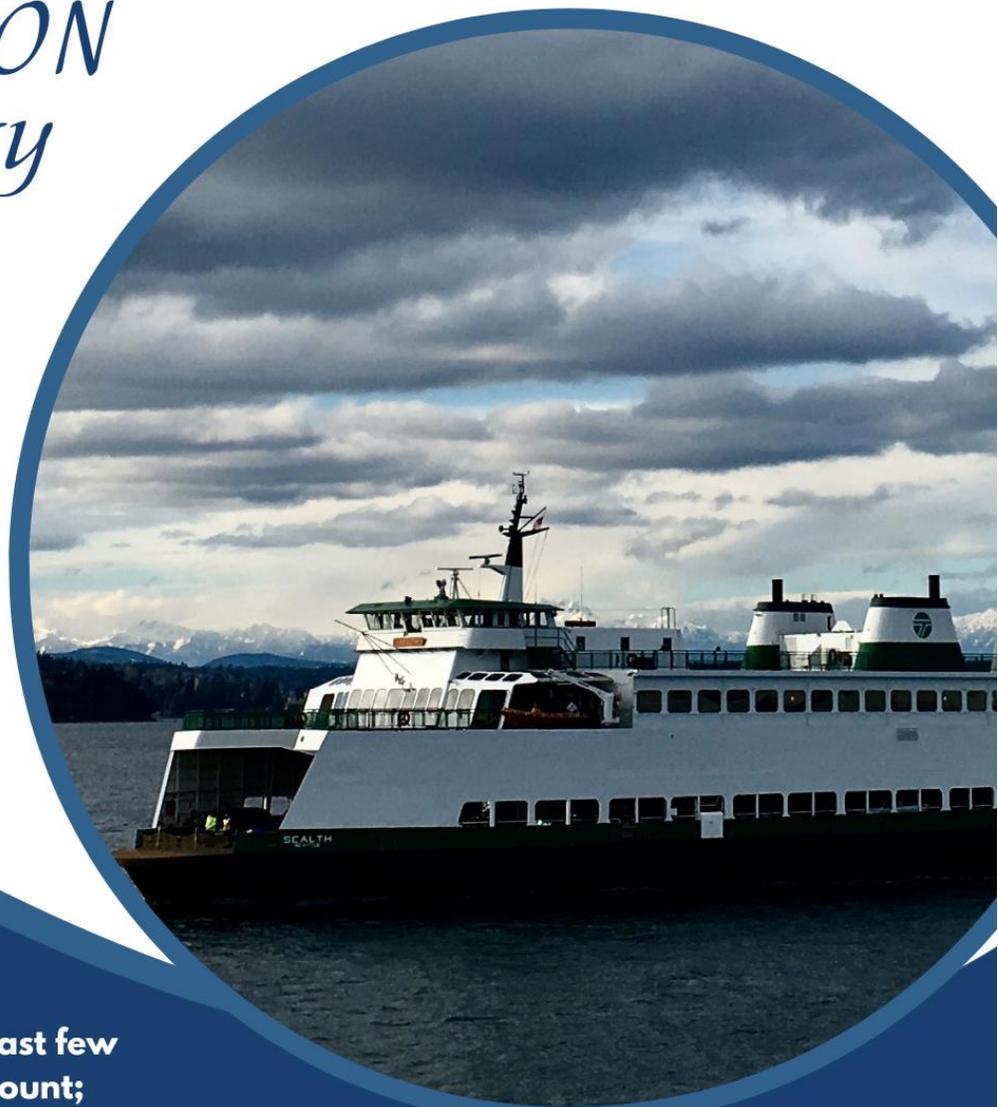


AN ISLAND IN CRISIS FOCUSED ON SOLUTIONS

ISLANDERS FOR FERRY ACTION COMMUNITY REPORT

NOVEMBER, 2023



“WSF has left islanders stranded throughout the system over the past few months more times than we can count; folks who commute to work by walking on/off, or who have medical appointments, people with children and pets, and elderly or infirm families to get home to, etc. They’ve left teens stranded after school. Visitors are stranded from being able to catch flights home. It’s not only untenable, it’s downright dangerous!”

Cheryl R., Vashon resident

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Letter from Islanders for Ferry Action: Vashon Faces a Transportation Crisis

The ferry crisis has been slowly strangling our community for two years now. A small town like ours can only take so much. If we do not find solutions soon, the crisis will devastate the health, livelihoods, and education of thousands.

Every week – sometimes daily – our ferry routes get canceled or delayed with little or no warning. This affects every island resident. But the burden falls disproportionately on our children, the elderly, the chronically ill, small businesses, and people experiencing socioeconomic insecurity.

The impact on public health is particularly alarming:

- Ambulances are delayed getting patients to hospitals or getting back to the island to respond to 911 calls for help.
- Patients miss vital medical treatments such as dialysis, cancer treatments, and cardiac procedures.
- Caregivers and hospice workers who commute to the island can't get to their bedridden and/or terminally ill patients.

The economic impacts are significant, and they're mounting:

- Workers commuting to and from Vashon miss work, put their jobs at risk, and lose wages – often the very workers who can least afford it.
- Businesses lose customers and can't get employees, merchandise, or supplies. 92% of Vashon businesses report moderate to severe impacts from ferry disruptions.
- Tourists stay away rather than risk being abandoned on a dock. We lose their dollars.

We need action now to protect the economic well-being, health, and quality of life of our 11,000 residents. We need immediate, real-world, multi-agency solutions to address the harms people are experiencing. We deserve safe, reliable transportation to and from our businesses and homes.

We stand ready to partner with any agency that will help implement the solutions we have documented in this report. We can't wait years for WSF to build more boats and train more skilled captains, mates and engineers. We, and the millions of other Washington residents and visitors who rely on the Washington State Ferries, need relief now.

All of our access to and from the island depends on maintaining traffic on Vashon's two state highways. You cannot get to and from Vashon without using State Route 161, connecting north Vashon with Fauntleroy and Southworth, or State Route 163, connecting south Vashon with Tacoma.

Sadly, these state highways are in poor condition – severely restricted or even impassable much of the time. Solutions for asphalt road problems are quickly found because the state recognizes the vital economic, education, and public health needs to provide a community with a well-functioning transportation connection. We need that kind of immediate relief for our marine highways.

We have already gathered more than 2,000 community signatures petitioning for action now. We ask for help from our state and local leaders to immediately address our transportation crisis.

