



## King County Water Taxi News

COMING SOON TO A TERMINAL NEAR YOU...

### The M/V *Sally Fox*

It's hard to believe, but in about two weeks, the M/V *Sally Fox* will be sailing around Elliott Bay! That's just one of many Water Taxi improvements coming in 2015, including the Vashon Terminal weather cover and the new online vessel tracking program.



Of course the highlights of the year will be the arrivals of new vessels for both of our routes. These boats will have increased capacity (250 passengers), carry more bikes (26 compared to the current 18), and be more reliable than the current aging vessels. (The *Melissa Ann* is more than 25 years old!)

The new boats will also have two boarding doors and American with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant amenities. These include restrooms, wheelchair tie-downs, six video monitors that can be used for safety announcements and closed-caption programming, and lower-profile door coamings (the raised borders that stop water from running in).

The M/V *Sally Fox* will be the first to arrive. Since she was launched in Bellingham Bay last December 15, the contractor, All American Marine, has been putting her through tests. Our crew members who have visited the boat and ridden along during sea trials have had extremely positive things to say about her.

We expect the vessel to be delivered to King County in March. After that, crews will be trained onboard in all aspects of operation including piloting, crewing, and mechanics. This process will take about a month, and we plan to put the *Sally Fox* in service in early April.

The second vessel, the M/V *Doc Maynard*, is expected to arrive in Seattle in mid-October.

Because of the new vessels' two-door boarding systems, we'll be modifying the docks. On the Pier 50 float we'll be removing the elevated walkway / boarding ramps and fabricating new gates on each side. We'll adjust the current boarding ramps to match the new vessel deck heights. This work will not interrupt service.

If you'd like to join the celebration when the *Sally Fox* is put into service, put a placeholder on your calendar for Saturday, March 28. Elected officials, members of *Sally Fox's* family and others will be on hand for this momentous occasion. The ceremony will start at 1 p.m. on the Water Taxi dock at the Vashon Terminal, followed by free 15-minute rides on the vessel.

### Ridership continued to grow in 2014

Last year was a good one for the Water Taxi, as ridership on both routes combined grew almost 5 percent over the previous year. Considering challenges such as the seawall construction project in front of Pier 50 for nine months and the lack of a dedicated back-up vessel, we consider this growth to be a great success.

For the West Seattle route, much of the success is the product of a marketing campaign during the summer season. Accommodating nearly 4,600 riders for the Super Bowl parade didn't hurt either.

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## Vashon terminal weather cover

The Vashon terminal weather cover and wind screen, two years in the making, is coming soon. We have completed the design, obtained the environmental permits, and put the project out to bid. We expect to award the bid in mid-to-late March and start construction in April. When complete, the project will provide cover from the elements for those early commuters who line up daily for their favorite seat on the boat.

## New ORCA LIFT fare

Beginning March 1, the King County Water Taxi will offer a reduced fare for passengers who have an ORCA LIFT card. The ORCA LIFT fare will be \$3.00 per one-way trip on the West Seattle route and \$3.75 per one-way trip on the Vashon Island route.

The ORCA LIFT card is available to anyone whose household income is at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level—about \$23,340 annually for an individual.

Learn more about the program at [www.orcalift.com](http://www.orcalift.com).

Program highlights:

- The reduced fare is available only with an ORCA LIFT card. You can apply for a card at about 40 sites around King County; see [www.orcalift.com](http://www.orcalift.com) for locations and what you need to bring.
- ORCA LIFT cards are free. A \$5 fee will be charged to replace lost, stolen or damaged cards.
- Card holders are responsible for loading E-Purse value or a monthly PugetPass on the card.
- Eligibility must be renewed after two years. The ORCA LIFT card can be used as a regular adult fare card when a rider no longer qualifies for the program.
- The fare is for the card holder only. Each card is registered in the ORCA system to the qualified card holder.
- Other transit services that offer an ORCA LIFT reduced fare are King County Metro, Seattle Streetcar, Sound Transit Link light rail, and Kitsap Transit.

## King County Ferry District assumed by King County

Effective January 1, 2015, the King County Ferry District was assumed by King County, with the King County Department of Transportation's Marine Division continuing to operate Water Taxi service.

State legislation passed last spring allowed King County to take this action. Although you will likely see no change to our current operation, we gain many administrative efficiencies as the Marine Division will no longer be maintaining two separate budgets, transferring funds between multiple agencies and accounts, and providing reports to two governments.

Starting in April 2007, the King County Ferry District delivered waterborne transit service through the policy-making and funding of existing Water Taxi service for the Vashon and West Seattle routes. Though assumed by the county, the Ferry District's strategic plan for adding new transit options will continue. In 2015, the Marine Division will begin researching the potential viability of expansion routes, primarily on Lake Washington and in Puget Sound. This will include an assessment of passenger-only ferry expansion options that build on new transit options to be delivered through Sound Transit's University Link and other funded regional transit expansions being delivered in the next decade.

