



*This special edition of the WSF Weekly Update looks back at our accomplishments from the last year and charts a course for where the ferry system is headed in 2018.*

**Message from Amy**

As I wrap up my first year at the helm of Washington State Ferries, I want to take a moment to reflect on our accomplishments in 2017 and map a course for the tasks we will tackle in the next year.

Last year, we carried 24.5 million riders, the highest ridership in 15 years! We are not only growing, we are reliable. Because of the dedicated employees who work on our vessels, in our terminals, and in the office dispatching crews at all hours of the day and night, we completed 99.45 percent of sailings in 2017.

Over the last year, I have learned a lot, ridden many ferries, talked to employees, and worked closely with my WSDOT colleagues, legislators and community partners.

My highlights of the past year include:

- Taking a two-week Ordinary Seaman training course and seeing up close the jobs our deck crews do every day.

**2017 by the numbers**



**24.5 million** riders traveled with us. The highest total ridership since 2002.



**1 new** Olympic Class ferry joined the fleet.

The *Chimacum* primarily serves the Seattle/Bremerton route.



**242 new** deck, terminal,

engine room, and Eagle Harbor Maintenance Facility employees joined our team.

Terminal and fleet employees



completed **4,538** total training hours.



Our ferries traveled a combined distance of **901,288**



*In May, I participated in Ordinary Seaman training where I learned everything from cleaning the ferry to fire fighting and life saving response.*

- Meeting with all of our [Ferry Advisory Committees](#) and learning about issues important to each of their communities.
- Touring our Eagle Harbor Maintenance Facility several times and seeing how the skilled employees in each of the shops keep our vessels and terminals maintained.
- [Celebrating the Chimaquam](#) starting service on the Seattle/Bremerton route in June.



*I was so honored to participate in the Chimaquam Community Celebration with Transportation Secretary Roger Millar, Rep. Judy Clibborn and Senator Curtis King on June 22.*

- Signing one of the first steel piles that will be used to construct a new [Colman Dock](#).

miles. That's more than **36 times** around the earth.

We completed **99 percent**



of scheduled trips. With an average of **440** departures per day, a ferry left the terminal every **3 minutes and 15 seconds** across the system.



Our Customer Service team answered **139,123 calls** in our call center, with an average talk time of **3:15 minutes**.



We responded to nearly **14,000** email and written comments and questions.



We shared **7,000** total tweets with our **24,900** followers and had more than **17 million** total impressions.

#### Community Engagement

In 2017, we held 36 public meetings, advisory group meetings, and public information sessions to speak directly with hundreds of community members and ferry customers. We held

- Helping to kick-off construction of the new [Mukilteo terminal](#) where I was joined by members of the Tulalip Tribe and elected officials. We've been working together to design and build a new facility that respects tribal lands and artifacts and improves safety at this terminal that's used by more vehicles than any other in the system.
- Meeting with a number of legislators in Olympia. In December, I presented to the [Joint Transportation Committee](#) and shared updates on WSF's accomplishments.
- Attending labor/management roundtables to better understand the challenges facing our employees.
- Awarding three employees with a WSF Life Ring Award. This special award is presented to individuals whose actions clearly made the difference in saving a person's life.



*In December, I awarded Able Bodied Seamen Jason Rossi and Wayne Reed with a WSF Life Ring Award for their role in rescuing an overturned kayaker on the Edmonds/ Kingston route.*

- Diving into our [long range planning process](#) by convening advisory groups and beginning our public outreach process.
- Celebrating the *Hyak's* 50th birthday as it received a symbolic gold stripe on its smoke stack and learning about WSF's long history and significance in Puget Sound. We also said goodbye to two of our oldest

public meetings in Vashon and Southworth, shared information on the Colman Dock and Mukilteo terminal projects, kicked off our Long Range Plan advisory groups, and formed the Triangle Improvement Task Force.

The [task force](#) is a citizen advisory group comprised of volunteers from each community served by the Fauntleroy/Vashon/Southworth route. In 2017, the task force met 13 times and focused on short-term operational changes to the Fauntleroy terminal. We'll continue to work with the task force this year as we plan for other improvements to the route.



*Triangle Task Force members observing operations at the Fauntleroy terminal.*



*Hundreds joined us for a public meeting on Vashon Island in September.*



ferries this year, the *Hiyu* and *Evergreen State*.

- Cutting the ribbon to officially open our new Orcas Island terminal building.