Amy Drayer, Vashon Island Chamber of Commerce
Wendy Aman, Vashon Ferry Advisory Committee
Laura Cherry, Dragon's Head Cider
Erin Kieper, Vashon Adventures
Beth Lindsay
Cheryl Lubbert, Nashi Orchards
Rick Wallace, VashonBePrepared

What is Islanders for Ferry Action?

The Vashon Chamber of Commerce convened a working group in September 2023, now called Islanders for Ferry Action (IFA). It's comprised of concerned business owners, parents, and other islanders dedicated to identifying and lobbying for solutions to chronic ferry service disruptions.

IFA recognizes that the causes of the service disruptions are deeply rooted and have been a long time developing. We are committed to working together with islanders not just on Vashon, but with all ferry-served communities who want to participate to discover and implement creative, real-world solutions that will help Washington residents stay on the move.

“We can't rely on the part of the state highway system that serves our community. Please take our solutions offered seriously. Our experience of the issues informs our suggestions.”

Andrea A., Vashon resident

Executive Summary

On Monday, September 18th, over 300 Vashon island residents and residents from other ferry-dependent communities gathered in person and on Zoom to discuss the impacts of ferry disruptions and specific solutions to address those problems. After a short introduction and overview of the WSF Service Restoration Plan and progress to date, the community broke out into constituency-based working groups:

- Schools, Students, and Families
- Public Health and Healthcare
- Business Owners
- Commuters and Visitors
- Current and Former Transportation Employees and Subject Matter Experts

In the following pages, we boil down hundreds of citizen suggestions and summarize the impacts and proposed solutions captured in those conversations. We have also included in this report the input of hundreds of Vashon residents who participated in multiple community meetings, responded to a business survey, and weighed in with their ideas in multiple online forums. We have also incorporated testimonials from some of the 2,000+ community members who have, to date, signed our online petition urging action.

Community members outline impacts that touch every resident and all aspects of life:

- Students and children stranded on docks, and schools facing economic impacts
- Emergency services face alarming delays and gaps in access to the mainland
- Patients receiving ongoing, life-saving procedures or care experience dangerous delays
- Small businesses struggle to survive facing mounting economic impacts
- Commuters lose jobs and wages, wait hours in line daily

We now ask for immediate solutions from WSF, the Legislature, the Governor, King County, and all other supporting agencies. We acknowledge funds have been allocated to build new ferries and train new captains, mates, and engineers. But that relief will take years. We do not have years. The ferry crisis hurts right now.

From Community Input, Core Solution Areas Emerge

- **Prioritize Reliability:** address and reduce last-minute boat cancellations and schedule gaps. Revise schedules to acknowledge real-world conditions so ferries can sail on time.
 - Create an on-call or standby crew for wholly ferry-dependent communities.
 - Increase, expand, and expedite crew recruitment and retention measures.

- Specific to Vashon, consider targeted changes to the current 2-boat schedule, and address large midday gaps in the schedule.
- Expand Public Transit and Alternative Transit Options: We need multi-agency collaboration to expand public transit options.
 - Expanded water taxi service from King and Kitsap counties, to reduce costs and increase access. Offer ferry-coordinated shuttle services to expand transit speed for passengers arriving to the Coleman dock or the Vashon Northend dock.
- Identify Loading and Other Efficiencies to Increase Reliability and Capacity: Faster loading and unloading will in effect increase ferry capacity and reliability by keeping the ferries on schedule.
 - Address multiple problems created by parked cars along Fautleroy Way.
 - Expand the qualifications for and public awareness of medical priority loading. Adopt loading practices that make it easier for those with priority loading to get to the front of the line. Provide priority loading for scheduled medical care.
- Address Economic Impacts and Provide Financial Relief for Ferry-Related Hardships: Until ferry problems have long-term solutions, interim mitigation, including financial relief, is needed for businesses and individuals struggling under these burdens. Solution concepts range from temporary tax reductions to grants to emergency measures to improve access to medical care and other vital needs.

These represent only the core outcomes from multiple solution options that the community has brought forward in direct response to resident needs. The report below outlines dozens of options to help relieve the stress of disruptions. The community is ready to work with any agency that is able to offer relief and assistance, and we ask for help from elected and agency leadership from across the region to address the situation. We cannot solve this crisis alone.

“I have a rare blood cancer called MDS. Every three weeks without fail I must go to Fred Hutch Cancer Center for a day of treatment. My visit involves a team of five medical professionals and rescheduling is extremely difficult for my medical team, not to mention me. And, think of the dozens of other patients who have similar medical challenges. A ferry delay or cancellation is NOT a mere inconvenience. Folks like me need reliable ferries to get the medical care that we must have to stay alive. If we could have all-day water taxi service it would be extremely helpful for people in my position.”

Rich A., Vashon resident

Constituency Impacts and Solutions

After a keynote briefing session, participants in the September community solutions workshop were asked to gather into constituency groups based on ferry crisis impacts – commuters, small businesses, patients who need mainland medical care, and people who have studied the ferry system for years.

We have incorporated problem statements and solutions from many community input sources, but the breakout sessions in September provided the organizational structure for the following detailed constituent views. Each section first describes the problems faced by the constituency group and then provides a list of potential solution concepts.

We acknowledge that some of the solutions will be easier to implement than others. Some will require funding by a county, state, or federal agency. Many will require multi-disciplinary coordinated action by diverse agencies and citizen groups.

As the Islanders for Ferry Action, our objective has been to define the problems and build a menu of solutions – a first step towards action.

“We have no other way to get off of the Island. I understand that it is my choice to live here, but in the 58 years I have been here, this is the worst service I have ever encountered. I'm afraid to drive off of Vashon not knowing when or if I can make it back. I have had multiple surgeries and knowing that reliable ferry service is unheard of, I've had to make reservations at hotels just to make sure I could make it to the hospital on time.”

Melody S., Vashon resident

Public Health in Crisis

Ferries serving Vashon Island have become the weakest link in our healthcare and emergency response chain. Conversations at the September solutions forum, social media, and community gatherings make it clear. Ferry problems have created a public health crisis. Solutions for this issue are top priority because for many of our residents they can be the difference in relieving pain, or even life and death.

Our fire department is our only 24-hour urgent care but ferry cancellations and delays take ambulances out of service for hours, degrading 911 response times. Patients who need chemo, dialysis, prenatal care, and cardiac procedures miss crucial and hard to schedule life-giving care. Many of our healthcare workers and first responders live on the mainland and can't get to their shifts to care for patients. The healthcare-related obstacles created by disruptions in service to ferry-dependent communities are myriad and dangerous to public health.

