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BERK

Guemes Island Ferry Operations and Service Study

January 2021

A. Executive Summary

BERK Consulting and KPFF Consulting Engineers were hired to evaluate Skagit County's Guemes Island Ferry system, identify service delivery options and help prioritize service improvements suggested by the community. Between June and December 2019, the study team reviewed operating and financial data, researched and interviewed other ferry operators and vendors, held workshops with ferry management, and attended site visits. The ferry community was asked to engage in two surveys, two public meetings, and via a comment email address to collect feedback on operations and service improvements. The team also met with the Guemes Island Ferry Committee and ferry staff several times during the study period.

The team found the ferry community is aligned around shared values for operating the ferry system: reliability, predictability and efficiency. They are also aligned on priority areas for investment being mid-day service, ticketing, and parking improvements on the Guemes Island side. However, the community is less aligned on which specific improvements should be made and the acceptable cost of those improvements. There is uncertainty related to the operational impacts of the larger new ferry, which will feature simultaneous passenger and vehicle loading and less frequent fueling and maintenance. There is also some cost fatigue in the ferry community associated with a fare increase in 2015 and the ferry replacement surcharge in 2018. Both factors contribute to a hesitation to invest in operational improvements.

The study team recommends several steps to improve policies, communication, and financial transparency intended to lay the groundwork for future decision-making about operations and service.

- Set service objectives to reflect community values of reliability, predictability, and efficiency and have clear metrics against which the system and potential investments can be evaluated.
- Strengthen financial policies and practices to streamline future decision-making and enhance predictability and creating transparency. This includes defining which expenses are capitalized and what expenses are considered operating expenditures, streamlining the fare structure, and considering an index for fare changes.
- Account for and publish financial data on ferry operations as a separate Enterprise Fund in the Skagit County Budget.
- Develop a white paper of ticketing system requirements and features and develop budget estimates that provides a guide to discuss with vendors.

A second package of investments for possible future consideration includes possible additional runs, signage and wayfinding, parking and terminal investments. Given the cost and level of effort required, we recommend holding on this package until funding for additional investments becomes available and the County has assessed the operational and financial impact of COVID-19.

Though significant investment is not recommended at this time, this study includes the teams' assessment of all options, their rough order of magnitude (ROM) costs and potential impacts to serve as a resource in years to come.

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B. Introduction and Context

Guemes Island is a rural community in unincorporated Skagit County that depends entirely on a ferry for access. Since the early 1960s, Skagit County has operated the ferry service which is a lifeline for the residents of the island. Year-round residents number approximately 824 (OFM, 2019) with significant seasonal and tourist travel in warmer months of the year.

The 1990 Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA), RCW 36.70A provides for sub-area plans, which are detailed land-use plans for smaller geographic areas. The Guemes Island Sub-Area Plan was adopted in January 2011. The community process and sub-area plan establishes an overall goal to allow growth that will conserve the island's groundwater resources, rural character, and sense of community. To achieve this goal, the sub-area plan and the 2016-2036 Comprehensive plan provide guidance for public engagement, encourage transportation demand management, and thoughtful consideration of ferry effects. These ferry effects include costs, congestion, parking, and others. The Comprehensive Plan establishes a rural character and zoning, and managing ferry service to support rural lifestyles supports the social fabric of the island community.

In 2017, the Board of Skagit County Commissioners approved a contract with a naval architecture firm, Glosten, for the design of a new vessel to replace the 42-year old vehicle and passenger ferry, M/V Guemes. The discussion of ferry replacement resulted in ferry system users raising several concerns, requests and questions regarding present and future service. This study was commissioned to assess potential service and operational changes in light of this feedback.

C. Study Objectives

BERK Consulting and KPFF Consulting Engineers were hired to conduct an operations and service study. The objectives of this scope of work were to:

- Assess the current operations and service situation.
- Formally evaluate public interest in operational service improvements that have been suggested by the community in Ticketing, Schedule, Queueing / Loading, Access, and Connections, and to help prioritize among these interests.
- Develop options for improvements from which Public Works can recommend action to the Board of County Commissioners. Given interdependencies among types of improvements, these would be recommended as packages of investment.

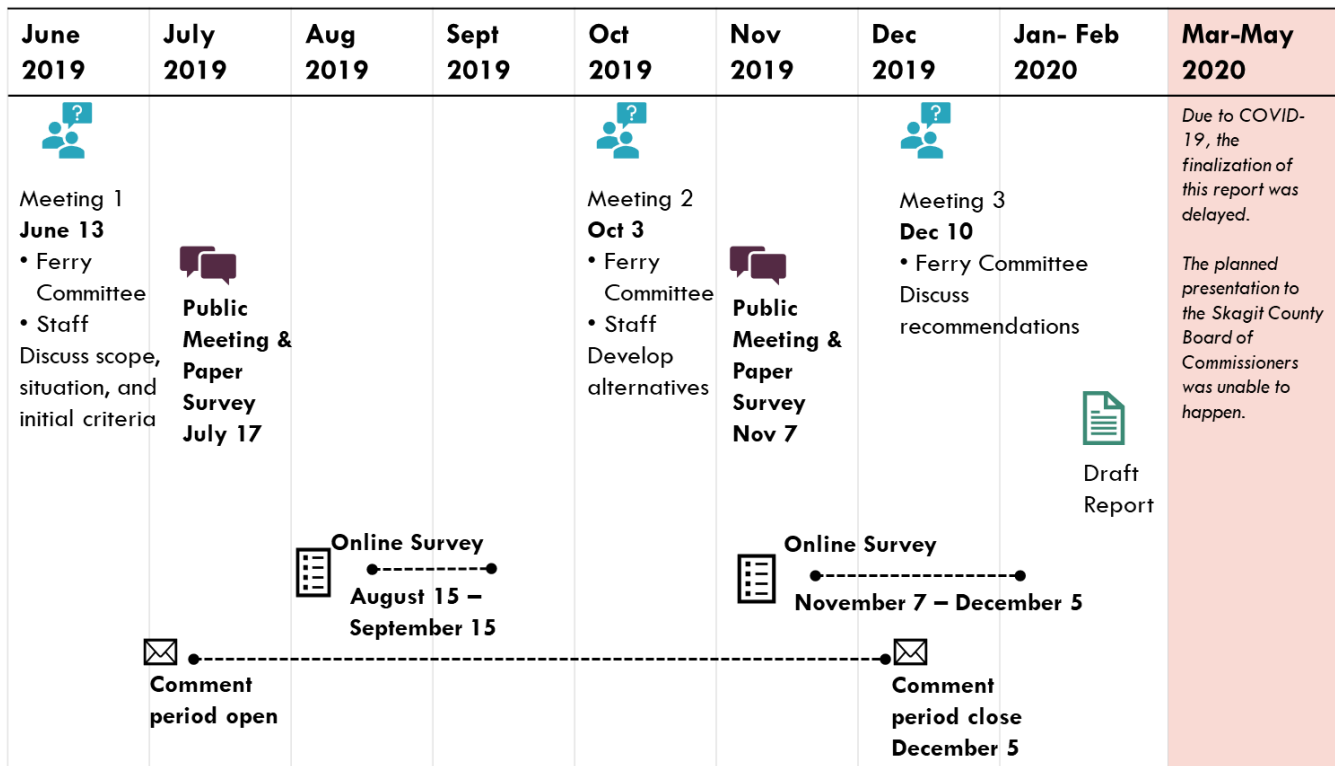
This scope was a high-level effort to identify priority options for operations and service changes, their rough order of magnitude (ROM) costs and potential impacts, and to recommend some next steps. These recommendations were to take the form of two packages: one that was lower-cost and a package that would require greater investment.

D. Study Process Overview

The study process kicked off in June 2019 with a public meeting with the Guemes Island Ferry Committee (GIFC) and ferry staff. The first meeting included a situation assessment based on a review of existing

data, policies and previous studies. An overview of the situation assessment findings is in the following section.

Exhibit 1. Study Timeline



Source: BERK, 2021.

Ferry community engagement over the study period solicited input on the study scope, operations and service changes of interest, and perspectives on prioritizing options in a resource-constrained environment. There were four primary venues for ferry community engagement:

- Two surveys were distributed and analyzed over the course of the study. These were primarily distributed online, and public meeting attendees also received the opportunity to respond to similar questions via paper. The first survey asked about criteria for making changes and scanned for level of interest in options. The second survey introduced the capital and operating costs of implementing a more narrow set of options as a deeper test of public interest and potential willingness to pay for options.
- Two public meetings were held at the Guemes Island Community Center. These forums updated attendees on the study process and findings and gathered public comment. They were hosted by the Skagit County Board of Commissioners, BERK Consulting, KPFF and Public Works. The vessel replacement design engineers from Glosten were also in attendance.
- The study team met with the Guemes Island Ferry Committee (GIFC) three times. The GIFC is an elected body of five ferry community representatives meeting at least one of the following criteria: registered voter of the Guemes Island Precinct, a Guemes Island resident, or a Guemes Island property owner. These meetings were also attended by some members of the general public.

- A ferry comment email address was set up to collect feedback that was not able to be collected via surveys and/or meetings.

In parallel to the GIFC meetings, the study team also met with ferry staff to solicit their perspective on opportunities for improvement and relative priorities.

Survey results are available at the Skagit County Engagement Hub (<https://publicinput.com/hub/5>).

In addition to the public and staff engagement, BERK and KPFF reviewed operating and financial data, researched and interviewed other ferry operators and vendors, held workshops with ferry management, and attended site visits to observe operations. This report synthesizes all of these sources of information.

E. Situation Assessment

POLICY CONTEXT

2016-2036 Comprehensive Plan

Section 8A-5 of the Skagit County Comprehensive Plan for 2016 to 2036 establishes the ferry service goal of working to maintain county and state ferry services as an important element of the transportation network. This includes:

- **8A-5.3** To meet future increases in demand, increase service capacity of the Guemes Island Ferry by: (a) encouraging car-pooling and walk-on passengers; (b) increasing the frequency of ferry runs based on demand; (c) considering additional ferry capacity if the aforementioned procedures fail to accommodate demand; and (d) adding additional runs outside the current schedule.
- **8A-5.5** Continue to provide safe and adequate ferry service between Anacortes and Guemes Island, and a fare structure designed to recover operating costs similar to the Washington State Ferries model.

Guemes Island Sub-Area Plan

The Skagit County Comprehensive Plan of 2000 called for Guemes Island to be a “Rural Area of More Detailed Planning,” as an island with distinct physical boundaries whose rural character continues to be shaped by its dependence on a ferry for access and on groundwater for drinking water. Rural character is understood to include both the amenities of the natural environment – the open spaces, views, wooded areas and wildlife – and the lack of urban-scale development. The term applies to the non-visual aspects of rural life on the island, the self-sufficiency, sense of community and mix of land-uses as well as the visual appearance of Guemes Island.

The Guemes Island Sub-Area Plan was adopted in January 2011 and contains three main points of guidance that impact the Guemes Island ferry. The Sub-Area Plan:

- **Establishes an overall goal** to allow growth that will conserve the island’s groundwater resources, rural character, and sense of community.
- **Contains guidance** for the development and update of the Guemes Island Ferry Capital Facilities Plan, which provides the specific planning and development criteria for ferry operations.
- **Reinforces the Public Forum process** established by County Resolution. Public Forums provide public

advisory input on the County’s Work Plan for the Guemes Island ferry operation. Topics of interest include ticket fare structure and fare recovery model, cost containment, ferry sailing schedule, ferry operations master plan and ADA accessibility issues confronting passenger-only ferry service. (Skagit County, 2010)

Select County Resolutions

- Resolution [R20100050](#), amended by Resolution [R20110382](#), establishes the Guemes Island Ferry **fare revenue target methodology**. The target is equal to 65% of the five-year average operating and maintenance cost of the ferry, less the five-year average MVFT and the five-year average state ferry deficit reimbursement. The resolution also establishes the **Public Forum Policy** and calendar for collaborative discussions between the County and the public and opportunities for advisory input on issues related to ferry operations.
- **Vessel Replacement Surcharge**. Resolution [R20180123](#) adopted in 2018 adds capital surcharges to the fare schedule.

