



# Kitsap Transit Seattle Fast Ferry Terminal Facility

**Scoping Information Report**

**May 2022**

## **Acronyms and Abbreviations**

EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
King County Metro	Metropolitan King County, Metro Transit Department, Marine Division
KT	Kitsap Transit
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
POF	Passenger-only Ferry
PSRC	Puget Sound Regional Council
WSF	Washington State Ferries

## I. INTRODUCTION

### Seattle Fast Ferry Terminal Siting Early Scoping

Kitsap Transit (KT) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) are conducting an early scoping effort for the Kitsap Transit Seattle Fast Ferry Terminal Facility Project (Project). The Project will assess downtown Seattle waterfront locations to identify a preferred downtown terminal location to support KT's long-term fast ferry operations. Expanded landing facilities in downtown Seattle are necessary to support the KT fast ferry service approved by Kitsap voters in 2016. The Project would improve reliability of this regional transit service by addressing the current lack of passenger-only ferry (POF) landing site capacity on the Seattle waterfront, the most in demand destination in downtown Seattle. KT received federal grant funding to support this Project.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements apply to any project receiving federal grant funding that might have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment, including those involving construction, expansion, renovation, facility planning, site selection, site preparation, and security or facility upgrades. The grantee must be in compliance with NEPA requirements during the initiation of the project, as part of planning, site selection, and site preparation, and the grantee must complete the NEPA process prior to actual project construction. Early scoping for the Project is occurring within the context of the Council on Environmental Quality's regulations for NEPA compliance. FTA is the lead agency under NEPA and KT is the lead agency under the Washington State Environmental Policy Act.



Figure 1. Kitsap Fast Ferry Route Map showing the three KT routes connecting to the Pier 50 facility in downtown Seattle.

### What is Scoping?

Scoping is a process that over time, with coordination and engagement, defines and refines the project. This process includes multifaceted engagement with tribal governments, agencies, and the public. The “public” includes transit riders, property owners, business owners, community-based organizations and all other interested parties. The Project will engage with the public on both sides of the Kitsap Fast Ferry route, in Kitsap County and in downtown Seattle, where the scope of the terminal siting project is focused.

The scoping process will include a series of meetings to define the criteria for the Project that will be used to screen sites and help form the development of alternative site locations and terminal layouts on the Seattle waterfront (discussed further in Section 4). KT is seeking comments on the Project purpose and need as well as positive and negative effects each potential site may have on the surrounding areas that should be considered during site screening and alternative development.

Once input is received through early scoping, KT will refine the screening criteria used to assess potential alternatives for terminal site locations. Those screening criteria will then be applied to Seattle waterfront properties to identify potential terminal site alternatives that meet the purpose and need of the Project. These locations will be further evaluated as part of the Alternatives Development process (described in Section 4 of this document).

After the completion of the early scoping notice period, FTA will determine what level of analysis will be required during environmental review. If it is determined that the Project will likely have significant impacts to the quality of the human environment, a formal decision will be made to proceed with an appropriate environmental process, which may trigger the need to file a Notice of Intent in the Federal Register. The purpose of the EIS is to provide full and open evaluation of environmental issues and alternatives, and to inform decision-makers and the public of reasonable alternatives that could avoid or minimize adverse impacts and enhance the quality of the environment. KT and FTA will conduct the appropriate environmental process, which may include another round of scoping meetings and a formal comment period, after the screening evaluation is complete. This will allow the public, agencies, tribes, and all other interested parties an opportunity to comment on the results of the analysis and to weigh in on the alternatives presented.

#### Involvement of KT Board

The KT Board includes 10 members, nine elected officials and a non-voting member who represents the agency's labor unions, and makes decisions regarding policy, operations, and project planning. All board meetings are public and anyone may attend. At the conclusion of early scoping, the KT board will adopt the alternative(s) that advance to the environmental review process. Screening criteria and initial site assessment, informed by input from all interested parties, will be presented to the KT Board.