Some of the most often cited and critical impacts include:

- Vashon Island Fire and Rescue, Vashon's only 24-hour care, is affected in multiple ways.
 - Delays to and from the mainland drive increased overtime hours for responders waiting for boats and drive up costs for the district.
 - Delays and cancellations increase wait times for patients calling 911 by decreasing ambulance availability.
 - Hours-long gaps in service pose serious risks to patient health. Airlift is only available for specific calls and is not a solution if and when boats are not available.
- Canceled appointments often result in weeks or months-long waits to be rescheduled, significantly affecting medical outcomes for islanders. Additionally, it is an added expense for most patients who have to cancel the same day.
- Uncertainty and consistently canceled sailings impacts prenatal care, which is time sensitive. Those with scheduled surgeries or critical appointments must often travel to town a day before to ensure they are there for scheduled procedures.
- Unpredictability of service adds significant burden to late pregnancy by limiting access to necessary and emergency care. Women in late pregnancy are unable to spend weeks living on the mainland in anticipation of delivery, but there is ongoing concern that they will be stranded on-island for several hours when it's time to deliver.
- Disruptions burden most severely the most vulnerable patients who have to travel to the mainland multiple times per week. These patients often don't have the money or capacity to simply move to the mainland.
- Unpredictability and minimal reliability affect healthcare workers traveling to the island, negatively impacting health outcomes for residents. This affects physicians' offices, dental and eye care, hospice workers, and physical and occupational therapists.
- Healthcare workers and first responders who work off island are hampered by limited and canceled sailings that prevent them from getting to work for their shifts. That means

that care teams are often short-staffed, and first responder teams scramble to cover emergency care.

- There is insufficient public awareness about who is eligible and how to get medical priority loading.

Public Health breakout attendees shared several proposed solutions:

- Expand the qualifications for and public awareness of medical priority loading. Adopt loading practices that make it easier for those with priority loading to get to the front of the line.
- Provide priority loading for scheduled medical care.
- Provide accessible shuttle service from Coleman dock to Pill Hill / VA.
- Provide better access to healthcare on-island: access to urgent care, mobile health; expand Sea Mar services.
- Make alerts ongoing and expand the amount of information provided about whether cancellations will be resolved or are unresolvable.
- Conduct outreach to medical providers and patients so they know to advocate for priority loading passes.
- Adopt the pandemic-era concept of essential worker status for healthcare providers to improve on-island medical care capacity. Extend medical priority loading to include healthcare workers, making it easier for patients to get more care on island.
- Fund grants to healthcare workers, using financial incentives to encourage commuting to work at the island's healthcare providers.
- Coordinate more closely with VIFR and Valley Comm dispatch center so ambulance crews know about ferry disruptions immediately and can quickly choose the best terminal and hospital combination off the north or south end.
- Work with specialty medical care providers to improve flexible scheduling practices for Vashon patients, where feasible. Educating a few major providers about the issue (Kaiser, MultiCare, Swedish, etc.) could provide relief for hundreds of patients.
- Provide overnight lodging so essential workers can come over prior to their shift or have a place to stay if ferries are canceled.

“When I was pregnant, I had to miss an entire day of work just to make a 30-minute check-in and that happened on a monthly to bi-weekly basis. Even with preferential medical boarding, I could not be sure of making my appointments because of boat cancellations and delays. I was terrified of what might happen if I went into labor on the island, especially late at night or early in the morning when sailings are often canceled. Like many, the boats are our only way of getting essential medical care and specialists – and working around a broken essential service has put enough strain on my family.”

Gedney B., Vashon resident

Students, Families, Schools at Risk

The constituents voicing their concerns in this section make a collective point: Folks on Vashon Island have no alternative to the state's marine highways, and a ferry disruption goes way beyond mere inconvenience. Our ferries are a fundamental feature of our daily lives. Every time there's a ferry cancellation or major delay, lives get turned upside down.

Disruptions have serious consequences for families, students, and the Vashon School district

- Students commuting on and off the island miss critical instruction time.
- The Vashon School District faces potential losses of millions in revenue and staffing shortages.
- Teachers commuting to and from the island are seriously affected by cancellations and delays.
- Students are at real risk of being stranded and unattended, both on and off the island.
- Parents and caregivers miss work and lose wages responding to disruptions.
- Impacts of ferry disruptions fall disproportionately on those with less; families with more economic resources have better access to ways to adapt and problem solve.

Students Commuting to Vashon

An excerpt from a recent story from King 5 news, aired on September 29th, brings the student commuter problems into stark relief:

“According to Vashon Island School District Superintendent Slade McSheehy, the 7:40 a.m. ferry, which the district adjusted school start times around, is late about 60% of the time. ‘Everybody has to stop and focus on the students coming in, they have to take their seats, there's a big pause,’ said McSheehy.

A commuter parent was profiled in the piece and also shared her story. “It's a good fit for her. It's a smaller school... she likes art, and they have a great art program,’ said Teresa Sorlie, who is one of hundreds of commuter families. She says normally the commute is worth it but is now voicing frustration over unreliable ferries disrupting already busy schedules just a month into the school year.” <https://bit.ly/48sgeJE>

The potential financial impact to the Vashon Island school district runs into the millions if commuter families become fed up with ferry disruptions and stop enrolling their students: each student enrolled in the district provides \$11,000 a year in revenue. At 250 commuters, that's nearly \$3 million out of a \$27 million budget.

Students Commuting Off-Island

The impacts to education affect students commuting off-island, as well. Students who take the Tahlequah - Pt. Defiance run are severely impacted by early morning cancellations. And it's not just about missing class time: when sailings are canceled morning-of, students have been stranded outside the home. Additionally, students returning from school activities can be severely impacted by mid-evening cancellations.

The Tahlequah – Pt. Defiance run is not an insignificant piece of our transportation needs on and off Vashon. Frequent cancellations of early morning and later evening boats have serious impacts to multiple constituencies, including students and families.

Islanders proposed potential solutions specific to the problems faced by students, schools, and families, which could be supported by state and local agencies:

- Develop standing, affordable or free in-loco-parentis transportation systems (shuttles, late night non-public options) and accommodation (staffed, open waiting rooms) for minors when ferries are canceled or significantly delayed.
- Improve communication lead time around crew shortages.
- Develop a commuter parent network or system that provides regular communication and resource options for parents and students.
- Hire adults to ride with commuter kids.
- Expand access and improve waiting areas at all ferry terminals.

