cost ever experienced. Ferry fares based on a high-cost year will result in overpayment during all other years.

The Guemes residential decline in recent years is partially caused by unreliable transportation service. Inadequate capacity and frequent breakdowns sometimes increase ferry crossing times two or three times the normal twenty minutes. Frequent second trip ferry runs, and necessary early ferry line arrivals add thousands of hours of waiting time for users. And they drive up the costs for deliveries and services. Some retailers even decline service to Guemes Island. Ferry breakdowns and lengthy maintenance periods make jobs or other daily needs impractical.

Public Works has squeezed all the efficiency possible out of ferry operations but failed to add adequate resources for public service. Proposing a 71% increase in user costs for the same inadequate service demonstrates a desire to reduce the livability for property owners on Guemes Island. Skagit County should serve Guemes Island to the same standards as other County areas. This will require the proposing of a fair and reasonable ferry rate increase and improving service levels when the new electric ferry is operating.

Regards,

Mark Madden

4910 N Indian Village Ln

Anacortes, WA 98221

206 660 1209

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows

Jennifer Rogers

From: Commissioners
Sent: Tuesday, February 28, 2023 7:53 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: FW: Guemes ferry rate increase

-----Original Message-----

From: EH <EH@co.skagit.wa.us>
Sent: Tuesday, February 28, 2023 7:12 AM
To: Commissioners <commissioners@co.skagit.wa.us>
Subject: FW: Guemes ferry rate increase

This email came into the EH email inbox. I am hoping you can direct it to the correct office.

-----Original Message-----

From: Mark Wilson <2009mjw@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 27, 2023 8:52 PM
To: EH <EH@co.skagit.wa.us>
Subject: Guemes ferry rate increase

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Commissioners.

My hunch is that the unintended consequence of a rate increase so large is that people will of course change their behaviors and ridership will go down and I assume revenue with it. There are islanders that will have no choice but to pay, but many including myself will either park a car full time on the Anacortes side or restrict how often they use the ferry. Everyone will suffer including the county. I believe the county should see the ferry as an asset/attraction to draw visitors in, not a liability that loses money. If the county has issues managing how roads are maintained they should reconsider how those needs are met and not punish the people of Guemes. I believe it's been said a car/driver/passenger fare is said to rise to around 35 dollars? That to me and I'm sure a lot of others is an unacceptable increase from present rates and I'm surprised the commissioners do not all agree. It would be a great idea for you all to come to the community center for a discussion. That would be better than the whitewashing we're about to get at tomorrow's meeting and would go along way to building faith in the county's current thought.

Please reconsider your positions.

Thank you, Mark Wilson.

Jennifer Rogers

From: Marsha Hanson <marshanson@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 28, 2023 10:20 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Parcel number P46645

#####

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Really 71 % increase and our taxes on our property almost doubled.....it seems like we get lots of attention for \$ needs but our roads etc. don't get the attention.

I will always vote yes on levies and schools but think we need to have gentler increases...

I am not for the 71% increase,

I think we should pay our fair share but come on.....

Marsha Hanson
3605881704

Jennifer Rogers

From: Mary Lascelles <mmlascelles@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 7, 2023 11:05 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Cc: Commissioners; guemesferry@gmail.com
Subject: Proposed increased fares for Guemes Ferry 2023

CAUTION: This email originated from an external email address. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender, you are expecting this email and attachments, and you know the content is safe.

Greetings to all concerned regarding proposed fare increases to Guemes Island ferry in 2023:

I am sure we all appreciate cost of living adjustments need to be made periodically.

In 2023, we have been issued substantial increases in our property taxes.
It has been a big hit for many.

Food prices have skyrocketed over the past year. It affects all of us daily.
So many are already trying to stay afloat - even before ferry fare increases.

Some of the fare increases (on the chart of many categories) are 30, 50, or even 100% higher than what we are currently paying.
How can Guemenians with families as well as retired (includes my husband and me) on fixed incomes cope with this kind of spike?
The highest % of Guemenians are middle class individuals, families, and the retired. All are trying their best to manage regular living expenses.

The increase in Social Security Benefits was 8.7% in 2023 - an extra \$100-200/month.
This was a a higher cost of living adjustment than the year before. It felt substantial.
However, it's been eaten up and then some by property taxes and groceries - before a rise in ferry fares.

Have you given thought to how drastically these fare increases will modify daily lives of Guemenians?
Can we keep in mind that while there are people with substantial means on Guemes Island, most live a modest lifestyle.

