

APPENDIX E

Stakeholder and Community Engagement

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INTRODUCTION

The Legislature called for early and continuous engagement of stakeholders throughout the Puget Sound Passenger-Only Ferry (POF) study. PSRC fulfilled this directive through engagement of stakeholders and communities in the 12 counties bordering Puget Sound, including those on Lake Washington and Lake Union, before study launch and throughout the process. Engagement followed a phased approach, and feedback received informed the study throughout the project.

The phases of engagement were not changed by the COVID-19 pandemic, but rather the tactics used to engage were changed. The team responded, identifying and implementing online and virtual opportunities to educate and obtain feedback on the study.

GOALS

The following goals guided engagement activities:

- Conduct early, inclusive, and continuous outreach during study development;
- Provide information about the study and potential future services;
- Gain feedback necessary to inform the study; *and*
- Lay groundwork to support future service implementation, if any.

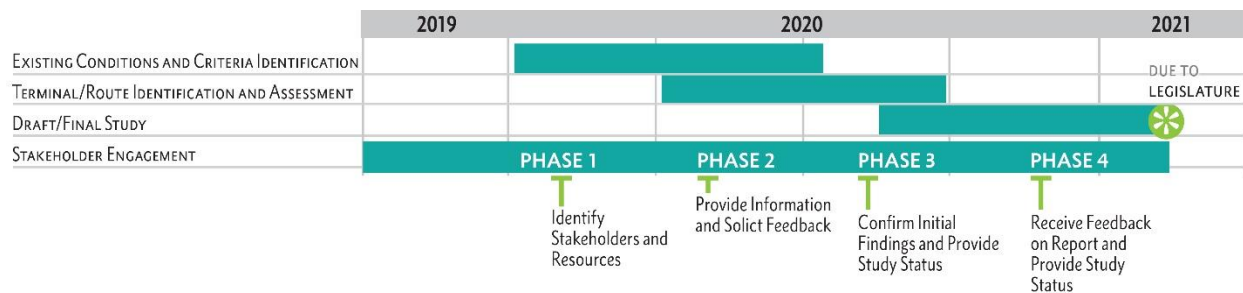
ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

Engagement activities were driven by information needed to inform the study and were tied to study project milestones. PSRC’s approach was strategic, focused, efficient, transparent, and flexible, especially in light of COVID-19.

Engagement started at a broader level, narrowing and becoming more focused and local as information was known and as study needs became more specific. The expectation is that broader and more comprehensive engagement can be conducted in specific route communities following completion of the POF study, depending on findings and implementation decisions.

Phases of Engagement

Figure 1- Schedule of engagement phases



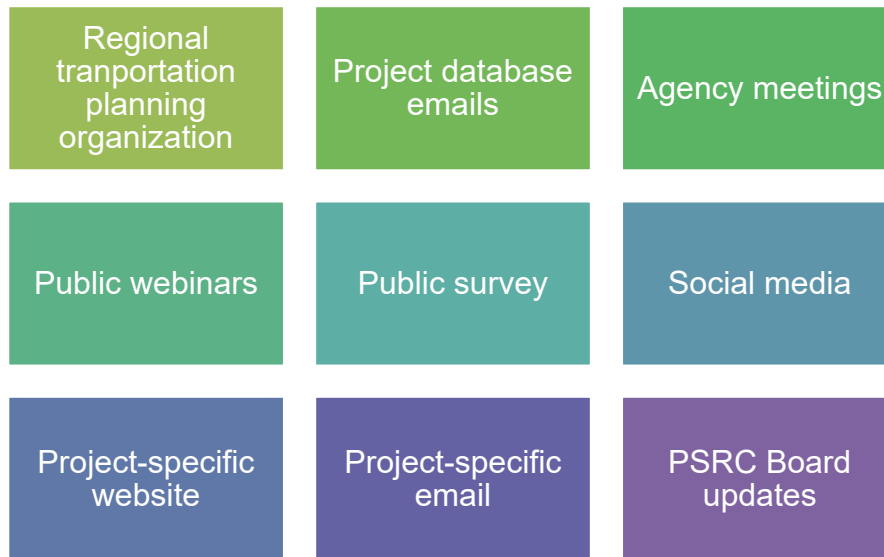
To conduct consistent engagement throughout the entire study process, multiple phases of engagement were undertaken with each phase connecting to key project milestones.