“The ferry disruptions that we’re currently living with have impacted my life in a number of ways, negatively impacting my business, my employees, and my family.

My son is now a sophomore in high school, and he commutes to Tacoma for school every morning on the 7:10am ferry during the week. There are quite a few kids on that ferry. Last week, my son and all of his schoolmates missed half of their school day because the ferry was canceled for lack of crew. When we received notification, most of them were already en route to the ferry. The kids spent several hours down in Tahlequah and finally made it to school around 11am. All of us parents scrambled to help our kids figure out what to do, where to be, and how to manage the day.”

Laura C., Vashon resident

Small Businesses Face Insurmountable Obstacles

The ferry crisis endangers the homegrown businesses that make up the majority of business on the island and make us a durable and vivid community. Island visitors stay away for fear of being stranded or inconvenienced. Business owners lose revenue they can't afford to lose because employees can't report to work, or inventory can't be delivered.

Vashon Island business owners must deal with a host of impacts that ripple through our small economy:

- Lost employees and inability to attract and retain staff
- Loss of wages paid for employees waiting on docks, lost productivity, and high opportunity costs
- Inability to reliably source and provide goods to customers; increase in cost of goods
- Canceled appointments by clients within the service sector
- Vendors that refuse to come to or service Vashon
- Long midday gaps cause huge and expensive logistical issues
- Businesses have lost the reliable ability to travel to the mainland and generate revenue
- Loss of tourists and visitorship revenue; drastic decrease in tourism dollars when service is reduced to one boat

In a recent survey by the Chamber of Commerce, 92% of businesses on Vashon report that their businesses have been impacted by disruptions, with 32% describing the impact as severe.

About two-thirds of the businesses responding to the study have three or fewer employees. Almost 70% of responding island businesses report the ferry problems have been hurting their employees and made it hard to attract and retain employees. Small businesses often operate on small margins - and revenue losses over time can add up quickly.

The business community is also quick to highlight the important impacts of disruptions and cancellations on the Tahlequah - Pt. Defiance run, which has become heavily used by companies to avoid delays on the Triangle Route.

“During days when the north end is down to one boat we have employees flat out say ‘I’m definitely not coming in today because it’s probably a three hour wait or more to come over and the same wait to catch a boat home.’ I have had countless home owners decide not to come over for meetings or a simple trip off island to pick up materials and the trip ends up taking the whole day. We lose out on roughly \$700K gross everyday employees don’t work.”

Alex D., Vashon business owner

Addressing core issues quickly is key to relieving this economic crisis:

- **Prioritize Reliability:** address and reduce last-minute boat cancellations and schedule gaps. Increase, expand, and expedite crew recruitment and retention measures.
- **Expand Public Transit and Alternative Transit Options**
- **Identify Loading Efficiencies to Increase Transit Reliability and Capacity**
- **Address Economic Impacts and Provide Financial Relief for Ferry-Related Hardships**

“The impacts are significant. Vashon Center for the Arts markets off-island for concerts and exhibits. Depending on the show, we can have upwards of 50% of our audience attend from off-island ... We frequently have to apologize to our patrons – just last week when we hosted the Thomas Dambo Troll Project speaking event (9/12), we had audience members from Tacoma unable to attend because the boat had been canceled. And at the conclusion of the event, dozens of mainland attendees were stuck on the north end waiting for the semi-truck to be unstuck on the Fauntleroy side.”

Allison Halstead-Reid, Vashon Center for the Arts

Severe Impacts to Livelihoods, Visitorship, Quality of Life

Unreliable service puts commuters' employment at risk on a daily basis. Commuters miss days and hours of work, hours, and income due to delayed and unreliable ferry schedules and canceled sailings. Gaps in sailing schedules string out commuter days, which often exceed 15+ hours, degrading quality of life for commuters and also affecting spouses and children in multiple ways.

Commuters cited multiple issues that cannot wait years for solutions:

- Parking on Fauntleroy Way creates confusion and delays. The ferry line is rife with line cutters.
- There are no restrooms on Fauntleroy Way for those waiting in long lines, which often run to 3 hours or more, particularly in peak season.
- There are simply not enough ferry runs during peak commuter hours. The 5:15 pm from Fauntleroy to Vashon is often overloaded, requiring commuters to wait in line for hours.
- Commuters are unable to get home to their children when ferries are unreliable and/or canceled. This means finding ad hoc emergency measures for childcare. Delays in picking up children from childcare equates to far more expensive childcare, already a substantial expense for working parents.
- Commuters are unable to get to services like the pharmacy for critical medicines due to commuter hour boats overloaded, delayed, and/or canceled.
- Commuters can't get back to feed animals and must often find last-minute help to care for pets and livestock.
- When Tahlequah/Pt. Defiance Boat cancels runs, those who commute to and from Tacoma for work or school have no useful alternatives due to lines at North end and limited sailings to Southworth.
- Walk-on commuters have no options and are often left stranded.
- Trades servicing the island are delayed or unavailable due to ferry limitations. These include everything from plumbing emergencies to construction delays due to downed or late ferries. Those who provide services to Vashon from off island often consider the island too risky to their bottom line to service the island, giving islanders fewer options and adding to expense.

Proposed solutions include:

- Expand King County Water Taxi Service: increase numbers of sailings; reduce gaps and add weekend runs for commuters who work on weekends.
- Provide adaptive Metro bus service that is responsive to delayed sailings. Provide a separate, ferry-coordinated shuttle for workers and visitors to the town core.

- Work with Kitsap and Pierce Counties to provide water taxi service to Vashon Island. This would benefit commuters on the Olympic Peninsula who work on Vashon as well as Vashon commuters to Southworth.
- Provide overnight parking options in Fauntleroy to offer alternatives for commuters to walk on during decreased boat service and at peak hours.
- Commuters need WSF to provide more quality, real-time, and focused information about delays and/or cancellations in sailings.
- Commuters need to be able to gauge if they can catch a ferry given the line. Video cams placed along lineup areas would be helpful in determining whether driving to the ferry makes any sense.
- Expand ride-share programs and commuter vans to and from Vashon Island.
- Provide stranded commuters at Point Defiance direct bus service to an alternative ferry terminal.
- Install a stoplight now at the end of the ferry dock to facilitate offloading.
- Loading, especially at Fauntleroy, would benefit from WSF utilizing Good to Go or other automated ticketing system.
- During peak commute hours, prioritize Vashon resident loading.
- Ban parking on Fauntleroy Way and tow violators.
- Remove expiration dates for ferry passes.

