

Transportation

Washington State Ferries

Gov. Inslee's 2024 supplemental budget continues to invest in Washington's ferry system to improve service reliability across a crucial marine highway. It includes workforce strategies to fill necessary crew positions, and it examines the state's role in passenger-only ferry service. In addition to existing funding to convert two vessels to hybrid-electric power, the budget funds the conversion of a third Jumbo Mark II vessel to hybrid-electric power. The governor's policy brief on climate and energy also outlines significant investments in a greener, healthier transportation system.

Improve reliability through workforce

Add dispatch staff

The governor's budget allocates funding to expand staff and hours for ferry dispatch. Dispatch staff address crew relief requests, which have increased and often occur after hours. Ferries cannot operate without the right number and types of crew members to comply with established standards and bargaining agreements. Dispatch staff respond to relief requests and recruit employees to fill necessary crew shifts. This funding will help prevent service interruptions by increasing dispatch staff and hours.

(\$935,000 Puget Sound Ferry Operations Account-State)

Add vessel crew staff

To improve service reliability and on-time performance, the system will use these funds to add an ordinary seaman and an engineer

room oiler to each 'watch' or shift. With this additional staffing, crews will be better equipped for unexpected absences. This investment in additional crew will help prevent service disruption, minimize delays and maintain reliable schedules for passengers.

(\$16.2 million Puget Sound Ferry Operations Account-State)

Expand the AB to Mate development program

Washington State Ferries (WSF) faces a serious shortage of licensed deck officers. This budget item helps train more officers through the AB to Mate workforce development program. The program reduces career growth barriers and encourages qualified, internal, unlicensed deck crew (Able-bodied Seamen or ABs) to become licensed mates. The agency will use the funding to grow the program from 24 to 72 participant spots. It will also allow the program to train more crew to become licensed deck officers, filling a critical requirement for reliable ferry service.

(\$4.2 million Puget Sound Ferry Operations Account-State)

Support the Wiper to Oiler promotion program

This item widens the worker candidate pool by expanding the wiper internship program from 10 to 26 internships and lowers barriers to engine room jobs at Washington State Ferries. The Wiper to Oiler program supports recruitment by adding entry-level wiper positions and providing on-the-job training for

promotion to the oiler position. With lower credentialing requirements and a pathway for advancement, the program appeals to a broader pool of skilled workers who can help fill immediate and future crew positions.

(§988,000 Puget Sound Ferry Operations Account-State)

Expand MITAGS training scholarships

WSF will use this funding to grow its training scholarship program with the Marine Institute of Technology and Graduate Studies (MITAGS). The program helps build a sustainable, diverse workforce pipeline by making maritime education and licensure available to more people. The scholarship pays for the 2.5-year program, offsets living expenses, and is available to individuals with little to no maritime experience. This budget increases the current scholarship cohort from 10 to 12 people, and it adds a third cohort of 12 candidates. The growing scholarship program helps a continuous stream of skilled, qualified crew members become licensed deck officers who can fill critical ferry positions.

(§454,000 Puget Sound Ferry Operations Account-State)

Double capacity for out-of-state recruitment

To strengthen the ferry workforce, Washington continues to recruit and train qualified out-of-state mariners. The governor's budget includes funding to double the existing program from 10 to 20 training seats. This increases the opportunity to recruit skilled crew members from the global pool of candidates.

(§933,000 Puget Sound Ferry Operations Account-State)

Build forward-thinking solutions

Implement a San Juan Island crew shuttle

Currently, WSF contracts a vessel to transport crew members from Anacortes to Friday Harbor in time to relieve the previous crew and return crews to the mainland at the end of their shifts. The governor's budget provides funding to continue this service, which has proven effective in ensuring crew members can get to and from work in a timely manner. This will reduce the likelihood of missed or delayed sailings due to lack of crew.

(§330,000 Puget Sound Ferry Operations Account-State)

Maintain Kitsap Transit passenger-only ferry

This item continues a contract with Kitsap Transit to provide supplemental passenger-only ferry service between Bremerton and Seattle. Two ferries served this route before the COVID-19 pandemic, but it has since been limited to one vessel and a reduced service schedule. WSF will continue to supplement service with the Kitsap passenger-only ferry so that travelers have more reliable service and more options.

(§1 million Puget Sound Ferry Operations Account-State)

Conduct state study of passenger-only ferry service

With this funding, the state will revisit and evaluate options for providing passenger-only ferry service to support existing ferry service routes and expand options for travelers. WSF will first examine opportunities to provide

passenger-only service on the interisland ferry route between the San Juan Islands. An additional \$5 million is set aside in unallotted status to support funding capital recommendations for the interisland route.

(§2.25 million Puget Sound Ferry Operations Account-State, \$5 million Puget Sound Capital Construction Account)

Study the next class of vessels

The department will initiate a vessel design to replace the aging Issaquah class ferries with a new automobile hybrid electric ferry intended to operate on the Vashon-Southworth-Fauntleroy route. The funding will support predesign studies and development of a request for proposal for procurement of up to four vessels. The predesign study will account for changes in technology and staffing needs.

(§1.5 million Puget Sound Capital Construction Account)

Electrify ferries

WSF is converting three Jumbo Mark II vessels from diesel to hybrid electric. Funding will support converting the third of the three vessels. These ferries serve the most densely populated urban areas in the central Puget Sound region and produce 26% of the fleet’s annual greenhouse gas emissions. Each conversion will reduce emissions by nearly 50,000 metric tons a year with the first vessel scheduled to sail in fall 2024.