RIDERSHIP

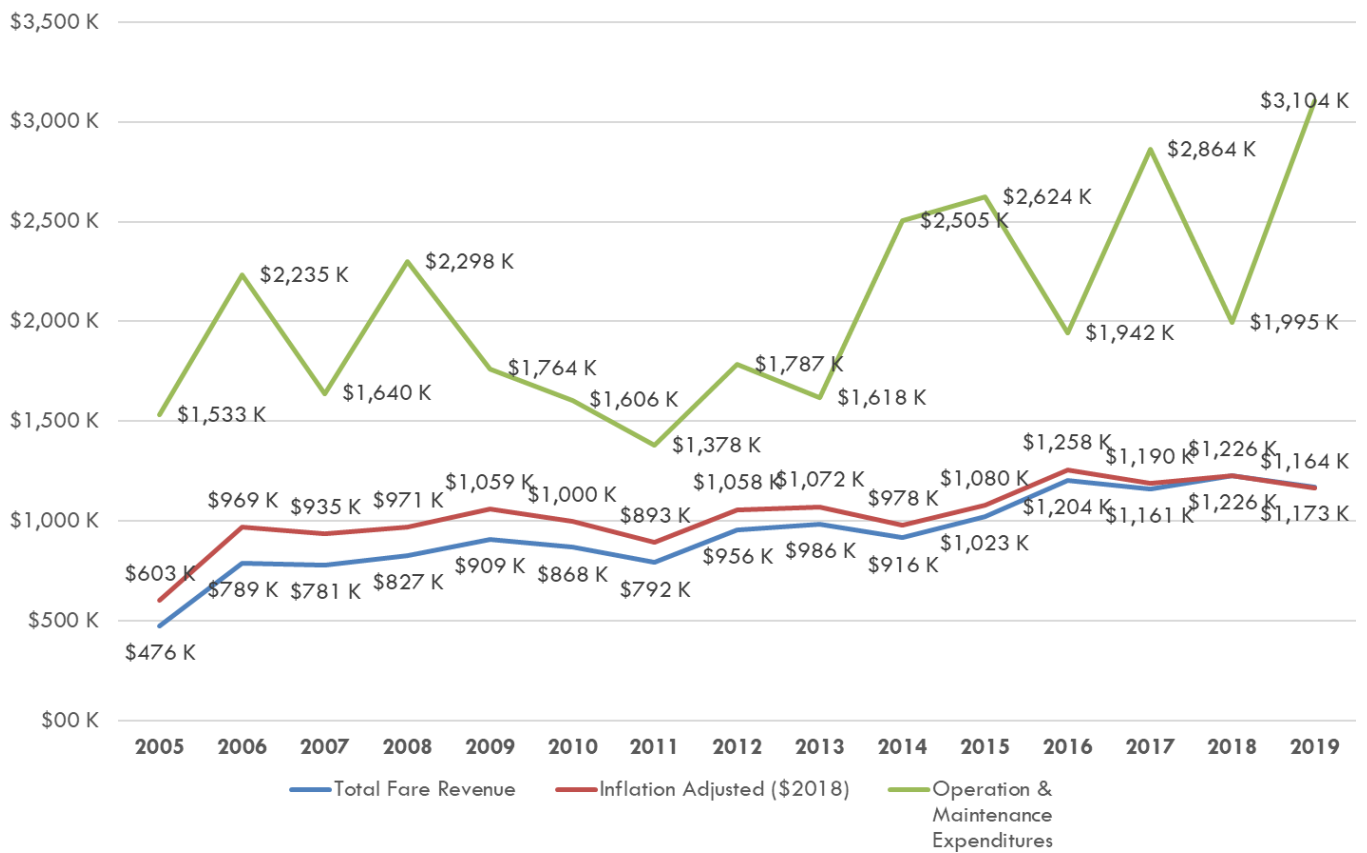
Over the period from 1990 to 2020 vehicle ridership peaked in 2002 and passenger ridership peaked in 2007. Since then ridership has been relatively flat despite housing growth. The downward trend of ridership per housing unit could be due to a slow decline in population per housing unit, in household size, and in the percentage of homes that are occupied full-time on the island. For example, the percentage of units occupied full-time dropped from 46.6% in the year 2000 to 40.2% in 2010.

REVENUE AND EXPENDITURES

Total fare revenue gradually increased between 2005 and 2019, at an annual average of 5%. The last fare increase was in 2015 and a capital surcharge was introduced in 2018.

Operating and maintenance expenditures grew at an annual average, 11% a year over 2005 and 2019. However annual operating expenditures vary substantially, ranging from roughly \$1.3 million in 2011 to over \$3 million in 2019 due to the vessel’s current haul-out schedule. Many major maintenance expenditures do not occur annually. This variability is one reason the fare revenue target is based on a 5-year average. The upward trend is driven both by increasing costs of operation and the increasing needs of the aging vessel.

Exhibit 2. Guemes Island Ferry Fare Revenue & Operation and Maintenance Expenditures, 2004 to 2019



Source: Skagit County, 2018; BERK, 2020.

FARE STRUCTURE

Over the past decade, four fare types (including senior, disabled, and youth) collectively comprised 97% of sales volume and 87% of revenue:

- Vehicle & driver punch cards,
- Single-ride vehicle & driver tickets,
- Passenger punch cards, and
- Single-ride passenger tickets.

While the distribution of sales volume among these four fare types is approximately equal, the revenue the fares generate is not. Two ticket types—vehicle & driver punch cards and single-ride vehicle & driver tickets—have comprised approximately two-thirds of fare box revenue since 2005. Further, while oversized vehicle tickets have comprised only 3% of fare sales by volume over the past decade, they contribute an outsized portion to the fare box to the tune of at least 10% of revenue each year.

Both single-ride motorcycle & rider tickets and bicycle tickets are a minor portion of sales. Combined, these fares comprise 1% or less of both fare sales by volume and fare box revenue. The large number of fares with low purchase volumes indicates that there is capacity to increase efficiency by consolidating some fare types.

Fare Changes Over Time

On an inflation-adjusted basis, benchmark fares have remained relatively flat over the last decade. Under current policies, fares only change following a shortfall in the fare recovery target, and then following a public process. This creates a pattern of periodic increases in fares followed by a period of declining fares in real terms until the next correction. The last fare change was in 2015, though there was the addition of a replacement vessel surcharge in 2018. These changes are one factor in the current sense of “fare fatigue” amongst the regular ridership.

Vehicle: Passenger Fare Ratio

The comprehensive plan and sub-area plans both encourage walk-on ridership and carpooling in ferry ridership. Vehicles occupy more deck space and payload capacity than passengers, and vehicle capacity is more likely to be full on runs while there is often cabin space for additional walk-on passengers. To address the increased payload capacity of vehicles and to provide an incentive to balance out ridership between walk-on passengers and passengers with vehicles, vehicles should pay more than passengers. However, there has not historically been consistency in how much more. Under 2019 fares, a vehicle & driver fare was 3.33 times an adult passenger fare while in 2005, a vehicle & driver fare was 3.83 times an adult passenger fare. Setting a standard ratio for the cost of vehicle fares relative to walk-on fares is one way to encourage walk-on ridership and carpooling, though parking and overall revenue impacts also need to be considered.

Transactions by Credit Card

Throughout 2018, most revenue was collected through cash transactions. On average, only 33% of revenue originated from credit card transactions during 2018. However, the ratio of cash to credit card transactions fluctuates throughout the year. The proportion of revenue collected through credit card transactions ranged from as little as 17% in August to a maximum of 43% in April. Credit card use can be subject to operational challenges related to the pursers’ connectivity in the vehicle line or inclement weather. The County currently pays the transaction fee on the credit card fares and does not pass that on to the customer. Recent COVID-19 events forced the ferry system to go 100% cashless, highlighting future potential.

OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Maintaining the service schedule and parking are two key operational challenges at the Guemes Island Ferry.

Service Schedule

Guemes Island Ferry service is provided every day with sailings leaving Anacortes as frequently as every 30 minutes during peak periods. The Ferry service is provided during the following times:

- Weekdays (Monday through Thursday): 6:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.
- Friday and Saturday: 6:30 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.
- Sundays: 8:00 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Additionally, there is a mid-day break in service from 11:15 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. for maintenance, fueling and crew breaks. Occasionally, the ferry provides another run (the double-run) during the mid-day

break.

With a short crossing of about 5 minutes, on time performance of the Guemes Island Ferry schedule is highly dependent on efficient use of the time in the dock required for loading and unloading (dwell time). Vehicle and walk-on queuing, fare collection, and loading/unloading of vehicles and walk-ons all contribute to the dwell time of the Guemes Island Ferry system, impacting the service schedule. These factors were also mentioned in the 2017 Transportation System Assessment.

Fare Collection

Typically, a crew member collects cash or credit card fare payment or punches a frequent user punch card from each vehicle in the queue and walk-on passengers as they approach the terminal. Each passenger is issued a paper ticket upon payment. In the non-peak season, the vessel operates with a three-person crew and one crew member is required to come off the vessel after landing in Anacortes to collect fares. In the peak season, during the mid-day hours (approximately 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.) there are four crew members scheduled and one crew member remains at the Anacortes terminal to focus on collecting fares.

Crew members expressed difficulties in meeting the schedule with a three-person crew due to the need to control and collect fares from both vehicles and walk-ons, which often requires a lengthy transaction time. Additionally, the crew mentioned technical challenges with the handheld credit card readers that exacerbate the slow processing time.

With most fare collection taking place immediately prior to or during loading of the vessel, there is considerable risk of delays to the sailing schedule. Having all fares collected by the time the vessel is ready to load (pre-sales) reduces the risk of delay from fare collection. Allowing passengers to pre-purchase tickets online, via a mobile application and/or ticket vending machine and staffing a dedicated ticketing agent to accommodate those unable to purchase a ticket electronically are two important strategies to maximize pre-sales and keep the sailing schedule.

Loading/Unloading

Vehicles load and unload the vessel in a single-file line and cannot simultaneously load/unload with walk-on passengers. This segregation of loading lengthens the dwell time and can cause delays to the loading process, impacting on-time departures. The Ferry Replacement Project includes adjusting the transfer span and apron to allow for simultaneous loading/unloading of walk-on passengers and vehicles.

Queuing

Vehicles queue in a first-come, first-serve single-file line to load the Guemes Island Ferry. The queue lane extends from the main terminal area east along 6th Street. With a single-file line that extends east along 6th Street, the crew cannot see most of the vehicles in the vehicle queue until they have turned in to the main terminal area, making it challenging to sort vehicles by size and manage the load. Providing cameras to view the extent of the line along 6th Street and reconfiguring the terminal striping to include two vehicle queuing lanes could improve vehicle loading.

Walk-on passengers queue as they arrive in an open waiting area adjacent to the terminal, and a sign directs walk-on passengers to wait to load the vessel until instructed by the crew. When ready, the crew directs walk-on passengers to load or unload the vessel. However, managing the walk-on passengers can

be difficult when the crew is also collecting fares and loading vehicles onto the vessel, which increases the risk of losing control of the walk-ons. Having a dedicated ticketing agent or crew member and/or the ability for walk-on passengers to pre-purchase tickets would allow for an accurate count and ability to validate all walk-on passengers.

Parking

Guemes Island Ferry parking is free for passengers for up to 72 hours on both the Anacortes side and Guemes Island side. With free parking, many passengers who are able choose to park and walk on the ferry. The Guemes Island Ferry also provides wheelbarrows for walk-on passengers to transport freight via the ferry.

Anacortes Terminal Parking

The Anacortes Terminal includes a smaller parking lot with angle parking immediately adjacent to the terminal. This parking lot does not provide a turnaround and requires vehicles to back out of the lot into the main terminal area near a designated crosswalk. There is larger parking lot located at the intersection of 6th Street and I Avenue connected to the terminal via a paved walkway. Opportunities for expanding parking in Anacortes include constructing a parking structure at the parking lot at 6th Street and I Avenue and collecting fees for parking.

Guemes Island Parking

The Guemes Island parking area is a large gravel lot that is not striped. There is limited signage, lighting or stormwater infrastructure. It is estimated that an additional 15 cars could park in the lot if it were resurfaced and striped.

F. Operations and Service Improvements

The situation assessment, community engagement, and observations of operations revealed a variety of options for the operation and service processes for ticketing, sailing schedule, queueing / loading, access, and connections.

An initial screen of options considered feasibility, scope, and public interest. Options that moved past the screen received a more detailed analysis of costs and operating impacts as well as additional public surveying. These options are included in this section. The full listing of all options reviewed is included in Appendix B: Operations and Service Improvement Options.

PROVIDE A MID-DAY RUN

The team considered two options for providing a sailing during the mid-day gap between 11:15 a.m. & 1:00 p.m. As this time is currently used for fueling and maintenance and the crew lunch break, the availability of this run requires scheduling crew and maintenance to accommodate the mid-day run.

- **Scheduled mid-day run.** This option would increase staffing and move the rotation of staffing so that the mid-day run is available and scheduled every day. This would also require moving fueling and maintenance after hours to ensure the boat is available.
- **Double run.** The mid-day double run is currently offered and noticed the day of the run. This option

would use current staffing levels and make schedule changes to be able to offer the double run more frequently and more consistently. This would require moving some fueling and maintenance after hours. The double run could be noticed further in advance or on a regular schedule of days.

The scheduled mid-day run appeared cost-prohibitive at this time. There is still interest in increasing available double runs, and as an interim step, we recommend tracking and publishing data on current double run availability and utilization.

PROVIDE LATER EVENING RUNS

The Guemes Island ferry operators receive occasional requests from the public for later runs on weekdays. These requests represent an issue for working adults whose work days end later than the last available sailing, though some are also interested in access to/from mainland recreation opportunities. The current weekday schedule ends at 8:30 pm (departing Anacortes). A 2006-2008 pilot period of Monday to Thursday evening runs until 10 pm expired without efforts to make the change permanent. During the trial period, in June 2007, an organized group of Guemes Island residents, Friends of Guemes Island, brought a case against the County related to extended weekday runs in the Snohomish County Superior Court. A conclusion of that hearing was that beyond the trial period, any pursuit of permanent extended weekday evening runs would need a new SEPA-compliant environmental review including potential induced growth, and direct and indirect environmental impacts. The County completed such a review in 2008. Also, in 2008, the schedule was finally adopted partially contracted to remove all sailings after 8:30pm Monday through Thursday.

The Guemes Island ferry operators also receive occasional requests from the public for later runs on Fridays and Saturdays, sometimes referred to as the “midnight runs.” The current Friday and Saturday schedule ends at 11 pm (departing Anacortes). These requests are typically people interested in mainland recreation opportunities. Data on cars left behind does not indicate that evening runs are currently in high demand, though that may reflect people choosing not to go off island for activities because they do not have a return option.

The team considered two options for later evening runs:

- **Later weekday run.** One more run four days of the week (Monday through Thursday).
- **Later Friday and Saturday Run.** One more run on Friday and Saturday night.

Through the engagement in 2019, ferry community diverged in terms of whether later runs were desirable and worth the increase in operating costs. Those who desired later runs diverged in terms of which days should be prioritized, mainly between those preferring later weekend runs for recreation, and those preferring later weekday runs for working.

Providing later evening runs would increase operating costs for providing additional service hours with crew hours and additional fuel. Later evening runs are not anticipated to require capital investment.

Based on the additional operating costs, we do not recommend any further action in pursuit of regularly scheduled later runs as part of this study. We do recommend setting service objectives and monitoring data that could be used to identify future demand for these runs (see Ferry Service Objectives on page 18).

PRE-PURCHASING TICKETS

The ferry community expressed interest in exploring opportunities for pre-purchasing tickets. These options range from purchasing punch cards online to implementing an online platform or mobile application. These options would require purchasing software that could be a capital expense or partnering with another Skagit County department for use of their software. There would be operating expenses for administering the online or mobile ticketing system as well as ongoing technical support.

In surveys, the team offered a minimal lower- and higher-cost option for online ticket sales to bookend public appetite for additional cost and features.