“After forty-two years on the island, raising our three children there, we made the difficult decision to sell our home and move to Seattle to be near children and grandchildren. It was taking 2-1/2 hours, minimum, each way to assist our daughter with child care when needed. We debated for two years whether to leave and finally decided that family came first. We miss our home and community, long term friends and the pace of Vashon but the ferry system was just too dysfunctional and undependable.”

Sue S., Seattle resident

“I have helped to organize the long running VIVA Studio Art Tours weekends each May and December. Since resuming the tours after the pandemic, there have been two of the three tours that were severely impacted by one-boat schedules on Saturday mornings at the north end route and a no-boat schedule on the south end.

The Vashon studios were ready, and very few off-island patrons came. Patrons who came later in the day and braved horrific ferry lines to do so. One Saturday, in the afternoon, the schedule was back to 1-boat on the north end, so they waited hours to get on the island and hours to get off the island. Why would they return to this event if the majority of their day and evening was waiting in a ferry line?

The Studio Art Tour will not function as it has for twenty years. Period. A one-hour wait for a boat for a special event is one thing, but a three- to four-hour wait is impossible and not viable, as we have seen.”

Marla Smith, Vashon Island Visual Artists

Transportation Experts Propose Solutions

A number of community members broke out into a working group addressing broader systemic concerns. Many identified as currently or formerly working in the transportation industry or having studied our ferry system for years and even decades.

They identified glaring and hidden problems and solutions within the current system:

Problems

- Total lack of predictability and reliability
- Ticketing wait times too long
- Number of commuters working off-island
- Difficulty commuting leads to gated / weekend community
- Gap in the schedule late in AM and overnight
- Current schedule is inefficient and typically inaccurate
- Lack of schedulers in WSF
- Why is weekend schedule different than weekday
- Slow unloading at Fauntleroy (need light at dock)
- Inaccuracy of reporting data / reliability data – cancellations are not included
- Lack of crew / recruitment and retention problems
- Notifications arrive too late to react or plan
- Ticket expiration
- Loading from Fauntleroy is inefficient

Proposed solutions were focused at systemic levels and locally:

- Partner with the Coast Guard to reduce required staffing to allow for under-capacity sailings rather than cancellations.
- Remove ticket expirations until service issues are resolved
- Utilize Good to Go for more seamless ticketing process and charge by vehicle not passenger / expedite ticketing / loading
- Reimburse for costs associated with ferry delays, cancellations
- Pay trainees more, offer retention bonuses
- Adopt suggested crewing levels and vacation scheduling changes recommended in the Joint Transportation Committee Commissioned Report of 12/22.
- Return dispatch to offices in Seattle
- Add signal at Fauntleroy to expedite off-loading of vehicles
- Increase KC Water Taxi runs – weekdays, weekends, West Seattle
- Every boat going to Fauntleroy from Southworth should take Vashon cars
- Legislature should fund contract schedulers to adjust currently flawed two boat schedule
- Expedite contracting and building of vessels by any means possible

- Fautleroy Terminal Project should include a dock with the maximum possible car holding capacity (186 cars)
- Link incentives to pay not just for workers on vessels, but admin and all WSF employees
- Reevaluate the Service Restoration Plan in light of vessel availability issues, and prioritize ferry dependent communities
- Add permanent on call crew for ferry dependent communities

“The impact to our business comes from clients who can't get back to the island to get to their regularly scheduled appointment with us. If our clients have ANY business in a day off island, they cancel their appointments, our service gets disrupted and we lose revenue. There are no more ‘I'll be back in time’ - nobody can plan to get back at a reasonable time after being off island. Also, when I need to pick up products from off island I have to cancel an entire day of on island appointments. More revenue lost.”

Business Survey Respondent

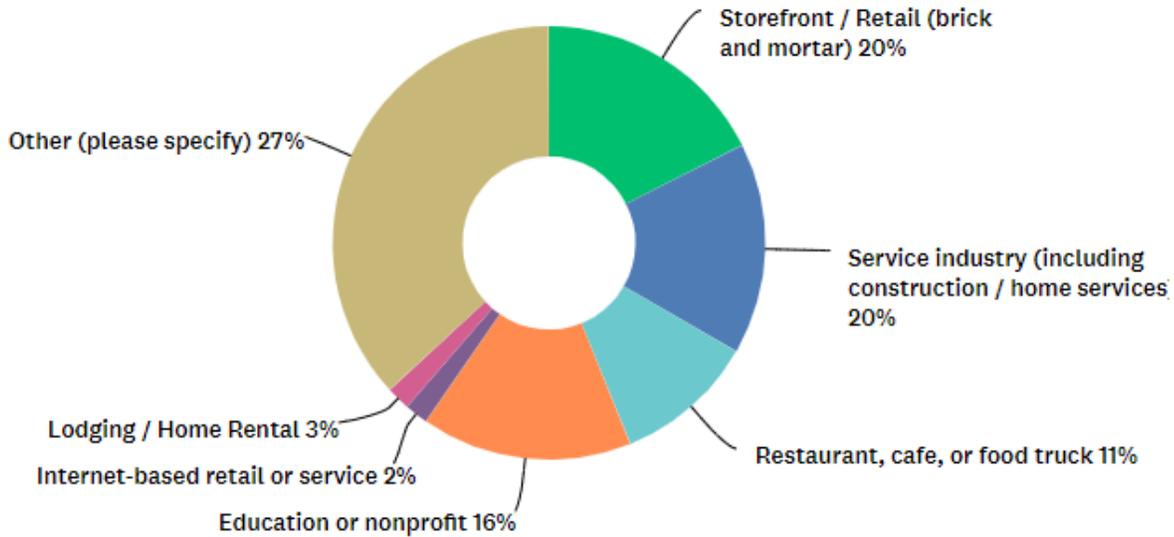
Vashon Businesses Survey Results

57 businesses participated via opt-in online survey August - October, 2023

What type of business do you operate on Vashon?



