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**Transportation Committee**

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**HB 3012**

**Brief Description:** Providing Kingston-Seattle and Southworth-Seattle passenger-only ferry service.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Woods, Murray, Cooper, Lantz, McMahan, Dickerson, Rockefeller and Chase.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Directs the Department of Transportation to provide direct passenger-only ferry service connecting Kingston and Seattle, and Southworth and Seattle.

**Hearing Date:** 2/3/04

**Staff:** Jill Satran (786-7315).

**Background:**

In recent years the Washington State Ferries has experienced dramatic shifts in its funding. In 1998, the voters approved Referendum 49 (R-49) to provide additional transportation funding, including a significant amount for ferries, through bonding and by shifting additional Motor Vehicle Excise Tax (MVET) funds. The MVET provided 20 percent of the funding for the ferry operating program. A combination of MVET and R-49 bonds provided 85 percent of ferry capital funding. In November 1999, the voters approved Initiative 695 (I-695), which abolished the MVET. I-695 was overturned by the courts, but the Legislature implemented the \$30 license tab fees. This terminated the MVET revenue, which would have paid for the debt service or the R-49 bond revenue.

Faced with significantly diminished revenues, the Legislature formed a Joint Task Force on Ferries to examine funding issues and recommend potential solutions and alternatives. Among the many recommendations put forth by the task force was a recommendation that the state continue to provide passenger-only ferry (POF) service because the state is able to provide the most cost effective service. In 2002, the Washington Transportation Commission announced its desire to discontinue all POF service to minimize costs.

In the 2003 session, the House supported a budget that provided for expanded POF service by adding two commuter service routes: Kingston/Seattle and Southworth/Seattle. The Vashon route would be maintained and the Bremerton route would be eliminated. The additional routes were not included in the final budget, although several bills were passed that opened up opportunities for other public and private entities to provide POF service in Puget Sound. As a result, Kitsap

Transit is currently working with at least two private operators to provide service on routes between Seattle and Bremerton, Kingston and Southworth.

**Summary of Bill:**

The Department of Transportation is directed to provide POF service connecting Kingston and Seattle and Southworth and Seattle. This service must be provided during work-day commute hours at a minimum.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 27, 2004.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.