**Can I suggest we modify the initial increase to 10-15% so Guemes households aren't buried deeper due to 2023 overhead?

Thank you for your time,

Mary Lascelles

7373 Guemes Place
mmlascelles@gmail.com

Jennifer Rogers

From: Megan McClellan <badgie523@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 23, 2023 5:25 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Guemes Island ferry rate proposal

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To whom it may concern:

I'd like to voice my firm opposition to the proposed Guemes Island ferry fare increases as laid out by the Guemes Island Ferry Fare Rate Study published on February 28, 2023. I am a three year resident of Guemes Island. I am a current nursing student at Skagit Valley College and a certified nursing assistant at a local hospital. I live on Guemes because my partner grew up and lives here, as does his family, who have been here for over forty years.

I rely on the ferry to get to school or to work most days, including weekends, early mornings, and late nights. Raising the rates for the walk on punch cards \$39 or \$82 (even for the seniors and disabled, wow), without offering any sort of resident discount or indeed any offered improvements like more runs or electric vehicle chargers is extortionary. It seems like this increase that the county is so concerned about will be on the backs of working families, including (future) nurses like myself who MUST go in to town regularly, and retired seniors (like my in laws) on a fixed income, rather than on the tourists who can afford to live in Seattle (hey maybe we could stop using tax money to pay for the county's multiple gravel trucks that seem to just be moving rocks to the open space near Young's Park and back off the island for no reason and use it for the ferry instead?).

In fact, things seem to have gotten worse. We keep a car on the other side because the lines have gotten so bad in the summer that there's no guarantee I'll be back to make it home from work if I drive on/off (but sure let's disincentivize bicycles by charging more for them!). Last week, I walked across the ferry to find that my car that had been parked overnight on the Anacortes had its gas siphoned. When I spoke with Anacortes PD, they described the security cameras in the parking lots as "basically useless any time they get a tiny drop of rain on them." Multiple neighbors have also had their gas siphoned or their cars or catalytic converters stolen. I lived in Oakland, CA for over a decade before moving here; I never had a car stolen or any sort of problems. Since living here, I have bought a locking gas cap and a Club for my car; it is simply astonishing to me that me and my belongings are less safe at the Skagit County Ferry parking lots overnight than they were parked streetside in West Oakland. And I'm going to be paying an extra \$1000+ a year for that?

I understand that the prices of everything are going up, and the ferry isn't free. I also want the ferry workers to be paid fairly, they do an outstanding job in all sorts of inclement weather and for long hours. However, I see no data in this report to justify the gouging raise in fares, and more importantly, WHY these particular decisions were made. Tell us (in layman's terms) why you made the decisions you did, and maybe people will listen. It will at least help to make it seem like you give a damn to those of us who work hard jobs with long hours and rely on the ferry to serve not just the community of Guemes, but Anacortes and the greater Skagit County area.

Regards,

Megan McClellan

Jennifer Rogers

From: Skagit County Public Works
Sent: Monday, May 1, 2023 8:28 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: FW: Pay Guemes Island ferry workers fair wages to staff appropriately...

From PW inbox

Shayna

From: Megan McClellan <badgie523@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, May 1, 2023 8:17 AM
To: Skagit County Public Works <pw@co.skagit.wa.us>
Subject: Pay Guemes Island ferry workers fair wages to staff appropriately...

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...and get the boat running again. I 100% support the GIF workers striking, as they have been treated unfairly by the county. Skagit County puts workers and passengers at risk when they don't staff adequately (and don't pay enough to attract or retain workers in the first place). Stop paying dog and pony show consultants and hiring extraneous office employees (who were not budgeted for), and put that money into the boat and the people that run it! Because of the county's malfeasance, I was unable to make it to nursing school today, and the nurses, teachers, and other people who contribute directly to the well-being of Skagit County were not able to make it to work. You may say that's because of the strike, BUT there's been multiple times recently that the county was not able to staff the boat and had to shut down early without warning, or haven't been able to get people together to do emergency medical runs at night. How is that okay? Get it together!

Megan McClellan
Guemes Island resident

Jennifer Rogers

From: Michael <pinotmaster@msn.com>
Sent: Friday, March 10, 2023 2:59 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: ferry increases

CAUTION: This email originated from an external email address. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender, you are expecting this email and attachments, and you know the content is safe.

Dear Commissioners,

I will make this short and sweet. The proposal put forth by the county increasing ferry fees is shortsighted, unfair, and poorly thought out. There still is no adequate reason given for the capping of the road fund contribution at 750k. Charging 10 bucks for a bicycle will not encourage more bicycle trips. It does seem as the county really doesn't like our little slice of heaven, that's for sure.

