

I am writing about Kitsap Transit's application for a route franchise between Harper, Kitsap County, and Seattle.

I am concerned that Kitsap Transit, high from the success of the Kingston and Bremerton foot ferries, is trying to recreate the success at Harper without acknowledging the differences in location and environment. Harper is vastly different from Kingston and Bremerton: it is a neighborhood, not a city. Putting a ferry terminal at Harper is much more equivalent to putting in a bus terminal in a housing development cul-de-sac.

I work in Seattle and live on Cornell Road in Kitsap County. The Harper Fishing Pier, proposed location of a Ferry Terminal, is at the east end of Cornell. Cornell Road is very special. The slow pace and its pedestrian-friendly nature have sewn 27 houses into a neighborhood, more than that: into a community. I've lived lots of other places but never known more than one or two neighbors; here, I know most of them. To me, the most valuable part of where I live is the community we have created.

I think a Foot Ferry Terminal at the Harper Fishing Pier will threaten our community.

I have three main concerns.

FIRST. The traffic on Cornell Road will increase in quantity and speed. In spite of any attempts to sign the road, people will drive down it to park, to look for parking and to drop off and pick up ferry riders. As people rush to the ferry and try to beat the rush getting home many of them will be going faster than is safe for a narrow, curving road with many driveways.

SECOND CONCERN. Along with the increase in traffic and speed, I anticipate there will be an increase in personal property crime that comes when more people move through a neighborhood without having ties to that neighborhood.

THIRD. The recreation use of the Pier will cease. Divers will no longer be able to run a rope underwater between the pier and the wreck. Fishing will be harder with the boats coming in and out, if fishing on the pier is even allowed.

My other concerns are these:

4. The Mosquito Fleet Trail will be interrupted by bus turn around and the terminal, making it difficult and dangerous for bicyclists to run from Southworth to the east end of Cornell.

5. Kitsap Transit will allow use of the ferry terminal by other operators. The extended the hours of use will aggravate the negatively impact the community and recreational use of the pier.

6. A foot ferry in South Kitsap will be in competition with WSF passenger-only service between Vashon and Seattle. Half of the WSF users are now from Southworth. If Kitsap Transit wins the competition, it will siphon riders from WSF, endangering the viability of the WSF passenger-only service. If WSF wins the competition, our community is left with a white elephant of a ferry terminal and numerous related headaches.

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To solve the parking question on Cornell Road: Kitsap Transit has promised to see that parking signs are installed. That doesn't solve the problem because then residents couldn't park on their own street. Enforcement is problematic--Kitsap Transit has said it will pay for additional County policing if it is necessary. Who defines "necessary"? The people who are paying for the enforcement or the people who are asking for it?

And the concern about parking is not limited to Cornell Road. The reason WSF abandoned use of Harper Dock in the late 50's was because there wasn't adequate room for staging. There wasn't adequate room for parking either. Parking by commuters was a problem on all side streets. This was in the 1950's; the population has grown considerable since then.

The No Parking signs do not address people who will want to drive down Cornell Road to drop off passengers. Cornell is narrow; the average width is 12' and it has no shoulders in most places. Its half mile length and limited vehicle traffic has lured many people into using it as a safe place to walk or run. From spring through fall, bicyclists use it as a way of avoiding the hill on Southworth Drive at Harper. In many places you can round a corner to find the road filled ducks or widgeons or geese. Residents are used to these obstacles and drive appropriately, backing into nearby driveways when they meet an oncoming vehicle. Who will protect us from commuters racing to catch a ferry?

Kitsap Transit foresees use of the Harper Ferry Terminal by other operators (Argosy could have a run to Blake Island). I assume those uses would be happening during times when the Kitsap Transit operator is not running ferries between Harper and Seattle. This extends the period of the terminal use beyond what Kitsap Transit is presenting in their January 2005 letter to the community. Will Kitsap Transit pay for parking enforcement during those times also? The issue of night and evening sound and light pollution in this rural community is significant.

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Bottom line: I am concerned that Kitsap Transit, high from the success of the Kingston and Bremerton foot ferries, is trying to recreate the success here without acknowledging the differences in location and environment; without acknowledging that there is already service to Seattle from South Kitsap; without acknowledging Harper is a community, not a city. In Harper, Kitsap Transit is not looking at putting in a ferry terminal on a city waterfront, next to a marina and other commercial properties. In Harper, Kitsap Transit is trying to put a ferry terminal in at a park, in a neighborhood.

Harper is not the right location for Kitsap Transit's south county ferry terminal.