

AN ISLAND IN CRISIS: THE 2-BOAT SCHEDULE

ISLANDERS FOR FERRY ACTION 2-BOAT SCHEDULE SURVEY RESULTS

OCTOBER, 2024





VASHON RESIDENT 2-BOAT SCHEDULE SURVEY RESULTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

October, 2024

This fall, the citizen-activist group Islanders for Ferry Action created and distributed an online survey for Vashon residents to better understand the impacts of the Washington State Ferries reduced service 2-boat schedule on the Triangle route, and to determine resident preferences for revising the schedule. We received over 500 responses, and the results revealed important details and insight into the impacts of applying a schedule intended for 24-hour “emergency” service as a years-long solution for our marine highway.

Key Findings

The current schedule and the numerous structural flaws leave Vashon riders vulnerable to missed trips, extended wait times and unpredictable cancellations. This unreliability has significantly impacted day-to-day travel, household finances, and access to healthcare.

Frequent Use for Critical Purposes

A significant portion of respondents are frequent travelers and rely on the ferry either daily (11%) or multiple times a week (33%), with most using it for commuting to work (32%) and medical appointments (32%). These vital needs indicate that service disruptions disproportionately impact access to healthcare and work/life balance.

Schedule Gaps, Wait Times, and Reliability Are Top Priorities

- **Morning Gaps:** 76% of respondents highlight a major schedule gap between 10:15 AM and 12:40 PM, resulting in delays and reduced service. This is the largest proportion of response for any question.
- **Afternoon Bottlenecks:** 36% of respondents cited long wait times at Vashon and Fauntleroy during the afternoon. These lines and overall travel times are compounded by the fact that key sailings, such as the 3:50 PM departure, stop at Southworth first.
- **Evening Issues:** Over 52% of respondents report long evening wait times at Fauntleroy, and many (22%) note unpredictable cancellations as a top issue.
- Respondents by a plurality (36%) suggest that the bonus third boat, or “Ghost Boat,” be utilized to provide service during schedule gaps. 30% prefer it to be used to reduce wait times.
- Complementary to this portion of the survey, an important external data point comes from the 2023 WSF FROG (Ferry Rider Opinion Group) survey, indicating that riders on the Triangle route clearly indicate a preference for a more reliable schedule.



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Widespread Impacts from Service Delays

More than half of respondents (58%) noted that missed medical appointments were the biggest impact to their family caused by cancellations and delays. 26% cited the increased cost of goods and services on Vashon as the most significant impact, and a combined 30% cited lost wages or impact to business. This reflects not just inconvenience but also tangible economic and health consequences for the community.

Significant Financial Burdens

46% of respondents report annual financial impacts ranging from \$1-\$1,499, with another 32% affected up to \$4,999. 14% cited impacts from \$5,000 - \$14,000, with more than 1% citing an annual impact over \$60,000. These figures highlight the economic toll of ferry cancellations and delays on individual households.

Need for Expanded and Reliable Public Transit

29% of residents find public transit vital to their household, and another 26% state that it is somewhat important, indicating both demand and need for reliable and accessible public transit.

Community Support for Water Taxi Expansion

There is strong interest in water taxi services, particularly for weekend service expansion on Saturdays (67%), along with later evening runs.

Overall, the survey data highlights both the heavy reliance on and the systemic failures of the 2-boat ferry schedule on the Triangle Route for Vashon Island. Addressing the service gaps, enhancing reliability, and optimizing the use of available boats and crew could significantly improve ferry service for residents. The strategic use of the Bonus Boat and a corrected 2-Boat schedule present immediate opportunities to alleviate the community's frustration and financial burdens.

