



Fauntleroy/Vashon/Southworth Sailing Schedule Revision

Fall 2018 Community Engagement Summary

Background

Washington State Ferries (WSF) is developing a new schedule for the Fauntleroy/Vashon/Southworth (F/V/SW) route to accommodate a third 124-car Issaquah Class vessel that WSF must assign to the route beginning in Spring 2019 and to plan for forecasted ridership growth. Adding a bigger ferry to the route means adding capacity, but it also requires more dwell time built into the schedule to provide reliability and fill each sailing.

In developing a new schedule, WSF has focused on responding to the changing needs of all three communities and addressing issues such as boats leaving with space available, long lines on Fauntleroy Way, new travel patterns, and growing ridership. The Triangle Task Force, a group made up of citizen volunteers from Fauntleroy, Southworth and Vashon, worked together with WSF and local Ferry Advisory Committees (FACs) to develop the new sailing schedule. Priorities included improving afternoon peak commutes westbound from Fauntleroy and adjusting sailing times eastbound in the morning from Southworth to provide more commute options. WSF is committed to continuing to evaluate the sailing schedule and to monitor route performance, making changes as needed.

Looking ahead, the feedback received during the community engagement process will inform decisions around improving the Fauntleroy terminal, revising the F/V/SW route's emergency two boat schedule, and providing better customer service.

Overview

The goals of the fall 2018 community engagement process were to:

1. Gather informed feedback on the draft schedule.
2. Involve and engage the community in development of the sailing schedule and respond to comments asking for more community engagement.
3. Educate ferry customers and the community about *why* the schedule needs to change, *when* changes will occur, and *how* WSF will address current challenges and priorities identified by the Triangle Task Force and public comments.
4. Be equitable by providing and encouraging the same level of interaction and involvement with all three communities on the Fauntleroy/Vashon/Southworth route.
5. Build trust



In the fall of 2018, WSF held a three-week public comment period on a draft sailing schedule. During this time, WSF hosted three public meetings, one in each community: Fauntleroy (10/23), Vashon (10/24), and Southworth (10/25). WSF also conducted outreach to key stakeholders, transit partners, and community groups. WSF publicized the draft schedule and public comment process through social media, in the WSF Weekly Update, via media and on flyers at terminals and on vessels.

This document summarizes what WSF heard from customers, stakeholders, community members, vessel crew, engine room employees, and terminal staff during the comment period from Oct. 15-Nov. 9, 2018.

Community engagement by the numbers

Information about the schedule revision and public meetings was widely shared.

- Featured in **seven WSF Weekly Updates** (sent to over 5,000 subscribers every Thursday).
- On social media, **21 tweets were sent from @wsferries** with reminders about how to participate and comment on the draft sailing schedule.
- The schedule revision **website saw 3,600 unique visits**.

WSF discussed the schedule revision process with the Triangle Task Force eight times from Fall 2017-Winter 2018. WSF also met jointly with the Triangle Task Force and Fauntleroy, Vashon and Southworth Ferry Advisory Committees to discuss schedule changes.

WSF hosted **three public meetings** in Southworth, Fauntleroy, and Vashon.

- **300 people attended the public meetings.**
 - 151 at Vashon
 - 27 at Fauntleroy
 - 122 at Southworth

WSF received a **total of 339 comments** during the three week public comment period. Comments were collected at public meetings, via email, or mailed to WSF.

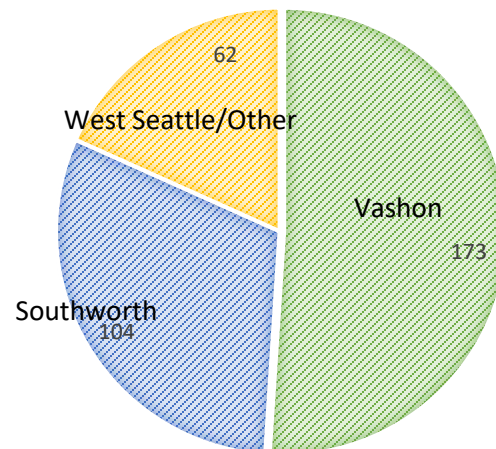


What we heard – public comment overview

The complete log of comments received during the three week public comment period from Oct. 15- Nov. 9, 2018 is included in Appendix A.