Michael Brown
4366 Clark Point Rd

Jennifer Rogers

From: Mike Clark <theclarkmike@msn.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 5, 2023 2:54 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: 2023 Ferry Fare Proposal

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The proposed \$750,000 for the Guemes ferry from Skagit county road fund amounts to a nearly fifty percent reduction from current funding*. This is far too large a reduction in the portion allocated to the Guemes ferry. I read that fares have not kept up with the current 65% requirement**. This is not the fault of the ferry riders and yet we will bear the brunt of this lapse. I believe any large increase in fares should occur over time to give people the opportunity to adjust their budgets to accommodate the increase. This increase should be based on a less drastic reduction in the funds allocated to the ferry. Thus, if there is any reduction in the percentage of road fund money it should be lessened over time rather than the proposed immediate nearly 50% reduction in the dollar amount for 2023 budget*. The draft study shows a 52% increase in fares will achieve a road fund contribution of one million dollars while maintaining the 65% contribution. This is a more manageable fare increase and lessens the road fund contribution by four hundred thousand dollars. In my view this is fairer and more suitable for both Skagit county and ferry riders.

On page six of the Guemes Island Fare Rate Study, the draft shows a table with the current funding at the 65% level, then shows funding based on a set dollar amount. This change is striking and misleading. Why does this table omit values with a percentage change in the road fund contribution? Why the set dollar amount? When was it decided to change this funding from a percentage to a set amount?

A set amount is a bad idea. Inflation will diminish the effectiveness of this contribution over time. Seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars in 10 years with inflation at 2.5 percent (very modest by today's standards) amounts to \$586,000. A reduction of 28 percent in ten years! This level of reduced road funding is not sustainable for the ferry to continue operating and is inappropriate for the tax payers of Guemes Island who by dint of their higher property values pay a large amount into the county road fund. You may counter that the set amount can be changed by the county, however we all know there is resistance and reluctance to increase ongoing funding and the heavy lifting needed to accomplish an increase. I rightly fear the set amount will languish until the increase needed to bring it current with 2023 dollars will be so large the county legislature will balk at the sum needed and approve only a modest portion. Thus, condemning the ferry to ever less road funds over time while us property owners continue to contribute more to the county road fund while receiving less return for our tax dollars. This is made obvious by the 22% increase in the road fund assessment in the 2023 property tax assessment. This proposal for funding at \$750,000 will result ferry riders paying more this year into the road fund and yet receive a decreased return.

The current method of specifying a percentage funding contribution is far superior. The percentage can be adjusted if needed but should remain a percentage thus guaranteeing future appropriate county funding for the ferry. A 52% increase in the current fare is more appropriate for ferry riders and Skagit county while maintaining the current percentage of funding.

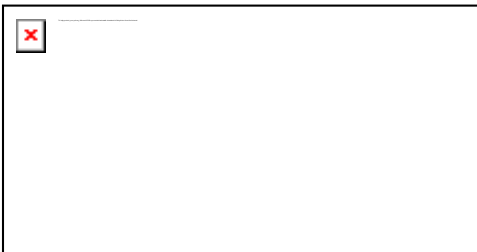
Sincerely,

Michael Clark
19615 36th Ave. NE
Lake Forest Park, WA 98155

Guemes property
6356 West Shore Road
Anacortes, WA 98221

* "This year, the county expects to send \$1.4 million in road fund revenue — about 10% of the road fund's budget — to subsidize the costs of running the ferry, said Rachel Rowe, who heads the county's ferry division"

Source: https://www.goskagit.com/townnews/revenue/skagit-county-proposal-includes-71-increase-to-guemes-ferry-ticket-prices/article_6f32a6de-b3bd-11ed-a7c1-8307d6ba9d4d.html



[Skagit County proposal includes 71% increase to Guemes Ferry ticket prices](https://www.goskagit.com/townnews/revenue/skagit-county-proposal-includes-71-increase-to-guemes-ferry-ticket-prices/article_6f32a6de-b3bd-11ed-a7c1-8307d6ba9d4d.html)

Skagit County is considering a significant increase to the price of tickets for the Guemes Island Ferry, which officials say will free up money to fix county roads.

www.goskagit.com

** The same article cited above

Jennifer Rogers

From: Michael Gray <mhowellgray@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 26, 2023 4:06 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Senior Comment on Ferry Fare Increases

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*To: Skagit County Commissioners: Ron Wesen, Lisa Janicki, Peter Browning
Public Works Director/County Engineer: Grace Kane P.E.
Ferry Operations Division Manager: Captain Rachel Rowe
1800 Continental Place
Mount Vernon, WA. 98273*

*Re: SKAGIT COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS FERRY DIVISION
2023 GUEMES ISLAND FERRY FARE INCREASE*

*From: Michael Gray
4898 North Indian Village Lane
Anacortes, WA 98221*

Dear Commissioners, Director, and Captain:

I am a full-time Guemes Island resident, registered Skagit County voter, and taxpayer for the past nineteen years. My wife, JoAnne, and I purchased our property from her parents who owned the property since 1959. Our property has been part of our family for approximately 64 years and is an integral part of ours and that of our families' past, present and, we hope, future lives.

