



GUEMES ISLAND FERRY NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2025



It's less than two weeks until Turkey Day!

November is upon us, which means daylight savings time has ended and we're in the dark days for the next few months. Thankfully we have some holiday cheer to look forward to soon! The Skagit County ferry division hopes you all have a wonderful Thanksgiving with your friends and family.

[Thanksgiving Sailing Schedule](#)

On Thursday, November 27, the ferry will be in service on a holiday sailing schedule. This means we will operate on the Saturday schedule, with the last run departing Anacortes at 10:00 p.m. Please note, county offices, including the ferry business office, will be closed November 27 and 28 in observance of the holiday.

[Annual Community Meeting](#)

We are hosting a virtual community meeting on Monday, December 15th, at 6:00 p.m. over Zoom to share a few updates about the ferry along with projects and maintenance periods scheduled for 2026. We will send out an email notice, and post on the website, with more details on how to join after Thanksgiving. We are looking forward to hearing from you all soon!

Employee Spotlight: Meet Public Works Director, Mike See!



This past April Skagit County announced Mike See as the new Public Works Director. Mike was previously the Assistant Public Works Director and has worked for Skagit County for over twenty years within the Parks and Recreation Department and the Public Works natural resources division.

Mike started his career with the County as the Park Ranger / Manager for Howard Miller Steelhead Park under the Parks and Recreation Department. He then transitioned over to the

Public Works Department, moving through several positions in the natural resources division, managing watershed, stormwater, and water resource issues, before ultimately becoming the natural resources division manager in 2018. Mike has also worked extensively in the community as an emergency medical technician, firefighter, and park law enforcement.

Mike graduated from Washington State University with a Bachelor of Science in Natural Resource Management. He enjoys spending time outdoors camping, hiking, and backpacking with his family, including three children. He is also an active volunteer firefighter with District #3 in Conway and Assistant Scout Master for Troup 4001 in Mount Vernon.

Mike has been excited to work with our ferry division since his appointment as Public Works Director. As one of the few counties in Washington state managing a ferry system, the chance to work with the Guemes Island ferry crew has brought unique challenges and opportunities. His background in conservation management and emergency response has been a helpful perspective when working to support the island community and building towards a more sustainable ferry vessel.

Mike will be attending the community meeting next month, and he's excited to hear more from Guemes Island residents on how we can keep improving the ferry experience.

2026 Fare Schedule Adopted

The County Commissioners have adopted [Resolution #R20250259](#) to establish the 2026 ferry fare schedule. The new fares will go into effect starting January 1, 2026. Please remember, all tickets purchased in 2025 will expire after December 31, 2025.

The 2026 fare schedule includes an average 30% increase on most fares to meet the 55% farebox recovery target in 2026. On July 27, 2023, the Skagit County Commissioners adopted Resolution [#20230152](#), which sets the ferry fare revenue target methodology, including the formula used to calculate fares each year. The County Commissioners stated they intend to reach a 65% fare box recovery target by December 31, 2028, which requires ferry fares to increase steadily from 2023 through 2028 to reach that target.

As part of a fare study in 2023, the Commissioners prioritized an equitable fare rate schedule to ensure fares are consistent with equivalent ferry systems and that fare revenue pays for a sufficient portion of the ferry operational costs. From 2015 to 2023, fares remained flat, while expenses for the ferry rose sharply, which has required the ferry division to rely on the road fund to absorb the remaining costs. In 2015, the ferry division required an additional \$1.1M from the road fund. The 2026 road fund allocation is expected to be \$2.7M.

The Commissioners recognize it is not financially viable to substantially rely on the road fund each year for the ferry division, as it takes significant resources away from roads, bridges, and culvert projects which are in dire need of repair or replacement. The expected fare increases from 2023 to 2028 to reach a 65% farebox recovery will help balance the sources of revenue for the ferry division between users of the ferry and the road fund.

The Commissioners and ferry division shared the documents below for the public review process of the new fare schedule. A work session and televised presentation to review the materials were held on September 9th and September 16th, and a public hearing was held on October 21st. The Commissioners accepted written public comment on the proposal from August 15th through the conclusion of the public hearing on October 21st. The ferry division received 33 written comments and a memo summarizing departmental responses is available on our [website](#).

The following materials are available on the ferry [website](#) for public review:

- [2026 fare schedule public comments response memo 10.28.2025](#)
- [Proposed resolution adopting the 2026 ferry fare schedule.](#)
- [Proposed resolution to provide a method to convert paper punch cards sold during COVID without expiration.](#)
- [2025 Ferry Fare Revenue Target Report](#) (Updated 10/1/25)
 - 2026 Ferry Fare Proposal is included in this report.
- 2024 Ferry [Expenditure](#) and [Revenue](#) Reports
- 2025 (Jan. 1 through June 30, 2025) [Budget Monitoring Report](#)
- [2024 Ferry Budget Monitoring Report](#)

Conversion of Non-Expiry COVID Punch Cards

The County Commissioners also adopted [Resolution #R20250260](#) this week to establish a method for riders with non-expiry COVID punch cards to convert the remaining rides to the electronic ticketing system. Riders with these tickets may continue using the paper punch cards through the end of 2025; however, these must be converted to the electronic ticketing system to keep using the remaining rides after December 31, 2025.

Appointments will be required to convert rides to the e-ticketing system. Appointments will be available starting December 1, 2025. Please see more information below on what you need to know:

Conversion Process

- Non-expiry paper punch cards are fully transferable through December 31, 2026.
 - If you transfer your paper punch card, be aware it will need to be converted to e-tickets to be used after January 1, 2026.
 - You do not have to be the original purchaser of the paper punch card to request conversion.
- Converted e-tickets will remain non-expiry and will be fully transferrable until used.
- Converted e-tickets will be issued to your app, via text, and email. Printed QR codes will only be available on request.
- Deadline: All non-expiry paper punch cards must be converted by December 31, 2026.
 - After this date, all unconverted rides will be forfeited.