- **Online Pre-Sales of Punch Cards only.** Online sale of punch cards only with postal mail fulfillment would be the minimum-cost option for online ticketing. This option is currently offered by Skagit County, but does not account for significant punch card sales. Over 9 months of Covid-19 operations (April 2020-January 2021), including a promotional offer of non-expiring punch cards, customers made a total of 704 punch card sales through email, phone, and mail. In comparison, in a normal year of operations the County sells around 100,000 punch card products.
- **Online or Mobile Pre-Purchase.** Some members of the ferry committee have expressed interest in being able to pre-purchase ferry tickets online or from their phone via a mobile application and show proof of purchase to the crew. This would add convenience for some passengers and allow for faster fare collection. There are a variety of online platforms that would allow passengers to purchase their tickets online. This would require Skagit County manage and administer this software and have access to ongoing technical support. The online or mobile application options are anticipated to be more expensive than purchasing punch cards online.

Over the course of the study it was clear that the ferry community diverged in terms of the desired features and acceptable cost of a ticketing system. This approach to fare collection should be considered and evaluated after Skagit County completes a white paper that outlines the requirements of a fare collection system for the Guemes Island Ferry, and potential budget constraints.

ADD PARKING AND ACCESSIBILITY

The access and connections options that garnered the most public support were:

- **Parking on Guemes Island.** The ferry community expressed interest in more parking options on Guemes Island. Without purchasing new land for parking, the existing parking lot can be resurfaced and striped to create additional parking.
- **Vanpool.** Skagit Transit suggested use of vanpools on the island since there is no bus service. Skagit Transit has vanpool vehicles available for use that would stay on the island. This would be a volunteer service that the Guemes Island residents would manage.

Parking improvements will require planning and design from Skagit County Public Works. As part of the design, stormwater management will meet county and state standards and provide for water quality treatment such as low impact development. For budget concerns, this option is included in Package 2. The vanpool requires volunteer organization.

Options with cost impacts appear in Exhibit 3 below as compared with “no action” alternative in terms of cost (both capital and annual operating), public support, and alignment with current policy guidance.

Exhibit 3. Options and Analysis Comparison Table

Option Theme	Specific Option	Cost		Proportion of Public in Support			Subarea and Comprehensive Plan Guidance
		Capital (\$2019)	Annual Operating (\$2019)	Surveys 1 & 2 (Ranked in top 3 priorities for improvements)	Survey 3 (What options should we analyze further?)	Survey 4 (What options are you willing to pay for or do you prefer no action?)	
Provide mid-day run	Scheduled mid-day run.	None	\$120K	85% (elimination of mid-day / evening service gaps)	57%	21% would pay	Add runs only when all other TDM options considered.
	Double run (as needed).	None.	\$25 – 30K			22% would pay	
	No action.	No change.	No change.			N/A	
Provide later evening runs.	9 p.m. run Monday thru Thursday.	None	\$32 – 37K	77%	41%	23% would pay	Add runs only when all other TDM options considered.
	Fri. & Sat. midnight run.	None	\$17–19K	51%	36%	17% would pay	
	8:30 p.m. run on Sun. (nonpeak).	None	\$8-9K	68%	Not included in survey.	17% would pay	
	No action.	No change.	No change.	N/A	N/A	43% prefer no action	
Pre-purchasing tickets.	Online presales for punch cards.	\$10 – 400k	\$60-70k per year	47% (improvements to the	41%	15% would pay some amount of	No relevant guidance.

Option Theme	Specific Option	Cost		Proportion of Public in Support			
	Online or mobile ticketing.	\$75 – 100k	5% - 10% of fare revenue share (+ credit card transaction fees) 5% of 2019 fare revenue would equal roughly \$58,000	ticketing system)	40%	additional fare 49% would use; but do not want to pay this much	
	<i>No action.</i>	No change.	No change.	N/A	N/A	36% would not use even if free	No relevant guidance.
Add parking and accessibility.	Guemes Island parking lot resurfacing.	\$275 – 325k	unknown	38%	58% of respondents ranked in top 3 priorities.	55% for resurfacing (17% impermeable 38% permeable)	Policy 6.4: The County in coordination with the Ferry Committee, should promote alternatives to automobiles on the Guemes Island Ferry with educational materials, incentives, and other supportive measures to reduce vehicle demand, especially during peak use periods.
	Skagit Transit vanpool on Guemes Island.	unknown	unknown	Not included in survey.	Not included in survey.	Not included in survey.	Policy 6.4 (see cell above).
	<i>No action.</i>	No change.	No change.	N/A	N/A	N/A	Same as today.

Source: BERK, 2021.

G. Findings

THERE ARE MAJOR OPERATING CHANGES EXPECTED WITH THE NEW VESSEL

Simultaneous vehicle and walk-on loading will be a major operating improvement with the new ferry. This change, along with operational adjustments, will make it highly likely the ferry will be able to maintain a sailing schedule of 2 runs per hour even with the increased vehicle capacity of 28 cars (a 33% increase over the M/V Guemes' current capacity of 21). Additional improvements in queuing and ticketing could further reduce dwell time.

The new vessel is also expected to require less frequent fueling and maintenance. The mid-day period is currently reserved for fueling and unforeseen maintenance needs on the diesel vessel. Reduced fueling and maintenance time on the new vessel would relieve one constraint on the possibility of a mid-day sailing. Opportunities for sailing schedule modifications in the future should be evaluated and analyzed in a schedule and staffing analysis. A below related finding is the need to develop policies about what expenses are capitalized and what expenses are considered operations and maintenance expenditures.

FERRY COMMUNITY MOST VALUES RELIABILITY, PREDICTABILITY, AND EFFICIENCY

Ferry reliability and predictability were top criteria held by a majority of the Guemes Island ferry community. Preserving Guemes Islands' rural character, along with limited service and occasional inconveniences, was also highlighted. However, there was some disagreement about the specific thresholds of acceptable service, and the community was split on issues of cost and willingness to pay for specific service improvements.

The Guemes Island Ferry community consistently mentioned they are interested in being efficient with existing resources. As fare revenue is required to cover 65% of operating costs, the ferry community is focused on making investments wisely to invest in improvements only when necessary to maintain their level of service. To address this concern, we recommend Public Works conduct a sailing schedule and staffing analysis to identify efficiencies in the current operations and to plan for the future vessel.

THE COMMUNITY CONSISTENTLY NAMES THREE PRIORITY INVESTMENTS

Within the operations and service options raised over the course of the study, public demand was the strongest for mid-day service, ticketing improvements, and parking improvements on Guemes Island. Mid-day service and ticketing improvements are consistent with the priorities first surfaced in the Guemes Island Ferry Replacement Survey in 2017 and the Guemes Ferry System Improvements Survey in 2018 ([Guemes Ferry Operations & Service Analysis - PublicInput.com](#)). However, there is some division in terms of willingness to pay for an additional mid-day run. There is also disagreement about the specific characteristics and features of an improved ticketing system and the appropriate amount to pay for it.

The community was firmly split on whether later service was needed or in line with its rural character. Even those who were in favor of later service were split nearly evenly among whether those runs were most needed on weekends or on weekdays.

NEED FOR SERVICE OBJECTIVES

The ferry system currently does not have service objectives to evaluate and plan investments needed to

achieve those objectives. To better define the characteristics of a ferry system that Public Works will manage towards, both members of the ferry community and the consulting study team recommend setting and publicizing objectives. We include some metrics as a starting point in this study in Ferry Service Objectives.

NEED TO CLARIFY AND STRENGTHEN FINANCIAL POLICIES

In addition to service objectives, systematic financial policies could streamline future decision-making. The first point below is especially relevant to the new vessel, which will operate with a fundamentally different cost structure than the current vessel. For example, it is expected to have significantly lower annual fuel and maintenance costs, though it requires a periodic major investment in battery replacement. Opportunities to develop systematic financial policies include:

- Develop policies about what expenses are capitalized and what expenses are considered operations and maintenance expenditures.
- Align fare changes to an index to make them more predictable (annual/biannual). Alternatively, an inflationary adjustment could similarly support predictability.
- Standardize discounts for frequent riders, youth, seniors and potentially small cars. Standardizing some fares relative to each other would set a formula for the spread of a general fare change, rather than negotiating fare changes by category.

Exhibit 4. Current and New Discounts

CURRENT (IMPLIED) DISCOUNTS	POSSIBLE NEW DISCOUNTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 100% discount for youth under 6 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Small cars
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 15-35% discount for punch card holders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Frequent riders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 50% discount for youth (6-17) and seniors (65+) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student and needs-based

Source: BERK, 2021.

- Establish a goal for vehicle-to-passenger fare ratio (how much more a vehicle fare should cost compared to a passenger fare) as a transportation demand management tool.
- Establish an enterprise fund for the ferry system with independently audited financial statements to improve transparency and overall accountability. Consider a county road fund designation to budget for.

Any modification of financial policies should be evaluated against impacts to total fare revenue, operational feasibility, and possible investments like parking and more sophisticated ticketing technology.

TIMING OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

The ferry community expressed price fatigue from fare increases and the recent vessel replacement surcharge. There is low appetite for additional fare increases to fund service and operational improvements. Uncertainty associated with operating costs of the replacement vessel adds to a reduced appetite for funding service and operational improvements.

As a result, the community sentiment was to focus on finding operating efficiencies in the current system, implement any policy changes necessary to smooth operations under the new vessel, and pause some improvements until more is known about the new vessel’s operating costs. Some high-priority improvements may be justified for additional cost.

H. Ferry Service Objectives

The ferry community expressed a desire for smooth operations, data-driven decision-making, and predictability. They also expressed comfort with a certain level of “inconvenience” given the rural character of the community in which they choose to live and the goals of the sub-area plan. Service objectives put these concepts into measurable or observable goals for the ferry system to manage toward by:

- Defining what the public can expect in terms of ferry service.
- Serving as a basis for data-driven decision-making at the County.
- Sometimes “triggering” action or signaling when things are not working as expected.
- Providing a threshold for considering operational modifications to meet the service objectives.

We recommend the County consider a balanced set of objectives that align with community expectations and their ability to deliver. The County should also establish in their Communications Plan the frequency and channels on which to publish these data. Many of the suggested metrics in the below table have already been collected since 2019, but not published. Since the County 2021 work plan currently includes a revamp of how these metrics are measured and collected, consistent publication may be expected to start in late 2021 or 2022 with target setting to follow.

Exhibit 5. Suggested Metrics for Ferry Service Objectives

Category	Baseline availability	Recommendation for Next Steps
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ On-time performance ▪ Reliability ▪ % of sailings that left cars behind ▪ % of sailings with full loads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collected since 2019, but not published 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Revise definition and collection methods ▪ Publish quarterly data ▪ Set target when a sufficient track record of data is available
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of doubles available and used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Doubles available is not currently collected ▪ Doubles used is collected, but not published 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Publish quarterly data

Source: BERK, 2021.

I. Recommendations for Next Steps

We describe two packages of options in this section. **Package 1** contains steps that are not expected to add significant net operating cost. These can be taken in the immediate term to improve efficiency of current operations and lay the foundation for potential future investments. **Package 2** contains investments that may represent additional operating costs. The recommendation is to more seriously consider investing in options in package 2 after the new boat is in operation.

This approach was originally recommended because of the uncertainty related to the new vessel and mixed public interest in specific options. Recent additional uncertainty from COVID-19 supports the need for a conservatively-stepped approach. Ridership was down approximately 25% for vehicles and 50% for walk-ons in April 2020, and fare collection was fully suspended until contactless collection could be implemented. Although vehicle ridership has returned closer to normal levels as of publishing, the full financial impact is yet to be seen.

PACKAGE 1

- 1. Implement service objectives.** Starting with the five-point set of objectives in this study, Public Works should establish a regular data analysis and communication plan. This would further define or revise the metrics if necessary and identify venues and frequency of data publication. After some time of collecting data under the existing schedule (six months to one year), revisit the draft service objectives.
- 2. Conduct financial policy improvements.** Public Works should take steps to address the findings about the need for strengthened financial policies and prepare for the cost structure of the new vessel operations. Public Works should first create a restricted fund for the ferry to enable this work. Separating the fund will create the accounting transparency necessary to better meet the public's needs, understand the true County road fund subsidy, and allow longer term financial planning for the ferry. This would include clarified definitions of operating, maintenance, and capital expenditures and a revised fare policy appropriate for the new vessel operations. This may include linking fare changes to external cost indices so they change in a predictable manner and developing a framework linking fares to each other in formulas such that as costs change, no new decisions have to be made about which fares should bear which portion of those cost changes.
- 3. Develop a fare collection white paper.** While there was a large degree of public interest in ticketing improvements, there remained a wide range of possible improvements and associated costs, both operating and capital. The ticket options range from simply modifying the current online form for mail-order punch cards to accept payments online, to installing ticket vending machines and employing a software vendor solution for desktop and mobile pre-sales for all fare types. Defining what Skagit County wants in a ticket system is critical to identifying and investing in the right ticket system for the Guemes Island Ferry. Public Works should develop a white paper for a ticketing system that defines the current operations in detail, what needs to change, and goals for the new ticket system. This information can be used to guide further discussion and negotiations with potential vendors.
- 4. Make fare policy modifications.** The Guemes Island Ferry should make fare updates in 2021 that include structural revisions to streamline discount applications, reduce underused fare categories, and meet the regular fare target.

5. **Signage and re-striping.** The Guemes Island Ferry should make a small investment to better designate walk-ons and vehicle areas.

PACKAGE 2

6. **Parking improvements on Guemes.** Skagit County should resurface and stripe the Guemes Island parking lot to create more parking spaces, improve safe access to and from the ferry, and upgrade stormwater facilities to improve runoff.
7. **Fare collection system - dependent on the white paper (in Package 1).** With a better articulation of requirements, features, and budget, the ferry will be positioned to work with vendors and potentially issue an RFP for a new fare collection system.
8. **New signage and wayfinding.** The new ferry will involve a new loading procedure, including simultaneous passenger and vehicle loading. This will require a holistic reorganizing of traffic flow in the terminal area and accompanying signage and wayfinding.
9. **Second queuing lane in Anacortes and other terminal improvements.** A second queuing lane allows the crew to visualize the vehicles for the next sailing and more efficiently load the vehicles on the ferry. Given the cost and uncertainty related to operations under the new vessel, this option is included in package 2.
10. **Access and Partnership with Skagit Transit.** Skagit Transit has already expressed interest and capacity to support the ferry community in several ways, offering both a vanpool vehicle and better coordination of bus service. The County should continue to explore of options to increase walk-on ridership and carpooling, including County and private rideshare options.
11. **Additional runs.** As the ferry community changes over time, the possibility of additional runs remains. Level of service objectives will help identify thresholds at which runs should be seriously considered. An interim solution would be to schedule changes to improve availability of double runs.
12. **Parking structure on the Anacortes side and charging for parking.** This option would be a major investment in achieving the transportation demand management goals outlined in the Comprehensive Plan and Sub-Area Plan. This would need to be evaluated along with a fare and revenue impact analysis. While capital funds may not currently be available, it should remain an option for future phases.

