

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4705

July 19, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

I am writing in support of Kitsap Transit's application to the Federal Transit Administration's Passenger Ferry grant program. Kitsap Transit is seeking \$13.5 million to replace an aging passenger-only fast ferry that is at the end of its useful life with a cleaner, more efficient vessel.

Kitsap Transit is a Public Transportation Benefit Area Authority in Kitsap County that serves over 270,000 county residents and 3.5 million riders annually. Kitsap Transit operates the second-largest ferry fleet in the state, connecting Kitsap Peninsula with Seattle and other parts of the state via three routes crossing Puget Sound. This service is a vital transportation link for commuters and others to employment, education, healthcare, and entertainment in Seattle. Kitsap Transit's fast ferries are also twice as fast as traditional ferries. Kitsap Transit offers both free commuter parking at park and ride lots across Kitsap County and bus service to connect riders to ferry terminals. In 2023, the fast ferry service transported over one million riders, with and served 40,800 more riders in the first quarter of 2024 compared to last year. Currently, the Kingston to Seattle route is serviced by the MV Finest, which has been in continuous service for more than 25 years and has met her useful life.

If successful, Kitsap Transit will use grant funding to replace the aging MV Finest. The MV Finest has reached her limits of repair and refurbishment, and the cost to refurbish the vessel is likely to cost the agency 75% or more of the cost of a new vessel. The proposed replacement will make the Kingston to Seattle route a sustainable transportation option as Kitsap Transit will utilize EPA Tier 4 engines, which meet the strictest requirements for regulation of particulate matter and nitrogen oxides. A new vessel will help ensure that Kitsap Transit can continue to offer its residents an alternative commute to car-limited ferries or a 90-mile drive to Seattle.

Thank you for your full and fair consideration of the Kitsap Transit's application to the Passenger Ferry Grant Program.

Sincerely,



Maria Cantwell

United States Senator