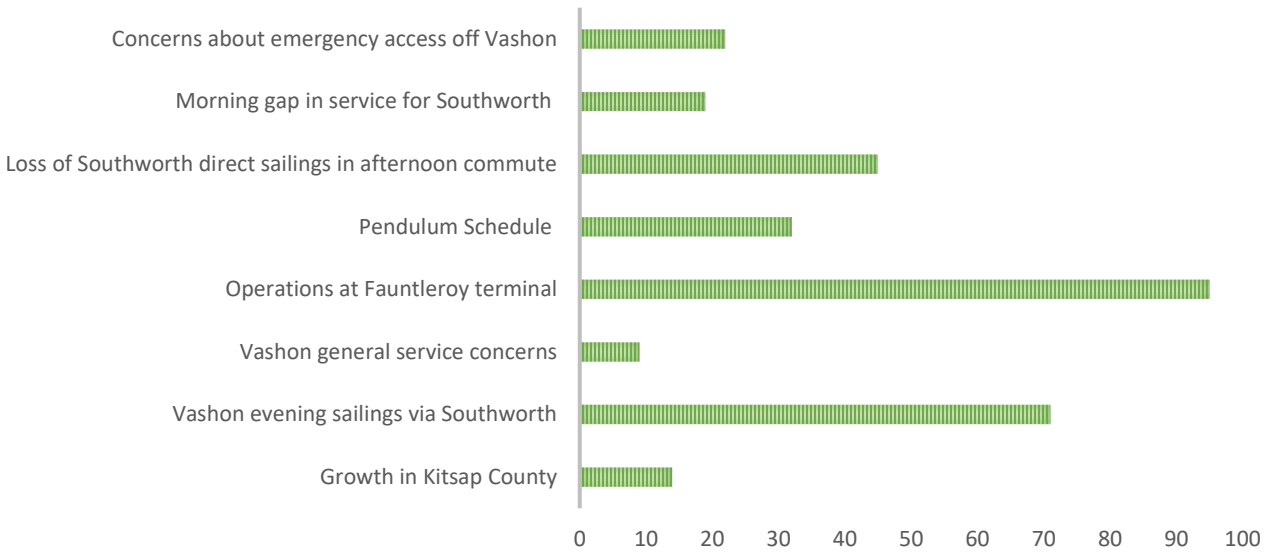
- Almost a third of comments addressed the loading process, wait times, or frustrations with operational inefficiencies of the Fauntleroy terminal.
- 55 comments included praise or satisfaction with the overall schedule development process.
- 33 comments expressed frustration with the process, dissatisfaction with public meetings, or distrust of WSF.

COMMENT BREAKDOWN BY COMMUNITY





KEY THEMES



More positives than negatives

While the majority of feedback focused on specific comments about the draft schedule, such as sailing times, loading allotments, or ideas about how to fix the Fauntleroy terminal, input focused on the community engagement process was largely positive. Out of the nearly 340 comments received, there were more positive comments than those expressing frustration over the process.

“Just wanted to thank you for considering the commuter kids in coming up with your new schedule. The changes barely impact them and us parents are SUPER grateful. It is already a long day for them and adding additional commuting time would have caused problems for a lot of families. Thank you! Greatly appreciated!” – Vashon commenter

“I have studied the material you submitted with the proposed schedule and believe the plan is viable to improve flow and increase timeliness. I have heard plenty of complaints from both Southworth and Vashon commuters that reflect a lack of consideration for the big picture; it is simply a difficult problem you are trying to solve. The proposed schedule is a good one, and much better than the first two published for consideration.” – Vashon commenter

“I wholeheartedly agree with the proposed schedule as do many similar riders who could not attend tonight’s event. Thank you.” – Southworth commenter

“Should help reduce traffic impact and queuing along Fauntleroy in p.m. Good proposal!” – Fauntleroy commenter



Characteristics of different communities

One of WSF's goals with the schedule revision and the approach to community engagement was to support the Triangle Route as a system where all legs of the route are an integral part of the state highway network. Many comments from Vashon residents viewed the draft schedule as favoring Southworth riders while many Southworth commenters viewed the schedule as favoring Vashon riders. The most common concern for Southworth riders was the loss of direct routes. Vashon riders' most common concern was about fewer evening direct sailings off the island.

