



## Inspiration and gratitude from Islanders for Ferry Action

*March 8, 2024*

Vashon folks believe in our power to achieve change. From the movie-worthy feat of reclaiming the gravel pit on Maury, to reviving the healthcare clinic, to standing up a world-class response to a global pandemic, time and again, Vashon people have joined hands to serve the community.

Last year, we all came together to push for improvements in our broken ferry service. Good news, Vashon. We did it. We've taken huge first steps to relieve the ferry crisis, something that many of us would not have imagined possible even a few months ago.

Because we are "can do" people, we worked together and created a remarkable outcome. Last week, the Washington State legislature passed budget provisions that will begin to provide much-needed relief to our ferry-dependent communities:

- \$3.1 million to fund mid-day, mid-week water taxi service from Vashon to Seattle
- Over \$10 million to recruit, hire, and train new staff – from deck officers to engine room staff - to reduce cancellations and late sailings due to crew shortages
- \$169,000 to hire a planner/scheduler who can revise and improve the two-boat schedule
- \$100,000 to reimburse walk-on customers for emergency expenses when WSF cancels the last sailing of the day

The timing was right last summer for the Vashon community to step forward in an organized way, join the regional tide pushing for change, and advocate.

So many people stepped forward to help make this victory possible. We had 300 attendees at the Islanders for Ferry Action Community Forum last fall, plus 2,500 signatures on our call for action petition. You took the time to share your experiences and needs. Your voices were critical to creating our report "An Island in Crisis, Focused on Solutions," which powered the movement that brought us to these first wins.

The list of thank-yous in this effort is exhaustive. Our 34th District legislative delegation performed magic in Olympia. Thank you to Representative Alvarado for introducing the \$3.17M allocation for expanded water taxi service. Thank you, Senator Nguyen and Representative Fitzgibbon for your work and support.

We thank Senator Marko Lias, chair of the Senate Transportation Committee, for hearing our concerns and listening to our requests, especially for a planner/scheduler to work on the broken two-boat schedule. Thank you as well to Representatives Fey, Paul, and Nance for leadership in advocating for ferry-served communities. And we thank Governor Inslee for allocating tens of millions to improve crewing.

We're also grateful to King County Councilmember Teresa Mosqueda and her team for their work behind the scenes and for sending a letter of support to legislators. We are grateful to hear that she is beginning conversations with King County Metro to expand public transportation, with the goal of expanding Metro runs and syncing service with the water taxi runs.

We continue to be grateful to the people in the offices, on the docks and boats, working hard every day in all weather, doing their best to get us where we need to go.

Finally, we must all be grateful to each other. In coordination with Islanders for Ferry Action volunteers, hundreds of islanders stepped up to contact our elected officials and lobby for these wins. We all believed change was possible, and we all made it happen.

So, what's next for IFA and for you? There's certainly more work to be done because we know new boats won't be here for years.

We need to keep advocating for WSF to put these new resources to work immediately and improve the two-boat schedule. We need to make sure Vashon's voice becomes even stronger in the planning process for the upcoming Fauntleroy Dock replacement which will improve ferry loading speed and traffic flow.. We need to make sure everyone who needs medical priority loading has access. And we need to expand our reach and collaborate regionally to make sure that ferry-dependent communities continue to be top priority in service restoration.

There's more to come. It's about time to host another community forum to hear from legislators and craft next steps. But today is a day to reflect, celebrate, and hold gratitude. Along those lines, Islanders for Ferry Action is organizing an appreciation event for our tireless ferry workers who put in the long hours on the boats and docks. We'll keep you posted and hope you'll join us in gratitude later this spring.

Thank you Vashon, for these first steps forward. Thank you for believing in change!

Wendy Aman, Amy Drayer, Beth Lindsay, Cheryl Lubbert, and Rick Wallace, Islanders for Ferry Action