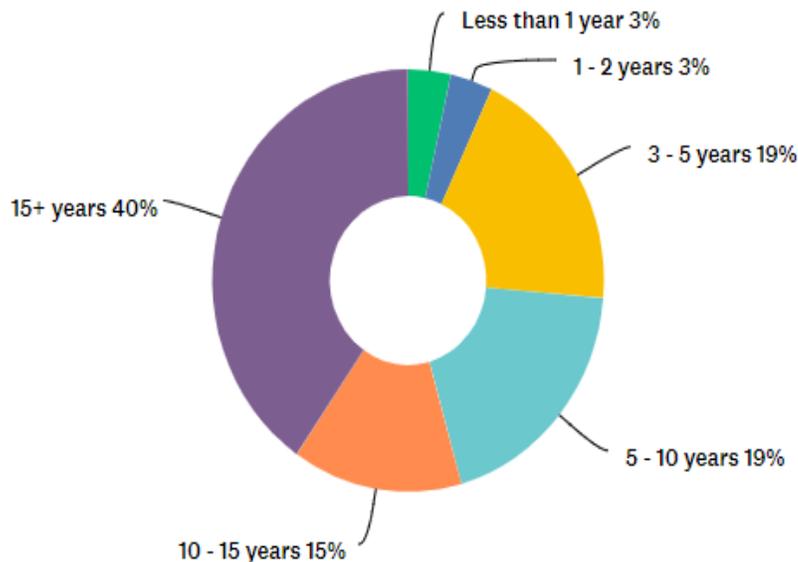
Answered: 57 Skipped: 0



How long have you been in business on Vashon?

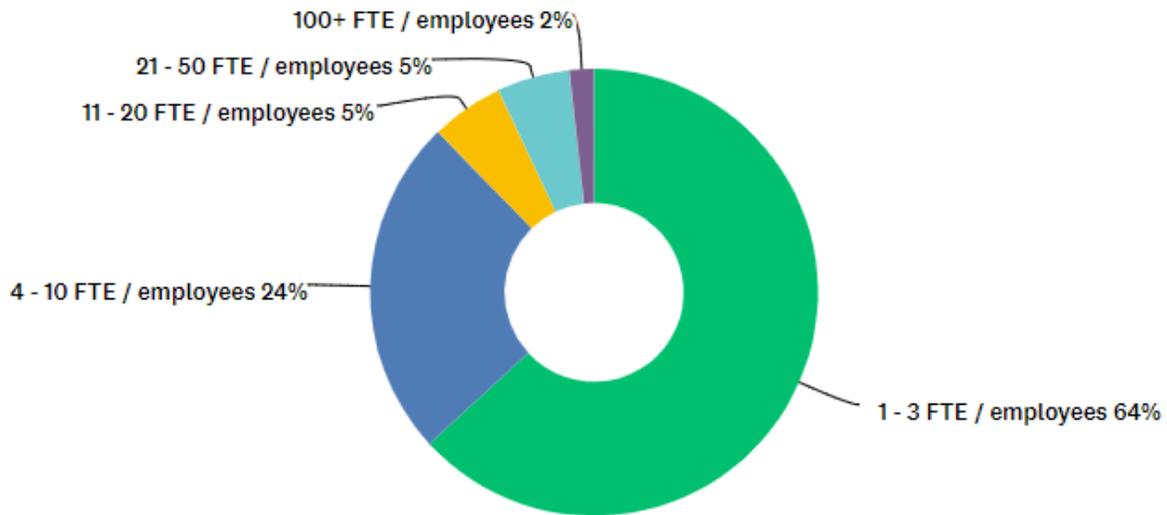


Answered: 57 Skipped: 0



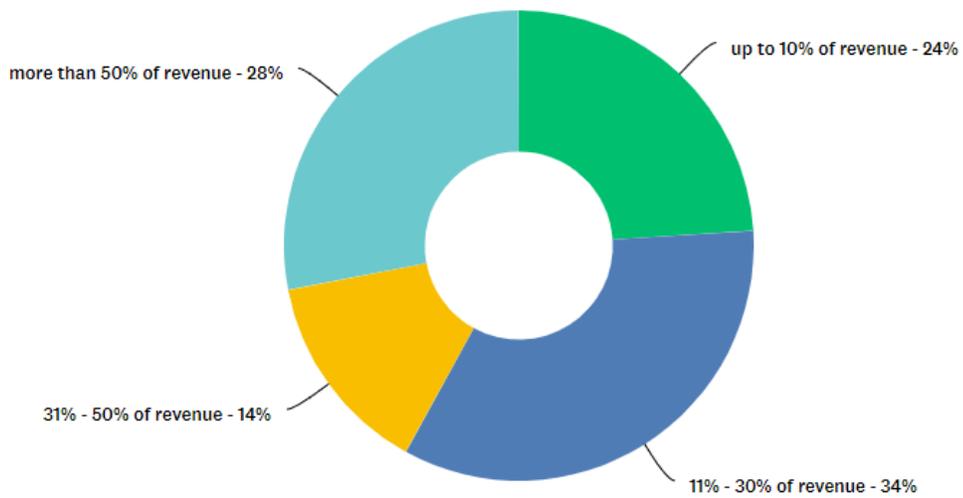
What is the size of your business on Vashon?

Answered: 57 Skipped: 0



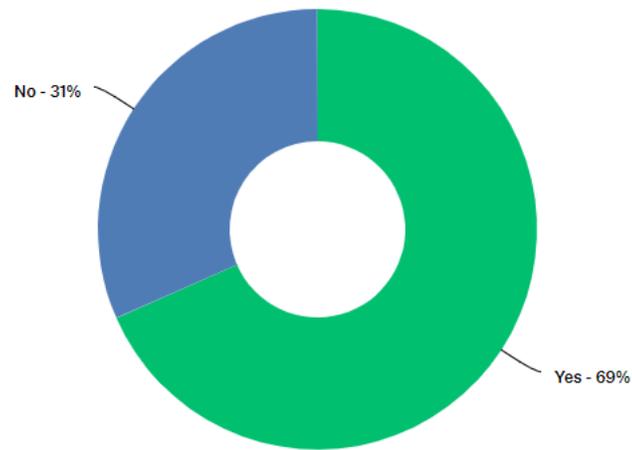
If you track this data, what percentage of your total, annual revenue is comprised of off-island visitors?