*I learn so much from our employees. Here I am shadowing one of our Information Agents as she helps a customer on the phone.*



*Our entire executive team toured many of the vessels and visited with staff in the engine rooms and pilothouses.*



*For the first time, we held photo and art contests to spice up*



*Southworth public meeting*

#### **WSDOT emphasis areas**

As part of WSDOT, the Ferries Division works to integrate with the rest of the state's multimodal transportation system, leverage our limited funding, and engage with our customers, communities and partners. Early last year, WSDOT introduced three agency emphasis areas: Practical Solutions, Inclusion and Workforce Development. We have formed teams to work on these strategies and will incorporate these goals in everything we do.

#### *Workforce development*

We strive to be an employer of choice – attracting and retaining a skilled, diverse workforce – valuing employee development and engagement, supported by a modern work environment. Here at WSF we are improving our internal communications and working on ways to bring together our remote workforce such as developing a marine learning system that will be accessible to our employees in the fleet. We provided training to more than 3,000 people this year including 156 deck, engine and terminal new hires.

#### *Inclusion*

the cover of our seasonal sailing schedules. This photo of the Lopez terminal, submitted by a San Juan Islands customer, was one of the finalists for our Winter 2017 schedule cover.



We hosted many community events aboard ferries this year, including pep rallies for the Seahawks and events in partnership with the Sounders.

### 2017 major accomplishments

#### New ferries

The third Olympic Class vessel, *Chimacum*, entered service last summer on the Seattle/Bremerton route. More than 1,800 guests joined us at the Bremerton ferry terminal in June to celebrate *Chimacum's* completion. The *Suquamish* is 80 percent complete and is scheduled to enter service next fall.



Christening the Suquamish on Jan. 4, 2018

We seek to understand, be sensitive to, and employ a workforce that reflects the many diverse communities we serve. All businesses desiring to work with us will have fair and equal access to contracting opportunities. At WSF, our projects and programs are developed with community input and embrace the diversity of the communities and customers that we serve.

#### Practical Solutions

We collaborate with our partners to make the right investments, in the right places, at the right time, while using the right approach. Our investment choices are guided by multimodal performance outcomes in order to achieve a truly integrated, sustainable transportation system. At WSF, we have put this approach into practice by broadening our scope to consider a complete door-to-door trip rather than simply dock-to-dock.



### *Construction begins on two major terminal projects*

This year we started construction on our two biggest terminal projects. Construction on the [Seattle Ferry Terminal at Colman Dock](#) began in August and is expected to last approximately five years. The project will remove over 7,400 tons of deteriorating creosote-treated timber piles from Elliott Bay and replace them with seismically-sound new concrete pilings and a steel trestle. It includes a new terminal building and a new passenger only facility. The ferry terminal, which serves over nine million customers per year, will remain open without any reductions to service throughout construction.

Construction of the new [Mukilteo terminal](#) is also well underway and we expect it to open in 2019. It will include a new passenger and maintenance building, a supervisor's building, transit center and four new tollbooths. The terminal's location near the Sounder commuter rail station improves transit connections and it includes a larger holding area for vehicles. As part of WSF's partnership with the region's tribes, the terminal will be built to respect the historical significance of the site, including an environmentally friendly design and cultural design features submitted by members of the Tulalip and Suquamish tribes.



*Seattle's Colman Dock construction kick off on October 17.*



*Mukilteo's construction kick off on August 30. The milestone event was celebrated with a tribal blessing and song by the Tulalip/Quilceda Elementary School Singers.*

#### *Vessel safety improvements*

We've worked with the U.S. Coast Guard to provide 100 percent life-rafting on all vessels. After several years of being allowed "alternative compliance" by relying on vessels in close proximity with each other to provide assistance in case of emergency, this year the Coast Guard has mandated each of our Jumbo Mark II, Jumbo, Issaquah, and Super class vessels have 100 percent life-rafting capacity. The Coast Guard is allowing us to install the new rafts during regularly-scheduled maintenance, over the course of the next three years, allowing us to minimize service disruptions.



*Life raft testing in May on the Salish. The passenger evacuation slides with life rafts are tested every six years.*



### *Safety management*

We've streamlined our internal Safety Management System (SMS), to reduce the number of accounts and the number of printed manuals to minimize printing costs, and make safety documents more easily accessible. This is part of an overall effort to simplify procedures and reduce redundancy across the agency.