Appendices

Appendix A: Situation Assessment

Prior to the first meeting of the GIFC, the consultants conducted a brief situation assessment. This assessment of current policy, recent data, and past survey feedback was to provide the context from which to launch the rest of the study. Highlights from this assessment are presented here, with additional detail from this review available in the Appendix.

POLICY CONTEXT

2016-2036 Comprehensive Plan

Section 8A-5 of the Skagit County Comprehensive Plan for 2016 to 2036 establishes the ferry service goal of working to maintain county and state ferry services as an important element of the transportation network. This includes the following subpoints (emphasis added):

- 8A-5.1 Encourage the provision of adequate street, highway, and road facilities to accommodate traffic to the ferry terminals in Anacortes.
- 8A-5.2 Work with the City of Anacortes, property owners, and residents on Guemes Island to develop and maintain adequate parking areas.
- **8A-5.3 To meet future increases in demand, increase service capacity of the Guemes Island Ferry by: (a) encouraging car-pooling and walk-on passengers; (b) increasing the frequency of ferry runs based on demand; (c) considering additional ferry capacity if the aforementioned procedures fail to accommodate demand; and (d) adding additional runs outside the current schedule.**
- 8A-5.4 In making all decisions related to the Guemes Island Ferry, balance the needs of the Island residents, the non-resident property owners, and the County citizenry as a whole. Decisions that would have significant service or financial impacts should be made after providing ample opportunities for public review and comment.
- **8A-5.5 Continue to provide safe and adequate ferry service between Anacortes and Guemes Island, and a fare structure designed to recover operating costs similar to the Washington State Ferries model.**
- 8A-5.6 Support the State’s continued provision of ferry service to and from Anacortes San Juan Islands-Vancouver Island, B.C. (Skagit County, 2016)

Guemes Island Sub-Area Plan

The 1990 Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA), RCW 36.70A provides for sub-area plans, which are detailed land-use plans for smaller geographic areas. The Skagit County Comprehensive Plan of 2000 called for Guemes Island to be a “Rural Area of More Detailed Planning,” as an island with distinct physical boundaries whose rural character continues to be shaped by its dependence on a ferry for access and on groundwater for drinking water. Rural character is understood to include both the amenities of the natural environment – the open spaces, views, wooded areas and wildlife – and the lack of urban-scale development. The term applies to the non-visual aspects of rural life on the island, the self-sufficiency, sense of community and mix of land-uses as well as the visual appearance of Guemes Island.

The Guemes Island Sub-Area Plan was adopted in January 2011 and contains three main points of guidance that impact the Guemes Island ferry. The Sub-Area Plan:

- **Establishes an overall goal** to allow growth that will conserve the island’s groundwater resources, rural character, and sense of community.
- **Contains guidance** for the development and update of the Guemes Island Ferry Capital Facilities Plan, which provides the specific planning and development criteria for ferry operations.
- **Reinforces the Public Forum process** established by County Resolution. Public Forums provide public advisory input on the County’s Work Plan for the Guemes Island ferry operation. Topics of interest include ticket fare structure and fare recovery model, cost containment, ferry sailing schedule, ferry operations master plan and ADA accessibility issues confronting passenger-only ferry service. (Skagit County, 2010)

Select County Resolutions

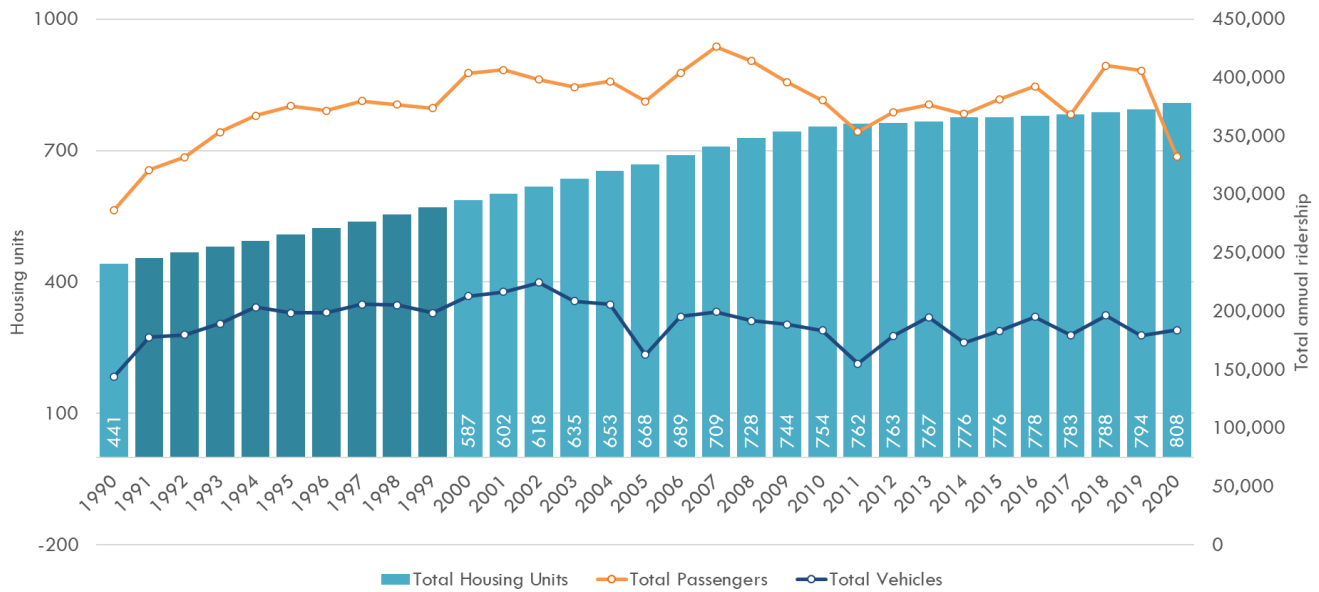
- Resolution [R20100050](#), amended by Resolution [R20110382](#), establishes the Guemes Island Ferry **fare revenue target methodology**. The target is equal to 65% of the five calendar year average operating and maintenance cost of the ferry, excluding the five year average MVFT and the five year average state ferry deficit reimbursement. The resolution also establishes the **Public Forum Policy** and calendar for collaborative discussions between the County and the public and opportunities for advisory input on issues related to ferry operations.
- **Vessel Replacement Surcharge**. Resolution [R20180123](#) adopted in 2018 adds capital surcharges to the fare schedule.

RIDERSHIP TRENDS

Ridership in the 1990s strictly increased year-over-year, whereas the first two decades of the 21st century have brought more varied ridership trends. Over the period from 1990 to 2016, vehicle ridership peaked in 2002 and passenger ridership peaked in 2007.

As shown in Exhibit 6, the period from 1990 to 2002 saw a close relationship between ridership and housing growth on the island as both grew at a relatively stable pace. Although ridership trends began to fluctuate in 2002, the stable rate of housing growth continued until 2011 when it finally began to taper. The ridership data collected does not differentiate passengers in vehicles from walk-on passengers. While vehicle ridership remained stable, the impact of Covid-19 in 2020 is evident in the drop off of passenger ridership.

Exhibit 6. Population and Housing Growth Compared to Ridership, 1990 to 2020

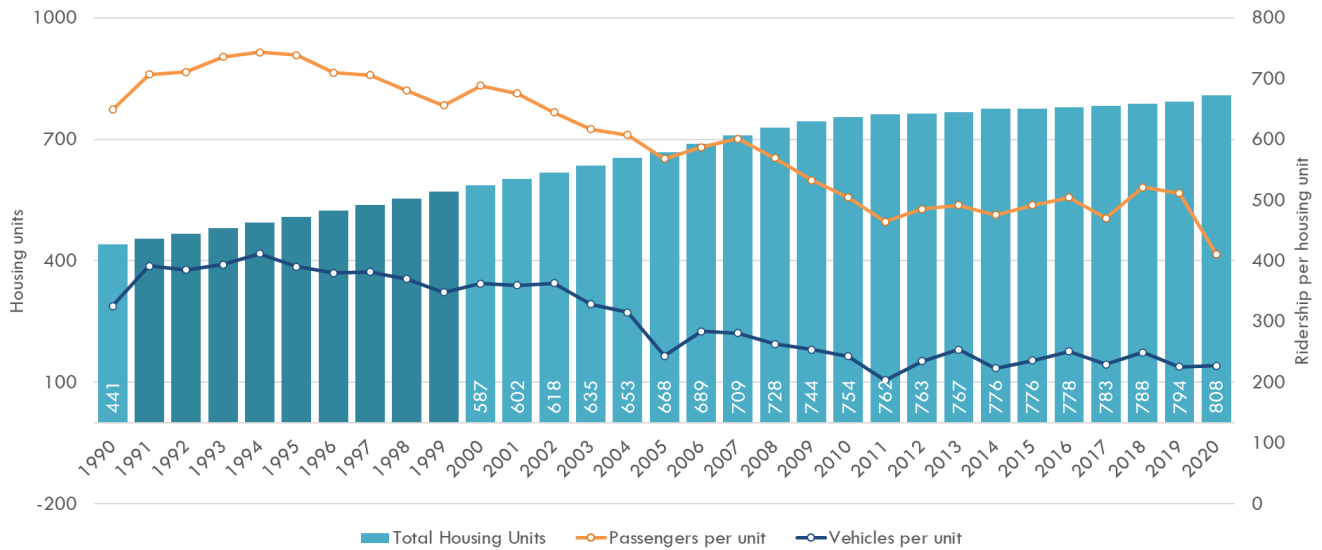


* In 2005 & 2011 there were extended ferry outages, with shorter maintenance outages in 2010, 2012, 2014, & 2015. No housing data exists for years 1991-1999, so linear growth is assumed.

Source: Skagit County, 2018; OFM, 2018; BERK, 2018.

Over the same time period, there was a downward trend of ridership per housing unit, as shown in Exhibit 7. This decline could be due to a slow decline in population per housing unit, in household size, and in the percentage of homes that are occupied full-time on the island. For example, the percentage of units occupied full-time dropped from 46.6% in the year 2000 to 40.2% in 2010.

Exhibit 7. Ridership per Housing Unit, 1990 to 2020



* In 2005 & 2011 there were extended ferry outages, with shorter maintenance outages in 2010, 2012, 2014, & 2015. No housing data exists for years 1991-1999, so linear growth is assumed.

Source: Skagit County, 2018; OFM, 2018; BERK, 2018.

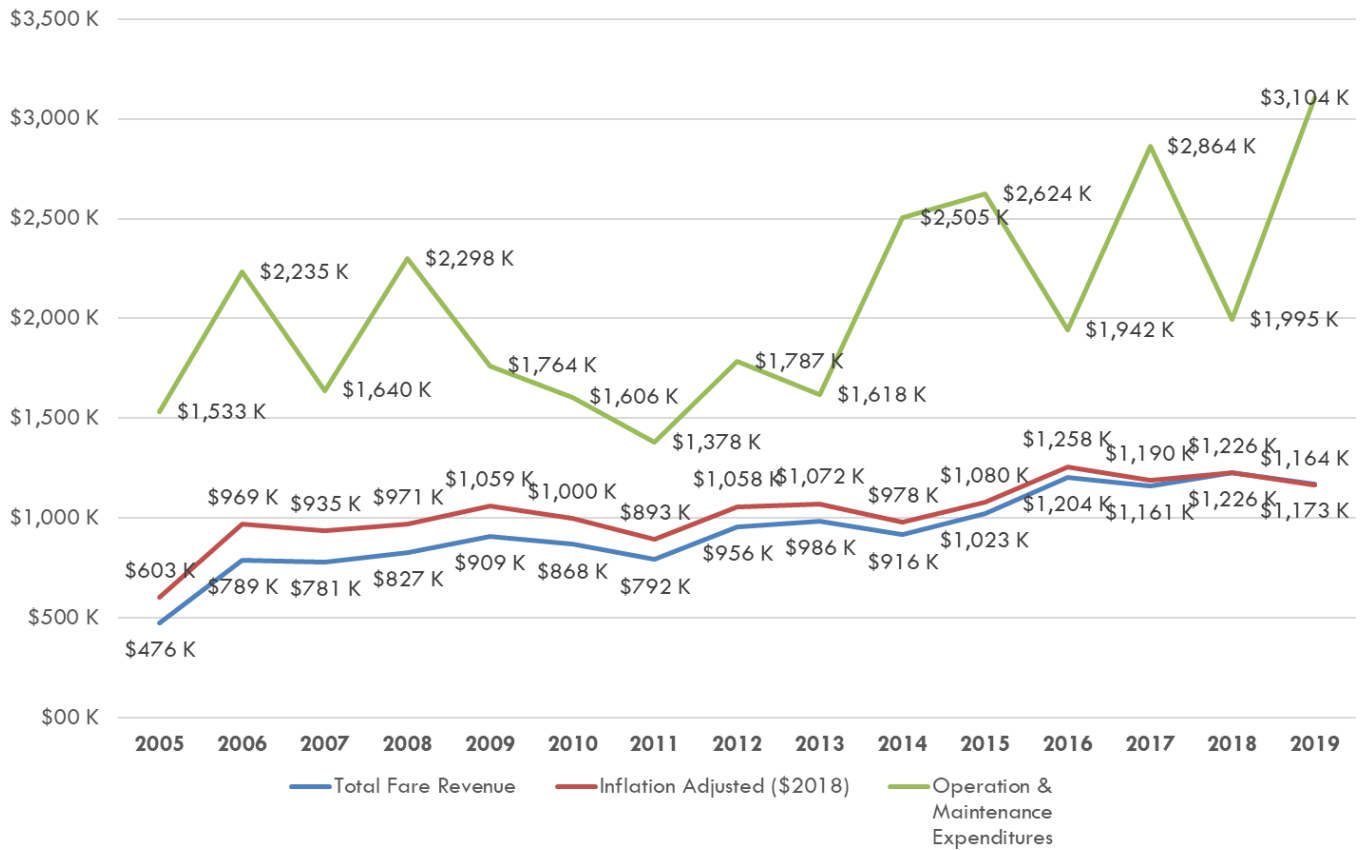
FARE TRENDS

Total Revenue

Inflation-adjusted total fare revenue has gradually increased since 2005, as shown in Exhibit 8.