Answered: 50 Skipped: 7



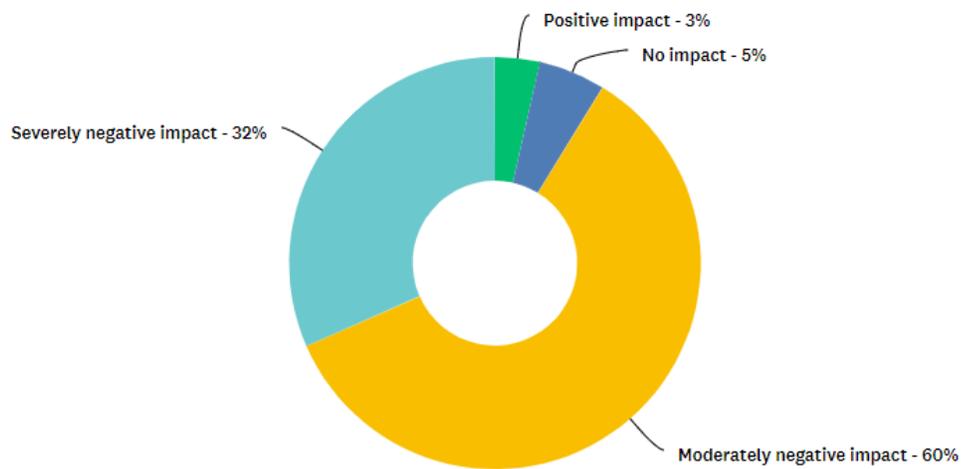
Have reduced service and ferry service interruptions in the years 2022 - 2023 negatively affected your employees,

Answered: 57 Skipped: 0



Overall, how would you describe the impact to your business of reductions and interruptions in ferry service

Answered: 57 Skipped: 0



Open Ended Survey Responses

If you track this data, what has been the impact to your business when Vashon is reduced to 1-boat service? How did you quantify that impact?

- Visitors are reluctant to come to Vashon in fear of long ferry lines. Difficulties for us to receive/transfer product from off island due to delays and disruptions.
- During days when the north end is down to 1 boat we have employees flat out say “ I’m definitely not coming in today because it’s probably a three hr wait or more to come over and the same wait to catch a boat home” I personall I have had countless home owners decide not to come over for meetings or a simple trip off island for a small amount of materials and the trip ends up taking the whole day. One missed meeting could mean hundreds of thousands. I believe I lose out on roughly \$700 gross every day employees don’t work.
- We were not able to get gasoline and diesel to the island.
- Staff unable to arrive on time, or at all for scheduled shifts.
- we have been busier than ever. its a captive audience. islanders shop more locally and visitors have nowhere to go but to our businesses
- Frustration for island visitors due to long wait times, unpredictable schedules and canceled sailings.
- Lines are longer so it is less reliable to plan on catching a specific ferry. employees come early to wait in line so they won't miss the 1-boat. This impacts my business as I need to pay them more for the extra time.
- Shipping/Freight costs have risen and travel times have increased due to late night delivery vehicles being routed to Southworth then Fauntleroy.
- We have two employees who commute from Tacoma, so we are mostly impacted by that ferry.
- The 1-boat ferry schedule greatly reduces the number of off-island participants interested in our events. The data is circumstantial, from talking to prospective participants.
- No impact. Both of my businesses sell to Vashon residents
- Time delays affect my business. I am a one person operation. the longer I have to wait the less customers I can serve,.
- Expensive. People cancel reservations and events because of ferry concerns/reputation for not showing up, being late, and long lines.
- Don’t currently track
- Canceled off island work
- Our delivery trucks making donation pick ups over town have been delayed. And scheduling those pick ups with ferry restraints is challenging and ever changing.
- Off-island staff and program participants are late and/or miss a program day due to a reduction in service.
- Employees have been unable to come into work (lost hours and lost productivity). But mainly, I have missed deliveries and farmers markets due to unpredictable and cancelled ferries. One hour of market missed is about \$400 in sales lost, and I’ve missed about 8 hours over the past few years due to delayed and cancelled ferries.

- We track cancellations due to ferry cancellations but have no way of knowing how many people decide not to come based on the limited ferry schedule. The lines and frequent cancellations are greatly impacting people's willingness to come over for the day or more.
- It's a shit show. Can't get merchandise delivered, can't do my will calls for merchandise effectively. The few wholesalers that will deliver to the island, won't because of added labor costs as their drivers sit in hours-long lines racking up overtime by waiting. I pay staff to be here to unload and manage product based off arrival times which are based on ferry times. It costs me real money to be paying my employees to sit around waiting for product that becomes hours late or doesn't come.
- Our off-island teachers cannot make it here on time resulting in canceled lessons and, after repeated issues, loss of the employee. This has happened over and over again.
- At least 20% drop
- People call me and say they were planning on coming out, but the ferries were not running.
- Island visiting customers had "ferry anxiety" and it inhibits shopping
- We roughly see a 15% reduction in the total volume of business on Saturday's and Sunday's when the boats are reduced.
- negative impact on employees who have to go off island for healthcare as well as pick up supplies for the company. It equates to a loss of hours equivalent to 16 hours which impacts the company
- Mainly it is taking me so much time that I have a lot less time to dedicate to my clients
- unable to hire anyone not living on Vashon, commuting is not an option
- minor inconveniences
- Unless there is a 12-24 hour warning that the ferry service has been reduced, our off island clients will frequently miss their appointments and as a result the shop makes zero dollars for the scheduled time.
- Not tracked but my students travel by ferry to campus 5 days/week so they are often affected by arriving late for class or having to leave early to ensure a spot in line.
- None really - Never has. Just delays sometimes. longer hour for our own deliveries - it works fine
- Missed appointments=missed revenue
- Families are late to programs or do not attend community functions
- For us, it's a matter of drivers being unable to take people to their medical appointments easily.
- 100% of the business for the day depends on the doctors ability to arrive by ferry on time to see patients for the day. If the doctor does not arrive, no patients can be seen.
- Time lost
- Employees have not been able to come and go to work; and sales has seen up to a 30% drop

If you track this data, has the effectively permanent reduction to two-boat service in the years 2022 - 2023 impacted your business? How did you quantify that impact?

- Have only been in business since Oct 2022
- Lost time overall. I miss more boats because of overloading or they are more prone to be late. I have waited in ferry lines for boats that are 45 minutes late and i still end up left on the dock because the boat was an overload. At that point I'm losing \$85 per hour then to top it off I'm charged \$107 to drive my 20ft long trailer across the boat. A car and driver ticket gets me 22ft in length. Two car driver tickets should get me 44ft in length and cost around \$40. If you have a

trailer attached and you're considered (under 40) the ticket for over \$100. It leaves a bad taste to feel taken advantage of.