#### Early Scoping Meetings

Early scoping includes a public comment period that will run 30 days. Public meetings will be held at the following times:

- Monday, June 6, 2022, 12:00-1:00 p.m. (PST)
- Wednesday, June 8, 2022, 6:00-7:00 p.m. (PST)

These early scoping meetings will be conducted in a webinar format, accessible via the internet and by teleconference. Links for the online public early scoping meetings can be found at the project webpage: <https://www.kitsaptransit.com/seattle-fast-ferry-terminal-siting-study>.

To identify concerns and interests due to the potential historical and ecological nature of the project sites, regulatory agencies and tribes will be given opportunities to review project information and provide comments throughout the scoping process. Potentially interested federally-recognized tribes will be contacted and offered individual meetings at their request. Invitations to the regulatory agency and tribal early scoping meetings will be sent to the appropriate federal, tribal, state and local governmental contacts. The meetings will be accessible online via the internet and by teleconference.

## How to Comment

Written early scoping comments on this notice are requested by June 12, 2022, to Steffani Lillie, Service and Capital Development Director at the contact information below.

**Email Address:** [SteffaniL@kitsaptransit.com](mailto:SteffaniL@kitsaptransit.com).

**Telephone Number:** (360) 478-6931

### **Mailing Address:**

Kitsap Transit  
Steffani Lillie, Service and Capital Development Director  
60 Washington Ave, Suite 200  
Bremerton, WA 98337

**Information for Alternate Formats:** (360) 479-4348.

## 2. SEATTLE FAST FERRY TERMINAL AND THE REGIONAL PASSENGER-ONLY FERRY SYSTEM

The KT Fast Ferry program is part of the regional POF system that provides faster transportation options for people traveling between the Kitsap Peninsula and downtown Seattle.

### Regional Passenger-only Ferry System

The Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) is the regional metropolitan planning organization that includes Kitsap County and develops policies and coordinates decisions about regional growth, transportation and economic development planning as well as secures federal funding for transportation projects. In 2008, PSRC conducted a POF Study that identified Bremerton-Seattle, Kingston-Seattle and Southworth-Seattle as the most viable new routes for implementation based on ridership demand, land use compatibility, ease of operational and system integration, capital and operating costs and assessment of environmental impacts. Supported by a voter-approved tax initiative, KT has implemented these three POF.

Currently, KT and Metropolitan King County, Metro Transit Department, Marine Division (King County Metro) operate POF services in the Puget Sound region. KT operates local POF service from Annapolis and Port Orchard to Bremerton via the Foot Ferry and cross sound fast ferry service between three sites on the Kitsap Peninsula (Kingston, Bremerton and Southworth) and downtown Seattle all arriving at the existing POF facility at Pier 50. The King County Metro Water Taxi provides service on two routes, between Vashon Island and Pier 50 as well as West Seattle and Pier 50.

A 2020 PSRC POF study identified current and future capacity constraints at the current Pier 50 facility as a challenge for existing and expanding interest in POF systems as a regional transportation option.

## Kitsap Transit Fast Ferry Program

KT launched its first Fast Ferry POF route between Bremerton and Seattle in 2017. The Kingston-Seattle route followed in 2018, and the Southworth to Seattle route in 2020. The service is partially funded by three tenths of a cent local sales tax approved by Kitsap County voters in 2016. All three routes offer morning and afternoon weekday commute service year-round, with all-day service on Saturdays from May through September. Operating two vessels on weekdays, the Bremerton-Seattle route also offers some midday service. The Kingston-Seattle and Southworth-Seattle routes each operate a one-vessel schedule. Since the launch of Southworth-Seattle service, the Bremerton-Seattle route has operated its two-vessel service from a float at Pier 54 which is temporarily leased from a private operator. KT's lease of Pier 54 will end in May 2022 when Pier 54 undergoes renovations. On May 2, 2022, all three Kitsap Fast Ferry routes, served by four vessels, will operate from Pier 50. The sailing times for these routes are limited by the slip availability at Pier 50 and may not be the ideal peak travel times desired by the KT customer.