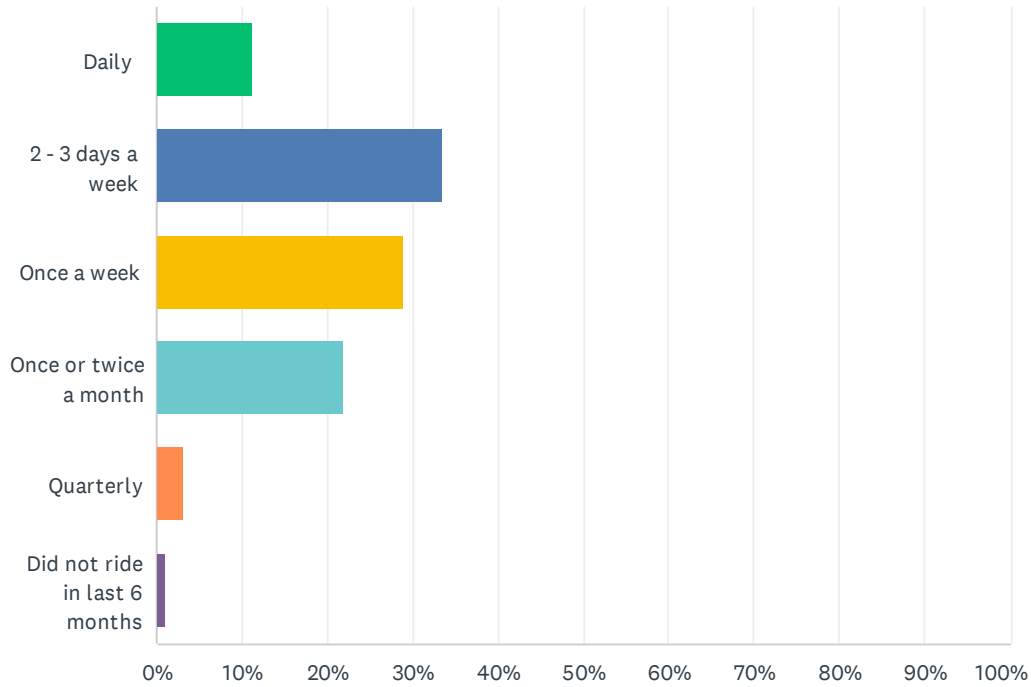
About Islanders for Ferry Action

Islanders for Ferry Action (IFA) is comprised of Vashon residents dedicated to identifying and lobbying for solutions to chronic ferry service disruptions. We are committed to working together with policy makers and all ferry-served communities to discover and implement creative, real-world solutions that will help Washington stay on the move.

Learn more at www.fixourferries.org

Q1 Over the last six months, on average, how often did you ride Triangle route (north end) ferries from and returning to Vashon?

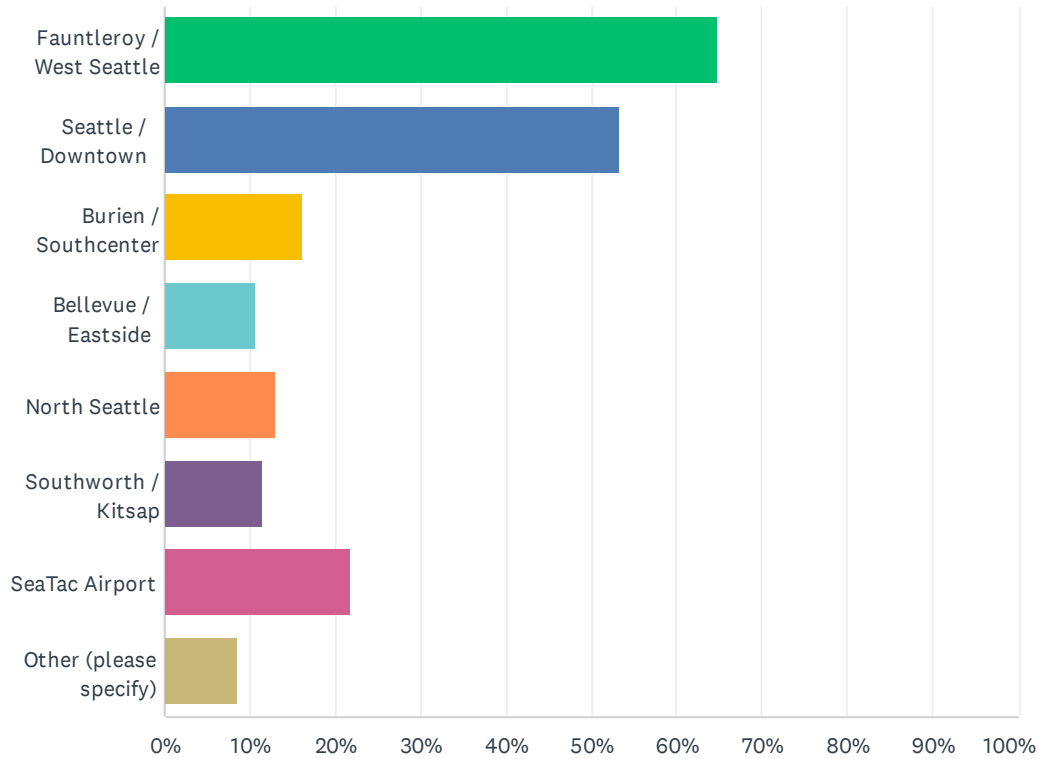
Answered: 500 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Daily	11.40%	57
2 - 3 days a week	33.40%	167
Once a week	29.00%	145
Once or twice a month	22.00%	110
Quarterly	3.20%	16
Did not ride in last 6 months	1.00%	5
TOTAL		500