**Water Taxi Fares Effective March 1, 2015.** No fare increase. ORCA LIFT fare added.

One-Way Water Taxi Fares	West Seattle Cash or Ticket	West Seattle ORCA card	Vashon Cash or Ticket	Vashon ORCA card
<b>Cash adult fare</b> (ages 6-64)	\$4.75	\$4.00	\$5.50	\$4.75
<b>Senior fare Riders with disabilities</b>	\$2.00	* \$2.00	\$2.50	* \$2.50
<b>ORCA LIFT fare</b>	**	** \$3.00	**	** \$3.75
<b>Youth fare</b> (ages 6-18)	\$4.75	*** \$3.00	\$5.50	*** \$3.75
<b>Children</b> (ages 5 and under)	Free	Free	Free	Free
<b>Bicycle fare surcharge</b> Limited capacity per sailing	No extra charge	No extra charge	No extra charge	No extra charge

\* Regional Reduced Fare Permit card required

\*\* ORCA LIFT card required


\*\*\* ORCA Youth Card required

## Ridership


The Vashon route had missed sailings because of weather and mechanical issues that affected ridership. When you factor in the loss of passengers from those lost sailings, the ridership in 2014 was nearly comparable to 2013. Another challenge for the Vashon route is that the 5:30 p.m. sailing often reaches full capacity and, unfortunately, some customers are left behind. This is just one of many reasons we eagerly await the *Sally Fox*.

We extend a special thank you to our valued regular riders. Your continued patronage makes a huge, and we hope lasting, contribution to our continued success!

VASHON RIDERSHIP							
Month	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	%
Jan	8,813	11,081	13,810	12,820	16,397	16,351	-0.3%
Feb	8,184	10,847	11,996	14,130	14,263	13,144	-7.8%
Mar	9,459	13,448	15,083	15,330	15,654	15,637	-0.1%
Apr	9,359	12,603	13,414	14,835	16,526	15,855	-4.1%
May	8,338	12,003	14,087	15,604	16,735	15,561	-7.0%
Jun	9,006	13,963	14,487	14,989	15,199	15,692	3.2%
Jul	9,469	13,276	13,887	15,150	17,547	16,669	-5.0%
Aug	8,661	14,569	15,681	16,392	16,880	15,857	-6.1%
Sep	8,826	13,923	14,082	13,992	15,197	15,542	2.3%
Oct	11,005	14,415	15,170	17,642	17,525	17,279	-1.4%
Nov	9,756	12,182	13,517	14,572	13,441	13,125	-2.4%
Dec	10,098	11,310	12,405	12,514	12,460	13,735	10.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>110,974</b>	<b>153,620</b>	<b>167,619</b>	<b>177,970</b>	<b>187,824</b>	<b>187,447</b>	<b>-1.8%</b>

 = WSF service

WEST SEATTLE RIDERSHIP							
Month	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	%
Jan	0	0	2,733	8,037	8,067	8,732	8.2%
Feb	0	0	2,569	8,837	7,188	11,438	59.1%
Mar	0	0	2,745	9,371	8,666	8,504	-1.9%
Apr	20,361	13,068	10,335	18,468	15,894	19,160	20.5%
May	31,557	17,389	17,367	26,454	26,129	27,417	4.9%
Jun	33,864	22,093	28,202	26,633	36,076	32,484	-9.96%
Jul	46,961	37,041	38,417	41,716	47,588	49,725	4.5%
Aug	43,979	32,169	41,157	44,225	45,336	53,802	18.7%
Sep	26,602	16,946	28,912	31,775	26,984	34,572	28.1%
Oct	12,872	10,318	25,270	20,530	19,332	20,752	7.3%
Nov	0	2,578	9,734	7,967	8,059	7,760	-3.7%
Dec	0	2,418	8,714	6,304	7,967	8,316	4.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>216,196</b>	<b>154,020</b>	<b>216,155</b>	<b>250,317</b>	<b>257,286</b>	<b>282,662</b>	<b>9.9%</b>

 = Argosy service

## Weather and the *Melissa Ann*

By Captain Dan Krebbiel



Captain Dan Krebbiel

We're in that time of year when our navigation tactics change from recreational vessel avoidance, (defensive driving) to ride comfort and debris avoidance. Sadly, we still have to deal with paddle-boarder avoidance.

### What weather will force us to cancel a sailing?

Generally, seas over six feet exceed what riders can handle. Our sailing area needs sustained winds of 40 knots or more from the south to generate six-foot seas. Our best indicators of wind conditions come from NOAA weather observation stations at West Point and Alki Point and can be collected from web sites or weather radio.

