

Washington State Ferries

JANUARY 2021

System facts

- Created June 1, 1951
- Largest ferry system in the United States
- Steady growth in yearly ridership in 2010s with an average of 23.4 million customers (14 million in 2020)
- Second largest ferry system in the world for vehicles carried with an average of 10.3 million/year in 2010s (7.6 million in 2020)
- Fleet of 21 auto-passenger vessels
- Operates 20 terminals on 10 routes
- About 2,000 employees
- 16 unions and 13 collective bargaining agreements

Key functions

Transit agency

- Third largest transit system in Washington (#1 King County Metro, #2 Sound Transit)

Marine highway

- Part of state highway network, serving eight counties and British Columbia, Canada

Link in region's multimodal connections

- Priority loading for freight, bicycles, vanpools and carpools
- Vehicle reservations on three routes

Mover of freight and goods

- Ferries specially constructed to accommodate commercial vehicles

Tourism, economic development

- Major tourist attraction and icon of Washington state
- Critical link between more affordable housing on the west side of Puget Sound and key employment centers on the east side

Safe, secure travel

- Enforce procedures to ensure the safety and security of passengers by working with the Washington State Patrol and U.S. Coast Guard
- As a port of entry and border crossing, ensure the security of the U.S. border by working with U.S. Customs and Border Protection

Challenges

Operations and Maintenance

- Aging fleet with all but 12 vessels over 30 years old
- Ferries in service 20+ hours a day, so it is difficult to find time for adequate maintenance
- Only one relief boat, restricting system capacity when vessels breakdown
- Drydock capacity in Puget Sound limited and difficult to adjust for emergency repairs

Workforce development

- Succession planning a critical priority
- Approximately half of vessel employees are 55 years old or older and may qualify for retirement in the next five to 10 years

New construction

- Opened Mukilteo multimodal terminal in December 2020, system's first in 40 years
- Constructing multimodal terminal at Seattle's Colman Dock
- Building first hybrid-electric Olympic Class ferry
- Converting the fleet's largest Jumbo Mark II Class vessels from diesel to hybrid-electric propulsion

2040 Long Range Plan

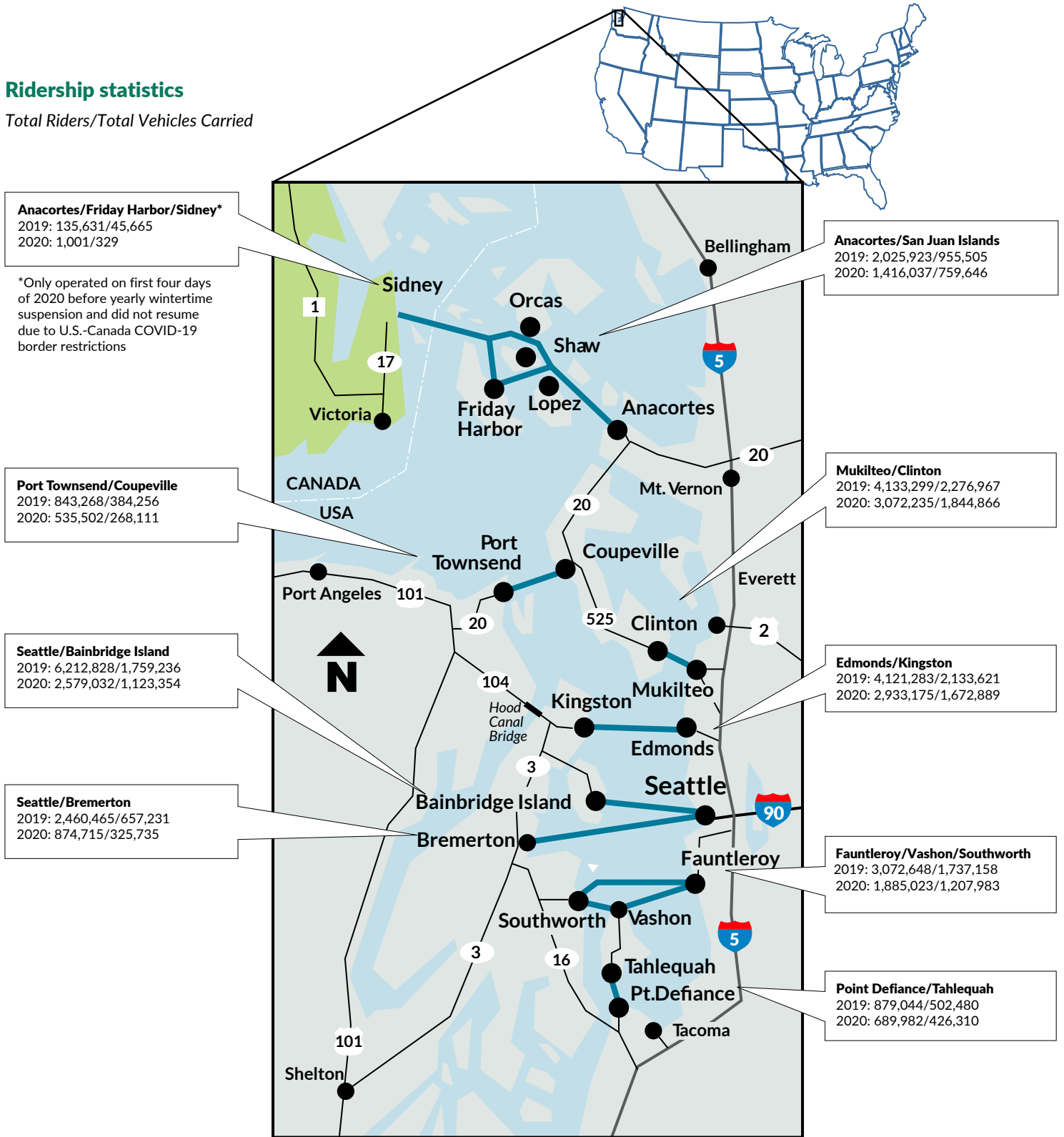
- Plans for the future of the ferry system through 2040
- Calls for 16 new ferries to replace aging vessels and help stabilize the fleet
- Considers ridership growth of 30% over the next 20 years



WSDOT Ferries Division – Nation’s Largest Ferry System

Ridership statistics

Total Riders/Total Vehicles Carried



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