- Phase 1: Identify Stakeholders, Tools, and Resources
- Phase 2: Provide Information and Solicit Feedback on Study
- Phase 3: Confirm Initial Findings and Provide Study Status
- Phase 4: Receive Feedback on Report and Provide Study Status

Engagement Tools

A variety of engagement tools were employed to meet the study outreach goals and inform the analysis.

Figure 2- Engagement tools



ENGAGEMENT APPROACH AND FINDINGS BY PHASE

Phase 1: Identify Stakeholders, Tools, and Resources

APPROACH

The first phase of engagement included the preparation and development of an engagement plan and resources to fulfill the engagement goals of the study.

The goals of Phase 1 engagement were as follows:

1. Assessment and preparation
2. Identification of relevant stakeholders, opportunities, and available resources
3. Development and launch of project materials

Phase 1 tactics included:

- Developing a project database including both coastal/marine and lake (Lake Washington and Lake Union) interests. PSRC utilized relevant, existing databases and added stakeholders as the study progressed.
- Preparing an outreach/engagement plan and timeline to guide activities.

- Producing initial project tools/materials including a project webpage, project email, FAQ, launch email, social media post(s), etc.

PSRC began outreach to identify stakeholders and resources in late 2019, prior to engaging a consultant team. PSRC staff presented at seven different forums covering the 12-county study area to inform and recruit stakeholders as well as to identify relevant plans and studies for consideration. In addition, PSRC Executive Director Josh Brown provided notification of the study to 22 Tribal leaders, inviting their tribes to participate in the study.

PSRC used its communication channels, including an email list with over 3,500 addresses and communication with Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs), to widely broadcast a request for stakeholder participation in the study. This led to the development of a broad project database with almost 400 stakeholders, which provided an effective tool to direct interested parties to the project website to keep informed on study progress.

Phase 2: Provide Information and Solicit Feedback on Study

APPROACH

This phase publicly launched the POF Study effort, broadly distributing general information and requesting specific feedback related to POF route and terminal options and criteria. Engagement started at a broad level, followed by more focused and specific engagement based on findings and decisions made throughout the study timeline.

The goals of Phase 2 engagement were as follows:

1. Verify the findings of the initial conditions analysis.
2. Gain input on the criteria and routes to be used in later portions of the study analysis.

Due to the wide geographic area of the study, PSRC utilized representatives of the RTPOs as a sounding board for initial information, assessment, and findings. Phase 2 tactics included:

- **Email and Webpage**
 - Launching a project webpage (psrc.org/passenger-ferry-study) and email (POF_Study@psrc.org) for interested parties to sign up for project updates.
 - Distributing initial email to over 3,500 addresses introducing the project, driving people to the project webpage and encouraging sign-ups to receive project updates.
 - Asking project partners and interested parties to share information to their audiences/memberships.
 - Updating project webpage.
 - Maintaining project database.

Table 1- Definition of survey regions

| Regions as defined for public survey analysis |
|--|
| Peninsula RTPO (Clallam, Jefferson, Mason) |
| North Sound Regions (Whatcom, Skagit, Island, San Juan) |
| PSRC (King, Kitsap, Pierce, Snohomish) |
| Thurston County |

- **RTPO Engagement**
 - Presenting at RTPO meeting in advance of public webinar to introduce the study approach and gain feedback on the list of studies included in the initial conditions analysis.
 - Presented at RTPO meeting following public survey to discuss proposed route analysis criteria.
- **Public Webinar**
 - Conducting first of three webinars to introduce the study and share ways to stay informed about and provide feedback on the study.
- **Public Survey**
 - Distributing online survey to better understand and review geographical priorities and destinations of interest (over 10,500 responses were received).

FINDINGS

Phase 2 provided valuable information about how to focus study efforts by geography by pinpointing regional priorities and areas of interest and rounding out local and regional plans to inform the initial conditions analysis of the study. This phase included two RTPO meetings, a public survey, and a webinar, in addition to the website content updates.

RTPO Meetings

Prior to the first public webinar, the meeting with RTPO partners assisted with additional information to add to the existing conditions and trends analysis. These reports included local and regional transportation plans, tourism plans, and draft passenger ferry studies. These studies and reports were included in the project analysis and used throughout the study.

April Webinar

The first of the three public webinars, the April 15, 2020 webinar, was focused on introducing the study and proposed study approach. Like all of the study webinars, this webinar was promoted via PSRC social media platforms and project email lists and was published on the Passenger-Only Ferry Study website. Key points of feedback were on the proposed list of studies to be analyzed during the initial conditions analysis and initial thoughts on the proposal for the stepped route analysis that would occur later in the study. This webinar also outlined ways to stay informed and provide input.

