

II] Key Accomplishments



Every accomplishment is meant to align with the ferry system's strategic goals, preparing the ferry system to be more self-sufficient and to provide a high level of service that continues into the future.

The Strategic Plan

In the fall of 2002, following an analysis of business and financial fundamentals, Washington State Ferries defined four Strategic Goals. They are:

1. Continually improve and refine our business processes
2. Broaden our revenue base and reduce costs
3. Promote and assist in the planning of regional transportation centers
4. Re-define who we are

The Strategic Goals acknowledge that traditional funding sources will be limited in the future. The Strategic Goals assume that the ferry system must identify and generate new sources of funding to provide a sustainable future.

To carry out these goals, Washington State Ferries formulated the Business and Capital Funding Plans.

The “5+5+5” Business Plan means that the ferry system is responsible for reducing costs by 5%, capping ferry fare increases at 5%, and generating 5% in new revenues with a comprehensive retail, marketing, and advertising program. Under this new plan, the ferry system proposes to recover 90% of its operating costs by 2008 with revenues generated by the ferry system (in fiscal year 2003 we covered approximately 73%).

The Capital Funding Plan builds on the Business Plan to address the ferry system’s urgent capital needs. The plan provides funding for much-needed major maintenance projects and new vessel construction. It’s a straightforward formula:

Service reductions + vessel retirements = less preservation work
Less preservation work = funding for critical capital investments

The Strategic Plan provides a sustainable future for the state ferry system through a focus on refining our business practices, broadening our revenue base and investing in our capital infrastructure. Facts, figures and more information on the Strategic Plan can be found in Chapter Four, page 20.

Safety and Security

For the past eight years, the ferry system has been working on a comprehensive set of safety enhancements in response to Coast Guard requirements regarding lifesaving measures (known as Title 46, Code of Federal Regulations, Subchapter W.)

The regulations of Subchapter W stipulate the required lifesaving equipment, plans, and training for all vessels, including all WSF vehicle ferries.

WSF submitted a comprehensive Safety Risk Assessment and Alternative Compliance Strategy to satisfy these new Subchapter W lifesaving rules.

But, on September 11, 2001, Washington State Ferries, along with the rest of the nation, was compelled to re-examine the security of its operation.

During 2001-2002, WSF tightened overall security and partnered with federal regulators and law enforcement agencies to coordinate threat and emergency response efforts.

The WSF Security Committee was formed to facilitate appropriate implementation of security measures, accurate/timely communications and reaction to pertinent emerging security issues. In July 2002, WSF's CEO, USCG Captain of the Port, and the Chief of the Washington State Patrol (WSP), signed the charter governing this joint security committee.

The Committee's work has spanned two years thus far and continues on a monthly basis, working to meet new security regulations and both federal and local legislation. An in-depth review of security issues the ferry system faced over the last year is covered in Chapter Five, Security & Safety, page 24.

Customer Service

Customer Satisfaction and Amenities Survey

In 2002, Washington State Ferries conducted the first-ever system-wide customer survey to measure customer satisfaction with Washington State Ferries' service and to measure interest in potential new services and amenities aboard the ferries and at the terminals.

WSF received nearly 7,000 responses from ferry passengers between August 19 and September 20, 2002. Customers expressed a broad level of interest in potential new services, especially on board the vessels.

Three quarters of all Washington State Ferries passengers describe themselves as "extremely satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied," overall, with Washington State Ferries. The satisfaction rating is slightly higher among full-fare passengers (79%) than among commuters (71%).

The most popular new service ideas, for both ferries and the terminals, are food courts, beverages such as espresso, wine and beer, newsstands and bookstores.

Washington State Ferries intends to use the information to improve its level of service wherever possible, and to assist with decisions about new services and amenities.

Accepting Credit Cards at Terminals

In a major improvement to customer service, WSF began accepting credit cards at all terminals where payment is rendered.

WSF Information Technology staff began implementing point-of-sale credit card acceptance at select terminals in October 2001. All terminals, with the exception of the San Juan Island terminals, were online by January 2002.

In July 2002, credit card sales represented 19% of all transactions and \$2.4 million on 67,000 transactions.

Monthly Passes Available at Retail Locations

Washington State Ferries first offered the “ferry-only monthly pass” in 2001.

Early in 2002, WSF began selling the ferry-only pass at convenient retail locations near ferry terminals. This allowed for flexibility in payment type, and gave customers the ability to purchase the pass at a storefront.

Smart Cards

On April 29, 2003 seven public transportation agencies, including Community Transit, Everett Transit, King County Metro Transit, Kitsap Transit, Pierce Transit, Sound Transit, and Washington State Ferries, authorized a new fare system that will allow passengers to move more easily between buses, trains, and ferries across four counties in Puget Sound.

The new fare collection system uses “smart-card technology,” featuring a fare card containing a microchip. The chip can be loaded with a cash value or any amount equal to a pass sold by the partner agencies. The cards are read at the farebox, terminal, or station with the fare automatically deducted.

Public introduction of the Smart Card is scheduled for 2006. The card will streamline the purchasing process for commuters, and eliminate more than 300 types of tickets, passes and tokens currently used by the transit systems.

Vanpool/Carpool

Washington State Ferries promotes Carpooling and Vanpooling as an alternative to single-occupancy vehicle travel. Ridesharing reduces traffic congestion and air pollution in our community. Through marketing and promotion efforts, participation in WSF's Carpool and Vanpool Program increased dramatically in Fiscal Year 2003. Through the combined effort of King County Metro, Kitsap Transit, and Washington State Ferries, Carpools on the ferries increased 34%; Vanpools on the ferries increased 19%; and VanShare groups (vans that drive to and/or from the ferry terminals, but do not board) increased 82%.

