

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## EHB 1782

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As Reported by Senate Committee On:  
Transportation, March 20, 2023

**Title:** An act relating to the operating and maintenance deficit of the Wahkiakum county ferry.

**Brief Description:** Addressing the operating and maintenance deficit of the Wahkiakum county ferry.

**Sponsors:** Representatives McEntire and Fey.

**Brief History:** Passed House: 3/2/23, 96-0.

**Committee Activity:** Transportation: 3/20/23 [DPA].

### Brief Summary of Amended Bill

- Increases state support of the Wahkiakum county ferry service to 85 percent of the operating deficit.

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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Liias, Chair; Lovick, Vice Chair; Shewmake, Vice Chair; King, Ranking Member; Holy, Assistant Ranking Member; Cleveland, Fortunato, Hawkins, Kauffman, Nobles, Padden, Randall, Valdez, Wilson, C. and Wilson, J..

**Staff:** Jenna Forty (786-7755)

**Background:** Any county may construct, operate and maintain ferries within the county or between counties. For counties operating ferry service under this general authority, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) may reimburse for a portion of the deficit incurred while operating a county ferry service. Currently Pierce, Skagit, Wahkiakum, and Whatcom counties operate ferries under this general authority.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

For Wahkiakum County's ferry service, the WSDOT is authorized to enter into a continuing agreement to pay for 80 percent of the operating deficit for the preceding fiscal year of the ferry service, with a maximum not to exceed the amount appropriated for the biennium. Funds must be used for the operation and maintenance of the Puget Island ferry. Fares established by the county must be comparable to those on similar runs listed on the state ferry schedule.

When the Legislature originally established state support for the Wahkiakum County ferry, it found that the Wahkiakum County ferry provides services which are primarily local in nature with secondary benefits to the state highway system in providing a bypass for State Route 4 and providing the only crossing of the Columbia River between the Astoria-Megler Bridge and the Longview Bridge.

**Summary of Amended Bill:** The continuing agreement between the WSDOT and Wahkiakum County must provide for payment of 85 percent of the operating deficit of the county's ferry service. The restriction that reimbursement may not exceed amounts appropriated for the biennium is removed.

The legislative findings state that the Wahkiakum County ferry provides an important transportation bypass for State Route 4 and provides the only crossing of the Columbia River between the Astoria-Megler Bridge and the Longview Bridge.

**EFFECT OF TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE AMENDMENT(S):**

- Restores the limitation that payments do not exceed the amount appropriated within the biennium.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Engrossed House Bill:** *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* No public hearing was held.

**Persons Testifying:** N/A

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** N/A