
PASSENGER FERRY SERVICE

DES MOINES / SEATTLE

FINAL REPORT ON PILOT & RECOMMENDATIONS

December 1, 2022

TIMELINE

- July, 2020 Ferry demand study completed
 - Despite presence of COVID, community and stakeholder response was very strongly supportive of moving forward
- October, 2021 Feasibility Report completed
- April 14, 2022: Council approval to move forward with pilot
- Pilot Project Implemented from August 10 to October 9, 2022
 - Service from Des Moines to Seattle and Seattle to Des Moines
 - Technical and operational assistance from Maritime Consulting Partners

PROCESS TO ESTABLISH OPERATIONS

- In early 2022, Des Moines City Council approved conceptually a potential allocation of \$975,000 to implement passenger ferry service
- The City Administration, in early spring of 2022 brought forward to City Council contracts for approval to initiate the pilot study project
- It should be noted, that the entire cost of operations was approximately \$220,000, far below the initial contemplated cost structure

PARTNERSHIPS WITH OTHER AGENCIES

- City of Des Moines financed the passenger ferry service
- Operational dynamic required partnership with other agencies, including:
 - Port of Seattle that operates the Bell Harbor Marina
 - Utilizing Best Management Practices to avoid any conflicts in operations with tribal fishing rights in Puget Sound
 - Ongoing discussions with Puget Sound Regional Council regarding ferry service throughout Puget Sound
 - Working with the Regional Tourism Agency (RTA) and Seattle business associations to promote the ferry service

OPERATIONAL DYNAMICS

VESSEL

- A 60-passenger aluminum catamaran ferry was provided and operated by a maritime contractor (Puget Sound Express) for the duration of the project
 - The Chilkat Express is United States Coast Guard certified to carry 63 passengers but for this project the passenger limit was set at 60



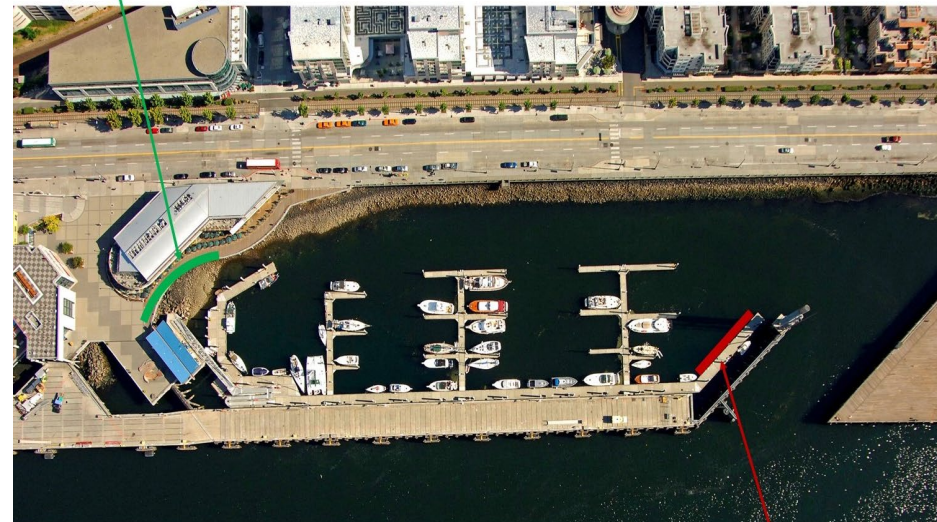
OPERATIONAL DYNAMICS

TERMINALS

- The ferry vessel homeported at the Des Moines Marina on the guest moorage float at the north side of the marina, and landed on the Seattle waterfront at the Bell Harbor Marina guest dock - a facility owned and operated by the Port of Seattle
- Terminal services in Des Moines were provided by the City's Harbormaster Department. These services included assisting with the ticket reservation system, queuing passengers, inspecting and clearing docks of hazards, meeting passengers, checking them in, and generally coordinating shoreside activities in Des Moines
- Terminal services in Seattle were provided by the ferry vessel crew and Port of Seattle personnel



Waiting Area to Board: Along upper sidewalk.