The webinar was well attended and concluded with a question-and-answer session. Some of the key themes of submitted comments and questions included the following:

- The public wanted to know if and how equity would be evaluated for the potential POF routes in this study.
- Multiple comments related to what potential **POF landing sites would be** evaluated and what landing characteristics would be evaluated. At the time of the webinar, these items were still under development.
- The public wanted to know whether the study focused on public or privately run service and what kind of **governance** structure would be assessed.
- **Marine mammal protection** was raised as a primary concern, with the study team indicating that protecting marine mammals can be achieved through POF operating protocols and is best addressed during POF implementation.

Each of these elements was addressed in the final report.

Public Survey

As a part of Phase 2 of engagement, PSRC conducted an online survey in spring of 2020 to further understand and review geographical priorities and destinations of interest. This information helped to guide the development of the evaluation methodology and criteria of the study.

The survey was promoted on PSRC social media platforms and some local news outlets. Over 10,500 individuals responded to the survey. Due to the strong response from the North Sound region—over half of the 10,500 survey responses were from Whatcom County—data normalization measures were taken to ensure geographic equity in survey analysis.

DATA NORMALIZATION

Data normalization efforts included dividing survey responses by the county each respondent indicated they were from. Then for each county group, route options were evaluated by the percent of respondents who selected or wrote in each choice. For the analysis of proposed criteria, data was normalized by region, not county.

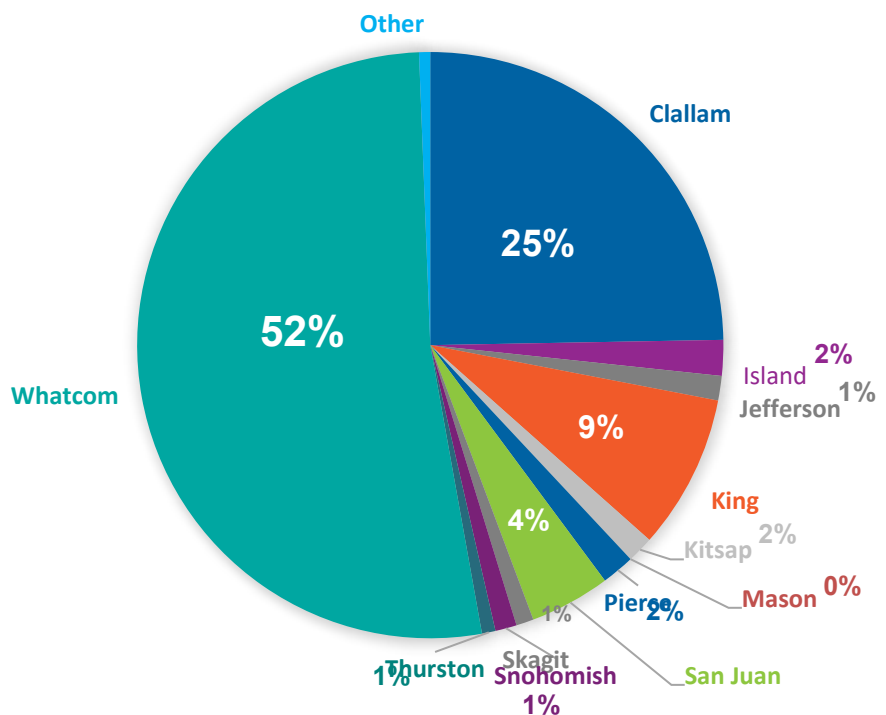
This data normalization was crucial due to the wide range in survey participation across the study area. The figure above shows the division of survey response by the county each respondent was from.

ANALYSIS CRITERIA TO EVALUATE POF SERVICE

The survey asked respondents to rank the importance of nine potential analysis criteria, each on a scale of one to five, with five being of greatest importance. The average ranking of each criterion was then calculated for all of the responses from each survey region. The resulting rankings were then ordered from highest to lowest in order to determine the top criteria for each survey region.

Based on this methodology, survey responses from all regions indicated that travel time savings was a top priority for POF service. As a result, travel time savings was incorporated as a

Figure 3- Survey participation by county




criterion in the Step 2 evaluation, as well as a criterion in the Step 3 weighted ranking of POF routes. Travel time competitiveness is often a high priority and consideration for transit customers.

