

FINAL BILL REPORT

ESHB 1922

C 361 L 95

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Regulating excursion vessels.

Sponsors: House Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Representatives K. Schmidt and R. Fisher).

House Committee on Transportation
Senate Committee on Transportation

Background: Commercial ferries (private ferries) are subject to the economic regulation of the Utilities & Transportation Commission (UTC). A commercial ferry is a for-hire vessel operated for public use between fixed termini over regular routes. Entry and rate regulation, as well as insurance requirements, are imposed. The entry standard is "public convenience and necessity" (PC&N).

One of three entry standards must be met when applying for approval as a for-hire vessel or carrier. PC&N is the most stringent entry standard. The applicant must prove that he/she is financially able to provide the service, that there is a need for the expanded service, that the existing carrier is not adequately serving the route, and that the new proposed service will not adversely affect the existing carrier. Under "public interest," the moderate entry standard, the applicant must prove that he/she is financially able to provide the service and demonstrate that the service will be used by specific customers. Under "fit, willing and able," the most relaxed standard, the applicant simply proves financial ability to provide the service.

Although commercial ferries are subject to economic regulation, the statute is silent on the operation of excursion ferries.

Summary of Bill: Ferry excursion services are regulated by the Utilities & Transportation Commission (UTC) with regard to entry, rates, routes and insurance. The entry standard is "public convenience and necessity."

An excursion service is a for-hire vessel that transports passengers over Washington waters from a point of origin with an intermediate stop(s) at which passengers may leave and reboard the vessel before it returns to that same point of origin.

The following services operating for compensation in Washington waters are exempt from the UTC's economic regulation: 1) charter services (vessels with captain and

crew that are hired to transport passengers or property); 2) vessels operated by nonprofit or governmental entities that are replicas (tall ships in Grays Harbor) or historic vessels (Virginia V); 3) vessels that depart and return to the point of origin without stopping at another location where passengers may leave the vessel; 4) vessels up to 65 feet, 49 passengers that operate in San Juan County six months per year; 5) excursions that do not depart from a point of origin on a regularly published schedule; 6) excursions that do not operate between the same point of origin and an intermediate stop more than four times per month or 15 times per year; 7) vessels that do not return to the port of origin the same day; and 8) vessels operating on the Pend Oreille River.

The regulation of excursion services by the UTC expires January 1, 2001.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	93	0	
Senate	39	6	(Senate amended)
House	95	0	(House concurred)

Effective: July 23, 1995