Q2 What are your most frequently visited destinations when traveling from Vashon on the Triangle route? (Pick two)

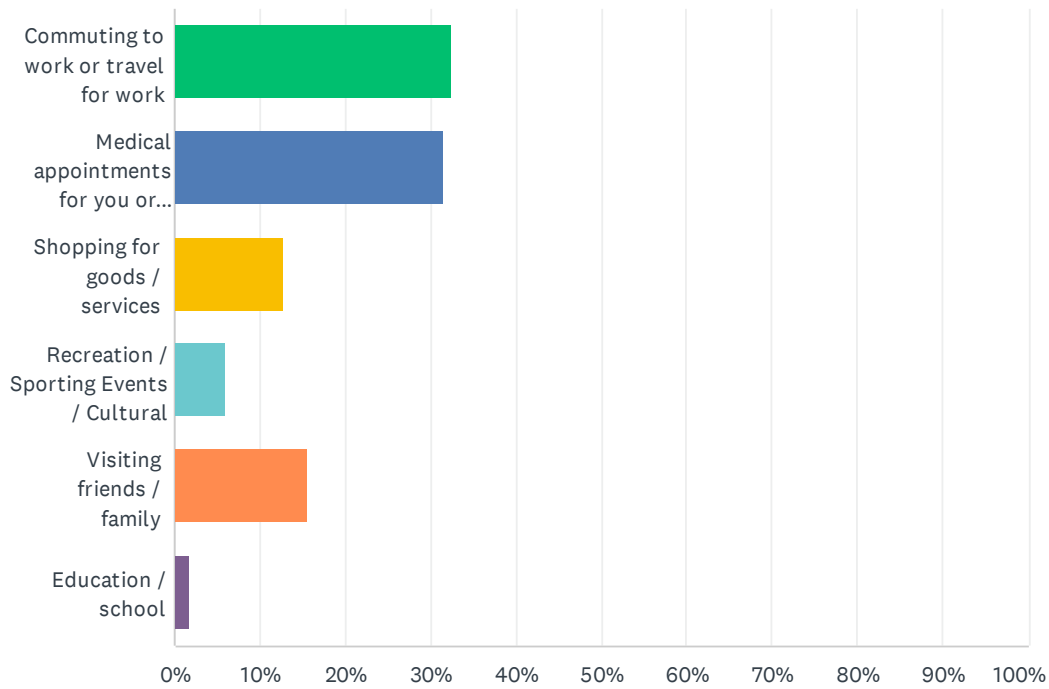
Answered: 500 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Fauntleroy / West Seattle	64.80%	324
Seattle / Downtown	53.40%	267
Burien / Southcenter	16.20%	81
Bellevue / Eastside	10.60%	53
North Seattle	13.00%	65
Southworth / Kitsap	11.60%	58
SeaTac Airport	21.80%	109
Other (please specify)	8.60%	43
Total Respondents: 500		

Q3 What's the primary purpose of your travel on the Triangle route?

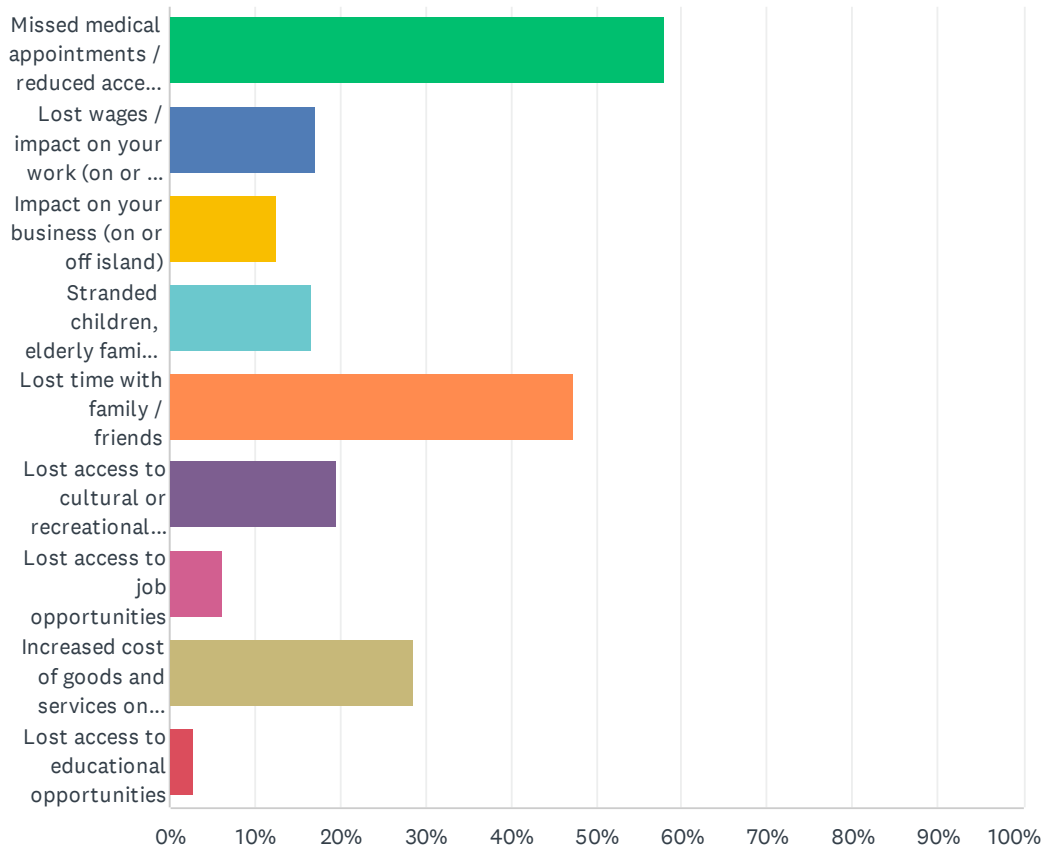
Answered: 500 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Commuting to work or travel for work	32.40%	162
Medical appointments for you or others	31.60%	158
Shopping for goods / services	12.80%	64
Recreation / Sporting Events / Cultural	6.00%	30
Visiting friends / family	15.60%	78
Education / school	1.60%	8
TOTAL		500