We are retired, living on a fixed income and a very modest investment/savings income, the basis of which has become rapidly depleted due to the pressures caused by increased taxes and inflation. The proposed ferry fares increase will be difficult for us and force us to take mitigatory measures that require changes in our life's activities. The ferry fare increases, as proposed, will negatively impact us financially. Moreover, changes we will need to make will have an impact on Skagit County Businesses. As consumers, we try to "think globally, but buy locally" as it pertains to purchases of hard goods and services, as well as food and essentials. The County's ferry fare increase will result in a decrease in our ferry ridership and an increase of online purchases in lieu of support of the local businesses. These dramatic high ferry fare increases will reduce our use of the ferry by:

- Rather than shopping locally, we will be forced to purchase on-line from vendors such as Walmart Marketplace, Amazon, Ace online, Home Depot online, Costco online, and other retailers that provide free shipping for online purchases.
- To compensate for the onerous and dramatic ferry fare increase, we will need to severely limit our ridership and spending of our discretionary income at local businesses to help compensate for this increase. This limit extends to hard good retailers, restaurants, and attendance at Skagit County area educational, recreational and entertainment events such as the theater and County events.
- Although we are not at this time greatly impacted by mobility issues that result in extreme difficulty getting to and from to medical appointments, we likely will be in the near future. We are very concerned for island

residents that are currently impacted and must take their vehicle (or get a ride from friends) for healthcare needs and are not able to somewhat mitigate the County's unfair fare increase by walking on.

- For these and other reasons I respectfully request the Commissioners consider the following:
 1. The County's proposed fares constitute up to 143% increase for seniors, youth and disabled. Please consider re-instating the former deeply discounted multi use tickets for island senior and disabled Guemes Island residents. It could be managed by requiring proper identification such as a valid driver's license or other ID showing residence on Guemes Island.
 2. As most medical appointments for seniors are during weekdays, as are youth attending school, I recommend consideration that the deeply discounted fare be applied to use only during weekdays.
 3. I recommend that the County phase in the increases over a five year period, to lessen the immediate/onerous and shocking impact on those that depend on the ferry in their daily lives.

Thank you for your consideration.

Michael H. Gray

Jennifer Rogers

From: Michael-JoAnne Gray <guemesgrays@hotmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, June 15, 2023 9:23 PM
To: Ferry Comments; Commissioners
Subject: Ferry Comments

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Dear Commissioners, Director, and Captain:

I am a full-time Guemes Island resident, registered Skagit County voter, and taxpayer for the past nineteen years. My wife JoAnne and I purchased our Guemes Island property from her parents who had owned the property since 1959. This property has been part of our family for approximately 64 years and is an integral part of our families past, present, and our future.

We are retired, living on a mostly fixed income comprised of social security and very modest investment/savings income, the basis of which has become rapidly depleted due to the pressures caused by increased taxes and inflation. The proposed increase in ferry fares will be difficult for us to absorb now and will be more so in the future as other living expenses increase, causing us to make changes in our lifestyle, such as ridership. Moreover, these changes will possibly have an impact on local Anacortes and Skagit County Businesses. As consumers, we try to “think globally but buy locally” as it pertains to purchases of hard goods and services as well as food and essentials. The County’s inordinate ferry fare increases will result with us needing to mitigate this dramatic increase by:

- Rather than shopping locally, we will be forced to purchase on-line vendors that provide free shipping to our home.
- To compensate for the onerous and dramatic increase in ferry fares, we will need to severely limit our ridership and spending of our discretionary income at local businesses to help compensate for this fare increase. This would apply to hard goods retailers, restaurants, and Skagit County’s educational, recreational and entertainment events.
- Although we are not (at this time) greatly impacted by mobility issues that result in extreme difficulty getting to and from medical appointments, we are very concerned for island residents that are. I am referring to those individuals that for health issues must take their vehicle (or get a ride from friends) and those that are not able to walk on the ferry to avoid for the high vehicle fares. For these and other reasons, I respectfully request the Commissioners consider the following:
 1. The County’s proposed fares constitute more than 100% increase for seniors, youth and disabled. Please consider re-instating deeply discounted multi-use tickets for island senior and disabled Guemes Island residents. I believe these deeply discounted tickets should be available to seniors, disabled and youth that qualify by having a valid driver’s license, their parents having a valid driver’s licenses, or other identification showing that they live on Guemes Island.
 2. As most medical appointments are during the weekdays as are attending public school, another idea would be to limit the deeply discounted fare tickets to being available during weekdays only.
 3. Phase in the increases over a five-year period, to lessen the immediate/onerous and shocking impact on those that depend on the ferry in their daily lives.

Thank you for your consideration.

Michael H. Gray

Jennifer Rogers

From: Michael Murphy <guemesif@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 7, 2023 11:18 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Cc: guemesferry@gmail.com
Subject: Guemes Ferry Rate Increase Proposal

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County Commissioners, Rachel Rowe and Grace Kane,

My name is Mike Murphy and I have been a resident of Guemes Island for 46 years at 5819 Edens Road. I am 72 years old and currently retired. I have served as the Fire Chief of Guemes Island, a Community Council member for 6 years, a member of the original Guemes Ferry Committee for 8 years. I am an active and contributing community member.

