



GUEMES ISLAND FERRY NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2026



Your Pier-Side Maintenance Guide

The pier-side maintenance period is quickly approaching! This month's newsletter is all about preparing riders for the upcoming vehicle ferry outage, and information about repairs and maintenance work to be completed this May.

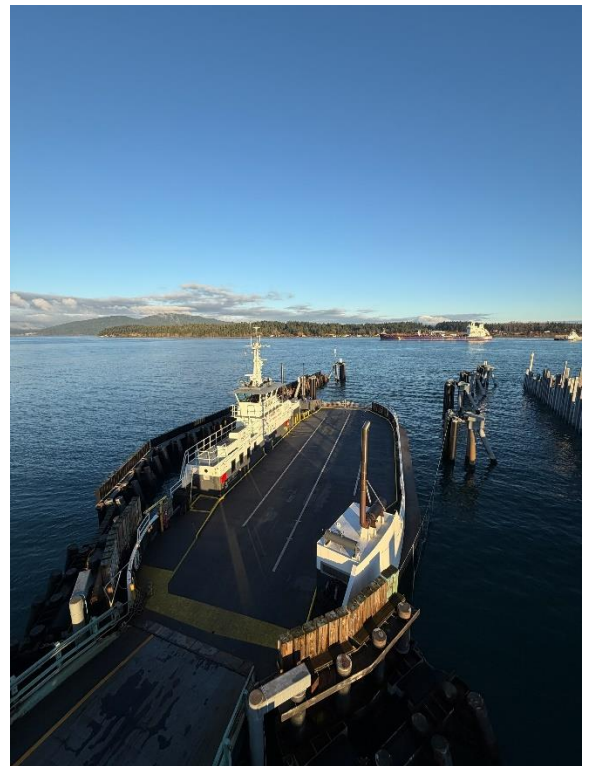
[Peak Season Starts May 20th](#)

The ferry will be out of service for pier-side maintenance from May 4 – 17 and returning to normal service on May 18. As a reminder, peak season starts on May 20. Nonpeak tickets cannot be used from May 20 through September 30. Peak season tickets will be available to purchase, along with nonpeak tickets, starting May 6, 2026.

[2026 Ferry Fare Schedule Update – Public Hearing Scheduled](#)

The County Commissioners adopted the 2026 fare schedule via [Resolution #R20250259](#), which went into effect on January 1, 2026. The Commissioners and staff identified an error in the oversized vehicles calculations during the adoption process. A public hearing will be held for consideration of an updated fare schedule correcting the error.

The public hearing has been scheduled for **Monday, April 20th**, at 1:30 p.m. in the Commissioners' Hearing Room at 1800 Continental Place, Mount Vernon. The public can also join the meeting via Zoom at the link on the [Commissioners' website](#) or by watching on TV21. The proposed adjusted fares schedule has been published on our website and written comments on the proposal can be sent to ferrycomments@co.skagit.wa.us.



Upcoming Bridge Span Maintenance and Schedule Impacts

Next week, crews will be replacing the pendant that operates the Guemes Island bridge span. Because this work must be done while the vessel is at the dock, we may need to delay or cancel the 1:00 p.m. sailing on Tuesday, April 21, and Wednesday, April 22.

The following week, we will complete the same work on the Anacortes bridge span. For that reason, the 1:00 p.m. sailing on Tuesday, April 28, and Wednesday, April 29, may also be delayed or canceled.

Once we see how long the work takes on the Guemes side, we'll have a better idea of what to expect in Anacortes. We will keep riders updated through email and text notifications.

During this work, the bridge spans will be temporarily out of service while the pendant is being replaced. Performing this work during regular operating hours helps reduce costs for the ferry division.



Chief Engineer Joe Greene evaluating the Anacortes bridge span

Pier-Side Maintenance Guide



Ferry Captain Van Bowling with Engine No. 1

Pier-Side Maintenance Scheduled for May 4 - 17, 2026

The vehicle ferry will be out of service Monday, May 4th, through Sunday, May 17th. The last car ferry run before going out of service will be at 8:00 p.m. on Sunday, May 3rd. Passenger-only service will be provided by Arrow Launch beginning May 4th, at 6:30 a.m., and will operate on the ferry's regular non-peak sailing schedule.

Since August 2025, we have included announcements about the upcoming pier-side maintenance for the M/V Guemes this spring and it was discussed during the virtual community meeting on January 28, 2026.

Pier-side maintenance means the work will be completed while the vessel remains in the water, but the impact of this maintenance period is similar to when the ferry is out of service for a "haul-out" or "drydock" period. The work on the vessel will be performed at the contractor's facility but will not require the vessel to be drydocked.

No Bus Service During Pier-Side Maintenance

Skagit County and Skagit Transit discussed transportation options for Guemes Island during the scheduled pier-side ferry maintenance period in May. Following a review of this year's ferry maintenance

period, Skagit Transit determined it cannot support operating a temporary shuttle due to fleet availability and island infrastructure constraints.