This item also appears in the Climate and Energy Policy Brief.

(§11 million Carbon Emissions Reduction Act)

Public safety

Public safety is another key focus of this supplemental budget. There were 750 traffic fatalities in 2022, making it the deadliest year on Washington roadways in over three decades. In 2023, 578 fatalities were already reported by September. This points to an alarming trend and the governor’s budget includes strategies to make our roadways safer. It invests in developing a pilot program to change speeding behaviors, and continues to resolve unsafe conditions on state-owned rights of way. It also provides funding for the Washington State Patrol (WSP) to improve enforcement, investigations and emergency response.

Washington State Patrol

Restore vacancy savings to fill critical roles

The 2023-25 budget included \$63.6 million in assumed trooper and non-field force vacancies. Yet, WSP is filling these vacancies quickly and the governor’s budget restores \$30.9 million to fund approximately 80 troopers and 100 non-field force positions. This investment will bolster the agency workforce and ensure that resources can be used appropriately to staff this essential work and put more troopers on our roadways.

(§30.9 million State Patrol Highway Account-State)

Add third trooper class

The budget also provides funding for the WSP to hire and host a third trooper class to graduate additional cadets. Funding will supply training and trooper vehicles. This will support the agency workforce by increasing the pipeline of trained, qualified troopers.

(\$9.5 million State Patrol Highway Account-State)

Make state toxicology staffing improvements

The state toxicologist provides laboratory services to support the investigation of alleged crimes, such as driving under the influence. For more than 20 years, this role has been performed by the Forensic Laboratory Services Bureau (FLSB) director or the Toxicology Laboratory Division (TLD) commander. During this time, the responsibilities of all three positions have grown. The governor's budget includes funding to right-size staffing by creating a new standalone state toxicologist position. This role will focus on technical personnel, instrumentation, methods, and quality assurance for the FLSB and TLD. It will also work to reduce the number of backlogged toxicology cases, improve turnaround time, and increase the number and amount of drugs the laboratory can detect.

(\$383,000 Highway Safety Account-State, \$127,000 Death Investigations Account-State)

Invest in Rapid DNA

Rapid DNA technology supports criminal investigations by quickly obtaining a forensic DNA profile from a biological sample. The Federal Bureau of Investigation approves its use for offender samples and arrestee samples.

Samples submitted to Washington's Crime Laboratory can take days or weeks to test, but Rapid DNA can produce a profile in 90 minutes. This investment permanently adds two forensic scientist positions whose work to process Rapid DNA will support criminal investigations.

(\$940,000 General Fund-State)

Fund local fire department training

Many local fire departments do not have the resources to send their firefighters to the State Fire Marshal's Fire Training Academy. This budget item provides access to staff and training resources through the Fire Training Academy's Regional Direct Delivery program (RDDP). Through this program, the State Fire Marshal's Office travels to local fire departments to connect with local firefighters and conduct and certify training.

(\$675,000 GF-S)

Department of Transportation

Implement speed camera test pilot

The governor's budget provides funding to establish an automated traffic safety camera pilot program along state highways. This initiative aims to comprehensively evaluate the efficacy of automated traffic safety camera technology, specifically focusing on its impact on speeding behavior. One-third of all fatalities involve speeding, and policies and programs to change speeding behaviors can save lives. Central to the initiative are critical components such as selecting appropriate technology, strategically placing cameras in high collision or high fatality locations, implementing signage

for motorists, conducting outreach efforts, and gathering comprehensive data on speed variations before, during, and immediately after motorists pass a speed camera.

(\$1 million Motor Vehicle Account-State)

Maintain encampment resolution efforts

The governor’s supplemental budget includes funding for the Department of Transportation to coordinate efforts to clear debris or hazardous materials from state-owned rights of way and maintain cleared sites. This funding is in addition to \$7 million from the 2023-25 budget and is necessary to continue this work. This item also appears in the Affordable Housing and Homelessness Policy Brief.

(\$10 million Motor Vehicle Account-State)

Department of Transportation

Additional Department of Transportation items appear in Public Safety, above.

Remove fish passage barriers

The governor’s budget continues to support the department’s work to meet the requirements of the 2013 *U.S. v. Washington* court injunction by including an additional \$150 million dedicated to removing fish passage barriers on WSDOT roadways. This funding is a critical step to tackle the escalated construction costs associated with culverts and meet the requirements of the injunction, mandating the correction of state-owned culverts that impede salmon and steelhead migration.

(\$150 million, Move Ahead Washington Account-State)

Department of Licensing

Increase access to identification

The governor’s budget provides funding to support the Department of Licensing’s proposed legislation to remove barriers to getting an identification card. This legislation makes it simpler for young people to get adult approval to apply for an intermediate driver’s license, simplifies, expands the eligibility for those who can qualify to receive an at-cost identicard, and gives direction for a study on providing identicards at reduced costs. This will help Washingtonians access the valid identification they need to travel, obtain gainful employment, and access public resources.

(\$100,000 Highway Safety Account-State)

Prepare for Real ID

Beginning May 7, 2025, the Department of Homeland Security will require individuals to have a Real ID compliant document to board a domestic flight or enter a restricted federal facility. In preparation, the budget provides funds for DOL to conduct a public outreach campaign that alerts Washingtonians about the new requirement, and to hire staff to serve the influx of customers who need to acquire compliant identification.

(\$2.7 million Highway Safety Account-State)