During the first years of the Ferry Committee, there was always open dialogue with the county regarding fare increases. The county valued islander input. Why has the county unilaterally decided to end that communication? Why is mismanagement of Public Works and the Guemes Ferry Manager's Office resulting in unreasonable rate increases for those people who are directly affected, yet have no say in the decision making? Why does the Guemes ferry need 4 and 5 employees per shift, when 3 people could adequately do the job - as was the case for 25 years? Mismanagement! Just look at the proposal to add a TICKET BOOTH - and another employee to man the booth! More mismanagement! In times of budget shortages, it is not logical to add more employees. The Guemes Ferry Manager can not manage the employees that are already working as it is.

My wife and I are proud to have contributed to the well-being of our community for more than 40 years. We are now on a fixed income, both of us retired. Property taxes have increased 30 percent for us and our neighbors. Now, the county wants to add an additional burden of a proposed 70 -104 percent ferry fare increase. I can understand the necessity for periodic fare increases. I believe a 15 percent increase to be reasonable. I also believe good management would not necessitate the use of a consulting firm. If I or my wife had run our businesses using that model, we would never have made it. Good Management can predict changes in the economy and make gradual changes to budgets -- but not keep adding personnel.

In conclusion, I believe Public Works and Ferry Management need to clean up their house, rather than shifting burden and responsibility to others. And yes, the county does have an obligation to provide ferry service to Guemes Island -- The ferry is an integral part of the Skagit County road system, not a separate entity as was suggested by Grace Kane recently.

Sincerely,
Michael E. Murphy

Jennifer Rogers

From: Michael Murphy <guemesif@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 8, 2023 10:41 AM
To: Ferry Comments; Guemes Island Ferry Committee
Subject: Rate Increase for Ferry Comments

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County Commissioners, Rachel Rowe and Grace Kane,

My name is Mike Murphy and I have been a resident of Guemes Island for 46 years at 5819 Edens Road. I am 72 years old and currently retired. I have served as the Fire Chief of Guemes Island, a Community Council member for 6 years, a member of the original Guemes Ferry Committee for 8 years. I am an active and contributing community member.

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My wife and I are proud to have contributed to the well-being of our community for more than 40 years. We are now on a fixed income, both of us retired. Property taxes have increased 30 percent for us and our neighbors. Now, the county wants to add an additional burden of a proposed 70 -104 percent ferry fare increase. I can understand the necessity for periodic fare increases. I believe a 15 percent increase to be reasonable. I also believe good management would not necessitate the use of a consulting firm. If I or my wife had run our businesses using that model, we would never have made it. Good Management can predict changes in the economy and make gradual changes to budgets -- but not keep adding personnel.

In conclusion, I believe Public Works and Ferry Management need to clean up their house, rather than shifting burden and responsibility to others. And yes, the county does have an obligation to provide ferry service to Guemes Island -- The ferry is an integral part of the Skagit County road system, not a separate entity as was suggested by Grace Kane recently.

Sincerely,
Michael E. Murphy

Jennifer Rogers

From: Michael Murphy <guemesif@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 24, 2023 8:52 AM
To: Commissioners; Ferry Comments
Cc: Guemes Island Ferry Committee
Subject: FERRY RATE INCREASE PROPOSAL COMMENTS

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Skagit County Commissioners,

My name is Michael Murphy, Guemes Island resident for 46 years, Ferry Committee for 8 years, Volunteer Fire Department, 10 years, three years as Chief, and Community Club Board member 5 years. I am writing these comments to you from an historic as well as present day perspective.

In early 1982, then County Commissioners Howard Miller, Bud Norris and Jerry Mansfield asked Max Benjamin and Al Bush (both Guemes residents) to establish a Guemes Island Ferry Committee along with three other community-elected members including Rollie Jones, Glen Veal and Mike Murphy, to be liaisons between the Island residents and the Skagit County Commissioners.

In December of 1982, the County Commissioners unanimously declared that Resolution 9518 be adopted for the purpose of establishing ferry user rates. These included cash fares, Washington State fuel tax revenue derived for ferry operations, and Washington State ferry deficit reimbursement. These revenues were to cover 100 percent of the actual cost of FERRY CREW WAGES AND BENEFITS, FUEL AND FERRY INSURANCE.

The reason for this adopted resolution was that these items were over and above the expenses for maintaining the county road system in Skagit County, Washington of which the Guemes Ferry is an integral part. This resolution worked well for many years. Changes to the resolution have since created issues with accountability and keeping costs down.

The island residents pay their fair share of taxes to maintain all county roads and bridges for all residents, visitors and businesses to have open access to the county.