Chilkat Express Docking location

OPERATIONAL DYNAMICS

OPERATIONS AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT

- Operations and overall project management was provided by Maritime Consulting Partners, the firm that conducted the aforementioned Reconnaissance Study and wrote the 2022 Ferry Demonstration Project Operations Plan

REVENUE / FARE STRUCTURE

- Farebox recovery
- First week of ridership was free
- Fare was \$10/each direction; active military and seniors were half price, \$5/each way; children under 13 were free
- Fare box recovery is a measure of how much of a transportation system's operating costs are recovered from the fares collected
 - Operating costs do not include the cost of items like planning and capital assets
- The 2022 Ferry Demonstration Project operating costs were \$220,402 and are listed below:

Operating Item	Amount
Management	\$ 47,840
Vessel Crew, Insurance, Supplies, Maintenance, Other	\$ 74,000
Vessel Fuel	\$ 83,532
Vessel Moorage (in Seattle)	\$ 15,030
TOTAL OPERATING COSTS	\$220,402

- Operating costs do not include things like planning, mobilization, capital assets, marketing and communications
- Net fare revenue collected during the project was \$89,546, therefore fare box recovery is 41%

SCHEDULE

- Days and hours of operation August 10 – October 9, 2022
 - Wednesday through Sunday between Des Moines Marina and Bell Harbor Marina in Seattle

Depart Des Moines	Depart Seattle
10:00 am	11:00 am
12:00 pm	1:00 pm
2:00 pm	3:00 pm
4:00 pm	5:00 pm

RIDERSHIP

- Rider utilization is a key indicator of the potential viability for a long-term or permanent ferry service
 - Vessel embarkation data indicates the total number of passengers that boarded the ferry during the demonstration project was 14,858
 - Given 45 days of service, this is an average of 330 passengers per day, or 41 passengers per one-way trip
 - The total possible passengers that could be carried during the demonstration period was 21,600
 - Accordingly, the overall utilization of the service was 69% of total capacity
 - This measure (of utilization v capacity) is commonly referred to as the service “Load Factor”
 - Projections developed prior to operations (during the reconnaissance and planning phase) estimated total utilization to be 3,600, a Load Factor of 17%
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- **KEY FINDING – 14,858 passengers were carried (a Load Factor of 69%) and actual ferry service utilization exceeded expectations (by 400%).**

DEMAND MOMENTUM

- Vessel embarkation data indicates the first week of service had the highest utilization with 1,897 passengers carried
- High utilization was predicted for that week and was attributed to the novelty of the service ***and that first week of service being free of charge***
- What was not predicted, was that **ridership would remain high throughout the entire demonstration project period**
- Ridership data indicates interest in, and utilization of, the demonstration ferry service had a high level of momentum
 - Meaning demand for the service remained high (as opposed to quickly dropping off) during the project period
 - This indicates utilization (demand) could remain high and even increase given a longer duration project
- The lowest rider utilization period occurred during week #6 with 1,549 passengers carried. The second highest utilization period occurred during week #7 with 1,689 passengers carried

FERRY RIDERSHIP GRAPHIC

[illegible]

KEY FINDINGS

- KEY FINDING: Leisure travel (site-seeing, events, and other) was the main type of use for the ferry service
- KEY FINDING: The vast majority of ferry passengers arrived at the Des Moines ferry in a passenger vehicle
- KEY FINDING: Though age distribution was fairly evenly distributed among adult age groups, the ferry was utilized most by users age 65 and older
- KEY FINDING: Ferry passengers came from around the region with most originating from Des Moines

KEY FINDINGS

- The vast majority of passengers said the \$10 (one-way) rate was just right
- The vast majority of passengers would prefer year-round ferry service
- The vast majority of ferry demonstration riders were very satisfied with the overall experience
- Fare box recovery was 41%, better than the industry average farebox recovery of about 30% for ferries, and substantially better than the average farebox recovery of roughly 19% for bus transit

IMPACT ON LOCAL BUSINESS

- Businesses who saw increases in activity as a result of the ferry pilot
- Chloe Tran (Owner of the Tea Cup)

“My name is Chloe Tran and I am the owner of TeaCup, located on 223rd and 7th Avenue. I did have my chance to meet Matt and Traci before and hope to meet you all soon.

I would like to thank you very much for your service and your help in building our city stronger, together. I would like to get feedback on our ferry services. Since the ferry service has started, we have had many new customers visiting our cafe.

When I have had the opportunity to talk with them, I often learn they are from out of town, visiting Des Moines for the day and using our ferry. In the past, September is one of our slowest month in sales, but not this year! Just two weeks into September, and we see our sales have been better than the Septembers of the past.”

IMPACT ON LOCAL BUSINESS

From Wesley Homes. CEO Kevin Anderson:

“I wanted to drop you a short note to let you know how much our residents have enjoyed having the ferry service to Seattle over the summer months. I know when I talked about this service at our town meetings over the summer a number of the residents were well aware of the service, had been on a ferry trip and encouraged others to take the ferry to Seattle for a day trip. I hope this service will continue in the future!

