

King County Marine Division Water Taxi Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the King County Water Taxi?

The King County Water Taxi is a passenger-only ferry service moving commuters, recreational riders and tourists between downtown Seattle and West Seattle, along with providing commute service from downtown Seattle to Vashon Island. Water Taxi service is a fast transit alternative operated by the King County Marine Division (Marine Division) as part of the King County Department of Transportation. The Marine Division is responsible for operations, moorage and vessel maintenance.

2. Where do King County Water Taxis operate?

Water Taxis currently serve routes from downtown Seattle's Pier 50 to the Vashon Island Ferry Terminal and West Seattle's Seacrest dock. Recently, the King County Council requested a study be conducted to research and propose additional ferry routes. As a result of this study, three potential new routes may be considered by the Council this year.

3. How often do King County Water Taxis operate?

The Vashon Island route operates six (6) roundtrips Monday through Friday during peak commute hours. Each one-way trip is approximately 22 minutes long.

From November through March, the West Seattle route operates 13 roundtrips Monday through Friday during peak commute hours. From April through October, there are between 12 and 23 roundtrips offered daily during peak commute hours, mid-days, evenings and weekends. Each one-way trip takes approximately 10 to 15 minutes.

4. How many passengers ride King County Water Taxis?

Ridership continues to grow annually, with more than 3.1 million passengers served since the start of King County service in 2008. In 2015, the West Seattle route served over 313,000 passengers, a 10.9% increase from the previous year. In the same year, the Vashon Island route served over 201,000 passengers, a 9.4% increase over 2014.

5. Is King County Water Taxi service reliable?

The King County Water Taxi consistently provides on-time, high quality service since launching in 2008. In 2015, the Vashon Island and West Seattle routes earned a reliability rating of 99.9% and 99.7%, respectively. On average, the system-wide reliability rating has been above 99% since 2010.

6. Does the King County Water Taxi service connect with other transit systems?

The King County Water Taxi offers riders easy, seamless connections to and from terminals. At downtown Seattle's Pier 50, the Water Taxi terminal is within a quarter-mile of dozens of

additional transit connections including King County Metro, Sound Transit Link light rail and the Seattle Streetcar.

The Marine Division contracts operations of free DART shuttles in West Seattle (routes 773 and 775) and Metro buses (routes 118 and 119) on Vashon Island. Both shuttle schedules are coordinated with Water Taxi service.

7. How much does it cost to ride the King County Water Taxi?

As of March 1, 2016, the cash adult fare for the West Seattle route is \$5.25 and \$6.25 for the Vashon Island route. Discounts are available for ORCA card users, ORCA Lift, Senior and Disabled and Youth. Children under 5 ride free. There is no extra charge for bicycles.

8. Are water taxis an environmentally-friendly transportation option?

Water taxi vessels have engines that use a biofuel blend, burn less oil, and have no oil filters that need to be disposed of. The EPA Tier III rated engines also produce less soot. Additionally, the vessels' efficient hull design reduces fuel consumption.

Water Taxi service is also key to the region's climate change action goals by taking cars off our bridges and roads while moving more people with fewer emissions. Furthering these goals, the new Sally Fox class vessels can hold up to 26 bikes onboard to encourage passengers to use alternative modes of transportation.

9. How is the King County Water Taxi funded?

Funding for operations, maintenance and assets comes from passenger fares, federal grants and King County property tax revenues.

The Marine Division has successfully secured federal and state grants to support terminal improvements, the capital construction of a maintenance and moorage barge, preventative vessel maintenance and preservation and the construction of two new passenger vessels. Since inception, grant funds have paid for over 70% of all capital assets.

10. What are future plans for the King County Water Taxi?

Water Taxi service is financially unsustainable beyond 2016. When the Marine Division was established in 2008, it was funded by a property tax levy rate of 5.5 cents allowing for operations and creation of a reserve account. The tax levy rate was reduced in 2010 to 0.3 cents resulting in annual operating deficits for the Marine Division. Since that time, the Marine Division has drawn down reserve funds to cover the gaps between overall annual costs and revenues.

At this key juncture, additional funding is needed for the Marine Division to maintain the current Water Taxi service. Despite the decrease in property tax revenues, the Marine Division continues to improve operations and financial performance. However, without additional funding, the Water Taxi service cannot be sustained.

Depending on future funding, the Marine Division's future plans include:

- Exploring feasible routes for system expansion;
- Design and construction of a new passenger terminal in Seattle;
- Improving transportation connections at terminals;
- Integrating service with new technology;
- Continuing identifying grant opportunities to fund capital improvements;
- Coordinating with regional stakeholders to support climate change action goals;
- Exploring public and private partnership options;
- Enhancing marketing efforts.

11. Why is the King County Water Taxi needed?

Water taxi service is an important component of the region's transportation system, offering a fast, reliable and quality transportation option. The Puget Sound region is expected to add one million more people by 2040 and Water Taxi service helps maintain mobility in support of our regional growth. Water Taxi service is also part of King County's climate action plan to encourage a sustainable and thriving region.

The Marine Division is also committed to providing a transportation service for all members of the community consistent with the King County Equity and Social Justice Initiatives. In 2014-15, the Marine Division built two new vessels that were ADA accessible, including designated wheelchair tables with tie-downs, an ADA restroom, video monitors for the hearing impaired and lower door thresholds for increased accessibility. Additionally, the Water Taxi created an ORCA LIFT Fare in 2015 allowing those families with low incomes to utilize our service at a reduced cost.

The West Seattle route transports a large number of tourists and casual riders to Alki Beach during the summer season contributing to the economic vitality of the region.

Water taxis are incorporated into emergency response plans to move emergency responders to the scene and to evacuate citizens from an area during emergencies. Additionally, water taxis are an unrestricted transit option during construction or road closures, such as the Alaskan Way Viaduct and the West Seattle Bridge projects.

12. Why is King County providing Water Taxi service?

Washington State Ferries previously operated the Vashon Island route, but abandoned it in 2008. The West Seattle route was assumed from King County Metro, who previously contracted with Argosy Cruises to operate the service. The State Legislature passed legislation that allowed counties to create Ferry Districts and collect tax revenues to support these services. King County was the first county to begin ferry service under this new legislation.

13. Where can I find more information about the King County Water Taxi?

Visit the website at www.kingcounty.gov/transportation/kcdot/WaterTaxi to learn more about water taxis.

For questions, call 206-477-3979 or email watertaxi.info@kingcounty.gov.