All Skagit County taxpayers pay for maintenance and repairs to the equipment and machinery used to keep the County road system working efficiently, ie. dump trucks, bulldozers, graders etc. Since the ferry is a piece of equipment in the road system, it seems that this, too, should be included in this maintenance schedule.

In addition, I believe that it is not the responsibility of the island residents and property owners to pay the wages of management who are participating in other than direct ferry activities such as procurement of a new vessel, docking facilities and charging stations.

Also note that the Guemes Island ferry is the **ONLY** section of Public Works that brings a positive cash flow to the County and it appears that the Public Works leadership is assuming that we are a cash flow that they can keep dipping into when they want money for other Public Works projects.

In my opinion, it would be better for Public Works to look at ways to save money by becoming more efficient in their operations than to keep trying to tax people out of their homes.

I will say that in the past 40 plus years that the Ferry Committee has done an exemplary job in trying to keep the avenues of communication open with the County. My hope is that the county officials will reciprocate, in kind, to the Ferry Committee and Guemes Island residents so that we can avoid issues like the ones we are now facing.

Sincerely,
Michael Murphy
5819 Edens Road
Guemes Island, WA 98221
360-391-4911

Jennifer Rogers

From: Michael Thomas <myclerecycle48@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, February 24, 2023 11:14 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Charging for bicycles?

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Why do you think that is fair? I think you're getting way out of hand!!! 🙄

Jennifer Rogers

From: Michael Thomas <myclerecycle48@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 7, 2023 3:56 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Guemes Island Ferry fares

CAUTION: This email originated from an external email address. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender, you are expecting this email and attachments, and you know the content is safe.

Why do you have a meeting in Mt. Vernon, when our car ferry is out for maintenance? I'm guessing so you can do whatever you want, with out our input. 🙄

Guemes Island Ferry Rate Increase

2023 Public Comment

Mike and Kim Stamper
6222 Section Avenue

I won't waste your time with more emphasis on the financial, social, and personal impacts of this egregious proposal. Suffice it to say the proposal will detrimentally impact all Guemes Island residents in almost all aspects of their lives. I would like to express my disappointment about the process. I would like to preface these bullet points with the observation that Skagit County has consistently failed to involve the wider Guemes Island community in developing plans that would address the very real issues posed by the operations and maintenance of this vital link between our home and all the services we must access on the other side of the channel. The island has a deep pool of very talented people to draw upon to come up with creative solutions to these issues with an eye toward reining in costs.

1. Many decisions have been made by what can only be characterized as governmental fiat over the years. Just a few examples:
 - a. The schedule was expanded in the face of almost universal opposition by islanders and without any vote of the people. This led to the addition of a second crew every day and the associated substantial increase in costs.
 - b. A fourth crew member was added without any attempt to find less costly approaches to expediting loading. As a result, skippers who once helped to load on the Anacortes side now sit in the pilothouse watching the process.
 - c. Skagit County decided with limited, though vocal, input from islanders to build a new, cutting edge, ferry based on technology (battery electric) that has very little real world data to show its effectiveness for our situation. The assumption is that this ferry will be lower maintenance and have lower operational costs. This assumption is based more on wishful thinking rather than actual data. A political coup for a former commissioner, this decision was made without a vote of the people. Furthermore, alternatives such as replacement with a used ferry or upgrading the current ferry were not explored in enough detail. Instead we are expected to foot much of the bill for this experiment without a vote of the people.
2. A little creativity may well uncover better solutions to the cost issues:
 - a. Return to the schedule that ended with the 6:00 pm ferry during the week. This schedule worked well for decades and would instantly reduce costs. If this is too onerous, perhaps a single run by Arrow or another water taxi operator would likely cost less than an entire second crew each day.
 - b. Encourage walk ons by improving parking on both sides and providing a shuttle service on the island. Reducing car traffic on the ferry would lead to reduced operating costs and obviate the need for a larger ferry.

- c. Automate ticket sales. Frequent users who qualify could be issued a credit card providing discounts as appropriate by user class. This system could be easily audited via CCTV. Measuring vehicle length could easily be automated with existing technology. Even small businesses like Blue Cow Car Wash have been able to successfully automate payments.
- d. Contract with a commercial water taxi service to provide after hours medical runs. This would reduce cost for call outs and obviate the need for county crew people to live close to the ferry landing.

Jennifer Rogers

From: Michael Painter <mpainter8418@mysvc.skagit.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, March 8, 2023 2:14 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Guemes Ferry Ticket Prices

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In favor of favoring the locals, could we triple the cost of a single ticket price in favor of keeping the punch cards at a lower price?

-Mike D Painter.

SVC Business Program
C- (360) 630-7827
[Sent from iMac1]

Jennifer Rogers

From: Mary Jo Andrak <mjandrak@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, March 10, 2023 1:51 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Ferry Fares

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Ferry Tales: Fares' Fair?