"... I understand Vashon is an island, however, the amount of catering to Vashon instead of mainland is unfair. Vashon has a fast ferry, and two ferry docks, while Southworth has one option. I sit unhappy five days a week with the same people every time..." – Southworth commenter

"Vashon Island is totally reliant on ferry service. Southworth and Kitsap County is on the mainland. Prioritizing mainland over the island community makes NO sense." – Vashon commenter

Vashon riders argued for more service priority because their community is an island. Many Vashon comments focused on the need for connections to the mainland, concerns about losing connectivity for certain customer groups, the local economy, and emergency response.

"I am a lifelong resident of Vashon and understand the compromises living here requires given the dependency on ferries. However, it is unfair to retreat from the availability of ferry runs. Getting to and from Vashon has become increasingly more difficult, especially with long lines and wait times."

"Our ferries are lifelines for residents and businesses alike. You fail to treat them as such. You make arrangements when roads are out of service; ferries are part of our roads. Penalizing Vashon further to accommodate increased volume to and from Southworth is unacceptable. Even on Vashon, we recognize the growth occurring on the Kitsap peninsula. Service has been inept and inadequate for more than two years now."

Southworth riders argued for more service based on the growth of south Kitsap County and an increase in daily commuters due to longer travel times on alternate routes. Comments focused on a gap in eastbound service during the morning and how that could impact parents dropping kids off at childcare, commuters heading to professional jobs in the Seattle area, and the potential for increased wait times at the Southworth terminal during the morning rush.

"The revised schedule continues to demonstrate a growing inequity to those who commute to/from the South Kitsap area into the greater Seattle area. If you consider the statistics you are providing less services and longer commute times to residents that represent a significantly lower income and higher poverty demographic..."

"Port Orchard is becoming more and more populated and the ferries are getting more and more crowded. Often I have to make sure I am at the dock early in order to make it on my preferred crossing time. PLEASE do not take any crossings away....only adding is prudent."



Regardless of community, a strong theme of the feedback addressed the growth of the South Kitsap County region. Many acknowledged the rapid growth of the area and were concerned about how WSF was going to accommodate the change while also providing equitable service.

“My concerns are for the emergency vehicles leaving the island during early evening when the ferries run from Vashon to Southworth to Fauntleroy schedules. Will those be rerouted directly to Fauntleroy? Can you keep the schedule if so? Also as growth pushes further to Kitsap County, will Vashon see more cuts or routes directly to Southworth rather than ferries running directly to Vashon? This would be a serious problem for Vashon. Thank you for your efforts.”

“...Greater growth on the Kitsap peninsula has occurred over that time and based on this...the ferry system should consider how to deal with that condition separately in lieu of juggling the Triangle route times and capacity limitations...”

Fauntleroy Terminal

Comments about issues with the Fauntleroy Terminal were by far the most common theme. Almost a third of comments expressed frustration, shared recommendations, or stated they felt changes in the schedule would not impact their travel as much as addressing current constraints around Fauntleroy terminal ingress and egress. Issues with loading vehicles in a timely manner as to decrease wait times and back up were a major concern.

“...The schedule won’t work unless you CHANGE THE PROCESSING AT FAUNTLEROY. No amount of dwell time will work if unticketed cars take up to three minutes. Different ideas include Good to Go, toll only on eastbound direction, multiple ticket options, etc. Put money in the long range plan to fund better processing.” -Fauntleroy commenter

“What good does a bigger ferry do when ferries regularly leave half empty even when the line goes to California Ave? Fix the tollbooth bottleneck!” -Vashon commenter

“I have no comment on the proposed schedule changes, as they are largely meaningless unless you make some real commitment to upgrading/replacing the Fauntleroy Terminal.” -Comment to planning email

Ongoing issues with loading

Issues with loading was another theme. Many comments focused on ideas, concerns, or frustration over loading. Loading processes and community perception of favoritism were frequently brought up. Many commenters suggested that the future of Fauntleroy Terminal could involve streamlining loading procedures, updating tolling options, and constructing overhead passenger loading and additional lanes.

“...It seems the biggest issue is dock space and staging area at Fauntleroy. Over the years it seems like most (if not all) other locations have managed to significantly expand their staging area to account for growth, larger boats, less congestion, why NOT at Fauntleroy! Expand the dock! Purchase some property! Build a staging structure! Do something effective! The mess at Fauntleroy in the afternoons is horrible and a significant safety issue.” -Southworth Commenter



Comments on specific sailing times and elements of the schedule

Southworth morning sailings

Southworth riders expressed concern about morning sailings, specifically removing the 8:20 am sailing and leaving a gap in service from 7:55 am to 9:20 am. This could potentially impact parents who drop kids off at school in the morning on the way to work and commuters working a typical 8-5 or 9-5 schedule.

