

Harper Pier FAQ

Updated November 2, 2021

Kitsap Transit is looking at the possibility of using Harper Pier as a tie-up facility for its fast ferries.

On Oct. 13, Kitsap Transit Executive Director John Clauson spoke to members of the public about the proposal. We received dozens of questions, both in person and online, and were not able to answer all of them in the time allotted. This document is intended to answer some of the most frequently asked questions about the proposal.

Executive Director Clauson addressed many questions in his talk with the community. You can view that video on our [YouTube channel](#).

This document may be revised over time as we receive more questions.

Q: Why is Kitsap Transit looking at the possibility of adding a tie-up facility to Harper Pier?

A: In March 2021, Kitsap Transit launched high-speed fast-ferry service between Southworth and downtown Seattle — the third route we've launched since voters approved a sales tax increase in 2016 to support passenger-only ferry service.

The ferry that operates the route leaves from Bremerton in the morning, where it is tied up overnight, and travels approximately 11 miles to the Southworth Ferry Terminal. After operating four round trips to Seattle, the ferry is tied up in Bremerton for several hours before returning to Southworth for afternoon service. At the end of the evening service, the vessel is tied up in Bremerton. Kitsap Transit vessels spend an additional 10 hours of travel time and 250 miles per week under the current tie-up arrangement compared to a tie-up at Harper Pier.

Kitsap Transit is seeking alternative locations to tie up its fast ferries to reduce the time the vessel spends on trips outside of passenger service. In addition to saving wear and tear on the ferry, a nearby tie-up facility would reduce fuel and labor costs and lessen the impact of vessel wake along the sensitive shores of Rich Passage.

Q: What exactly is Kitsap Transit proposing? Where are you in the process?

A: Kitsap Transit is looking at the possibility of adding a vessel tie-up facility at the end of Harper Pier.

We asked our consultant KPFF to conduct a high-level conceptual analysis of what a mooring float might look like at the end of Harper Pier. The float would serve as a place to tie up ferries when they are not in service midday, at night and on weekends. Kitsap Transit would **NOT** be operating fast ferry service from Harper Pier.

KPFF is examining at a high level if a tie-up facility at Harper Pier is possible. They have been contracted to provide **preliminary conceptual** drawings of the proposed facility, basic 3D renderings of the site,

estimated regulatory compliance timelines, a high-level environmental assessment and a high-level tribal coordination plan.

Our interest in Harper Pier is very preliminary. Before any tie-up facility could be built, Kitsap Transit would need to conduct a formal site analysis involving multiple potential locations. After a preferred site was selected, we would have to go through an extensive process including environmental reviews, conceptual and detailed design studies, permitting, public outreach, and purchase or lease agreements.

Q: What other alternatives sites is Kitsap Transit looking at for a tie-up facility? Why not moor the ferries at the Southworth dock?

A: Kitsap Transit is exploring other alternatives for a tie-up facility, including the Southworth Ferry Terminal. Right now, discussions with the state regarding Southworth are also at a preliminary stage.

Washington State Ferries (WSF) is exploring improvements to the Southworth Ferry Terminal. WSF has indicated they are open to considering the option of a Kitsap Transit tie-up facility at the Southworth terminal.

Kitsap Transit has about \$5 million allocated in its capital budget to explore, design and construct an alternative tie-up location for the Southworth Fast Ferry service.

Q: Are you looking at Vashon Island or Manchester? Why or why not?

A: We are not considering Vashon Island as a possible location for a tie-up facility due to the logistics of transporting crews to ferries. Kitsap Transit would need to have discussions with the Port of Manchester before moving forward on a possible tie-up facility there.

Q: How would a potential tie-up facility impact the environment around Harper Pier, including the estuary? Will Kitsap Transit conduct an environmental impact study?

A: Any and all impacts to the environment would be evaluated as part of a formal site evaluation process. We can't say for certain right now what the impacts would be because our interest in the dock is preliminary, and those studies have not been conducted yet.

Q: What is Kitsap Transit's plan to mitigate the environmental impact of its ferries?

A: Any required environmental mitigation would be part of the site evaluation process.

Q: What is Kitsap Transit's plan to clean up/mitigate toxic spills (oil/diesel/etc.)?

A: Kitsap Transit takes environmental issues very seriously. Since 2019, Kitsap Transit's marine operations at the Bremerton Transportation Center has been ISO 14001 certified, meaning we meet or exceed federal recommendations for environmental sustainability.

We contract with Clean Harbors and have an Environmental Sustainability Management System (ESMS) team that instructs our employees on best practices for safely handling oil and diesel and monitors our performance.

Q: Will dredging be required?

A: No dredging will be required.

Q: How would a potential tie-up facility impact public access to the pier and recreational activities like swimming, fishing, crabbing, squidding and scuba diving?

A: Kitsap Transit does not intend to close off the pier to public access nor bar community members from enjoying the same activities they enjoy right now.