I also want to encourage the counsel to continue their plans for the redevelopment of the Marina District. There are many outstanding benefits to the City and it's residents with this redevelopment plan. I truly believe it will enhance the community and surrounding areas of our City.”

RECOMMENDATIONS GOING FORWARD

- The 2020 Des Moines Ferry pilot utilization and farebox recovery would place it at the upper end of the successful range in ferry services around the country
- Based on the high rate of utilization, healthy farebox recovery and positive response from the community, it is recommended that the City of Des Moines proceed with expanded service in 2023

ACTION ITEMS

- Define the objectives for the next Demonstration Period
- Expand project period.
 - Start earlier in the season, to test whether visitors and leisure travel interest would be as strong for entire spring summer season
- Expand daily service hours to determine if commuters would regularly use the service
- Establish links with other transportation modes and carriers to maximize intermodal connections
- Develop partnerships with private and public sector partners to create a rider incentive programs
- Develop partnerships with retail businesses adjacent to both terminals to drive customers to local businesses

EXPAND PROJECT PERIOD

- Extend the Demonstration Period
 - Given the high level of public acceptance, if another demonstration project is activated it is recommended it run for a longer period
 - For example Mother's Day, 2023 through September 30, 2023 (spanning the entirety of the Farmer's market)
- Extend the operating schedule to include traditional commute times
- Given the high level of public acceptance, if another demonstration project is activated, it is recommended the schedule be expanded to include times that are commonly considered commute periods
- An example of a modified schedule could be:

<u>Days of the Week</u>	<u>From Des Moines</u>	<u>From Seattle</u>
Monday - Friday	First sailing at 8:00 am	Last sailing at 6:00 pm
Saturday - Sunday	First sailing at 10:00 am	Last sailing at 7:00 pm

OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Secure a Vessel for 2023
 - If the City decides to proceed with a ferry demonstration project in 2023, it's recommended that it start working to secure a vessel as soon as possible
 - The vessel used during the 2022 demonstration project provided proved to be ideal. Accordingly, this would be the logical vessel to try and secure for future service
- Consider other Terminal Locations in Seattle
 - The Bell Harbor Marina was well suited for the service, and would be work well for future service, but other terminal owners have indicated an interest in hosting future ferry service and those alternative terminal locations should also be considered
- Improve ADA Accommodations
 - It is recommend that additional emphasis be made on providing ramps and boarding systems that minimize barriers for users with disabilities
 - Also, consider how additional seating areas on the vessel can be dedicated to passengers with mobility restrictions and/or disabilities

EXPANDED CUSTOMER SERVICE

- Provide Customer Service Representatives at both terminals:
 - Customer Service Representatives at both terminals (Des Moines and Seattle) during ferry operating hours can answer questions in person, by phone, email, chat, or social media and help manage booking and reservations
 - These persons can also manage passenger check-in and boarding activities, and provide other safety and security functions
 - Customer Service Representatives can act as 'Ambassadors' to promote Des Moines and enhance the visitor experience

COMMENTS FROM THE COMMUNITY

■ Data was collected from the ticketing and reservation system, as well as surveys issued to ferry riders

“I have sang the ferry praises from the mountain top and told every neighbor here in Des Moines to book tickets by Sunday. I left a 5-star raving review on Google but if there is anything else I can do to inform the city council how important this initiative is to our town, please let me know.

Finger and toes are crossed you will be back in the spring for 4-5 months with extended times!”

S.M.

“Hi,

We rode your deluxe fast ferry Friday. We drove over from Renton, took a walk up Des Moines Creek, ferried to Seattle and back and then played games at Waterland Arcade and ate dogs at The Dog House.

The people on either side of us in the boat were tourists from Pendleton, OR by way of Graham.

If you're hoping to attract some of us to your part of Puget Sound, the fast ferry seems to be working!

Thanks - we had a very fun day.”

G&J.S

“We rode the Des Moines Ferry during Pilot Project 2022. We purchased our tickets online, which went great. We drove to Seattle with our family members who live in the area.

The crew and the boat were great. We loved our experience of riding back and forth. We had this experience simply for pleasure, and eating at Anthony's restaurant. Our niece had never been on a ferry. It was her last trip before passing away a week and a half ago. So thank you for fulfilling a last wish.”

L.R.

NEXT STEPS

- Final report will be posted on the City website tomorrow (December 2, 2022)
- Motion from City Council to move forward to establish potential terms to continue passenger ferry service pilot, phase II, into a second season