

MARIA CANTWELL  
WASHINGTON



## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4705

May 26, 2020

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao  
Office of the Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Chao,

I am writing in support of the Washington State Department of Transportation – Ferries Division (Washington State Ferries (WSF)) application to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA)'s Passenger Ferry Grant (PFG) Program for the Issaquah Class Ferry Reduction Gear Preservation Project.

WSF is the nation's largest ferry system serving over 24.3 million riders in 2019, including 10.6 million vehicles/drivers and 13.7 million passengers. The ferry system includes 22 vessels and ten routes serving 20 terminals located around the Puget Sound and in the San Juan Islands. WSF's services provide vital marine highways for personal, commuter and recreational travel and freight traffic; providing access between urban areas on the east side of Puget Sound and growing communities on the Kitsap and Olympic peninsulas and San Juan Islands.

According to WSF, this project is a critical element to achieving a state of good repair for WSF's vessels. Reduction gears are a key component of Issaquah Class ferry propulsion systems, and a failure of this component will pose a safety risk to riders, crew, the environment and the vessel. The reduction gear components of these vessels have reached or exceeded their 20-year life cycle. WSF estimates that an unplanned replacement of a failed reduction gear would cause a 15-month period of lost service. A loss of service capacity like this would cost WSF approximately \$6,000 per day, which totals almost \$3 million per failure.

PFG funds will be used to purchase reduction gear components for two Issaquah Class vessels as a part of critical preservation efforts. The used components from these two vessels will be remanufactured to support additional vessels in the class, with one set remaining as a spare. Maintaining reduction gears in a state of good repair improves reliable ferry service and supports vessels in reaching their expected service life.

I strongly support Washington State Ferries' application for the Issaquah Class Ferry Reduction Gear Preservation Project and thank you for your full and fair consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Maria Cantwell".

Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator