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

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

11 (b) The operation, maintenance, and improvement of ferry vessels
12 and dock facilities;

13 (c) Providing shuttle services between the ferry terminal and
14 passenger parking facilities, and other landside improvements
15 directly related to the provision of (~~passenger-only~~) ferry
16 service; and

17 (d) Related personnel costs.

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

20 (1) A county ferry district may incur general indebtedness, and
21 issue general obligation bonds, to finance the construction,
22 purchase, and preservation of (~~passenger-only~~) ferries and
23 associated terminals and retire the indebtedness in whole or in part
24 from the revenues received from the tax levy authorized in RCW
25 36.54.130.

26 (2) The ordinance adopted by the county legislative authority
27 creating the county ferry district and authorizing the use of
28 revenues received from the tax levy authorized in RCW 36.54.130 must
29 indicate an intent to incur this indebtedness and the maximum amount
30 of this indebtedness that is contemplated.

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

33 (1) If the department acquires or constructs, maintains, and
34 operates any ferry crossings upon or toll bridges over Puget Sound or
35 any of its tributary or connecting waters, there shall not be
36 constructed, operated, or maintained any other ferry crossing upon or
37 bridge over any such waters within (~~ten~~) 10 miles of any such
38 crossing or bridge operated or maintained by the department excepting

1 such bridges or ferry crossings in existence, and being operated and
2 maintained under a lawfully issued franchise at the time of the
3 location of the ferry crossing or construction of the toll bridge by
4 the department.

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

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

25 (4) The department shall not maintain and operate any ferry
26 crossing or toll bridge over Puget Sound or any of its tributary or
27 connecting waters that would infringe upon any franchise lawfully
28 issued by the state and in existence and being exercised at the time
29 of the location of the ferry crossing or toll bridge by the
30 department, without first acquiring the rights granted to such
31 franchise holder under the franchise.

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

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