Overall, the potential for a route to be electrified was deemed of lower importance for many survey regions, as was ensuring that the route served under-served communities.

Despite the commonalities discussed above, some differences were noted regarding other key criteria. Recreational potential for POF routes was identified as more important in the North Sound and Peninsula RTPO regions. Prioritizing recreational opportunities contributed to more routes in these regions being designated as discretionary/recreational routes, and the relative recreation potential of each route was included as a criterion in the study analysis. Similarly, ridership was determined to be more important in PSRC and Thurston regions. Prioritizing route options with higher ridership potential was determined as important in those areas. Ridership potential played an important part in the evaluation criteria as a result.

Table 1 indicates the order of importance for the criteria identified for each region.

Table 2- Criteria ranking by region



| | Least Important | | | | | | | | Most Important |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Peninsula RTPO | Electrification | Under-served Communities | Multimodal Connections | Local Support | Ridership | Quick Implementation | Recreation | Travel Time Savings & Resiliency | |
| PSRC | Electrification | Under-served Communities | Recreational Potential | Local Support | Resiliency | Multimodal Connections | Quick Implementation | Ridership | Travel Time Savings |
| North Sound Transportation Alliance | Electrification | Multimodal Connections | Under-served communities | Local Support | Ridership | Resiliency | Travel Time Savings | Quick Implementation | Recreational Potential |
| Thurston County | Quick Implementation | Under-served Communities | Local Support | Electrification | Recreational Potential | Resiliency | Multimodal Connections | Ridership | Travel Time Savings |

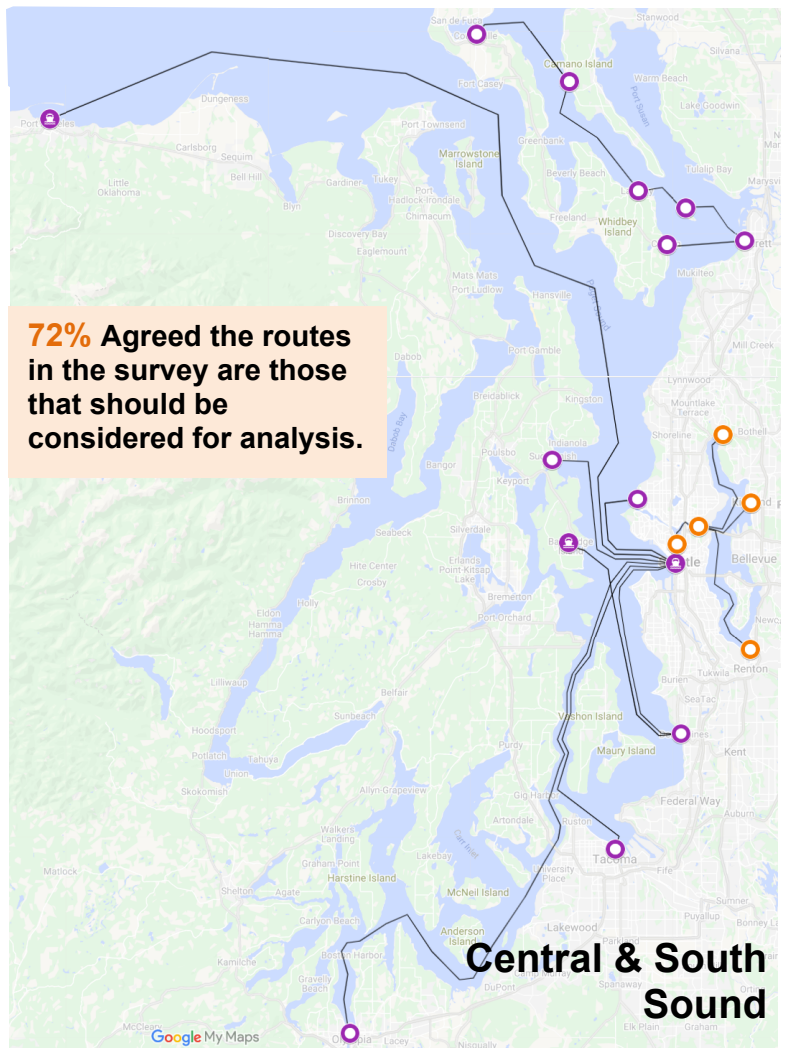
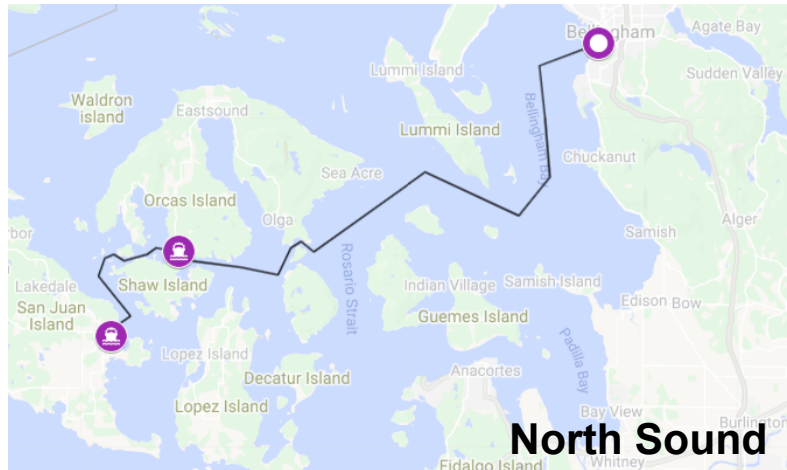
ROUTE OPTIONS

