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Kenmore ferry is a 'high priority,' officials say

By [TOM CORRIGAN](#)**Bothell Reporter Reporter**Dec 03 2008, 12:00 AM **NEW**

On Nov. 17, the King County Ferry District formally approved funding for up to five new ferry routes, including one leaving Kenmore, according to district Executive Director Kjristine Lund.

Lund added the Kenmore route, which would run between the city and northern Lake Washington in Seattle, is likely to be among the first to get up and running.

Kenmore may be competing with a route from Renton for the first boats, or the two routes may be launched simultaneously.

“Kenmore is a high priority,” Lund added.

Other routes may reach Kirkland, Des Moines and Ballard.

Ferry district officials have tossed out July of next year as a potential start date for the first new runs.

“I think practically, it won't happen that soon,” Lund said.

Instead, she feels the first boats will leave their moorings in early 2010.

“We're hearing a lot of different things,” said Kenmore Mayor David Baker. “We're just hanging back and making sure we're ready.”

Lund did not have a price tag for the new routes readily available, but did say the ferry district would be leasing any needed boats.

Kenmore officials have been lobbying hard for the new ferry run for some time. In the past, King County Council Member Bob Ferguson, who sits on the ferry district board, said there were three main criteria officials were using to pick spots for new runs: local support, local facilities and local investment. Baker said

Kenmore has certainly shown plenty of support for the ferry.

Baker added that earlier this year he surveyed about 100 people at the Kenmore Park and Ride regarding their thoughts on a ferry run. He said more than 60 people indicated they would take advantage of a Kenmore ferry stop. Baker noted many of those using the Park and Ride don't live in Kenmore, but come from neighboring towns.

"It seems like it could potentially be a boon for the whole area," Baker said.

What's in it for Kenmore alone?

"I think the city would like to be a destination, not just a pass-through," Lund said.

Baker said a ferry stop here possibly could lead to new local development, but he also talked about increased use of existing retail by non-residents making their way to and from the water. According to Baker, the ferry district has plans for three runs in the morning and three in the afternoon, with each boat carrying up to 160 or so riders.

According to information released by the ferry district, the Lake Washington routes will be modeled after the Elliot Bay Water Taxi that serves West Seattle and downtown Seattle. The Water Taxi carried more than 181,000 passengers between West Seattle and downtown this season, a number that represents a 70-percent increase in ridership over the past three years.

While the board announced funding for the new ferry runs, officials also stated they had elected to bypass the allowed property tax levy increase of 1 percent.


"North-end officials and residents have expressed strong support for a Kenmore route and the regional mobility it will offer," Ferguson said following the district board's Nov. 17 decision. "The board's action charts a fiscally conservative course for moving forward with this route and expanded passenger ferry service throughout King County."

Bothell Reporter Reporter Tom Corrigan can be reached at tcorrigan@bothell-reporter.com or (425) 483-3732, ext. 5052.

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