Pier-Side Frequently Asked Questions

1. Where do I catch the passenger-only boat?

You'll catch the passenger-only boat at the same Ferry Dock location – 500 I Avenue, Anacortes. Passenger-only service will be provided by Arrow Launch. The 49-passenger vessel, Strait Arrow, will operate on a first-come, first-served basis, and will run on the non-peak Guemes Island Ferry schedule; reservations are not accepted.

2. Is there a charge for the passenger-only service?

Yes. The fares will be charged in accordance with the ferry's non-peak fare schedule which can be found at skagitcounty.net/ferry. Tickets can be purchased online, via the ferry app, or at the kiosk in the ferry terminal lobby. The ferry will transition to peak season on May 20, following the return of the car ferry service. For those wishing to pre-purchase for the peak season, peak season tickets will go on sale May 6. As a reminder, all tickets purchased in 2026 will be valid through 12/31/2026.

3. What is the sailing schedule for passenger-only service?

The ferry will operate on its non-peak sailing schedule: Monday through Thursday, 6:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 6:30 a.m. to 11 p.m.; and Sunday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. The schedule is available online at skagitcounty.net/ferry.

4. Can I bring my bicycle or motorcycle onboard the passenger boat?

The passenger-only boat can accommodate bicycles. Small motorbikes and motorcycles will be allowed on a space-available basis at the captain's discretion.

5. Can I bring gasoline or propane containers on the passenger boat?

Portable containers of gasoline and propane, even if they are empty, are not allowed to be carried on the passenger-only boat. There will be no regularly scheduled HAZMAT runs during the pier-side maintenance period.

6. What if I need to get my vehicle on or off the Island during the ferry shut down?

If you need to transport a vehicle between Anacortes and Guemes Island during the ferry pier-side maintenance, you will need to make your own arrangements. Two local companies that may be able to assist are Island Transport and San Juan Marine Freight Company.

7. What should I do if there is an emergency?

If you have an emergency, dial 911 right away. For more information on emergency services, please contact your local fire department.

8. If I want to talk to someone about the ferry outage, who do I contact?

Please contact Rachel Rowe, Ferry Operations Division Manager

Email: ferrycomments@co.skagit.wa.us

Phone: (360) 416-1466

Pier-Side Maintenance Work Items

Stabbert Marine Services in Anacortes has been contracted to complete a series of required pier-side maintenance items on the vessel. These tasks address U.S. Coast Guard compliance and routine upkeep that cannot be performed during normal operations. Below is a summary of the work being completed by Stabbert Marine, MER Equipment, and the Skagit County Chief Engineer and Captains.

Work Items Completed by Stabbert Marine

1. Car Deck Steel Renewal

Completing USCG-mandated steel replacement on the car deck. This work must be finished by May 31, 2026, to maintain compliance.

2. Opening and Cleaning All Below-Deck Void Spaces

Includes gas-freeing, inspection access, and removal of accumulated scale and debris to ensure structural integrity.

3. Re-Coating Apron Slide Areas

Abrasive prep and application of a high-durability coating system to reduce address wear on apron contact surfaces.



Apron Slide Area (front of car deck) to be re-coated

4. Painting Inboard Bulwarks

Surface prep and coating to prevent corrosion and maintain integrity.

5. Replacement of All Fire Pumps

Installing two hydraulic pumps and one electric pump, maintaining full redundancy to the firemain system.



Inboard bulwarks are the “walls” pictured here around the car deck which will be repainted



Ferry Auxiliary Generator

Work Performed by MER Equipment (Auxiliary Generator)

1. Service the generator

Full inspection and 3,000-hour service, including replacement of pumps, filters, and hoses as necessary to maintain operating condition.

2. Load Bank Testing

Running the generator under controlled load to burn off carbon buildup in the exhaust stack.

Work Items Completed by Skagit County Chief Engineer and Captains

1. Installation of New Electrical Cabling for Transmission Clutch Solenoids

Replacing aging wiring and conductors to improve reliability of clutch engagement.

2. Cooling System Service

Adding new level sensors and drain valves to improve monitoring and simplify future maintenance.

3. Hydraulic System Service

Changing hydraulic oil and addressing minor leaks. Routine leak checks are performed weekly, but this is a full-system service.

4. Vessel-Wide Electrical Inspection

Verifying integrity of electrical connections and relocating select switches for improved accessibility and safety.

5. Pilot House Steering System Upgrades

- Installing new steering control levers and updated steering indicators
- Rewiring steering console switches to improve reliability and reduce electrical noise



Public Works Director Mike See, Commissioner Joe Burns, Chief Engineer Joe Greene, and Captain Van Bowling in the pilot house

6. Inspection of All Outdrive Brackets

Checking for corrosion, cracking, and fastener integrity.

7. Underwater Propeller Inspection

Using an underwater camera to assess condition without hauling the vessel.

8. Main Engine Top-End Inspection and Service

Resetting valve lash and injector timing, completing the 5,000-hour service interval for both main engines.