### *Exemplary customer service*

WSF Information Agents responded to approximately 139,000 phone calls in 2017. They handled more than 85,700 vehicle reservations for customers over the phone. We also share information quickly and transparently on our Twitter account @wsferries. Our account routinely tops 1.5 million impressions each month.

### *Concessions revenue increases*

Total concessions revenues across all categories increased five percent from FY 2016 to FY 2017. Onboard concessions revenue increased 11 percent, and our vendor, Centerplate, is constantly adding local and sustainable products to provide better food and beverage options for ferry riders.

## **What's ahead in 2018**

### *Investing in people*

Our workforce is the backbone of the ferry system. Approximately 25 percent of WSF's employees are eligible to retire in the next five years. Many of them are highly-skilled and credentialed crew members, tradespeople, and vessel engineers with a long career path to reach their current positions. Currently, 55 percent of our deck crews and 62 percent of our captains are over age 54, and 55 percent of our engine room crews and Eagle Harbor maintenance staff are over 50. We are focusing on ways to help new employees entering the organization see future possibilities and to develop long-term interest in a WSF maritime career. We will continue our partnership with Seattle Maritime Academy (Seattle Central College) to provide training opportunities on a joint deck and engine simulator and maintain our intern program, providing a local pipeline of future licensed employees. We are also forging new partnerships with institutions such as Perry Technical Institute in Yakima.





*Our guests from Perry Technical Institute rode the Puyallup, took a tour of the engine room, visited all the shops at Eagle Harbor, and visited the engine room of the Kitsap.*

#### *Vessel maintenance needs and summer service expectations*

WSF transports 50 percent more people in summer than we do in winter, with only 18 percent more service hours. During these busy months, we are unable to increase the number of boats we own, the size of our terminal space, or the availability of our crews proportionally. This puts pressure on the entire ferry system, as customers wait longer, crews work longer hours, and maintenance crews have fewer hours available to access vessels and equipment.

We have 22 vessels in service, and 19 of those are necessary for maintaining our summer schedule. To meet vessel maintenance needs, two vessels are usually scheduled for summer work that includes preventative maintenance or painting. That leaves us with one legislatively-funded service relief vessel to handle whatever the summer season throws at us. The Governor's budget for the rest of the 17-19 biennium also includes money to keep the *Hyak* in service to minimize disruptions while other vessels go in for work.

We are planning now for next summer's seasonal spikes in ridership and the maintenance needs of our vessels that operate up to 20 hours a day, 365 days a year. We are reviewing schedules for several routes and will be updating our summer service contingency plan that outlines how we handle unexpected service disruptions and vessel maintenance needs.

*2040 Long Range Plan*

In 2017, WSF launched a comprehensive effort to develop a [Long Range Plan](#) that will shape the future of the ferry system through 2040. Systemwide ridership is projected to grow 30 percent in the next 20 years and we need to plan for how we will accommodate this growth. The completed long range plan will provide a blueprint for new vessel needs, service scenarios, ridership forecasts, and the agency's sustainability efforts. The development of the Long Range Plan includes a broad public involvement process and the engagement of numerous partners, including ferry riders, community interest groups, transit agencies, elected officials, and Ferry Advisory Committees.

#### *Hybrid electric ferries*

In January, Governor Inslee signed [Executive Order 18-01](#), which directs state agencies to improve the efficiency of state government operations and reduce spending on energy. It specifically directs WSDOT to begin the transition to a zero-carbon-emission state ferry fleet. WSF is exploring how hybrid electric technology could be used to power ferries to reduce our carbon footprint and lower fuel costs. This is all part of our effort to make Washington's ferry system the greenest in the world. Pending available funding, we will be looking at converting our three largest ferries, the Jumbo Mark II class, to hybrid electric propulsion by reviewing capital costs, potential capital and operating savings, construction schedules and other considerations, such as shore power charging infrastructure and connections to our terminals.



*Checking out a bank of batteries such as those that could someday be used to power our ferries.*

**Closing**

I never thought this job would be easy, but I have been inspired to discover the truly exceptional levels of skill, dedication and sheer force of will employees use to get our customers safely to their destinations every day. With this in mind, I enter 2018 grateful to all of you and committed to fight for the tools and support the ferry system needs to serve our customers and the residents of this great state. It has been an amazing first year for me, and I look forward to sharing more with you next year.

*If you want to receive updates about WSF throughout the year, be sure to [subscribe to our Weekly Update](#).*

**Amy Scarton**

Assistant Secretary, WSDOT/Ferries Division



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