## Existing POF Facility in Downtown Seattle

KT shares the use of Pier 50—the only public POF facility serving downtown Seattle—with King County Metro under a five-year use agreement expiring August 2024. The existing POF facility in Seattle is a single float that supports a maximum of two, side-loading vessels (one on each side) at any one time. The float currently serves four routes with four vessels, and in May 2022, will also be the landing site for the Bremerton-Seattle service and its two additional service vessels.

## Kitsap Transit Seattle Fast Ferry Terminal Facility Project Development

KT began developing their 2040 Long Range Plan in 2021 with an existing conditions analysis identifying limited docking facilities on the Seattle waterfront as a constraint to full realization of the goals of the Fast Ferry program and highlighting the importance of the current Project. Securing adequate landing and shoreside facilities on the Seattle waterfront will be a key goal of the marine component of KT's Long Range Transportation Plan.



 Study Area for Seattle Terminal Alternative Analysis

Figure 2. Downtown Seattle Waterfront Project Study Area Map

### Project Funding

Recognizing the increasing need for docking capacity on the Seattle waterfront to address existing landing capacity limitations and service level and reliability issues, KT has dedicated some local funds in their capital budget to initiate site procurement. Additional funding will be sought through grants and other local sources to complete detailed planning, environmental review and preliminary engineering work. Additionally, the project is included in the PSRC 2021-2024 Transportation Improvement Program and identified as project KT-66 in the Washington State 2022-2025 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program.



## Project Context and History

Passenger-only ferry docking facilities at the Seattle waterfront, the most in demand destination in downtown Seattle, are limited and inhibit any increases to service on current routes or introduction of new routes due to capacity constraints at the existing facility. The Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) forecasts in 2018 that the region will add 1.8 million people and 1.2 million jobs by 2050. This growth is supported by PSRC's regional transportation forecasting models that predict continued growth over the next 20 years.

Passenger-only ferry service to downtown Seattle, the region's economic and cultural center, offers an alternative to the region's capacity strained land-based transportation systems and complements existing Washington State Ferries (WSF) service. Passenger-only ferry transportation continues to expand, with KT implementing three routes in the last four years (Bremerton-Seattle, Kingston-Seattle and Southworth-Seattle) with four vessels, and with ridership growing on the two existing King County Water Taxi routes (West Seattle-Seattle and Vashon Island-Seattle), operated by the Metropolitan King County, Metro Transit Department, Marine Division (King County Metro). In addition to existing operators, a recent PSRC 2020 Puget Sound Passenger-only Ferry Study identified additional potential ferry routes into the congested downtown Seattle waterfront. King County and other municipalities continue to explore passenger-only ferry service to downtown Seattle.

The KT passenger-only ferry program is an important transportation link connecting the Kitsap Peninsula to downtown Seattle. To ensure this service is reliable and meets rider needs, adequate landing facilities must be available on both ends of the routes. KT has built adequate landing facilities at two of their four landing locations: Bremerton and Kingston. The Southworth-Seattle route currently shares a single slip with WSF at Southworth, and KT is working with WSF to make facility improvements to expand docking facilities. However, all three KT routes share two slips with the two King County Metro routes at Pier 50 on the Seattle waterfront (KT's fourth landing location). Pier 50's designed operating capacity is insufficient for five distinct routes, serviced by six operating vessels, arriving 20 times during both the morning and afternoon commute periods.

KT is the secondary user at Pier 50 and must fit their service schedule around King County Metro's schedule. Hence, the driving factor in KT's service schedule is docking availability. This means that landing times are limited to available docking windows rather than customer preferences for arrival and departure times. With 12 landings in the peak commute ridership periods (5 a.m. to 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. to 7 p.m.), KT's current schedule fully utilizes the docking times not reserved for King County Metro. Although there are a few remaining dock openings during the commute window, they cannot be accommodated within KT vessel headways and dwell times.