Operating and maintenance expenditures grew at an annual average, 11% a year over 2005 and 2019. Annual operating expenditures vary substantially, ranging from roughly \$1.4 million in 2011 to over \$3 million in 2019. The peaks and valleys are due to the vessel’s current haul-out schedule. Many major maintenance expenditures do not occur annually. This variability is one reason the fare box revenue target is based on a 5-year average. There is an overall upward trend (annual average of 5%) in the operation and maintenance expenditures linked to the aging vessel.

Exhibit 8. Guemes Island Ferry Fare Revenue & Operation and Maintenance Expenditures, 2005 to 2019



Source: Skagit County, 2018; BERK, 2020.

Sales and Revenue by Fare Type

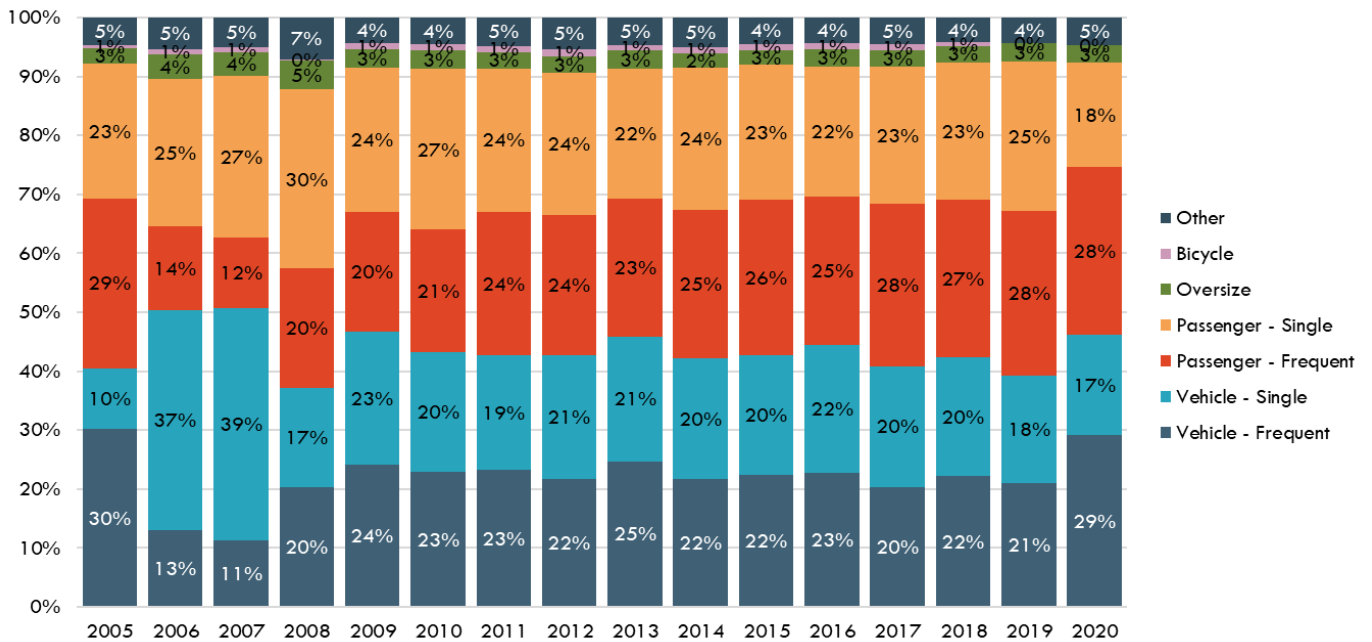
Exhibit 9 and Exhibit 10 show fare box contribution by major type of fare and by percentage of sales volume. Over the past decade, four fare types (including senior, disabled, and youth) collectively comprised between 88 and 93% of sales volume:

- Frequent vehicle & driver cards,
- Single-ride vehicle & driver tickets,
- Frequent passenger punch cards, and
- Single-ride passenger tickets.

While the distribution of sales volume among these four fare types is approximately equal, the revenue the fares generate is not. Two ticket types—vehicle & driver punch cards and single-ride vehicle & driver tickets—have comprised approximately two-thirds of fare box revenue since 2005. Further, while oversized vehicle tickets have comprised only about 3% of fare sales by volume over the past decade, they contribute an outsized portion to the fare box, between 10 and 15% of revenue each year.

Both single-ride motorcycle & rider tickets and bicycle tickets are a minor portion of sales. Combined, these fares comprise about 1% both fare sales by volume and fare box revenue.

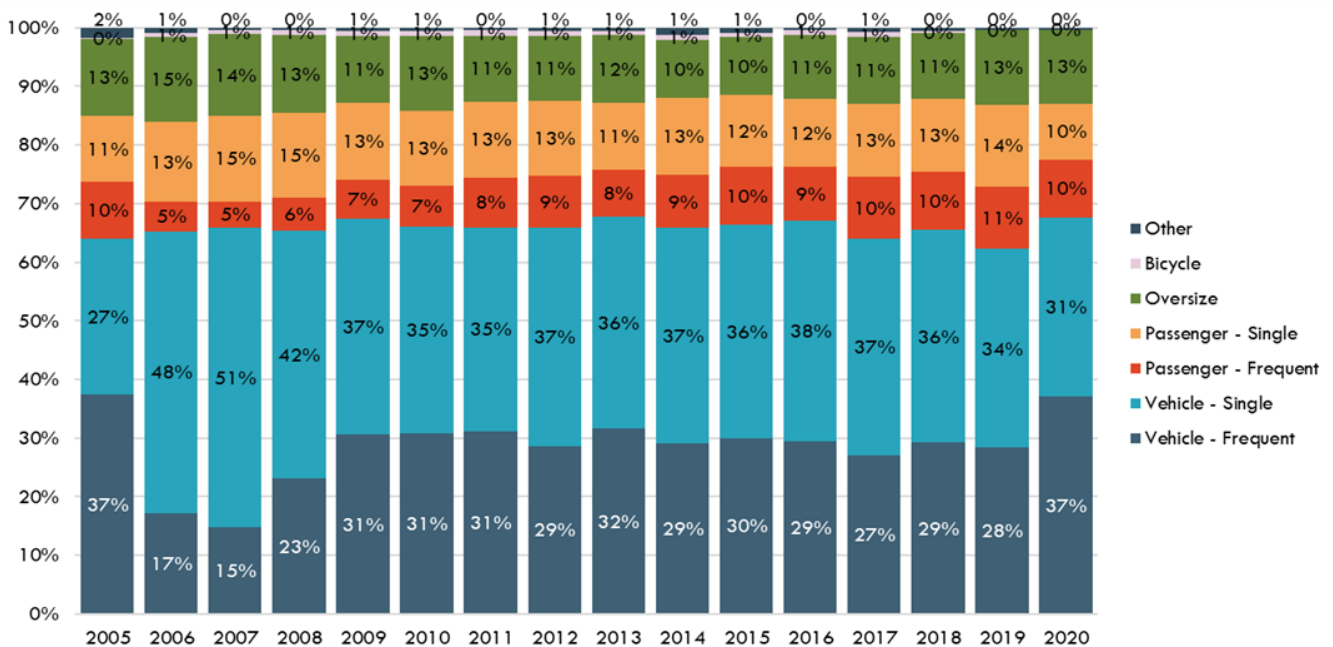
Exhibit 9. Guemes Island Ferry Percent of Fare Sales Volume by Type, 2005 to 2020



Source: Skagit County, 2018; BERK, 2021.

Note: Figures in chart may not total to 100% due to rounding.

Exhibit 10. Guemes Island Ferry Fare Box Contribution (percent of revenue) by Type, 2005 to 2020



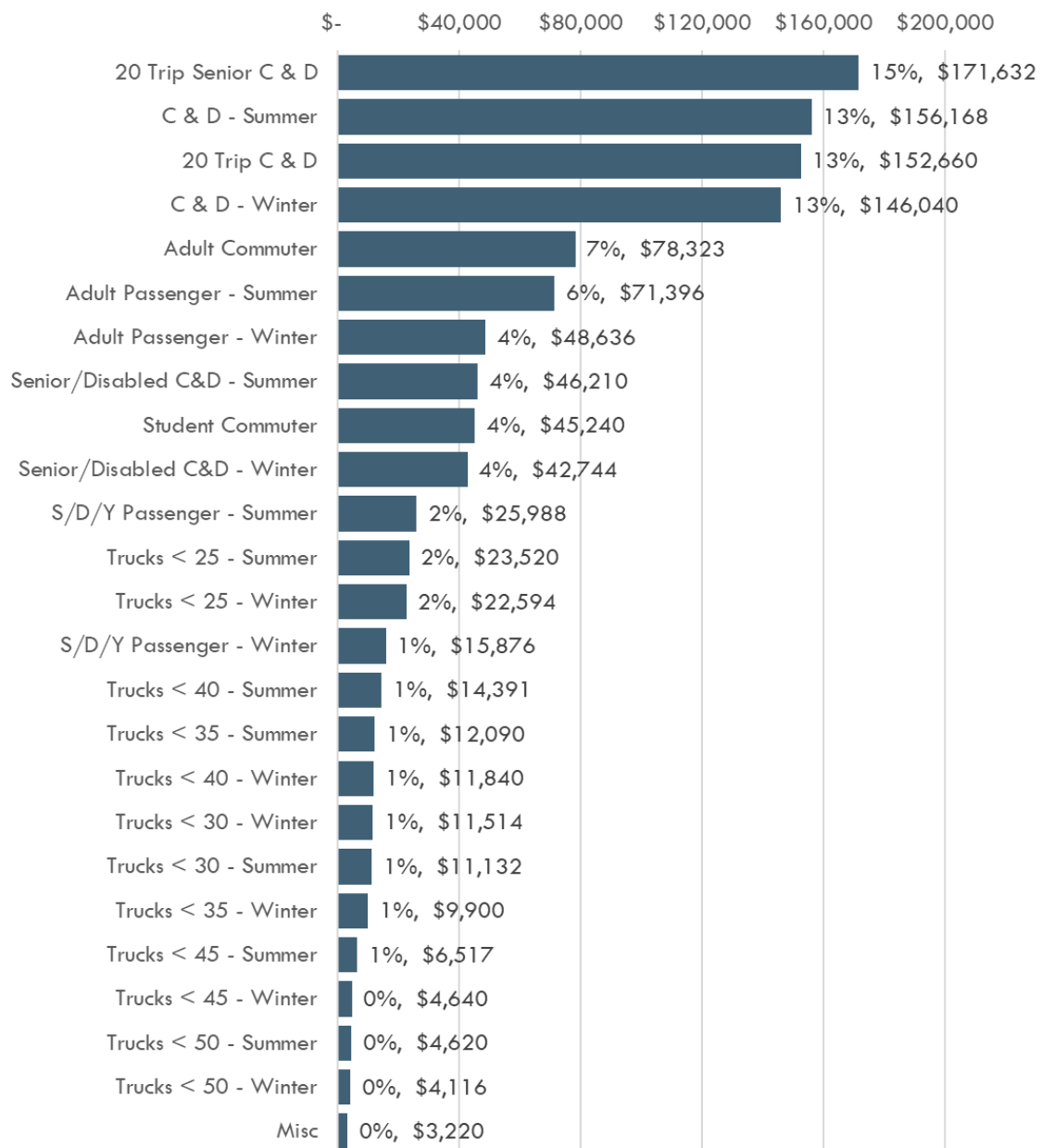
Source: Skagit County, 2018; BERK, 2021.

Note: Figures in chart may not total to 100% due to rounding.

Exhibit 9 and Exhibit 10 show only seven categories of fares, there are subdivisions in fare categories by vehicle size and by senior, disabled, or youth status. As a result, passengers can select from over 20 fare options and these options vary again by season. System-wide, there are over 40 fare types. Exhibit 11 shows the portion of sales by revenue of each ticket type in 2019. Notably, the top 15 types of fares make up 92% of sales revenue, and all other fare types each represent 1% of sales or less. The fare types with the lowest use represent only one ten-thousandth of sales, a small portion of transactions to warrant an entire fare type.

The large number of fares with low purchase volumes indicates that there is capacity to increase efficiency by consolidating some fare types.