Apart from identifying key analysis criteria, the survey also provided respondents the opportunity to recommend routes for consideration. A selection of routes was included on the survey based upon previous studies; these included:

- Bainbridge Island–Des Moines
- Ballard (Shilshole Bay Marina)–Downtown Seattle
- Coupeville–Camano Island
- Downtown Seattle–Des Moines
- Downtown Tacoma–Downtown Seattle
- Friday Harbor–Bellingham
- Kenmore–Seattle (UW Waterfront Activities Center)
- Kirkland–Seattle (UW Waterfront Activities Center)
- Olympia–Downtown Seattle
- Port Angeles–Seattle
- Renton–South Lake Union
- Suquamish–Downtown Seattle
- Whidbey Island (Langley)–Camano Island
- Whidbey Island (Clinton or Langley)–Everett

Of survey respondents, 72% agreed the routes shown in the survey were those that should be considered for analysis.

Figure 4- Routes included in the survey
[base map from Google Maps]



For those that believed additional routes should be evaluated, an opportunity to write in up to three route options was provided. The following route combinations were “write-in” routes that were supported by at least 10% of one county’s survey respondents and were therefore added for assessment:

- Port Townsend–Downtown Seattle
- Port Townsend–Bellingham
- Orcas Island–Bellingham
- Camano Island–Everett
- Tacoma–Olympia

OPEN-ENDED COMMENTS

The survey provided an opportunity for respondents to provide additional information through open-ended comments. Overall, the majority of comments were positive towards the prospect of POF service as a form of transportation. Many used this opportunity to further advocate for implementation of specific route selections made in the route options portion of the survey. Additionally, respondents shared additional factors they felt were important for POF service, including:

- Access to healthcare,
- Access to airports,
- Resiliency with respect to the West Seattle Bridge closure,
- Equity considerations,
- Access to housing,
- Potential intermediate stops that should be considered, and
- Expansion of existing POF service.

Additional themes of comments which were outside the scope of the study included:

- How to finance future POF service,
- Fare integration with ORCA, and
- Linking service to Canada (outside of Puget Sound study area).

Phase 3: Confirm Initial Findings and Provide Study Status

APPROACH

Phase 3 focused outreach to confirm findings from Phases 1 and 2 and to fill in identified gaps needed for the POF Study. Ongoing general project updates were posted via the project webpage, email distribution lists, social media, etc. and through partners and existing communications channels.

The goal of Phase 3 engagement were as follows:

- Gather information to develop route profiles.

Phase 3 tactics included:

- **Email and Webpage**
 - Distributing project email update, including reviewing survey results and promoting the second webinar.
 - Updating project webpage.
 - Maintaining project database.
- **RTPO Engagement**
 - Presenting at RTPO meeting in advance of public webinar.
 - Presenting at RTPO meeting to go over the draft route profile format.
- **Public Webinar**
 - Conducting second webinar to provide a study update, share survey results and preliminary study findings, and to gain input.
- **Agency Coordination**
 - Completing site-specific outreach with community representatives within routes and landing sites identified in the Step 3 analysis to better understand potential challenges and opportunities of POF service.