Additional challenges to maintaining service schedules occur when KT and King County Metro vessels experience inevitable transit delays due to weather conditions such as fog or marine traffic that lead to cascading departure delays and service disruptions that cannot be mitigated with two landing slips.

KT must stay within their docking windows in Seattle so as not to disrupt King County Metro's schedule. To maintain docking windows, KT routinely has to travel at higher than planned speeds to maintain the Seattle arrival and departure schedule. At these higher speeds, KT consumes more fuel leading to higher carbon emissions and increased operating costs from higher fuel expense. Higher-speed operations also place greater loads on vessel engines and other vessel systems leading to increased maintenance costs.

This is particularly a problem on the Southworth-Seattle route where KT shares a single operating slip in Southworth with WSF's Fauntleroy-Vashon-Southworth route which has high potential for delays due to ridership congestion and the complicated landing schedule with multiple destinations. On average, five of the fourteen KT service trips per day are forced to run at higher than planned speeds during a portion of the route to meet scheduled arrival times in Seattle. Three of these five trips are typically required to run at top speed of 38 knots. On an annualized basis these five trips consume approximately 27,000 more gallons of fuel and cost approximately \$82,000 more than planned.

KT temporarily operated their Bremerton-Seattle route from a leased private dock at Pier 54. The lease could not be renewed, forcing KT to consolidate all three routes with King County Metro's two routes at Pier 50 beginning May 2, 2022. With five routes and six vessels operating from two slips, the risk of arrival and departure delays and higher operating costs will increase.

### 3. THE PURPOSE AND NEED

In the sections below, KT defines what the project intends to accomplish (project purpose) and the problems the project plans to address (project need). The purpose and need statement will be refined throughout the scoping phase in response to public and agency comments.

#### Project Purpose

The purpose of the proposed Project is to improve regional mobility through expanded passenger only terminal facilities on the downtown Seattle waterfront to:

- Increase vessel docking capacity.
- Increase passenger staging capacity and improve rider amenities, including restrooms and bicycle storage.
- Incorporate shoreside infrastructure and equipment to support electric vessel charging.
- Increase integration of passenger-only ferry travel with other transit modes.
- Maintain or improve rider accessibility to Seattle business, employment, cultural and retail destinations.
- Create opportunities for growth of regional passenger-only ferry routes throughout the Puget Sound Region.
- Improve access to jobs and housing opportunities in regional growth centers.
- Expand mobility options for minority and low-income populations.

## Need for the Project

Additional terminal facilities are needed because:

- The current passenger-only ferry terminal in downtown Seattle, Pier 50, is the only public facility of its kind. This facility can only accommodate two vessels at one time.
- The Pier 50 passenger-only ferry terminal facility does not have shore-side space for equipment and infrastructure needed to support future electric vessel charging, such as energy storage systems.
- KT's passenger-only ferry service frequency cannot be increased during peak commute periods due to the limited landing site capacity. Current service is limited to 12 landings from the three KT routes within the peak period.
- Terminal docking congestion leads to cascading departure delays and schedule disruptions.
- Access between the more affordable housing on the Kitsap peninsula and the Downtown Seattle job center is constrained due to limited frequency of the passenger-only ferry service. Alternatives to passenger-only ferry service include auto/passenger ferry service provided by WSF, bus transit, or driving; all of which result in travel times roughly twice as long as KT's passenger-only ferry routes.
- Additionally, the PSRC 2020 Puget Sound Passenger-only Ferry Study identified the lack of landing site capacity in downtown Seattle as a barrier to potential future routes or service expansion.

## 4. ALTERNATIVES DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Figure 3 provides a summary of the alternatives development process that will be completed in the planning phase of the Project. The Project is currently in the first step of the alternative development process, which includes development of site screening criteria, initial review of site options, and early scoping. Outreach completed to date to support site screening includes a public survey and initial stakeholder outreach to waterfront property owners and local agencies. Initial outreach focused on understanding priorities for a new POF landing and identifying site physical and operational requirements.