Exhibit 11. Top 25 Ticket Types by Percentage of Total Revenue, 2019



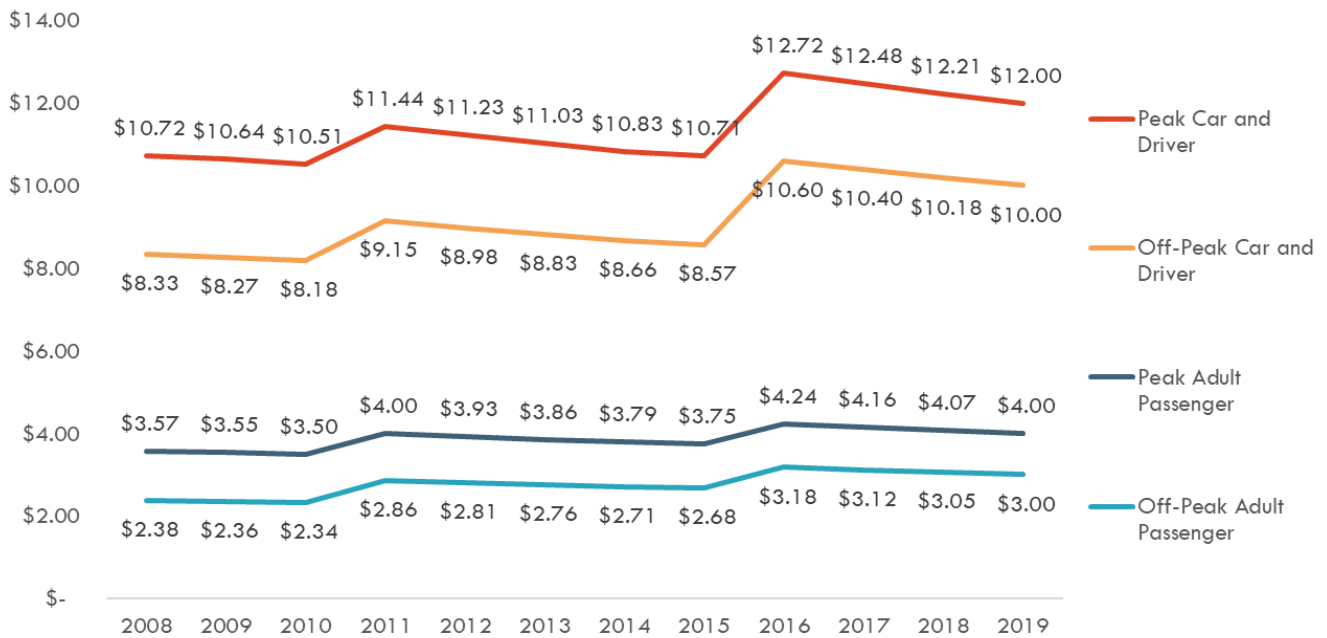
Source: Skagit County, 2018; BERK, 2021.

Fare Changes Over Time

On an inflation-adjusted basis, benchmark fares have remained relatively flat over the last decade. Under current policies, fares only change following a shortfall in the fare recovery target, and then following a public process. This creates a pattern periodic jumps in fares followed by a period of declining fares in real terms until the next correction. The last fare change was in 2015, though there was the addition of a replacement vessel surcharge in 2018.

One tool of managing transportation demand is to encourage walk-on traffic over vehicle traffic, because walk-on passengers occupy less space than vehicles. To do so, ferry systems can create a greater fare spread between passenger and vehicle fares. Using standard adult fares as the benchmark, Exhibit 12 shows the difference between the fares for a walk-on passenger and for a car and driver (C & D) over a ten-year span.

Exhibit 12. Benchmark Fares, 2008 to 2019 (Inflation-adjusted, 2019 dollars)



Source: Skagit County, 2018; BERK, 2019.

The ratio of the price of a standard vehicle fare to the price of a standard adult passenger fare is called the vehicle fare to passenger fare ratio and is a common metric to understand transportation demand management. As shown in Exhibit 13, in 2008 that ratio was 3.5, meaning a vehicle fare was 3.5 times the price of a passenger fare. By 2018, that ratio had dropped to 3.33, with an even lower bottom of 3.20 in the interim years of 2012 to 2015. With the downward trend of this ratio, there is less incentive for passengers to choose to walk on the M/V Guemes instead of bringing a vehicle. This might be in part due to the effect of the fare rounding policy, but the ferry could track and manage this spread more actively.

Exhibit 13. Vehicle Fare to Passenger Fare Ratio (2008-2018)

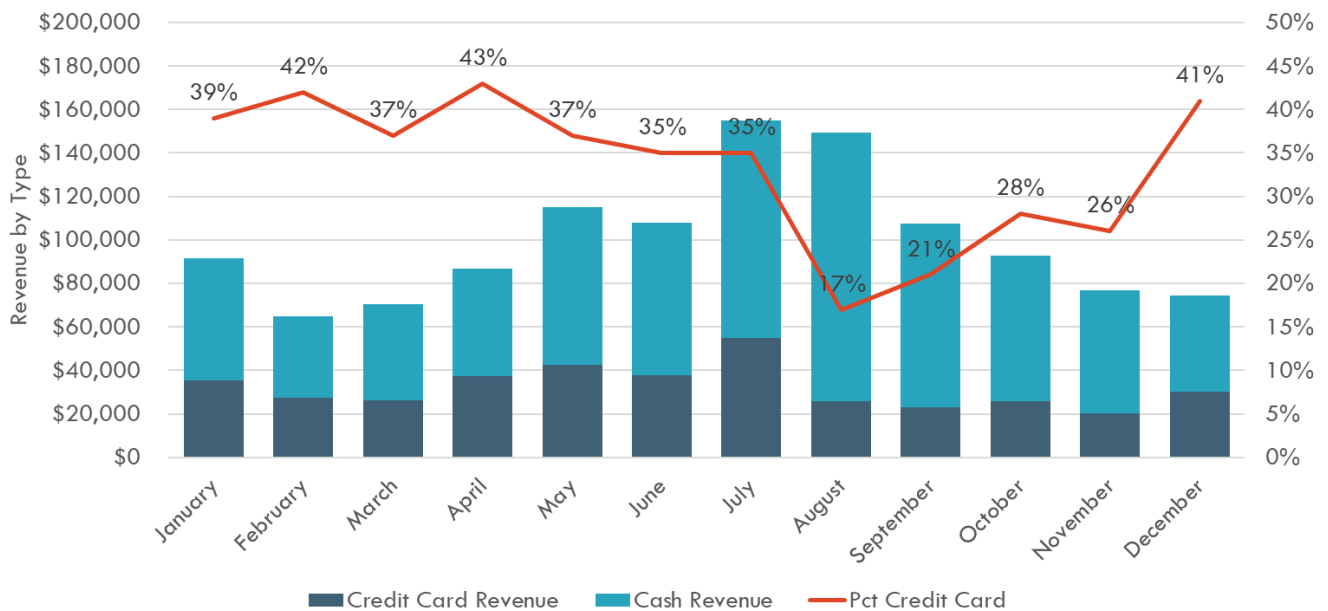
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Vehicle to Passenger Fare Ratio (Non Peak)	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.20	3.20	3.20	3.20	3.20	3.33	3.33	3.33

Source: Skagit County, 2018; BERK, 2019.

Transactions by Credit Card

Throughout 2018, most revenue was collected through cash transactions. On average, only 33% of revenue originated from credit card transactions during 2018. However, the ratio of cash to credit card transactions fluctuates throughout the year. As shown in Exhibit 14, the proportion of revenue collected through credit card transactions ranged from as little as 17% in August to a maximum of 43% in April. Revenue from credit card transactions was lower from August to November than during the rest of the year. Credit card use can be subject to operational challenges related to the pursers’ connectivity in the vehicle line or inclement weather. The County currently pays the transaction fee on the credit card fares and does not pass that on to the customer.

Exhibit 14. Ticketing: 2018 Credit Card Use



Source: Skagit County, 2018; BERK, 2019.

2017-2018 Community Surveys

Prior to this Operations and Service study, Skagit County had administered two surveys via PublicInput.com. One survey gathered feedback about vessel replacement, and the second survey gathered public opinion about system improvements suggested in the first survey.

Across these two surveys, members of the public submitted 683 surveys and 232 people left comments. Approximately three-quarters of respondents identified as living on Guemes Island either full-time or

part-time, as shown in Exhibit 15. Information from both surveys is summarized at a high level in this section.

Exhibit 15. 2017-2018 Surveys

	Replacement Survey	System Improvement Survey
Date Open	September 15, 2017	December 14, 2017
Date Closed	December 11, 2017	March 30, 2018
Number of Respondents	334	349
Number of Commenters	127	105
Residents (full- and part-time)	73%	76%

Source: BERK, 2019.

- Service disruptions and the sailing schedule were seen as the most important system improvement in the 2017-18 surveys.
- Loading passengers and vehicles at the same time was by far seen as the highest priority for loading procedure changes. The new vessel and terminal design will allow that.
- The second highest priority was selling or validating tickets on board the vessel which is likely not feasible given the short crossing time.
- 60% of respondents said *reliability* is the most important thing Skagit County should consider when designing a new ferry. In second survey, half of respondents answered that fewer unplanned maintenance outages were the most important aspect of reliability.
- The elimination of mid-day/evening service gaps was ranked as the top choice of 54% of the time. Adding later weekday evening runs was ranked as the top choice of 29% of the time, while Friday and Saturday midnight runs were the top choice 26% of the time.
- Even when reminded that the new ferry will be larger than the current vessel, a large majority (73%) think it's important for the new vessel to maintain two round-trips per hour. 10% did not think it was important and 18% were unsure.
- Most survey respondents reported purchasing a punch card and using a credit/debit card for that purchase.
- Sales data shows that the overall ferry receipts are about one-third credit/debit.
- Many comments included ideas for the ticketing system, and almost every comment on the system noted that the speed needed to be improved. More options for payment or types of tickets were also supported.

Appendix B: Operations and Service Improvement Options

This section presents all options that were surfaced through the Operation and Service review for Ticketing, Schedule, Queueing / Loading, Access and Connections improvements. Some of these suggestions were only briefly considered and may have been deemed infeasible, out of scope, or not a high enough priority among the public to continue analyzing. Other suggestions received further consideration which included a more detailed analysis of costs and operating impacts and additional public surveying.

SCHEDULE

- **Later weekday run.** The Guemes Island ferry operators receive occasional requests from the public for later runs on weekdays. These requests represent an issue for working adults whose work days end later than the last available sailing, though some are also interested in access to/from mainland recreation opportunities. The current weekday schedule ends at 8:30pm (departing Anacortes). A 2006-2008 pilot period of Monday to Thursday evening runs until 10pm was allowed to expire without efforts to make the change permanent. During the trial period, in June 2007, an organized group of Guemes Island residents, Friends of Guemes Island, brought a case against the County related to extended weekday runs in the Snohomish County Superior Court. A conclusion of that hearing was that beyond the trial period, any pursuit of permanent extended weekday evening runs would need a new SEPA compliant environmental review including potential induced growth, and direct and indirect environmental effects.
- **Later Friday and Saturday Run.** The Guemes Island ferry operators receive occasional requests from the public for later runs on Fridays and Saturdays, sometimes referred to as the “midnight runs.” The current schedule ends at 11pm (departing Anacortes). These requests are typically people interested in mainland recreation opportunities. Data on cars left behind does not indicate that evening runs are currently in high demand though, that may reflect people choosing not to go off island for activities because they do not have a return option.
- **Mid-day Run.** Provide one sailing during the mid-day gap between the 11:15 a.m. & 1:00 p.m.
- **Standardize schedule across week and season.** Schedule operates the same every day of the week, year-round
- **Align schedule with Skagit Transit.** A member of the ferry community suggested that the ferry maximize service alignment with Skagit Transit’s schedule on the Anacortes side. This would have the effect of encouraging walk-ons. The study team connected with Skagit Transit who is planning on modifying the 410 and 409 routes. This will improve service connections to the Guemes Ferry stop. They are also investing in by-stop data collection to get a more accurate picture of demand generated by the ferry, which could lead to future improvements.
- **Departures and arrivals are always on time.** A member of the public suggested that the ferry should be run such that departures and arrivals are always on time.

	Operational Impact	Community Input	Cost	Recommendation
Later Weekday Run	Operating additional evening runs would add service hours to the vessel, require extending the PM crew shift on those days and burn additional fuel.	Current public input that was interested in a later run was split between those who wanted it available on weekdays (see previous) and others who wanted it on the weekends. Data on cars left behind does not indicate that evening runs are currently in high demand. However that may reflect people choosing not to go off island for late evening activities because they do not have a same-day return option.	Operating costs would increase. There are no additional capital costs.	We do not recommend any further action in pursuit of later weekday runs. However, this could be an a recommendation as an outcome of a comprehensive schedule analysis.
Later Friday and Saturday Run	Operating additional evening runs would add service hours to the vessel, require extending the PM crew shift on those days, and burn additional fuel.	Public input that was interested in a later run was split between those who wanted it available on weekdays (see previous) and others who wanted it on the weekends.	Operating costs would increase. There are no additional capital costs.	We are not currently recommending any further action in pursuit of later Friday and Saturday scheduled runs. However coordination of a quarterly calendar of “special runs” in tandem with Anacortes cultural programming and/or concert events at the store could be part of the communications plan.
Mid-day Run	Currently, fueling and maintenance are done during this period and crew takes their lunch break. Providing a mid-day sailing would require adjustments to crew schedules and could require shifting maintenance and fueling to a different time.	This was one of the most frequent suggestions heard from the community.	Operating costs would likely increase. There are no additional capital costs.	Recommend a more detailed schedule and staffing analysis after which more detailed options including costs would be provided.

	Operational Impact	Community Input	Cost	Recommendation
Standardize schedule across week and season	No impacts to ferry operations are anticipated.	The ferry community was interested in improving predictability.	This would be potentially be a no cost option.	Evaluated and not considered a high priority relative to other schedule needs.
Align schedule with Skagit Transit	No impacts to ferry operations are anticipated.	The ferry community was interested in better aligning the ferry schedule with the bus schedule.	This would be potentially be a no cost option.	Skagit County Public Works should continue to work with Skagit Transit to ensure modifications to the bus schedule align with the sailing schedule.
Departures and arrivals are always on time	Prioritizing on-time departures requires staff to cut off ticket sales and loading at times when there may be still be passengers waiting to get on board. It may also reduce overall system throughput by eliminating one or more round trips and increasing the dwell time of the remaining sailings.	This idea was debated as some members of the public felt that they would prefer a ferry that waited for someone rushing down the hill over 100% on-time departures. Others felt it was a worthwhile goal, even if not always met.	It is not anticipated this would impact operating cost. Reducing dwell time may require capital investments with a more efficient fare collection system.	On-time departures and arrivals are a potential service objective. If on-time departures are going to be a priority, Public Works needs to define the window that would be considered “on-time” and collect and publish these data. They should also determine a target that reflects the community’s expectations (that might not be 100%). Achieving the on-time departure goals may require minimizing dwell time through a schedule analysis or fare collection modifications.

QUEUING AND LOADING

- **Simultaneous loading of vehicles and passengers.** The Ferry Replacement Project includes adjusting the transfer span and apron to allow for simultaneous loading/unloading of walk-on passengers and vehicles. This will significantly reduce dwell time.
- **Second queuing lane.** A second queuing lane was recommended by the consultant team to improve operational efficiency by bringing vehicles closer to the vessel to load. The crew would be closer to the vessel when collecting fares.