FINDINGS

Information gathered as part of Phase 3 engagement shaped the route profiles. Agencies provided feedback as to specific landing sites identified for a route and provided insight as to opportunities and hurdles to POF implementation within that jurisdiction.

RTPO Meeting

In preparation for the second webinar, PSRC once again met with RTPO partners to share the survey findings and the findings of the stepped route analysis to date, revealing the routes that were slated to be profiled following Step 3 of the route analysis. RTPO members provided valuable insights into how the communities with interest in recreational/discretionary routes had different experiences and tolerances for POF routes than may be typical for commute routes. One key observation was that longer route travels times are often expected and may not preclude ridership, as long as routes are competitive.

August Webinar

The second webinar was held on August 20, 2020 and was focused on providing the public with online survey results and preliminary study findings of the study and on gaining feedback on the

shared findings. Preliminary findings included the routes analyzed during each step of the study along with the proposed list of routes to be profiled.

Key themes among public feedback:

- Many questions revolved around specific routes and what aspects contributed to where specific routes ended up in the [route ranking](#).
- [Marine mammal protection](#) was again raised as a concern, with the study team indicating that protecting marine mammals can be achieved through POF operating protocols and is best addressed during POF implementation. Study analysis found that marine mammals migrate throughout the entire Puget Sound, impacting all POF routes on the Sound nearly identically.

Following Step 3 of the route analysis, engagement meetings were held with agencies and local property owners in the jurisdictions in which the profiled routes were set to be implemented. These meetings were designed to determine agency interest in potential routes, to gain more clarity on feasible route and landing site options, and to determine any key concerns or considerations moving forward. The study team met with representatives from the following agency partners:

- City of Bellingham
- City of Everett
- City of Gig Harbor
- City of Kenmore
- City of Kirkland
- City of Langley
- City of Renton
- City of Ruston
- City of Seattle
- City of Tacoma
- Island County
- King County Metro
- Kitsap County
- Kitsap Transit
- Legacy Development
- Port of Everett
- Port of Seattle
- Port of South Whidbey
- San Juan County
- SECO Development
- Suquamish Tribe
- University of Washington
- Washington State Ferries

REFINEMENTS TO ROUTE ANALYSIS

Throughout these meetings, information was gathered that helped to refine Step 4 of the route analysis. The following sections detail some of these findings and how they resulted in refinements to the route analysis.

Routes Not to be Profiled

Two routes that were candidates for route profiles (Suquamish to downtown Seattle and Gig Harbor to downtown Seattle) were not moved forward to profiling as the result of stakeholder meetings. Representatives of the Suquamish Tribe and Kitsap County indicated that the potential landing site on the Suquamish waterfront has important cultural value and serves cultural and economic purposes that are incompatible with consideration for POF at this time. The City of Gig Harbor expressed that potential landing sites in their community were also incompatible with potential POF use and the city's vision for its waterfront, including recreational and economic uses in the area.

Preferred Landing Sites

Multiple potential options were identified for a potential POF landing site for each route throughout the analysis process. For the purposes of route comparison and ease of analysis, a representative landing was selected for each end of the potential POF route. These representative locations were used for Steps 1 through 3 of the route analysis process. For Step 4, a primary purpose of the agency engagement meetings was to confirm that the representative landing site selected was the preferred landing option for each jurisdiction. The following jurisdictions indicated preferred landing sites that were different from the initially selected representative location.

- Bellingham, South Whidbey, and Everett

As a result, the route profiles and further route analysis were updated to reflect agency comments.

However, a preferred landing site could not be selected for both ends of all profiled POF routes. The reasons for this depended upon each specific site.

- **Downtown Seattle:** The current POF landing site could not support the addition of further routes with capital improvements. A multitude of additional landing options are available along the waterfront. Additional study and multi-party negotiation are needed to determine the path forward for providing docking capacity for new routes serving downtown Seattle.
- **South Lake Union:** Public docks in this area face parks and recreation use grant restrictions. Though private options could be feasible, additional outreach would be needed with property owners before a landing could be selected. A Seattle Public Utilities-owned site mentioned as a potential option was located farther away from representative land-side transit modal connections.
- **University of Washington:** The University has expressed the need to retain compatibility with crew team and recreational boating use of facilities and waterways. In addition, the University described the need for improved ADA-compliant pedestrian connections to the Link light rail station and UW campus from the representative location. Further negotiation would be needed to ensure that a selected landing site could maintain compatibility.