"... I would assume anyone in our position with regular work hours on the Southworth side that the route for the direct boat we rely on for work every morning (7:50 am) is being completely eliminated. The next closest boat is almost 2 hours later during morning commute hours. I can't imagine it is an option for any commuters to take the 8:45 boat, as it's just not normal work hours to start work from 9:30 or 10 a.m. Therefore, every commuter on the 7:50 boat will be forced to take [an earlier] boat, which is [the] 7:05 a.m. one. If this boat is overcrowded because of the loss of a morning boat, everyone will have to get there even earlier to ensure a spot. This would add about an hour to every regular commute, every day."

"...Only concerns are gap in the morning 7:55 to 9:20. If I need to stop by my kid's school or any other reason. Gap in the afternoon [from] 11:35 to 1:40 will be hard to get home in case of emergency. Example: my child gets sick and the school calls to get her etc..."

"...[The] 7:55 am Southworth to Fautleroy will be very full. I'll need to leave earlier to get in line. On my way home, no more direct boats and MAYBE less time on [Fautleroy Way]. 7:55 [a.m. sailing from Southworth to Fautleroy] will be a nightmare... No one is going to take an earlier boat than they do now. The loss of the 8:20 a.m. will be a nightmare. Then an hour and twenty five minutes to the next one??..."

Vashon evening sailings

A strong theme from Vashon customers was concern around evening sailings from Vashon to Fautleroy. Parents with children commuting to Vashon schools from off the island were concerned about the schedule preventing students from fully participating in extracurricular activities. Many were concerned about being able to time social outings, concerts, and other Seattle evening events with the new schedule.

"The reduction of ferries leaving Vashon later in the evening affects commuter students/parents that attend events at all schools in the evening including Harvest Festival, Parent conferences, performances, and sporting events. In most cases events run later than 8 p.m. and will leave little time to get to the Vashon dock by 8:20 or have to wait an hour and a half until the next ferry at 9:55."

"I'm a resident of Vashon and my family uses the Vashon-Fautleroy route daily. I am concerned about the changes for evenings leaving Vashon. It seems a bit drastic to have 5 out of 7 sailings after 6 p.m. going through Southworth. If we have to go out of the way to get off island it really



adds significantly to the travel time and will make leaving the island in the evenings quite tedious. I'd prefer to see a few more of those evening sailings as direct."

"I'm horrified that there are no direct ferries from Vashon to Seattle all evening from 5:45 pm until 8:20 pm. This means it blocks us from getting to any events in Seattle. Plays, shows, concerts, lectures, school performances by our grandchildren. We are cut off when we wait nearly an hour!!"

Southworth direct sailings

Southworth commuters, especially vanpool customers (who get priority loading), expressed concern about the loss of direct sailings from Fauntleroy in the afternoon and early evening. Many outlined how this change would significantly add to their overall commute. Eliminating direct sailings was the top concern for those working swing shifts, off hours, or with reverse commutes.

"[This schedule] will make me wake up earlier for the 5:50 instead of 6:00 am boat. I am concerned that the 5:50 will not be a limited vehicle load, thus not sure anytime for an earlier start. Also, concerned with losing direct routes after 3:00pm. Another example of Southworth being second class citizens!"

"To see that all direct sailing to Southworth are removed in the prime afternoon commute was very discouraging. By this change in schedule and route you have added on to my commute time by over 30 mins in the evening."

"No direct routes from Fauntleroy to Southworth in afternoon which adds at least 25 minutes to commute. Also having to leave earlier makes the work day longer. I'm already taking vanpool to work, we now have a 12 hour day, 6:00 am ferry and 4:30 pm ferry. With these changes the workday will be 13-14 hours and little family time. The 4:20 direct route is critical for us to have time with family after work. This new schedule completely eliminates direct sailings from Fauntleroy to Southworth."

Frustrations with the overall process

From the 10 percent of negative comments received during the public comment period, some addressed specific frustration with aspects of the schedule development process. Themes included frustration over the style of public meetings, strong feelings that the public process was merely a formality, and that WSF was not listening to riders.