9. Rebuild of the No. 2 Engine Fuel Manifold

Restoring proper fuel distribution and eliminating minor seepage.

10. Battery Replacement

Installing new starting batteries in the machinery spaces and new battery banks in the fidley for pilot house navigation electronics.

11. Replacement of Flame Screens

Installing new flame arrestor screens on fuel, ballast, and void vent piping to maintain compliance and safety.

12. Man Overboard (MOB) Davit Service

Replacing the winch and other worn components and recoating the swing arm and stanchion to ensure reliable operation during emergency recovery.



Ferry Main Engine



Man Overboard Davit (Yellow Arm)

Ferry Replacement Project

Temporary Technical Advisory Group (TAG) Report

The TAG is obligated to provide a final report with recommendations on the replacement or refurbishment of the Guemes Island ferry to the Board of County Commissioners by August 31, 2026.

The group held its sixth meeting in April to continue reviewing the matrix of propulsion options for recommendation to the County Commissioners. Meeting materials and summaries will be available on the [TAG website](#).

The TAG will begin to develop and finalize its recommendation in its final report the Commissioners over the next three months. A televised presentation to the County Commissioners on the TAG recommendations has been tentatively scheduled for July 7th at 8:30 a.m. in the Commissioners' Hearing Room.

Value Engineering

Skagit County has selected AECOM to conduct an independent Value Engineering / Risk Assessment (VERA) study focused on the ferry's propulsion system and shoreside charging infrastructure. AECOM will perform the study following Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Value Engineering guidelines and methodology for conducting a Value Engineering / Risk Assessment (VERA) study. They will partner with Elliott Bay Design Group to provide independent ferry expertise.

The VERA study will focus on opportunities to reduce project costs, evaluate alternative technologies and configurations, identify and develop response strategies to projects risks, and confirm whether the current design approach remains the most appropriate for advancing the Guemes Island Ferry Replacement Project.

As a reminder, the TAG is not involved in this process. The VERA study will be completed by the end of May 2026. The total contract amount is \$230,893 and is funded by Move Ahead Washington (MAWA), which is sourced from the Climate Commitment Act. The CCA supports Washington's climate action efforts by putting cap-and-invest dollars to work reducing climate pollution, creating jobs, and improving public health. Information about the CCA is available at www.climate.wa.gov.

FTA Grant Announcements

The Federal Transit Administration has released three separate funding opportunities for 2026 which support ferry service nationwide. We have received a few emails from helpful islanders with information about these grants and we greatly appreciate your interest in financially supporting the Ferry Division!

Skagit County Public Works evaluated the requirements and eligibility for these grants and unfortunately, Skagit County is not eligible for these grants. Below are the three separate grants announced this month, and why we are not eligible to apply for the funding.

1. Passenger Ferry Program

\$105 million awarded competitively for any purpose eligible under 49 U.S.C. 5307(h) for capital projects to support passenger ferry systems in urbanized areas, such as ferry vessels, terminals, and related infrastructure. 49 U.S.C. 5307 provides federal funding to states and local recipients for transit capital and operating assistance and transportation-related planning in urbanized areas.

While vehicle ferries are eligible for this grant, Skagit County is not eligible to apply because we serve too small of a community for this program. To be eligible the ferry system must serve an urbanized area of at least 50,000 people.

2. Ferry Service for Rural Communities Program

\$454 million awarded competitively for any purpose eligible under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), for capital, planning, and operating assistance to ensure basic essential ferry service is provided to rural areas. Eligible ferry systems must have operated a regular schedule at

any time during the five-year period ending March 1, 2020, and have served not less than two rural areas located more than 50 sailing miles apart.

Skagit County is not eligible because it does not serve at least two rural areas located more than 50 miles apart. The Ferry Division only provides service to one location, Guemes Island.

3. Electric or Low-Emitting Ferry Pilot Program

\$98 million awarded competitively for any purpose eligible under section 71102 of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), for the purchase of electric or low-emitting ferries and the electrification or other reduction of emissions from existing ferries.

Eligible recipients for the Passenger Ferry Program and Ferry Service for Rural Communities Program may apply for this grant. Skagit County is not eligible for either of these programs, and as such is not eligible for the Electric or Low-Emitting Ferry Pilot Program.

[Contact Information for Customer Support and Services](#)

Guemes Island Ferry Business Office

500 I Avenue, Anacortes, WA 98221

Phone: (360) 416-1466

Email: ferrycomments@co.skagit.wa.us

Website: www.skagitcounty.net/ferry

The ferry business office is open Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Please note, our phone number has recently changed. If you call our business office outside business hours, or if there is no answer during business hours, please leave us a voicemail. We return voicemails by the next business day.

Feedback? We'd love to hear from you!

If you have thoughts, ideas, or feedback on our monthly newsletter, Jenn Rogers, Communications and Engagement Manager, would love to hear from you! You can e-mail her at jrogers@co.skagit.wa.us