Here are the caveats:

- The data on the sites can be over an hour old. We also consult other vessels and the Coast Guard for current conditions.
- The exact wind direction affects the wave size. If it's more out of the east or west, seas may be less. If the wind is freshening (still building) seas may not have gotten too big yet.
- A change in the tide can also affect sea state. When tidal current and wind oppose each other, sea height increases.

We will almost always go out and check. In the morning, if it's blowing out of the south, and we can get to Vashon, we can always get back to Seattle. In the afternoon, we will inform you before departure if we think we might get turned back at Alki Point, and if making a stop at West Seattle is an option.

### What about a northerly?

The limiting factor when the wind is blowing out of the north is whether or not we can safely board and disembark passengers at the Vashon dock. It is exposed to the north and the "fetch," or distance the seas have to build, is longer to the north than to the south. It will take less wind to produce seas that may force us to cancel. We have found those limits to be about 4-foot seas. A sustained northerly wind of a little over 20 knots puts us right at the edge.

### What about all those logs?

We operate in an area where rivers flush out a lot of debris. High tides will also pull debris off of the beaches

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## Weather and the *Melissa Ann*

and put it into circulation until the wind puts it back on the beach.

We use night vision binoculars to help locate debris. On average we are able to see and avoid about 80 percent of the debris in our path. Debris can be heavy enough that we have been delayed trying to get through it.

The hulls of the *Melissa Ann*, *Spirit of Kingston*, *Sally Fox*, and *Doc Maynard* are divided into five or more watertight compartments each. The forward-most compartments on each side will hold only about one hundred gallons. If we hit something hard enough to open one up, you wouldn't even notice a list.

We expect the *Sally Fox* to be an even better sea boat. Her wave piercing bow, longer waterline length, narrow hulls, and higher tunnel (the space between the hulls) will provide a better ride underway and sitting at the dock.

## What experience do you have with heavy weather?

Twenty of my 30 years on fast catamarans were in Alaska. Eleven of those were on a 105-footer that served a mine every day of the year. Two more were in the ice of Glacier Bay. The rest has been in Hawaii, the Caribbean, around Puget Sound, and throughout Southeast Alaska.

If you have any questions, please feel free to ask me or the crew.

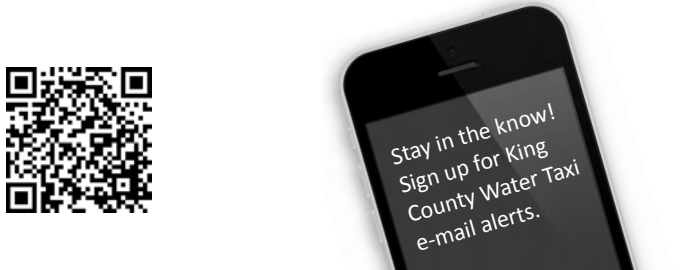
Here's to smooth sailing.

*Cap'n Dan*

PERFORMANCE METRICS			
Category	Vashon Island	West Seattle	System
Passengers served	184,457	282,662	467,119
Trips	2,927	10,457	13,384
Miles traveled	29,460	20,264	49,724
Days of service	251	312	563
Service hours	1,473	3,517	4,990
Passengers per service hour	125	80	94
On-time performance	97.3%	97.8%	97.6%
Service reliability	97.8%	99.7%	99.3%

2014 Performance Metrics table from our *2014 Facts and Figures*

Go to [www.kingcounty.gov/transportation/kcdot/WaterTaxi/AboutUs.aspx](http://www.kingcounty.gov/transportation/kcdot/WaterTaxi/AboutUs.aspx) to see the entire recap of 2014.



## Find more news at [www.kingcounty.gov/watertaxi](http://www.kingcounty.gov/watertaxi)

We welcome comments from the public. Send an e-mail to [watertaxi.info@kingcounty.gov](mailto:watertaxi.info@kingcounty.gov) or leave a message at 206-477-3979.

Alternative formats available  
206-477-3832 (TTY Relay: 711)

## Water Taxi Watch is live

We're pleased to announce that our Water Taxi Watch system is live.

Water Taxi Watch, modeled after Washington State Ferries' very popular VesselWatch, lets you track the position, speed, and direction of Water Taxi vessels in real time. You can also find their next scheduled departure time or their last actual departure time.

Hopefully the next time you're down at the dock on a foggy morning and can't see your boat, you'll use this new tool to find that the vessel is just minutes away.

This project was funded by a Federal Transit Administration technology grant and is a collaborative effort between WSF and King County. Visit [www.kingcounty.gov/watertaxi](http://www.kingcounty.gov/watertaxi) for a link to this exciting new feature!



*Note: The site currently lists the vessels' estimated arrival times. These are estimates based on the scheduled crossing times added to the actual departure times, and do not account for weather or other delays during the crossing.*