



Washington State Transportation Commission

2021/23 Ferry Fare Setting Hearing Summary

August 10, 2021

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Chair Roy Jennings opened the meeting at 10:00 am with introductions by commission members and staff, an overview of the agenda, and virtual meeting protocols.

Agenda Item 2:

Overview of 2021/23 Ferry Fare Proposal

Presenters:

- Carl See, Deputy Director, Washington State Transportation Commission
- Aaron Halbert, Financial Analyst, Washington State Transportation Commission
- Ray Deardorf, Senior Planning Manager, Washington State Ferries, Washington State Department of Transportation

The panel provided an overview of the Commission's 2021-2023 ferry fare proposal, the proposed vanpool definition policy change, and public input received through July 30, 2021.

The Commission's ferry fare proposal (Alternative 1) increases passenger and vehicle fares by 2.5 percent in October 2021 and October 2022. Alternative 2 would increase vehicle fares by 3.1 percent in October 2021 and increase passenger and vehicle fares by 2.5 percent in October 2022. The vanpool definition change decreases the required number of people to be considered a vanpool from five people to three people and adjusts fares accordingly.

The 2021 Ferry Fare Online Public Input Forum was open from May 28, 2021, through June 10, 2021. During this time, there were 1,121 participants and 689 written comments submitted. Respondents more greatly supported Alternative 1 than Alternative 2, and more greatly opposed Alternative 2 than Alternative 1. For the vanpool definition change, there was about an even split between those in support, opposition, and those that were neutral.

Following the Commission's decision to advance Alternative 1 at the June 2021 Commission meeting, additional comments were submitted via email. Comments generally fell into the following three categories: general opposition to any fare increase, service issues, and support for Alternative 2.

Presentation:

[2021/23 Ferry Fare Proposal](#)

For more detail on agenda item 2, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:03:36, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

**Agenda Item 3:
Public Comment**

Chair Jennings called on members of the public to provide testimony. A summary of the public testimony follows:

Mr. Joe Kunzler (Skagit County) does not support the ferry fare proposal. He is disappointed that there is no low-income fare or additional funds provided for ferry vessel replacements. He feels that the legislature must prioritize funding ferries due to a lack of private sector competition.

Ms. Sara Kiesler (Tacoma) spoke in favor of Alternative 2. She feels that fares must be equitable, and incentivize walk-on and bike passengers, in order to meet our state's climate goals.

For more detail on agenda item 3, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:38:01, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action: None.

Follow-Up: None at this time.

**Agenda Item 4:
Commission Discussion & Action - *ACTION***

Commissioners expressed their continued support for Alternative 1. Walk on passengers this year seem to be responding to much more powerful factors than price alone. It has also been a year where economic hardships have been felt by everyone; therefore, it is not a good time to place more of the financial burden on vehicles whose ridership has remained more steady than walk on passengers.

For more detail on agenda item 4, please refer to the [TVW Meeting Recording](#), starting at 00:47:06, on the progress bar found at the bottom of the screen.

Action:

Vice-Chair Young moved to adopt Alternative 1 and that it be filed as the CR-103. Commissioner Batra seconded the motion. The motion was approved, 7-0.

Vice-Chair Young moved to adopt the vanpool definition policy change, to be filed as the CR-103. Commissioner Restucci seconded the motion. The motion was approved, 7-0.

Follow-Up: WSTC to file the CR-103 with final fare and policy changes by August 30, 2021. WSF to provide notification of ORCA transit partners, reprogram fares, and distribute new fares to the public and WSF staff.

Next meeting: Hearing on Toll Rate Setting - August 24, 2021

TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

ROY JENNINGS, Chair

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JERRY LITT, Member

JAMES A. RESTUCCI, Member

HESTER SEREBRIN, Member

ATTEST:

REEMA GRIFFITH, Executive Director

DATE OF APPROVAL