- Fewer options for scheduling off-island staff.
- no problem noticed. we also deliver to regional areas and its been okay- we figured it out. not that difficult.
- Same as above.
- The ferry time schedule is extremely unreliable. Our Venue host many weddings that are quite impacted. Many of my prospective clients mention that they are aware of the ferry "problem" and worry that Vashon may not be the ideal place to have their event.
- Shipping/Freight costs have risen and travel times have increased due to late night delivery vehicles being routed to Southworth then Fauntleroy.
- We cannot quantify that impact, other than that it personally affects us greatly as individuals.
- The reduced ferry schedule somewhat reduces the number of off-island participants interested in our events. The data is circumstantial, from talking to prospective participants.
- No impact. If anything, it has encouraged people to buy more locally sourced products and services like mine.
- Again, time delays affect how many customers I can serve. less income for me.
- 50% reduction in earnings.
- Feels like yes, but hard to quantify
- No impact
- The answer is the same as above.
- Our design business includes commuting off island to meet clients, take island clients to see materials and sites. Reduced/chronically late ferry service results in significant time- \$5-10,000/year that we cannot bill or recover.
- Only when an already reduced schedule encounters additional disruption, delay, cancellation.
- Impacted business. Inability to do more business because of the ferries are not frequent or always delayed or cancelled
- Yes. I now have to leave hours early for my market, using up nearly 2 extra hours of my day. That's \$100 labor used on waiting for ferries due to reduced schedule.
- Same answer as above.
- There's no easy way for a small business like me to quantify the impact in direct black and white numbers. The 2-boat service is mind numbingly horrible for anyone trying to get on or off the island at certain hours. The timing of the boats makes zero sense. Can't get off the island after 10:15 a.m. on the north end. The secret is out about the south end boat, and now it is too small to clear the lines. Two-boat schedule during summer is ridiculous. The big truck that do deliver to island businesses fight for space with passenger vehicles.
- Yes. It's resulted in more late arrivals than other years, resulting in lesson cancelations. Students also suffer the ferry system, not being able to reach town in time resulting in canceled lessons.
- 20%
- sales!!! numbers do not lie
- yes
- It has impacted the amount of clients can come to the island, and I've given up on trying to maintain a practice off island
- I just can't go off island as often.
- same as above

- no significant impact
- Students who take more than one course with us are now selecting other campus locations for their advanced training sometimes to avoid ferry/cost of lodging on Vashon.
- no not really impacted. We are actually more busy
- Clients don't feel comfortable making appointments when the ferries are inconsistent.
- hard to quantify, but yes off island families do complain.
- Yes, the doctor who commutes to Vashon has to reduce their schedule (see less people) due to the lack of ferry options.
- Time lost
- Employees have not been able to come and go to work; and sales has seen up to a 30% drop

Is there any other information you would like to share?

- Due to ferry reductions and disruptions, our business hasn't been able to perform as optimally because my employees, including myself, haven't been able to get on and off island as frequently and as easily. We run our business trying to avoid ferry runs as much as possible because they are so unpredictable and time-consuming.
- Our employees live off island so they were not able to get to work.
- Often, an 8 hour shift turns into 12+ for our off-island staff, waiting for ferries that get cancelled, driving around to other terminals, and trying to get home. It makes it hard to staff our organization.
- The ferries are short on people like everyone else. We live on an island and we can figure out how to adapt. We have everything we need.
- Current ferry service is unacceptable and very frustrating.
- Inconsistent ferries and triangle routing have increased costs due to travel times.
- As a new business on Vashon, we are alarmed by how sparse and erratic the ferry service to the island has become. It has a significant impact on our ability to attract off-island visitors to our events.
- We depend on the ferries to do our farmers markets and had to cancel twice. Most of our visitors come from off-island and more would come with better ferry service
- Even though the reduction of ferry service has positively impacted my business, it is vitally important for all of us that our ferry service be reliable and predictable, for any time we need to leave the Island, and for the smooth running of most of the other businesses on the Island.
- Reliable service is key to keeping Vashon liveable.
- We have lost employees because they have been stranded on and off island due to cancellations and last minute schedule changes
- The 10:15 to 12:40 gap from Vashon to Fauntleroy is frustrating and often the 12:40 fills up very early because of it, causing passengers to miss the boat.
- Having a set schedule that is reliable would be better than the frequent cancellations. People can plan if they know what to expect. Some will opt out of coming but those who still come will plan accordingly and arrive with time to do make their scheduled reservation time. We have last minute cancellations or delays due to ferries at least 10-15 times each weekend day. Not acceptable for viable businesses relying on the ferries to bring customers over.

- The above 2 questions should be labeled "definitely" negative impact. I don't think anyone but the gas stations and grocery stores could say "severely", but I am more than moderately negatively impacted.
- It is not only business but the need to get off Island for medical appointments
- Unreliable ferry service and long wait times, especially on the weekends makes it unlikely that customers will come back to the island in the future.
- I am a solo practice, so have only clients, no employees. Grave concerns about commerce on the island, which would impact our quality of life here. Also greatly concerned about emergency services on and off the island.
- 3:05 Fa-Va is always full. That means I miss it and the next boat goes to So. Getting home is hours longer. A royal pain.
- Boat schedule disruptions, delays and cancellations have led to a number of our suppliers discontinuing delivery of inventory to our business. This requires us to source elsewhere, pick up on the mainland ourselves or discontinue offerings. All of these are detrimental to our business.
- With unreliable ferry service the cost of repairs and vendors/contractors willing to come to Vashon has shrunk, driving cost up.
- Instead of starting a new committee, instead hook up with the island's existing ferry committee(s) and work with them
- The impact to our business comes from clients who can't get back to the island to get to their regularly scheduled appointment with us. If our clients have ANY business in a day off island, they cancel their appointments, our service gets disrupted and we loose revenue. There are no more "i'll be back in time" - nobody can plan to get back at a reasonable time after being off island. Also, when I need to pick up products from off island I have to cancel an entire day of on island appointments.... more revenue lost.
- While this impacts our ability to reach the mainland, it also interrupts potential for growth and expanded services. We are limited in our ability to provide services to the mainland, and to provide furniture installations for clients in terms of paying our warehouse to transport pieces at \$150/person while they sit in the ferry line.
- I'm happy to fill out this survey however I have zero hope or expectation that it will do nothing other than land on deaf, incompetent, indifferent, corrupt ears at the WSF.
- We have had serious discussions about relocating our business due to changes in ferry service along with other increasing challenged to running a profitable business on island.
- its the way it is on an island
- I would be happy to volunteer time to facilitate improvement in ferry service.
- supporting weddings on island, ferries are a huge disruption and hard to continue to make the island attractive for off island business. combine this survey with a resident survey for a more holistic look at impact to the island
- I regularly have to stay at a hotel the night before I fly out of SEA simply because I cannot rely on the ferry system to get me on the other side of the water in time. As I travel quite a bit for work, that is about \$200 per trip (3 trips in the last 12 months and 2 more expected this year)