For example: Kitsap Transit currently operates passenger-only ferry service out of a similar float at the end of a pier in Kingston without impeding the public's access to that pier. Under the Harper Pier proposal, ferries would only be tied up to a float at the end of the pier.

We received multiple questions about the impact of Kitsap Transit's fast ferries on scuba divers. The Edmonds Underwater Park is another nearby example of how public recreation and public transit can co-exist alongside one another. The underwater park is an extensive scuba park located adjacent to WSF's ferry terminal in Edmonds.

KPFF's conceptual design for Harper Pier shows the vessels tied up to a float attached to a 100-foot gangway, which is connected to a small 10-by-10 foot bump-out structure. Please see the slides in the community meeting presentation.

The ramp is intended to extend the float out into deep enough water to protect the hulls of the boats and the sea bed at zero tide. The conceptual design leaves the entire north and south sides, as well as most of the end of the pier, open for public access.

Q: What studies have been done examining the proposed tie-up facility and its impacts? What kinds of studies need to be completed before the project can move forward?

A: As we have said, our interest is preliminary, and we have not conducted feasibility or environmental studies of the Harper Pier location yet. A full site analysis would examine the environmental, noise, traffic, and neighborhood aesthetic impacts of installing a tie-up facility at Harper Pier and other locations. After a preferred alternative was selected, we would have to go through an extensive process including environmental reviews, conceptual and detailed design studies, permitting, public outreach, and purchase or lease agreements.

Q: How would Kitsap Transit crews get to the ferries in the morning? How early would they arrive?

A: No new parking would be built to accommodate crew vehicles. Instead, we would likely have crews park at Harper Church Park & Ride and take them via bus or van to the pier at the beginning of their shift. A single Kitsap Transit vehicle would likely need to park by the pier occasionally to offload supplies for the ferry. Crews would arrive at approximately 4:30 a.m.

Q: How big are the Kitsap Transit vessels that would be tied-up at the proposed pier? How big would the proposed float be?

A: The Kitsap Transit ferries that are expected to operate the Southworth route are:

- M/V Enetai – 128 feet long, 38 feet wide
- M/V Commander – 128 feet long, 38 feet wide
- M/V Solano – 125 feet long, 38 feet wide

The float is 110 feet long. If Kitsap Transit were to move forward with the proposal, the gangway linking the bump-out structure to the float is anticipated to be about 100 feet long.

Q: Where do the ferries refuel? Where would sewage/graywater be pumped out?

A: The ferries currently refuel at a commercial facility in Seattle and pump out sewage/graywater in Bremerton. The vessels need to have sewage pumped out on average every two days. Kitsap Transit is exploring all of our options for refueling and sewage pump-out.

Q: What does “light maintenance” mean? What kind of maintenance would Kitsap Transit perform on the vessels while tied up at Harper Pier? How often?

A: “Light maintenance” refers to basic tasks like emptying the garbage cans, cleaning the restrooms and vacuuming the inside of the vessel.

Vessels would travel to Bremerton for oil changes and other routine maintenance. Any maintenance beyond that would require Kitsap Transit to take the ferry to a facility or dry dock that could lift the vessel out of the water. The vessel’s main engines need oil changes every 4-6 weeks.

Q: What kind of lighting and security measures would Kitsap Transit have at the facility?

A: Coast Guard security rules require Kitsap Transit to have lights and cameras directed at our vessels at night. If Kitsap Transit were to move forward with the Harper Pier proposal, we would look at multiple lighting options to ensure minimal impact on community members.

Kitsap Transit would restrict access to the float where the ferries are tied up, but would **NOT** restrict access to Harper Pier.

Q: Why wasn’t a tie-up facility included in the original fast ferry plan?

A: In the original fast ferry business plan, Kitsap Transit planned to build a side-loading pier at the Southworth Ferry Terminal to load passengers. Building the pier would have required an extensive design and permitting process and pushed the launch of Southworth service back several years. After listening to community input, we decided to modify the designs of our ferries to load from the existing Washington State Ferries terminal and start service earlier.

Q: What are the next steps? Can you hold another meeting to keep the community updated?

Staff will be updating the Kitsap Transit Board of Commissioners and asking to modify the budget to provide for additional assessments beyond the Harper Pier. KPFF has been asked to identify the next steps and develop a proposal to evaluate Southworth options.

Kitsap Transit is committed to an open and honest dialogue with the community. We will hold another community meeting with an update when we have additional information to share.

Q: What is Kitsap Transit's proposed timeline for installing a tie-up facility at one of the proposed locations?

A: A timeline for the proposals has not been developed.

Q: How many times a day would ferries be tied up at Harper Pier?

A: Kitsap Transit ferries on the Southworth-Seattle route operate four round trips in the morning and four round trips in the evening. If Kitsap Transit moves forward with this proposal, two ferries would be tied up to the float at Harper Pier. The ferry operating Southworth service would be tied up twice a day – once after completing its morning sailing schedule and once after completing its evening sailing schedule.