	Operational Impact	Community Input	Cost	Recommendation
Simultaneous Loading of Vehicles and Passengers	There would need to be new signage for the new loading procedures. This will reduce the dwell time.	The ferry community was interested in this concept.	The cost is mostly accounted for in the capital improvement to allow a new loading procedure. Some further costs for signage are anticipated.	Continue to plan for simultaneous vehicle and passenger loading, including signage and communications with staff and ridership to ensure a smooth transition.
Second Queuing Lane	There would need to be signage or a signal to instruct vehicles where and how to queue.	The ferry community was not interested in this concept.	This would incur some capital expenses for striping and adding signage/signaling.	Based on the lack of interest, this option is not recommended for further analysis in this study.

TICKETING

- **Online Pre-Sales of Punch Cards only.** Online sale of punch cards only with postal mail fulfillment would be the minimum considered online ticketing.
- **Online Pre-Purchase.** Some members of the ferry committee have expressed interest in being able to pre-purchase ferry tickets online and show proof of purchase to the crew. This would add convenience for some passengers and allow for faster fare collection. There are a variety of online platforms that would allow passengers to purchase their tickets online. This would require Skagit County manage and administer this software and have access to ongoing technical support.
- **Fourth crew member/dedicated ticketing agent.** This option allocates staff to ensure tickets are sold and validated before ticketing.
- **Ticket Vending Machine for Pre-Purchase of Fares.** Provide a ticket vending machine (TVM) at the terminal to pre-purchase tickets with a credit/debit card and quickly show proof of fare when boarding. There are a variety of approaches to implementing a TVM.
- **Mobile Ticketing for Pre-Purchase of Fares.** Provide a mobile application for passengers to purchase their tickets via their phone and show proof of fare when boarding. There are a variety mobile application options to evaluate.

- **Tollbooth for pre-purchase.** A tollbooth would allow for passengers to pre-purchase their tickets. This concept was suggested by the consultant team as an option to separate fare collection from the loading process and reduce dwell time.
- **Charge on board.** A member of the ferry committee suggested collecting fares on board similar to the Lummi Island Ferry system.

	Operational Impact	Community Input	Cost	Recommendation
Online Pre-Sales of Punch Cards only	Work would be transferred from the ferry crew to Skagit County administrative offices to handle punch card orders and fulfill them. Ferry operations may be somewhat streamlined.	Most community members desired a more comprehensive online ticketing system.	The main cost would be administrative staff time and postage.	This approach to fare collection should be considered and evaluated after completing a white paper that outlines the requirements of a fare collection system for the Guemes Island Ferry.
Online Pre-Purchase	The crew would be required to verify the purchased ticket using a handheld scanner.	The ferry community expressed interest in exploring opportunities for online ticket purchase.	This would require purchase of software that could be a capital expense or partnering with another Skagit County department for use of their software. There would be operating expenses for administering the online ticket system as well as ongoing technical support.	This approach to fare collection should be considered and evaluated after completing a white paper that outlines the requirements of a fare collection system for the Guemes Island Ferry.
Fourth Crew Member/Dedicated Ticketing Agent	With additional capacity dedicated to ticketing, this would support timely departures.	The community was split on this option. Some were concerned about the operating costs while others supported it for the smoother operations and accommodation for people who are not able to use a vending machine or online sales.	The main cost is additional staff time. The ferry already operates with a similar staffing model during peak travel times.	This approach is important to include, regardless of whether other options are pursued, for ridership unable to access other ticketing methods.

	Operational Impact	Community Input	Cost	Recommendation
Ticket Vending Machine for Pre-Purchase of Fares	The crew would be required to verify the purchased ticket using a handheld scanner.	The ferry community expressed interest in exploring opportunities for pre-purchasing tickets.	This would require purchase of machines. There would be operating expenses for managing the ticket vending machines as well as ongoing technical support.	This approach to fare collection should be considered and evaluated after completing a white paper that outlines the needs of a fare collection system for the Guemes Island Ferry.
Mobile Ticketing	The crew would be required to verify the purchased ticket visually or using a handheld scanner.	The ferry community expressed interest in exploring opportunities for pre-purchasing tickets.	This would require purchase of software that could be a capital expense. There would be operating expenses for administering the mobile ticket system as well as ongoing technical support. These costs are typically charged through a percentage of fare revenue (5-10%)	This approach to fare collection should be considered and evaluated after completing a white paper that outlines the needs of a fare collection system for the Guemes Island Ferry.
Tollbooth for Pre-Purchase	Tollbooth would need to be staffed and a crew member would need to collect fares for walk-ons.	The ferry community was not interested in this idea.	Installation of a tollbooth would require capital investment.	Based on the lack of interest expressed by the ferry community, this is not recommended for further analysis in this study.
Charge on board	Crew would collect all fares during the roughly 5-minute crossing.	Members of the ferry committee expressed interest in this concept.	No additional operating or capital investment is anticipated with this option.	Based on observing the challenges at the Lummi Island Ferry (even with a smaller boat, they are delaying unloading to finish fare collection). Infeasible given length of the Guemes crossing, boat size, & credit card processing issues.

ACCESS AND CONNECTIONS

- **Parking in Anacortes.** The ferry community expressed interest in more parking at the Anacortes terminal. There are limited areas to expand parking capacity and adding more parking would require significant capital expense.
- **Parking on Guemes Island.** The ferry community expressed interest in more parking options on Guemes Island. Without purchasing new land for parking, the existing parking lot can be resurfaced and stripped to create additional parking.
- **Vanpool.** Skagit Transit suggested use of vanpools on the island since there is no bus service. Skagit Transit has vanpool vehicles available for use that would stay on the island. This would be a volunteer service that the Guemes Island residents would manage.

	Operational Impact	Community Input	Cost	Recommendation
Parking in Anacortes	One option could be to charge for some or all parking which would reduce demand and could improve parking availability. However, this would require management and oversight to collect parking fees. It may also discourage walk-ons and encourage more people to drive their vehicles onto the ferry.	The ferry community was not interested in charging fees for parking at Anacortes.	Purchasing more parking would incur a capital expense. Charging for parking would require management and oversight of a parking management company.	Based on the cost, this option is not recommended for further analysis in this study.
Parking on Guemes Island	This option is anticipated to reduce the amount of maintenance required compared to the current gravel parking lot. It will increase capacity of the lot by approximately 15 vehicles.	Some members of the community expressed interest in resurfacing the Guemes Island parking lot.	This option would require capital investment in resurfacing the lot, striping, adding lighting and improving stormwater management.	This option is recommended to increase parking capacity.
Vanpool	Public Works could be the liaison between the Guemes Island Ferry community and Skagit Transit, but no direct operational impacts to the ferry are anticipated.	The ferry community expressed interest in this community-led transit option.	The vanpool users would need to pay for fueling the vehicle.	This option is recommended to explore further.

FARES

- **Adjust vehicle size for standard fare.** Introduce a small vehicle (under 14') fare and change standard fare to 22'. This would in turn impact the oversize vehicle fare structure.
- **Remove peak/non-peak fares.** Peak fares were introduced to manage transportation demand and recoup costs associated with a higher level of operations in the warmer months. Over the years, the definition of the peak travel time has shifted. This option is to eliminate the fare difference and keep the same fares year-round for consistency.
- **Do not charge for passengers.** The management of walk-on passengers is a significant use of staff effort. Charging for passengers also complicates pursuing the vehicle line as they must tabulate all the passengers in each vehicle, which may involve multiple fare types. Charging only for the vehicle would streamline pursuing, queuing, and loading. It also aligns with the County and Guemes Islands' transportation demand goals of encouraging walk-ons in lieu of vehicle traffic. This option got some support at the July public meeting and the support of 8% of survey respondents as an issue to analyze further. Opposition of this policy pointed to limited parking options on both sides of the route.
- **Introduce a resident fare.** A resident fare would be a way to ensure year-round affordability for those who depend on the ferry and whose trips are less discretionary. This would require a method of verifying residency and keeping the information up to date, and a ticketing system to would support this.
- **Reduce number of fare categories.** Including discounts and peak and non-peak fares, there are over forty fare types. Reducing the number of fare categories would make the collection process easier for purser and riders, and set the groundwork for investment in an improved ticketing system.

	Operational Impact	Community Input	Cost	Recommendation
Adjust vehicle size for standard fare	No impacts to ferry operations are anticipated.	The community did not provide significant feedback on this option.	Assuming an increase in the length of the standard vehicle, this would create some revenue loss.	We recommend this option be considered along with an overall fare structure revision to neutralize potential revenue impacts.

	Operational Impact	Community Input	Cost	Recommendation
Remove peak/non-peak fares	No impacts to ferry operations are anticipated.	The community was mixed on this option. Some support the peak fares to manage summer travel demand and maximize revenue from non-residents. Others prioritize consistency and year-round affordability.	There are potential operating cost savings, however, the loss of revenue is more significant.	We recommend continuing to charge peak and non-peak fares for revenue and demand management reasons.
Do not charge for passengers	This option has the potential to streamline operations by charging and verifying vehicles only, without having to count passengers within vehicles.	The possibility of not charging for walk-ons was raised by staff. There was interest from both community and staff in this option.	There are potential operating cost savings, however, the loss of revenue is more significant. In 2018, the ferry took in \$275,341 from passenger revenue. This represents 23% of all fare revenue that year. This revenue would likely have to be recouped from vehicle fares or paid parking (enforcement of which might cancel out any operating efficiencies).	We recommend continuing to charge for walk-ons. The lost revenues are not likely to be recouped by operating savings or fare increases on vehicles.
Introduce a resident fare	This option would require a method to verify residency and maintain that information. It would also require a new ticketing system to ensure non-transferability of the resident fare.	A member of the ferry community raised this option, but it did not gain significant community support.	Operating cost of residency verification and ticketing systems.	Too many barriers to implementation; Punch card product will continue to be designed with residents in mind
Reduce number of fare categories	This option has the potential to slightly streamline pricing by reducing the need to navigate many fare categories.	The community supported this option.	There is no significant impact anticipated on operating cost. This step could reduce the cost of an improved ticketing system by reducing the complexity of the fare structure.	Consider eliminating fare categories that account for less than 2% of ticket sales. This includes potentially combining oversize fare categories to be increments of 10' instead of 5'.

OTHER

- **Establish quantified level of service goals.** The idea of a quantified level of service statement was raised at the July public meeting and in GIFC meetings. There is level of service language in the current comprehensive plan, but it does not currently provide adequate guidance to ferry operations decisions. Level of service goals would impact operations by providing greater clarity and criteria for decision-making.
- **Ferry levy on rentals.** At the July public meeting a community member raised the idea of charging a ferry levy on short-term rentals on Guemes Island. These rentals impact ferry traffic and may represent a greater ability to pay than year-round residents.

	Operational Impact	Community Input	Cost	Recommendation
Establish quantified level of service goals	The level of service goals should also assume there would be operational changes and/or capital investments if level of service goals are not being achieved.	This option was surfaced at a public forum and had community support.	Establishing goals would not require operational and capital expense. However, operational and capital expenses may be required to meet the level of service goals.	We recommend setting service objectives as a management policy (without amending the comprehensive plan). A recommended “pilot” set of objectives is contained in this report as a starting point. See Ferry Service Objectives.
Ferry levy on rentals	N/A	N/A	N/A	This suggestion is not related to service or operations and considered out of scope for this study. However the possibility can be raised with the Board of County Commissioners separately.

Appendix C: Public Comments

Date Received	Commenter	Comment	Summary Notes
Jul 11, 2019	Bud Ullman	<p>At the first Stakeholders Meeting in June I expressed my concern that the Ferry surveys, while useful, probably do not accurately capture the full range of Ferry patrons' opinions, particularly those opinions animating or relying on the Guemes Sub-Area Plan Goals. I encouraged BERK to seek out a wider range of opinions.</p> <p>Attached here, from a different but related context (which I assume needs no explanation here), is a letter from 95 Ferry patrons who might warrant consideration as sources of such opinions.</p> <p>As you may know, I serve on the Guemes Island Ferry Committee but this submission is entirely my own and not that of the GIFC which neither endorses nor opposes this message.</p> <p>Thanks for your time and attention.</p> <p>[Petition Attached]</p>	<p>Commenter is concerned that the surveys don't capture the full range of ferry patrons' opinions and included a petition letter from 95 ferry patrons.</p>
Sep 15, 2019	Bud Ullman	<p>TO: BERK, Skagit County Public Works</p> <p>FROM: Bud Ullman (as an individual ferry patron and not as a member of the Guemes Island Ferry Committee which neither endorses nor opposes what's said here)</p> <p>RE: Guemes Island Ferry Replacement Project</p> <p>DATE: September 15, 2019</p> <p>I appreciate this opportunity to comment on the current ferry project. I am glad BERK and the County are examining so many aspects of ferry operations. I am confident that the result will be improved service, and I thank you for your work.</p> <p>I would like to draw attention to two facets of the work having to do with the ferry schedule. First, I am concerned that on this point more weight might be given to the three surveys than the surveys can properly bear. And second, I am concerned that values other than money are getting lost. Let me explain.</p> <p>SURVEYS' WEAKNESS</p>	<p>Commenter is concerned about lack of no action alternative options on the surveys; inadequate notice to the public that the surveys cannot overturn the GISAP goals; slant toward expanding service on the surveys; and overemphasis on money.</p>