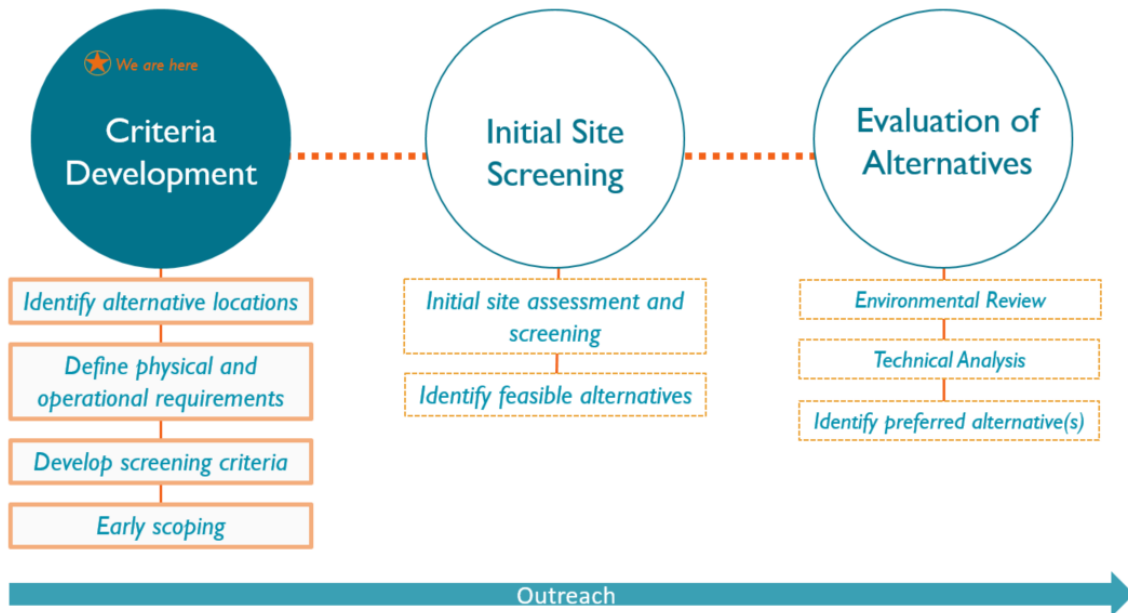


Figure 3. Alternatives Development Process

### Defining Site Alternatives

Since the Project kick-off in 2020, KT has conducted initial property site screening to document ownership and site dimensional characteristics of Seattle waterfront properties. KT has also identified preliminary physical and operational requirements for infrastructure and facilities to support vessels and passengers. The assessment of physical and operational requirements has included in-water dimensional requirements and uplands space needed for a KT terminal facility to serve the operational needs of their three cross-sound routes. Site screening and alternatives development will continue after input from the early scoping comment period and continue through the scoping process as stated in this document.

As part of the early scoping process, KT is seeking input on the screening criteria to both narrow the list of sites considered and to further analysis of remaining sites to become site alternatives.

The criteria below will be applied to initial site screening:

**Site use compatibility**

- Site allows POF landing site use
- POF operations are compatible with existing site uses

**In-water space to accommodate KT's operating needs**

- Four operating slips (three in service and one back-up)
  - Provide capacity for KT's current three routes during peak hour commute, with capacity to accommodate potential future growth
  - 2 bow-loading, 2 side-loading
- Simultaneous maneuvering space for a minimum of two vessels
- Adequate protection from wind, waves, and wakes from vessel traffic

**Space for passenger programming**

- Space for covered queuing and amenities to support at least three POF routes

**Access**

- Multimodal-Pedestrian, bicycle, and transit connections
- Maintaining current POF crossing times

**Future use planning**

- Uplands and in-water space to add equipment to support electric charging for vessels or
- Space to accommodate future application of alternative fuels

## 5. PROJECT TIMELINE

KT is in the early planning phase of the Seattle Fast Ferry Terminal project. After the planning phase, KT will move into the design phase and later construction of the terminal. The timeline below includes estimated years for completion of each phase.