KEY THEMES

Though each agency partner had their own unique concerns and considerations, a few common themes were present among the discussions.

Competing Interest for Transit Dollars

Multiple jurisdictions indicated that due to the variety of other planned transit investments in their jurisdictions, POF would be competing for transit dollars with other modes. Though an integrated and multimodal transportation network is possible and the goal of many agencies, funding is limited for the system as a whole.

Relationship to POF and Recreational Uses

Multiple route landings are in the vicinity of parks or other recreational boating areas. Stakeholders expressed concerns with maintaining the compatibility of recreational and educational (i.e., UW Crew team) uses in chosen landing sites used as POF landings. Parks

and recreation use grant restrictions that could also prohibit non-recreational uses in some areas.

Stakeholders identified a potential conflict between outdoor recreational space and transportation facility use. There are models for how this potential conflict might be mitigated.

Additional stakeholder negotiation will be needed regarding how recreational and POF uses could work in the unique context of each landing site.

Connections to Landing Sites

Stakeholders indicated the importance of connections to potential landing sites, though not all stakeholders emphasized the same modal connections. Some prioritized bicycle connections, including the prioritization of bicycle space on vessels, while others emphasized needing bus and rail transit connections. The ADA accessibility of pedestrian connections was a focus of others. The need and/or availability of parking to serve the landing site was mentioned in other stakeholder meetings.

Phase 4: Receive Feedback on Report and Provide Study Status

APPROACH

Phase 4 focused on finalizing the POF Study and circulating the draft report to interested stakeholders and gaining comments from the public. Ongoing general project updates were posted via the project webpage, email distribution lists, social media, etc. and through partners and existing communications channels.

Phase 4 tactics included:

- **Email and Webpage**
 - Distributing project email with project update and promoting third webinar.
 - Updating project webpage.
 - Maintaining project database.
- **RTPO Engagement**
 - Presenting at RTPO meeting in advance of public webinar, getting feedback on route profile content and layout.
- **Public Webinar**
 - Conducting third and final webinar to present the final draft report.
- **Opportunity for feedback on Draft Report**
 - Publishing the draft report on the website for public review.

FINDINGS

The goal of Phase 4 engagement was to gain feedback on the draft report and draft route profiles. Throughout this phase, stakeholders and the public engaged meaningfully with the questions proposed by the study team and offered additional information on terminal siting based on their local knowledge and expertise. Generally, there was overall enthusiasm for POF service throughout the engagement process, with some cautionary feedback regarding potential hurdles that could be encountered with the implementation of specific routes. More detail on the topics covered in the key themes can be found in the appropriate appendices to this report.

KEY THEMES

Cost and Ridership Calculations

Several commentors had questions about the specifics of cost per passenger figures—the exact inputs, assumptions, and strategies for covering costs. A few individuals asked about potential fares and how including POF service in the ORCA transit fare program could impact card costs, particularly for large employers with Business Passport accounts. Stakeholders from some communities indicated the ridership estimates in the route profiles were lower than they expected. These stakeholders were optimistic ridership would be higher, lowering cost burdens associated with POF service.

Speed and Travel Time Calculations

A few questions were posed about the assumptions underpinning the travel time savings calculations—specifically related to speed. Some responses expressed skepticism about whether travel time calculations fully accounted for low-wake areas and other speed restrictions. These comments did not appear to indicate any disapproval of POF service, only requests for more information.

Environment and Recreation Impacts and Mitigation

Concerns about the impact of POF service on non-motorized recreational vessels and activities were expressed—specifically in Union Bay and Portage Bay for the lake-based routes. There was advocacy for preserving these recreational areas and concern over the safety of sharing the waterways with POF service. A few commentors also indicated a preference for electric vessels or potentially hydrogen-powered vessels to prevent noise, pollution, and negative impacts on fish and wildlife on all routes.

Access and Capacity Issues

Several responses from both the public and policymakers were related to capacity concerns—either terminal/pier capacity for additional vessels or capacity for multimodal connections to POF service, such as parking facilities and availability of proximate transit connections. Easy access to other transportation services at terminals, as well as appropriate parking capacity was noted. Respondents indicated this type of access was critical to making POF service, particularly across Lake Washington and Lake Union, a viable alternative to driving or freeway-based bus trips. Some responses highlighted potential alternative access points for consideration, particularly on the South Whidbey – Everett route. Stakeholders noted the benefits of connections between military facilities on the South Whidbey-Everett route.