

September 23, 2022

Governor Jay Inslee
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Dear Governor Inslee:

The Kitsap Economic Development Alliance (KEDA) strongly supports a proposal by Bremerton Mayor, Greg Wheeler, and the board of Kitsap Transit for temporary expansion of Kitsap Transit passenger-only ferry service on the current Washington State Ferry (WSF) Bremerton-Seattle route.

Kitsap's dependence on the ferry system impacts our residents, commuters, trade, and visitors. Waiting on the ferry is an accepted reality of living and doing business in Kitsap, but recent WSF service cuts due to a lack of workers, increased retirements, vessel maintenance, among other issues have created a chokehold on ferry travel.

Reduced WSF capacity significantly impacts all Kitsap communities, and the Bremerton route has felt the greatest deficit. The Bremerton ferry one-boat service creates hours-long gaps between sailings, which is expected to continue until at least 2023. Hundreds of thousands of passengers that depend on a stable and reliable WSF Bremerton marine highway are encountering serious hardship and financial impacts due to reduced service levels. This situation acutely impacts Bremerton's low-income and traditionally underserved citizens who have fewer transportation and employment opportunities.


Increased state funding for Kitsap Transit's passenger-only ferry (POF) sailings on an interim basis to assist WSF with their current Bremerton-Seattle schedule until WSF service can be fully restored would create a solution for those experiencing hardships.

Those hardships impact Bremerton residents who commute to their jobs in health care, construction, equipment repair and other essential employment in the Seattle region. Medical patients are also confronting more travel time and stress to attend appointments or receive treatment. Small businesses still in economic recovery are also experiencing higher costs and lost productivity due to reduced operations on WSF's Bremerton marine highway route.

Reliable ferry service operations are essential to our economy as well as the quality of life of our citizens. Adding temporary Kitsap Transit passenger-only trips would add capacity, improve access, and support the livelihoods of Bremerton citizens and businesses.

We strongly support the solution proposed by the City of Bremerton and Kitsap Transit Board and urge you to advocate for this initiative.

Sincerely,


Joe Morrison
Executive Director | morrison@kitsapeda.org
Kitsap Economic Development Alliance