

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2353

As Passed House:
March 14, 2007

Title: An act relating to passenger-only ferry service.

Brief Description: Regarding passenger-only ferry service.

Sponsors: By Representatives McDermott, Cody and Appleton.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 2/26/07, 3/1/07 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/14/07, 75-20.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Extends the date by which a county ferry district must begin service on the passenger-only ferry route between Vashon and Seattle until July 1, 2008.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 24 members: Representatives Clibborn, Chair; Flannigan, Vice Chair; Jarrett, Ranking Minority Member; Schindler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Appleton, Armstrong, Campbell, Curtis, Dickerson, Eddy, Hailey, Hankins, Hudgins, Lovick, Rodne, Rolfes, Sells, Simpson, Springer, B. Sullivan, Takko, Upthegrove, Wallace and Wood.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Ericksen and Kristiansen.

Staff: David Munnecke (786-7315).

Background:

In 2006, Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 6787 directed the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to continue the existing passenger-only ferry (POF) service between Vashon and Seattle until it is assumed by a county ferry district. This bill also required

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counties wishing to assume the route to submit a business plan to the Legislature and the Governor. If the Governor approves a business plan, the designated county ferry district would be eligible for grant funding.

Any county ferry district assuming the POF route between Vashon and Seattle is required to honor existing labor agreements, not contract out operations, and must begin operations on the route by July 1, 2007.

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

Finally, the WSDOT was directed to establish a ferry grant program, from which county ferry districts and public transportation benefit areas are eligible to receive funding. Priority must be given to grant applicants that provide continuity of existing passenger-only service and provide local or federal matching funds.

King County is currently contemplating the formation of a county ferry district to assume the POF route between Vashon and Seattle. However, the formation of a county ferry district, the imposition of a property tax assessment, and the collection of sufficient funding through an assessment is a lengthy process.

Summary of Bill:

The date by which a county ferry district must begin service on the passenger-only ferry route between Vashon and Seattle is extended until July 1, 2008.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect on June 30, 2007.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Former riders of the Aqua Express route between Kingston and Seattle are interested in setting up a non-profit organization to provide service on the route. There is substantial demand on the route, but the previous operator acquired too large a boat to make the service financially practical. The former riders are interested in obtaining grant funding to cover some of the start-up costs on the route, and support this bill as a potential vehicle for doing so.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Dan Brown, Kingston Express Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.