"The comment only 'meeting' you had on Vashon was unconscionable and a 'token' fulfillment of your responsibility for adequate review of transportation available to Vashon citizens. Please reconsider your decision." – Vashon commenter

"The current 'open house' format is not conducive to giving feedback and feeling like our voices are being heard. [...] Is anybody actually reading feedback??" – Southworth commenter



Better connections to transit

Many comments contained feedback about walk-on options and alternatives to driving a single occupancy vehicle. Some comments expressed the need for more carpool incentives, better connections to bus service, and more passenger only ferry options. Overall, those who said they used the King County Vashon Water Taxi were very pleased with the better alignment of the new schedule.

“In total yes, the connections to the water taxi on the new schedule are far better. I love the alignment of the WSF with the King [County] Water Taxi. Great job there.”

“[This will make my time on the ferry] shorter. It aligns well with the Water Taxi. It works well for my schedule.”

“I like that you’re finally matching the schedule with the King County Water Taxi.”

Crew, terminal staff, and engine room employee comments

Speaking with members of the crew and reading written comments from WSF employees provided informative feedback about dwell times, crew changes, and route operations. Comments from WSF employees can be found in Appendix A.

Frequently Asked Questions

While the majority of comments related to WSF’s draft sailing schedule, some of the input related to other topics, alternative schedule proposals and future projects.

How were alternative schedules like the “Pendulum” proposal considered?

Early in the process, WSF attempted to draft an all-stops (pendulum) schedule with enough time for loading, unloading, and crossing time in addition to meeting labor agreements, vessel logistical functions, and key user needs. We abandoned this attempt when we realized that the resulting schedule would greatly reduce service to both Vashon and Southworth during the busy morning and evening commutes while having significantly more service than needed between Vashon and Southworth. Such a schedule would create longer lines and carry fewer people and goods.

Two Vashon residents, Steve Stockett and Rick Wallace, have spent a great deal of time developing an all-stops/pendulum schedule. We appreciate their sincere efforts, but their proposed schedule suffers the same capacity issues.

Additionally, none of the drafts WSF received met the route requirements for crossing and loading/unloading times, deck crew and engineer shift changes, vessel logistical functions, and key user sailing times (i.e. school sailings and connections to King County Water Taxi), and even a schedule that could meet these needs would still result in an untenable decrease in capacity during our busiest times.



For example:

- The WSF schedule includes 10 arrivals in Fauntleroy in between 4:55 and 8:55 a.m., for a maximum capacity of 1,200 vehicles. The Pendulum schedule had seven arrivals during this time, for a maximum capacity of 840 vehicles. This would mean a 30% drop in capacity during the busy morning commute.
- The number of departures from Fauntleroy in the WSF schedule between 3:00 and 7:35 p.m. is 10, for a maximum capacity of 1,200 vehicles. The Pendulum schedule has eight departures during this time, for a maximum capacity of 960 vehicles. This would mean a 20% drop in capacity during the busy evening commute, or a 25% increase in wait times.

However, WSF's schedule does incorporate the suggested all-stops sailing pattern approximately once an hour in the evening commute to provide connections in the opposite direction than standard westbound commute needs. Meanwhile, most sailings make an efficient dual destination pattern in the evening commute to get people home from Fauntleroy to Vashon and Southworth as quickly as possible and then return to Fauntleroy to load up again. This pattern moves the most people while balancing the connectivity needs of non-commuters.

What about emergencies? What is WSF doing to ensure access on and off Vashon Island for emergency responders?

Consistent with ([WAC 468-300-700](#)), WSF diverts vessels in response to medical emergencies and provides priority loading for all emergency vehicles traveling to and from a call. The revised schedule provides more opportunities to serve emergency service providers than the current schedule or other proposed schedules.

What is WSF doing to improve issues at the Fauntleroy Terminal? Is WSF going to build a new terminal?

The Fauntleroy terminal is scheduled to be replaced in 2025-2027. The new terminal will address seismic deficiencies and will be built to current standards. The planning, design and environmental process for the Fauntleroy project will begin in early 2019. The community will be engaged in all phases of the project as we determine the best option for building a new terminal.

Is this schedule permanent? What if there are major issues?

Once the revised schedule is in place in Spring 2019, WSF will be closely monitoring the route's performance. Key factors WSF tracks include ridership, on time performance, customer service interactions, vessel capacity utilization, and delays/cancellations. Implementing the revised schedule in the slower spring season will allow WSF to make changes as needed in time for the busy summer season.