

Bothell Kenmore Reporter

Kenmore foot ferry won't hit the water

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While the decision was all but made over the summer, the King County Ferry District has officially canceled the proposed expansion of foot-ferry service.

The expansion was slated to include a run between Kenmore and Seattle, most likely to the University of Washington. Two existing foot-ferry runs from downtown Seattle to West Seattle and Vashon Island will continue.

At its November meeting, the ferry district board of supervisors voted unanimously to reduce the ferry district levy for 2010, relinquishing money that would have gone to support the additional foot ferries. Those dollars instead likely will go to the cash-strapped Metro Transit bus system.

“In light of tough economic time and the transit crisis King County is facing, these savings allow us to preserve bus service,” said King County Councilmember Jane Hague, who formally proposed the action by the ferry district. “Estimates show that these savings could translate into more than 180,000 hours of bus service.”

“By sharply reducing the property tax levy for ferries, we are able to prioritize preserving basic bus service without raising taxes,” said ferry boardmember Larry Phillips. “Using reserves to preserve existing passenger ferry service while using levy dollars to stabilize bus services gives us time to have a vital regional conversation about the future of our entire transit system.”

“This action allows us to continue service on the popular West Seattle route, which will be a lifeline for many commuters once construction begins on the Alaskan Way Viaduct,” said ferry district Chair Dow Constantine, who also should become the next King County executive when the November election results are certified.

Constantine added that the ferry district will seek funding from the state to help expand the West Seattle service during reconstruction of the viaduct.

According to figures supplied by the ferry district, the adopted levy lowers the property tax rate for the ferry district to \$1.8 million, which will translate to about one-third of 1 cent per \$1,000 of assessed property valuation collected in 2010. The new rate amounts to about \$1.20 per year for a home valued at \$400,000.

Set in 2007, the original rate was 5.5 cents per \$1,000 in assessed valuation.

Again according to the ferry district, the reduction in district collections gives the King County Council the option of adding a property tax benefitting Metro Transit without any additional impact to local taxpayers.

“During these tough economic times, it is appropriate for the ferry district to use its reserves to stay afloat,” said boardmember Bob Ferguson, who was a supporter of the additional ferry runs.

“During the economic downturn, it is important to hold down property taxes for our residents while also prioritizing scarce public dollars for sustaining bus service,” added boardmember Kathy Lambert.

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