

FINAL BILL REPORT

ESSB 6787

C 332 L 06

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Providing funding for local government passenger ferry service.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Rockefeller, Poulsen, Haugen and Oke).

Senate Committee on Transportation

Senate Committee on Ways & Means

Background: The legislative authority of any county with a population greater than one million persons may create a passenger-only ferry district. The district is a municipal corporation and the county legislative authority, acting ex officio, is the district's governing body. The district may levy a property tax of up to 75 cents per \$1,000 of assessed valuation for ferry district purposes.

There are currently four counties that operate ferries: Skagit, Pierce, Whatcom, and Wahkiakum.

The Washington State Ferry System currently operates a passenger-only ferry route between Vashon Island and Seattle.

Summary: Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is directed to continue the existing Vashon to Seattle passenger-only ferry (POF) service until it is assumed by a county ferry district. Counties wishing to assume that route must submit a business plan to the Legislature and the Governor. If the Governor approves the business plan, the county ferry district is eligible for grant funding. A county ferry district assuming the Vashon to Seattle POF route must honor existing labor agreements, may not contract out operations, and must begin operations July 1, 2007.

The Office of Financial Management is directed to contract to develop a non-state government operated back-up plan for continuing service on the Vashon to Seattle POF route.

WSDOT is directed to collaborate with new and potential POF service providers for terminal operations at its terminal facilities.

WSDOT is required to sell or otherwise dispose of the state passenger ferries Snohomish and Chinook if the business plan to assume the Vashon to Seattle POF route is approved by the Governor. The proceeds of the sales are to be deposited into the passenger ferry account.

WSDOT is directed to establish a ferry grant program. Eligible for the grants are county ferry districts and public transportation benefit areas. Priority must be given to grant applicants that provide continuity of existing passenger-only service and provide local or federal matching funds.

Before seeking grant funding for the Kingston to Seattle POF route, a Public Transportation Benefit Area must receive governor approval on a business plan submitted to the Legislature and the Governor.

County ferry district statutes are broadened so that they may be formed in any county. In addition, the county ferry district statutes apply to all ferries and not just passenger-only ferries.

The Utilities and Transportation Commission moratorium on accepting new applications for additional private POF service into King County is extended by one year.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	46	1	
House	61	37	(House amended)
Senate	43	3	(Senate concurred)

Effective: June 7, 2006