Date Received	Commenter	Comment	Summary Notes
		<p>Of all the topics under study, ferry scheduling has the greatest potential to affect life on Guemes Island. This is particularly true (1) in light of the commitment already made to deploy a larger ferry, and (2) viewed against the background of the Guemes Island Sub-Area Plan's (GISAP's) Goals where the clear instruction is that we conserve the island's groundwater resources, rural character, and sense of community.</p> <p>While topics like ticketing and loading are important to the immediate experience of ferry patrons, these topics are unlikely to impact, except perhaps very indirectly, the GISAP Goals or the longer term living of life on the island. In contrast, adding morning and evening runs (as contrasted with closing the 11:15 and 6:45 gaps) can lead to increased traffic, both personal and commercial vehicles, and development. If we build it, they will come. And the values the GISAP seeks to protect may be compromised, surely within the lifetime of the new vessel.</p> <p>In seeking public input it is customary to offer a "no action alternative." It is not clear why this was not done in this case, particularly in light of the public outcry against the decision a few years ago to expand the sailing schedule. Instead, the surveys seem to interpret "improvement" to mean only bigger and/or more. Yes, there are comment boxes for narrative responses, but there aren't tallyable check-boxes for "no more morning or evening sailings." The surveys thus begin on a slant.</p> <p>Of particular concern is that survey respondents are not told that survey results cannot overturn or replace the GISAP Goals. BERK has appropriately noted the importance of the GISAP Goals but, importantly, the surveys did not inform respondents that there are real limits inherent therein. Rather, the surveys offered respondents a blank slate, unfettered by previous decisions. How survey respondents might have responded in light of the GISAP Goals we simply cannot know. Because the surveys separated themselves from the GISAP, I hope BERK will weigh the survey results against the backdrop of the GISAP. But, as discussed below, that weighting seems to be focused only on money.</p> <p>The first survey, the "Guemes Ferry Replacement Survey," asked respondents to prioritize seven "improvements" including "the sailing schedule." That particular improvement received the highest prioritization. But the survey did not distinguish between adding sailings at either or both ends of the day</p>	

Date Received	Commenter	Comment	Summary Notes
		<p>(which I discourage) or closing the mid-day and evening “gaps” (which it seems to me most ferry patrons favor).</p> <p>In my experience there are numerous ferry patrons who would like to see the gaps closed but who are not in favor of adding morning or evening runs. So it is difficult to say what “improvements” to the schedule respondents had in mind. Reading the comments below the survey question shows much greater concern over fares than scheduling, and a rough balance between commenters discouraging more runs and those wanting them. Thus I do not find the results of this survey question very informative on the matter of adding morning or evening runs.</p> <p>The second survey, the “Guemes Ferry System Improvements Survey,” made the leap of presenting respondents ONLY with options that add sailings. (A possible but irrelevant exception is the option for “one-per-hour sailings during non-peak season.”) So in this survey there is no survey option allowing a respondent to express opposition to an expanded sailing schedule, except in the written comment section where several respondents expressed just such opposition. When survey results are expressed in terms of which boxes got how many checks, I cannot avoid feeling the written comments are of secondary weight.</p> <p>Of course a number of commenters endorsed an expanded sailing schedule, for various reasons – working in Seattle, attending cultural activities, etc. However, none of these commenters addressed the GIPAC Goals, the values reflected there, or the impact on the aspects of Guemes life the commenter finds enticing. Again, commenters were offered a blank slate on which to express their druthers without regard to prior decisions and commitments.</p> <p>The third survey, “Guemes Ferry and Operations & Service Survey,” continues both the blank slate approach eliding earlier decisions in the GIPAC, and offers responses only increasing sailings. Again, respondents who don’t want increased morning and evening sailings have no box to check nor any other simple, direct way to impact the resulting survey numbers. True, they can assign a lower priority to the increased sailing options, but that is a far cry from a tangible expression in an itemized, and subsequently digitized, list of survey options.</p> <p>FOCUS ON MONEY</p>	

Date Received	Commenter	Comment	Summary Notes
		<p>As mentioned above, it is to be hoped that BERK's work will eventually incorporate the values inherent in the GISAP Goals. So I was crestfallen to see that the current survey informs people</p> <p>BERK and KPFF's work will result in two packages of system improvement operations (both prioritize maintaining two round-trips per hour).</p> <p>Package 1: Service improvements that can be attained with minimum investment</p> <p>Package 2: Additional service improvements that come at a higher cost.</p> <p>Apparently all recommendations will be weighed solely in terms of money. This is an all too common outcome where non-monetary values are also in play. I had hoped (and still hope) for more when BERK's initial public documents highlighted the GISAP Goals.</p> <p>I do take some comfort in the fact that expanding morning and evening sailings will likely be expensive. But living in a world where the only values weighed are economic is nonetheless disheartening, particularly where people struggled long and hard to get the GISAP articulated and adopted and literally took to the streets to protest a previous such expansion.</p> <p>CONCLUSION</p> <p>In sum, I believe that respect for the GIPAC Goals, the values expressed there, and the limits inherent in respecting those things counsels strongly against adding morning and evening sailings. The surveys inadvertently discourage expressing opposition to such additions, and using money as the only relevant value is an unworthy disservice. I see great risk of, and no value in, moving the island toward serving as a bedroom suburb or encouraging induced demand with an expanded sailing schedule. We should first evaluate the impact of a bigger boat before we entertain amplifying that impact with an expanded morning and evening sailing schedule.</p> <p>Thank you again for your work. This comment is critical of parts of your work, but I want to say again that I appreciate and applaud the overall undertaking. And again, please know this message is my own and is neither endorsed nor opposed by the Guemes Island Ferry Committee.</p>	

Date Received	Commenter	Comment	Summary Notes
Jun 12, 2019	Ed McNamee	<p>In regards to your survey, I will touch on just one subject as not to blur the priority with other subjects. I will just keep dwelling on the same subject that that I have been bringing up every year for at least a half dozen years.</p> <p>The math is simple with my proposal that a wireless remote control for the Guemes Island bridge would increase efficiency with the current schedule.</p> <p>Reasons Why</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Every time the Guemes bridge is adjusted time is compromised from the schedule. ▪ Much of this adjustment could be accomplished during the ferry's approach remotely from the deck before the ferry touches the wing walls. ▪ A huge improvement in safety would be realized by eliminating the need for the crew to climb the ladder during the first and last run. ▪ Dramatically reducing Skagit County's liability in comparison to the associated risk currently requiring crew members climb these antiquated slippery ladders which are outdated in comparison to the industry standards. <p>Thanks Ed</p>	<p>Commenter suggests wireless remote control of the Guemes Island Bridge to improve efficiency</p>
Jul 18, 2019	Mary Parker-Hale	<p>Hello.</p> <p>I live full-time on Guemes and I am a regular ferry user. Below are my thoughts from the July 17, 2019 meeting at the Guemes Island Community Hall.</p> <p>Firstly, the goals of any ferry improvements should be consistent with the GI Sub-Area Plan adopted in January 2011, i.e. to conserve ground water resources, rural character, and sense of community. I'm afraid that if we get too wrapped up in making everything too high tech and too regimented, we will lose the current experience of riding a friendly, rural ferry system. To become like the WSDOT ferry system is not necessarily a good thing. I know this because I have ridden that system most of my life and that's a banal experience.</p> <p>SUGGESTIONS:</p> <p>Ferry schedule:</p>	<p>Commenter suggests several specific improvements that would maintain rural character.</p>

Date Received	Commenter	Comment	Summary Notes
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The schedule says the word “approximately” in several places. Suggest highlighting this word so riders know that while the Skagit Ferry System does it’s best to maintain the schedule, due to unforeseen circumstances (weather, traffic volumes, etc) it cannot guarantee exact departure times. I feel that folks need to mellow out a bit and realize we’re on “Island Time.” ▪ It would be nice to add a permanent mid-day ferry run, however I do not see how that would be possible without adding a second crew and thereby increasing our costs. ▪ Consider adding a later run on special holidays like the Fourth of July. <p>Ticketing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Introduce online ticket pre-purchases, however also have a way for folks to continue to pay with cash. Set up a kiosk that accepts both cash & credit cards in addition to making the online pre-purchase option. ▪ Consider incentivizing commercial companies with heavy long loads to charter/reserve the San Juan Enterprise barge to make their crossings. This would allow more regular passenger vehicles to fit onto the ferry (less frustration) and cause less “wear and tear” to the ferry. <p>Fare Structure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Should have most favorable fares for passengers and bicyclists and least favorable for passenger vehicles. Continue charging more for longer passenger vehicles. ▪ Introduce an additional surplus charge for commercial vehicles according to its Class Size ▪ Simplifying the fare structure categories makes sense. <p>Queueing & Loading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create a designated queue line for walk-on passengers and bicyclists so no one gets missed when collecting tickets. ▪ Provide better signage for ticketing and also instructions for how to pay. <p>Parking Issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parking should continue to be free for 72 hours on both sides! 	

Date Received	Commenter	Comment	Summary Notes
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Given that peak times are identifiable, it seems you could use this data to justify adding a small shuttle to/from ferry as a way of reduce parking congestion. ▪ Encourage carpooling. ▪ There should be a few more designated handicap parking spaces in the lower lot. ▪ I strongly prefer a non-permeable parking lot surface. <p>Finally, I wonder if the owners of the property located to the west of the Guemes Island parking lot would be willing to sell a portion of their land to the Skagit County Ferry System? If so, I think that may allow greater flexibility for accommodating future parking needs and system improvements.</p> <p>Thank you.</p> <p>Mary Hale</p>	
Aug 28, 2019	Jacqueline Trevillion	<p>Additional morning/evening runs. Emphatically, I say no. They would open us up to bedroom community development; destroying the character of guemes. In- convenience is essential!</p>	<p>Commenter opposes additional morning/evening runs.</p>
Sep 9, 2019	William Rainwater	<p>I think the passenger fares should increased to half of the car fares. They are not paying their share of the ferry costs. Without a ferry they could not live on guemes.</p>	<p>Commenter suggests increasing passenger fares to half of vehicle fares.</p>
Jul 12, 2019	Kal Brauner	<p>Captain Rowe,</p> <p>We currently have a PEAK 10-Trip Vehicle Convenience Punch Card that “expires upon next fare adjustment (no refund).” We purchase these and the NON-PEAK variation for the convenience of both ourselves and the ferry’s crew. However, we don’t use them too often -- it takes us about 1.5 years to exhaust them.</p> <p>Bottom-line: Do you see any fare increases in the next 1-1/2 to 2 years? I am always bothered by the “no refund” policy. We could always use cash, but it is more convenient for everyone not to do so.</p> <p>Thank you,</p> <p>Kal Brauner</p>	<p>Commenter expressed confusion with wording around expiration of 10-ride passes and asked about future fare increases.</p>

Date Received	Commenter	Comment	Summary Notes
Aug 11, 2019	Ginger Orsini	<p>I am a full-time resident on the island, and have been for the past 30 years. I have a couple of comments that pertain to issues the Berk study is covering, so please make sure these comments are directed to them.</p> <p>1. A suggestion for reducing the amount of FARE CATEGORIES: Eliminate the “motorcycle & senior/disabled rider”, and the “20 trip motorcycle & senior/disabled rider” categories. There is no such thing as a disabled motorcycle rider. Seniors must often take a car on the ferry because of lowered abilities and income. But they will not take a motorcycle unless they are trying to reduce carbon impact or have fun, even if they are 75. Motorcycles already receive a discount based on the size of their vehicle, that should be enough. I also imagine that this category is rarely used.</p> <p>2. The ferry SCHEDULE: Please DO NOT attempt to expand the hours of ferry operation, either in the morning, or evening. This will create a situation where Guemes becomes more like a bedroom community than a rural island. People who move to the Island and are still working off the island should be prepared to function within the normal boundaries that the ferry schedule imposes. To expand the parameters of the ferry schedule will also contradict the main goals of the sub-area plan: 1. To conserve the groundwater, 2, to preserve the rural character of the island, and 3. To preserve the sense of community. You have already seen that there is little appetite for expanding the schedule except for the mid-day runs. Also, if you attempt to expand the morning or evening times, you run the risk of opening a huge can of worms, that will raise old animosities, and probably be settled by someone who doesn’t even really care about any of us.</p> <p>Personally I would like to see the weekday afternoon and evening schedule changed so that the big gaps close up, particularly between 6:45-8:00, and the ferry comes to rest around 7:30 or 8:00. Say 6:15, 7:00, and 7:30. Then the islanders, and the crew all get to go home to eat!</p> <p>With people already expecting late weekday ferries, I understand that cutting them off earlier, would be a huge debate. The one place where the schedule can be altered is to allow for more movement in the middle of the day by scheduling a second 11:15 run, or to use a consistent guideline of running the 11:15 boat until all the cars are cleared from either side. Try to see if maintenance and fueling can be accomplished at a different time, and have the crew eat in shifts.</p>	<p>Commenter wants to maintain rural character of Guemes and opposes additional morning/evening runs. Commenter suggests specific fare categories to eliminate.</p>

Date Received	Commenter	Comment	Summary Notes
		<p>Thank you for considering these ideas.</p> <p>Ginger Orsini</p>	
Jul 25, 2019	Sharyn Richmond	<p>One comment I would like to add is that there's a high amount of interest in an earlier ferry in the mornings.</p> <p>The 6:30 am Guemes Ferry time doesn't allow an islander to leave Guemes and ARRIVE at a decent paying place of employment to survive this high economic area in Anacortes.</p> <p>The fact is that there are a lot of young families leaving based on high Real Estate and high rent. ASD103 is suffering too.</p> <p>If one could leave Island much earlier than 6:30 am, one could find a higher wage of employment to survive these constant increases of our economy.</p> <p>Please consider an earlier ferry than 6:30 am like 5:30 or 5:45. It would be most beneficial and helpful for everyone who lives in the area to continue to survive and keep families here with all of us.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>	<p>Commenter requests earlier morning ferry to allow for commute to higher-paying jobs to afford high cost of real estate.</p>
Jul 25, 2019	Tom Jeffcott	<p>In my view the foremost consideration should be in maintaining the rural character of Guemes Island.</p> <p>Planning decisions that adversely impact rural character include increased access by extending ferry sailing times, zoning changes that allow more housing density, zoning appeals, potable water requirements, septic system requirements, and more that are outlined in the Guemes sub area plan.</p> <p>The allure that island living seems to exude will no longer exist if if good decisions aren't taken in the planning process.</p> <p>Comments submitted to previous surveys indicate to me that many were focused on day to day operations as opposed to a holistic view of quality of life in a unique community. Opinions as to a three man vs four man crew, extended or continuous operation hours , lunch breaks or none, etc are always up for discussion. Once the quality of life and rural character are diminished it can't be put back in the bottle.</p> <p>Tom Jeffcott</p>	<p>Commenter supports maintaining rural character of Guemes Island.</p>