February 25, 2023 at 12:54pm • Created by: MJ Andrak

On what planet is a 71% increase in fares *fair*? I take issue with Commissioner Peter Browning's comment (*Skagit Valley Herald*) that the fare increases for Guemes Ferry riders "appear fair".

Seriously, "fair" to whom?

A few years ago Commissioner Don Munks took a trip to Lopez and said he thought \$25 a trip very reasonable. Unlike those other islands the Commissioners mention as comparable now in fares, we do not have services here. You can buy groceries on Lopez, eat at good restaurants, get medical care and rarely need to leave that island. Here, we must go in for all those errands and more. Adding \$25 to the cost of a meal or the cost of your groceries may well be a budget breaker for some.

Guemes residents? Bicyclists? Tourists? Commuters? What kind of place is Guemes to become? Will this fare increase appease the goddess Progress?

As ferry history has shown us, when car and driver rates go up, people park their cars and ride their bikes or walk on. Those fares are increasing as well. And, as folks shift to walking on, parking in town becomes increasingly difficult and car traffic revenue declines.

Folks on fixed incomes will struggle to pay that high ticket fare, especially if they have one or two doctors appointments a week. Many of them must drive on because of mobility issues. Teachers, students, making an extra trip or two for participation in extra curricular activities will feel the crunch.

Commuters will take the brunt of the increase, traveling daily or several times a week, and doing some off island recreation on their days off.

Tourists and visitors will be the least impacted. You recognize them, they bring more than one vehicle, each packed with people, ATVs, boats, crab pots, skateboards, and bikes for their Guemes vacation. They patronize local B&B's, bring scores of their nearest and dearest friends and many come to party. A \$25 ferry fee will not even register on their bottom line.

Again, I ask, what kind of place is Guemes to become?

Adding insult to injury, Skagit County property tax bills came in our mailboxes this week. Another "fair" increase? NOT!

-Commentary by MJ Andrak

Sent from my iPad

Jennifer Rogers

From: Skagit County Public Works
Sent: Monday, May 1, 2023 8:08 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: FW: Guemes Island Strike

From PW inbox.

Shayna

-----Original Message-----

From: mollydecroes@gmail.com <mollydecroes@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, May 1, 2023 7:44 AM
To: Skagit County Public Works <pw@co.skagit.wa.us>; Commissioners <commissioners@co.skagit.wa.us>; Rachel Rowe <rrowe@co.skagit.wa.us>; jjones@kiro7.com
Subject: Guemes Island Strike

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To whom it may concern:

The mismanagement of the guemes island ferry has finally reached unsustainable levels.

Today, May 1, the ferry crew has gone on strike due to the negligence of skagit county managers and commissioners.

For YEARS the crew has been fighting for equal wages and a fair contract. To no avail. They are a hard working crew who cares about the safety of islanders and tourists, as well as their own well-being and worth. They are shockingly underpaid... and even more shocking than the over 50% proposed price increases is the fact they aren't even going to see any of that money for their hard work. Where does it go?! The Guemes Ferry route is a road. For the public works committee to say islanders don't "pay their fair share" is absurd. Where do our taxes go?

Management and officials continually mismanage funds. This doesn't mean they can pass the buck and blame crew members or taxpayers for their inadequacies, and just continue to expect them to work for a pittance, and us to pay even more money... with the money seemingly going into a black hole.

People are stranded. Children can't get to school. Appointments are being missed and peoples livelihoods are behind threatened.

It's shameful (and possibly illegal) how the crew is treated. I don't blame them for the strike. I blame the officials in charge for consistently failing in their roles.

This will continue to happen. This is at a breaking point and it's disgusting how little management and officials care.

Please. Do better. Pay your crew. Recognize taxpayers. Fix this.

Molly DeCroes

Jennifer Rogers

From: Molly Johnson <mollyjcassidy@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, March 10, 2023 11:31 AM
To: Commissioners; Ferry Comments
Cc: guemesferry@gmail.com
Subject: Please consider before increasing Guemes Ferry rates

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The fare proposal process needs to take the time to develop a clear and transparent set of alternatives that will ensure the plan is thorough and considers engagement of the community and all stakeholders. We are looking for a plan that is sustainable and equitable now and into the future.

There needs to be a transparent public process for the development of the fare increase proposal.

The methodology and process used to develop the fare increase proposal is not using the current and best available data.

Public Works need to look at the actual funding needs and fully explore options for funding that established need.

Fare increases impact working families, fixed income households, and small businesses with oversized vehicles' ability to maintain their quality of life and earn a living on Guemes Island.

The cap on the Road Fund contribution is arbitrary and unnecessary.

Public Works's budget shortfall for Fonk Road repairs are not an acceptable reason to cap the Road Fund contribution.

Guemes property tax payers will contribute more than the proposed cap of \$750,000 to the Road Fund in 2023

The Guemes Ferry's Road Fund Contribution percentage is less than the Whatcom and Pierce County ferry's road fund contributions.

