
ENGROSSED HOUSE BILL 2588

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2026 Regular Session

By Representatives Timmons, Ramel, and Lekanoff

Read first time 01/20/26. Referred to Committee on Local Government.

1 AN ACT Relating to county ferry district authority; amending RCW
2 36.54.120, 36.54.130, and 36.54.135; and reenacting and amending RCW
3 47.60.120.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 **Sec. 1.** RCW 36.54.120 and 2003 c 83 s 302 are each amended to
6 read as follows:

7 A ferry district may construct, purchase, operate, and maintain
8 (~~passenger-only~~) ferries or wharves at any unfordable stream, lake,
9 estuary, or bay within or bordering the ferry district, or between
10 portions of the ferry district, or between the ferry district and
11 other ferry districts, together with all the necessary boats,
12 grounds, roads, approaches, and landings appertaining thereto under
13 the direction and control of the governing body of the ferry
14 district, free or for toll as the governing body determines by
15 resolution.

16 **Sec. 2.** RCW 36.54.130 and 2009 c 551 s 4 are each amended to
17 read as follows:

18 (1) To carry out the purposes for which ferry districts are
19 created, the governing body of a ferry district may levy each year an
20 ad valorem tax on all taxable property located in the district not to

1 exceed (~~seventy-five~~) 75 cents per thousand dollars of assessed
2 value, except a ferry district in a county with a population of (~~one~~
3 ~~million five hundred thousand~~) 1,500,000 or more may not levy at a
4 rate that exceeds seven and one-half cents per (~~thousand dollars~~)
5 \$1,000 of assessed value. The levy must be sufficient for the
6 provision of ferry services as shown to be required by the budget
7 prepared by the governing body of the ferry district.

8 (2) No tax may be imposed under this section by a ferry district
9 created after the effective date of this section unless the
10 imposition of the tax is first approved by a majority of voters
11 within the ferry district voting at the next general election
12 occurring at least 60 days after the governing body of the ferry
13 district adopts a resolution to impose the levy, or at any special
14 election prior to this general election called for this purpose by
15 the county legislative authority.

16 (3) A tax imposed under this section may be used only for:

17 (a) Providing ferry services, including the purchase, lease, or
18 rental of ferry vessels and dock facilities;

19 (b) The operation, maintenance, and improvement of ferry vessels
20 and dock facilities;

21 (c) Providing shuttle services between the ferry terminal and
22 passenger parking facilities, and other landside improvements
23 directly related to the provision of (~~passenger-only~~) ferry
24 service; and

25 (d) Related personnel costs.

26 **Sec. 3.** RCW 36.54.135 and 2007 c 223 s 7 are each amended to
27 read as follows:

28 (1) A county ferry district may incur general indebtedness, and
29 issue general obligation bonds, to finance the construction,
30 purchase, and preservation of (~~passenger-only~~) ferries and
31 associated terminals and retire the indebtedness in whole or in part
32 from the revenues received from the tax levy authorized in RCW
33 36.54.130.

34 (2) The ordinance adopted by the county legislative authority
35 creating the county ferry district and authorizing the use of
36 revenues received from the tax levy authorized in RCW 36.54.130, if
37 approved by voters, must indicate an intent to incur this
38 indebtedness and the maximum amount of this indebtedness that is
39 contemplated.

1 **Sec. 4.** RCW 47.60.120 and 2003 c 83 s 204 and 2003 c 373 s 2 are
2 each reenacted and amended to read as follows:

3 (1) If the department acquires or constructs, maintains, and
4 operates any ferry crossings upon or toll bridges over Puget Sound or
5 any of its tributary or connecting waters, there shall not be
6 constructed, operated, or maintained any other ferry crossing upon or
7 bridge over any such waters within (~~ten~~) 10 miles of any such
8 crossing or bridge operated or maintained by the department excepting
9 such bridges or ferry crossings in existence, and being operated and
10 maintained under a lawfully issued franchise at the time of the
11 location of the ferry crossing or construction of the toll bridge by
12 the department.

13 (2) The (~~ten-mile~~) 10-mile distance in subsection (1) of this
14 section means (~~ten~~) 10 statute miles measured by airline distance.
15 The (~~ten-mile~~) 10-mile restriction shall be applied by comparing
16 the two end points (termini) of a state ferry crossing to those of a
17 private ferry crossing.

18 (3) The Washington utilities and transportation commission may,
19 upon written petition of a commercial ferry operator certificated or
20 applying for certification under chapter 81.84 RCW, and upon notice
21 and hearing, grant a waiver from the (~~ten-mile~~) 10-mile
22 restriction. The waiver must not be detrimental to the public
23 interest. In making a decision to waive the (~~ten-mile~~) 10-mile
24 restriction, the commission shall consider, but is not limited to,
25 the impact of the waiver on transportation congestion mitigation, air
26 quality improvement, and the overall impact on the Washington state
27 ferry system. The commission shall act upon a request for a waiver
28 within (~~ninety~~) 90 days after the conclusion of the hearing. A
29 waiver is effective for a period of five years from the date of
30 issuance. At the end of five years the waiver becomes permanent
31 unless appealed within (~~thirty~~) 30 days by the commission on its
32 own motion, the department, or an interested party.

33 (4) The department shall not maintain and operate any ferry
34 crossing or toll bridge over Puget Sound or any of its tributary or
35 connecting waters that would infringe upon any franchise lawfully
36 issued by the state and in existence and being exercised at the time
37 of the location of the ferry crossing or toll bridge by the
38 department, without first acquiring the rights granted to such
39 franchise holder under the franchise.

1 (5) This section does not apply to the operation of passenger-
2 only ferry service by public transportation benefit areas meeting the
3 requirements of RCW 36.57A.200 or to the operation of (~~passenger-~~
4 ~~only~~) ferry service by ferry districts.

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