- Conversions will be on ride-for-ride basis; for example, if you have 10 remaining rides on a non-expiry paper punch card, you will be issued a multi-ride e-ticket for 10 rides with no expiration date.
 - Peak and non-peak paper punch cards will be treated equally such that converted e-tickets can be used year-round regardless of season.
 - Unused vehicle rides will only be converted to vehicle e-tickets and unused passenger rides to passenger e-tickets, etc.
 - Monetary refunds will not be issued.

Appointments

- Appointments required: Call (360) 416-1466 or email ferrycomments@co.skagit.wa.us.
- Hours: Monday–Thursday, 8:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m. (excluding holidays/county closure days).
- Start date: Appointments begin December 1, 2025.
- Location: Anacortes Ferry Terminal, 500 I Avenue, Anacortes, WA 98221.
 - In-person only: You must bring and surrender your punch cards at the appointment.
 - Conversion cannot be done virtually, by phone, or at the Mount Vernon Continental Administration office.

Ferry Replacement Project Update

The County Commissioners have [nominated](#) nine members to the Ferry Technical Advisory Group (TAG). Those nominees are: Adam Paull, Allen Bush, Becca Fong, Corey Joyce, Jonah Petrick, Paul Bieker, Ryan Monaham, Sandy McKean, and Tom Fouts. We would like to share a sincere thank you for their willingness to serve on the TAG, and support of the ferry replacement project.

The first TAG meeting will be on Monday, November 17th, at 6:00 p.m. at the Anacortes Library. These meetings are open to the public, but there will be no opportunity for general public comment at this meeting. Agendas, memos, preparation materials, and other notes will be posted to the ferry replacement project [website](#) for each TAG meeting.

The ferry division is still working on a request for qualifications (RFQ) to conduct a value engineering assessment of the current all-electric vessel design and bid package to evaluate how to best reduce the cost of the vessel to meet our available budget. When the RFQ is released, we will send out a press release.

For more information on the TAG, including the charter and authorizing resolutions, please visit our [website](#).



Maintenance Updates



Outdrive Repair Effort

The ferry outdrive was removed from the vessel following the loss of its propeller in January 2025 and is still undergoing an overhaul. While this was originally part of routine maintenance, additional repairs were needed, including replacement of the corroded propeller shaft and a full rebuild of the lower unit.

A new propeller has been delivered to Skagit County. In the next couple of weeks, the propeller will be shipped for final assembly and testing of the outdrive. All related costs will be submitted to the insurance company for reimbursement.

As shown in the photo, corrosion on the propeller shaft was significant enough to require full replacement.

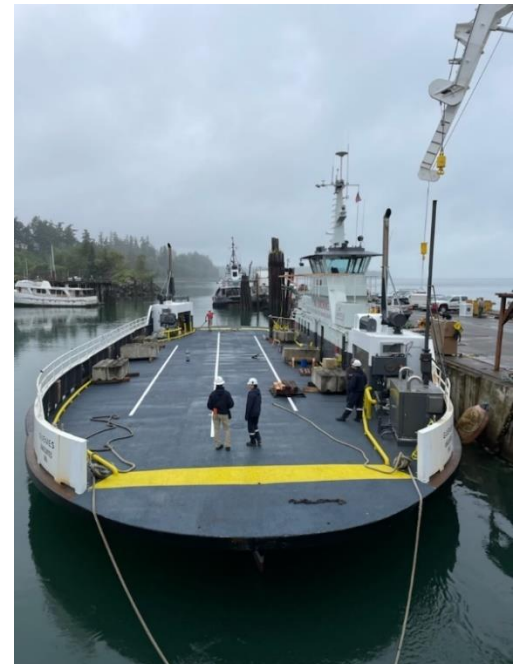
Outdrives on the ferry have been in service for over 35 years and are maintained with great care to ensure safe and reliable operation. However, some steering system components on the ferry are becoming outdated and increasingly difficult to source. Joe, Chief Engineer, is actively exploring modernization options to extend the life of these systems. Full replacement of the outdrives would cost well over \$1 million, which is not feasible within our current budget.

Additional maintenance period next spring

Please be advised, the Ferry Division is planning to have a pier-side maintenance period in spring of 2026. The Contractor has not yet been selected, so exact dates are unknown at this time. We estimate the work will take place sometime between late February and Memorial Day. Pier-side maintenance means the vessel will still be in the water, at the Contractor's facility, while the work is completed. **The work will not require the vessel to drydock.**

The U.S. Coast Guard is requiring the County to replace four small sections of steel on the vessel deck forward of the car deck. This was called out during the 2025 drydock; however, if done at that time, the ferry's return would have been delayed even further. Other maintenance items will be addressed during this time as well, including a full replacement of wiring connected to the engines that caused a shutdown in June of this year.

Given the vessel's age, there are times when annual maintenance periods are beneficial, and doing this work in 2026 should reduce the amount of time out of service for the next required drydock in spring of 2027.



The ferry division is also planning a project to replace the flaps on the aprons on both Anacortes and Guemes bridges. This work may or may not take place at the same time and is expected to take 3 days total. It may require a partial day shutdown of passenger-only service for the work on the Guemes side. For the work on the Anacortes side, passenger-only service can run between Cap Sante and Guemes. More information on that project will be coming soon.

We will have more information on the specific dates of the maintenance period once we have selected a vendor (estimated selection is January 2026) to conduct the maintenance work. As soon as we have more information on schedule and details for passenger-only service, we will share them.

Feedback? We'd love to hear from you!

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