Lifesavings/rescues

Washington State Ferries gives Life Ring Awards to those employees involved in saving the life of a customer or fellow co-worker. WSF vessel employees receive training in first aid and rescues at sea, and are trained in the use of the vessel's on-board automatic external defibrillator (AED) for heart attack victims. Because of this training, WSF employees are able to assist during life or death situations by responding with immediate assistance and by properly communicating the emergency so that victims are able to receive additional assistance as quickly as possible.

In 2002, Life Ring Awards were given to crewmembers from the *MV Elwha* (March 12), *MV Walla Walla* (July 7), *MV Hyak* (July 20), *MV Yakima* (July 29), and *MV Chelan* (Dec. 2) for their life-saving efforts.

In 2003, several WSF employees earned Life Ring Awards: Crewmembers on the *MV Evergreen State* (Jan. 26) for rescuing an overturned kayaker from rough waters, the *MV Elwha* (May 9) for aiding a choking victim, the *MV Chelan* (May 22) for saving a man who had jumped overboard, the *MV Tacoma* (Sept. 9) for saving a heart attack victim, Port Townsend/Keystone crew (April 7) for using CPR to resuscitate a customer, Southworth terminal employees (Oct. 6) for rescuing a seizure victim from a burning vehicle.



Environmental Stewardship

Eelgrass Mitigation at the Clinton Ferry Terminal

As part of a comprehensive terminal maintenance and preservation program, the Clinton Ferry Terminal was recently expanded to accommodate increasing service demands. The conventional approach to dock expansion would involve simply widening the dock to provide more vehicle holding area on the dock. However, the original design would have resulted in the loss of a substantial amount of eelgrass, which is an important habitat for juvenile salmon.

WSF decided to use this project as an opportunity to gain a comprehensive understanding of the impacts of ferries and ferry terminals on eelgrass. Researchers from the Battelle Marine Sciences Laboratory and the University of Washington, members of the Marine Resources Coordination Board, and employees from federal resource agencies worked directly with WSF Terminal Design engineers to develop a new dock design that would avoid and minimize the impact on eelgrass. This collaborative effort also identified experimental methods for eelgrass mitigation, such as the installation of glass blocks in the dock. As a result of this unique partnership, the final permitted design impacted only one third of the original estimate.



Testing Cleaner Fuels on the Ferries

The exhaust from diesel engines is a substantial source of air pollution in the Puget Sound Region. As such, the WSF Vessel Maintenance and Preservation Department, with technical and financial support from the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency and Region 10 of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, embarked on a study to evaluate the potential benefits and the likely costs associated with burning cleaner fuels in the WSF fleet. The goals of the study were to:

1. Develop an emission factor for successively cleaner grades of diesel fuel and one diesel fuel blend
2. Compare the economies of each fuel
3. Assess the compatibilities of each fuel with WSF existing equipment
4. Give WSF personnel experience handling each fuel

Using the *MV Rhododendron* as a test platform, WSF tested four different diesel fuels and fuel blends.

The data generated from this test indicates that the ferry system can potentially achieve substantial reductions in emissions from the fleet by burning cleaner fuels.

The Diesel Fuel testing indicated:

- The quantity of particulate matter emitted from the stack of the *MV Rhododendron* was reduced by between 55 and 75% when burning low sulfur diesel, B20, and ultra low sulfur diesel fuel, respectively.
- The quantity of sulfur dioxide emitted from the stack was reduced between 85 and 92% when burning low sulfur diesel, B20 and ultra-low sulfur diesel, respectively.
- The quantity of nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, and non-methane, non-ethane hydrocarbon emissions were not significantly changed by sulfur content in the fuel.

WSF is currently working to compare these test results with results generated by other organizations, to determine how to apply the results of these tests to the diesel engines on other vessels in the fleet, and to evaluate the costs and benefits associated with moving toward burning cleaner fuels and exploring grant-funding opportunities.

Schel-chelb Bay Estuary Mitigation (Bainbridge Island)

WSF's Eagle Harbor Repair facility has been the site of shipbuilding activities that span nearly a century. Historically, shipbuilding activities contributed pollutants to the land, water, and sediments in the vicinity of their operations.

In the early 1990's the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) declared WSF's Eagle Harbor Repair facility part of a superfund site - The Eagle Harbor/Wyckoff site. Cleanup of this site was completed in the late 1990's and the Schel-chelb Estuary wetland construction/restoration project was completed to replace habitat lost due to site cleanup activities. The primary goal of the estuary construction/restoration plan was to restore the intertidal and estuarine habitats that historically existed at the Schel-chelb site.

The Schel-chelb Estuary Mitigation Project won an award at the Shared Strategy for Puget Sound Salmon Recovery Conference in Tacoma, Washington.



Removal of Creosote Treated Timbers From the Marine Environment

WSF's Terminal Engineering Department has made a commitment to design, construct and maintain terminals in an environmentally responsible manner, using the best available practices and material. As part of this commitment, the Department decided to incorporate creosote removal into all ongoing ferry terminal replacement and improvement projects. The creosote-treated wood is being replaced with pilings made from steel and concrete, and the removed creosote is disposed of in a way that ensures it does not get re-used in the aquatic environment.

Creosote is a complex mixture of many chemicals and has been found to be potentially toxic to fish, other marine organisms and humans. Approximately 300 chemicals have been identified in coal-tar creosote, and there may be 10,000 other chemicals present in the mixture. The major chemicals that can cause harmful health effects are polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), phenols and cresols.

Since the year 2000, WSF's Terminal Engineering department has removed 2.5 million board feet of creosote-treated timber and piling from Puget Sound. (A board foot is one inch thick by one foot wide by one foot long.) WSF is committed to continue to remove creosote-treated lumber and timber during major maintenance activities and construction projects at all of our terminals over the next ten years.

