

# Discussion of Ferry Issues Continues in Kingston

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## KINGSTON

Problems with the state ferry system, from the biggest policy issues to local concerns, were the subject of an earnest discussion Monday night in Kingston, where two local legislators had come to engage the public.

About a dozen people joined Reps. Sherry Appleton, D-Poulsbo, and Christine Rolfes, D-Bainbridge Island, to debrief on last week's Puget Sound Leadership Ferry Summit in Bremerton, where leaders and stakeholders from around the state discussed Washington State Ferries issues.

The legislators met with the Kingston Ferry Advisory Committee, one of a number of advisory groups in a town well-known for its civic activism.

A top local concern has been the traffic backups through town when the Kingston-Edmonds ferry run is at peak capacity, making local travel and commerce difficult.

The big issue with attendees was money — specifically,



Sherry  
Appleton

ly, how the state funds ferries and how much riders are forced to pay.

Appleton said she will be introducing five bills aimed at solving ferry woes, including revamping the much-maligned electronic ticking system, restructuring the group that makes policy recommendations and reconfiguring how the state spends gas-

tax revenue to include 1 cent for ferries — a half-cent more

than her failed request from last year.

The 1999 passage of Initiative 695, which drastically reduced car tab fees that paid for things like ferry operations, destroyed the vision of the ferry system, Appleton said.

"It's sort of become broken," she said.

Rolfes said the state has money to run a ferry system, but not enough to run the kind of system that



Christine  
Rolfes

the state is seeking. A study of the system's operations and pricing is under way, though a wrench has been thrown in the gears with the recent halt of auto-ferry service in Port Townsend because of a need to replace the state's 80-year-old vessels.

Appleton said the large meeting last week in Bremerton was meant to begin the conversation, not solve all the prob-

lems. There were calls for more people in farther-flung communities, like Sequim and Port Angeles, to have their voices heard.

Last year, people voiced concern over rising fares, and the Legislature listened by freezing them temporarily.

For Kingston Ferry Advisory Committee member Paul Lundy, that communication is key.

"It's gotten us to where we are today, where we're seriously evaluating the system," he said.