Jennifer Rogers

From: Morna McEachern <mornaemce@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 28, 2023 1:16 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Guemes ferry fares

CAUTION: This email originated from an external email address. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender, you are expecting this email and attachments, and you know the content is safe.

Thank you for inviting comments on Guemes ferry fares.

First, I support incremental increases in ferry fares.

I may have missed it, but as you consider fare structures, if you are going to charge bicycles more than walk ons, please have discounted punch cards available. I am a senior, a Guemes resident, and a bike commuter.

I'd also like to add my voice to the concern for lower income residents—many of whom have lived on Guemes for decades and are now on fixed incomes—low ones. A 70% fare increase may well drive them off the island—perhaps to homelessness, which is very expensive for us all.

Finally, I have a question about the road fund and its relationship to property tax increases. Guemes is a fairly densely populated area for unincorporated Skagit County—and our property taxes went up about 40% this year—so I would think we are contributing significantly to the road fund. Do you know the proportion of the road fund that Guemes property taxes account for?

Thank you very much,
Morna McEachern
4989 Edens Rd, Anacortes, WA 98221, USA
360-299-9727

Jennifer Rogers

From: Morna McEachern <mornaemce@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, June 4, 2023 5:15 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Thank you for your attention

CAUTION: This email originated from an external email address. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender, you are expecting this email and attachments, and you know the content is safe.

Dear Madams and Sirs,

It pains me that the Guemes ferry has become such a divisive issue in our county, particularly at this time. The new electric ferry project is a golden opportunity for us all to come together and celebrate being at the forefront of electric propulsion ferries—which is the way of the future.

I am a full-time resident of Guemes Island, have had property on the island since 2004, and am happy to pay property taxes to support the county's work. I have spent my life working with people; I have taught in classrooms first grade through PhD levels, I have run businesses and schools, and I am now president of the Guemes Library (we have received several grants and gifts that have enabled us to provide islanders with access to eBooks and Audiobooks, be part of Washington Rural Heritage project of the state library, expand our collection to be more diverse, support over 25 volunteer librarians, and more).

There are four areas that I would like to comment on: the ferry crew, new ferry fares for bicycles, the ferry as a piece of road equipment, and Rachel Rowe's work procuring a new electric ferry.

First, I support the ferry crew full stop. They not only do a risky, skilled, job with good cheer and competence (and continue to do so without a union contract), but they are first responders in many types of emergencies—rescuing a person overboard, responding to medical emergencies, dealing with disabled cars, navigating safely in a high marine traffic channel, transporting fire equipment in emergencies, and much more. They need to be compensated in a manner that reflects the responsibility, training, and on-call nature of the work. I do not know all the details of the issues that are on the table for the union negotiations, but I do know that there is a difference between negotiating and mediation. Please respect your employees request to negotiate a union contract.

Second, as a resident of Skagit County and as a senior citizen bicycle commuter, please honor the former walk-on punch card practice for bicyclists. Bicycles are part of the foot passenger space on the ferry deck—except in the summer when large groups of cyclists visit for a day (and spend their money in the county on the way to a ride on Guemes). Residents are required to keep their bikes in the passenger space and take up no more room than carts and wheelbarrows. We make it work—with the support of the ferry crew, who make sure that safety measures are always complied with.

Third, the Guemes ferry is a piece of road equipment and the pandemic (with months of no fare collection or road work, e.g.) disrupted any 'normal' work/revenue flow. I have read both the county's and other analyses of the costs, and income—an analysis is only as good as the question that is asked. It is not correct to use shortfalls in the pandemic years as a basis for analyzing the costs/income of the Guemes ferry.

In addition, it seems disingenuous to separate one piece of road equipment from a fleet. The county makes money from Guemes through property taxes, building permits, septic inspections, and the fact that the growing population supports businesses in the surrounding area, to mention a few sources of income. If it is necessary to separate the ferry from the road equipment fleet, my understanding is that there is a fund that has been building up in value from a surcharge on the ferry fares to support buying a new ferry. Please use that fund to recoup losses accrued during the pandemic (to reiterate, it is disingenuous to use 2020-2022 as years to analyze ferry fares).

Fourth, the new electric ferry is now completely funded without Skagit County funds—I have a hard time imagining that other road equipment is funded this way. For that excellent work—engaging with many entities, I would like to commend Rachel Rowe. For years, I have attended meetings and observed Rachel’s calm, dedicated attention to replacing a soon-to-be worn-out current ferry with an electric ferry. I have traveled in Scandinavia and know that electric ferries are proven to be effective and safe. Electric propulsion is very appropriate for the Guemes Channel. I look forward to following Rachel’s work as she shepherds the building process of this visionary project. Good work, Rachel!

Thank you for your hard work,

Morna McEachern mornaemce@gmail.com