Q4 How are you and your family most impacted by delays and cancellations on the Triangle route? (Pick two)

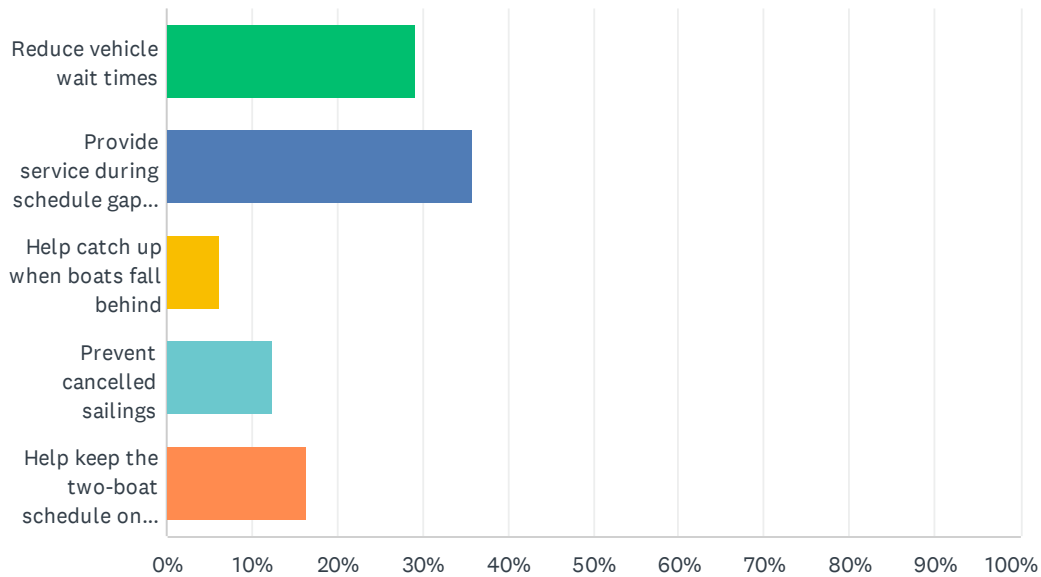
Answered: 494 Skipped: 6



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Missed medical appointments / reduced access to medical care	57.89%	286
Lost wages / impact on your work (on or off island)	17.00%	84
Impact on your business (on or off island)	12.55%	62
Stranded children, elderly family members, or visitors	16.60%	82
Lost time with family / friends	47.37%	234
Lost access to cultural or recreational activities	19.64%	97
Lost access to job opportunities	6.28%	31
Increased cost of goods and services on Vashon	28.54%	141
Lost access to educational opportunities	2.83%	14
Total Respondents: 494		

Q5 Washington State Ferries hopes to keep the unscheduled, third, Bonus Boat or “Ghost Boat” running on the triangle route. With the Fall schedule it will run morning to evening, seven days per week. In your opinion, what’s the best use for the “Ghost Boat?” (Note WSF currently does not have crew or vessel capacity to return to the full three-boat schedule. The third boat available, the Salish, is too slow to keep up with the three boat schedule).

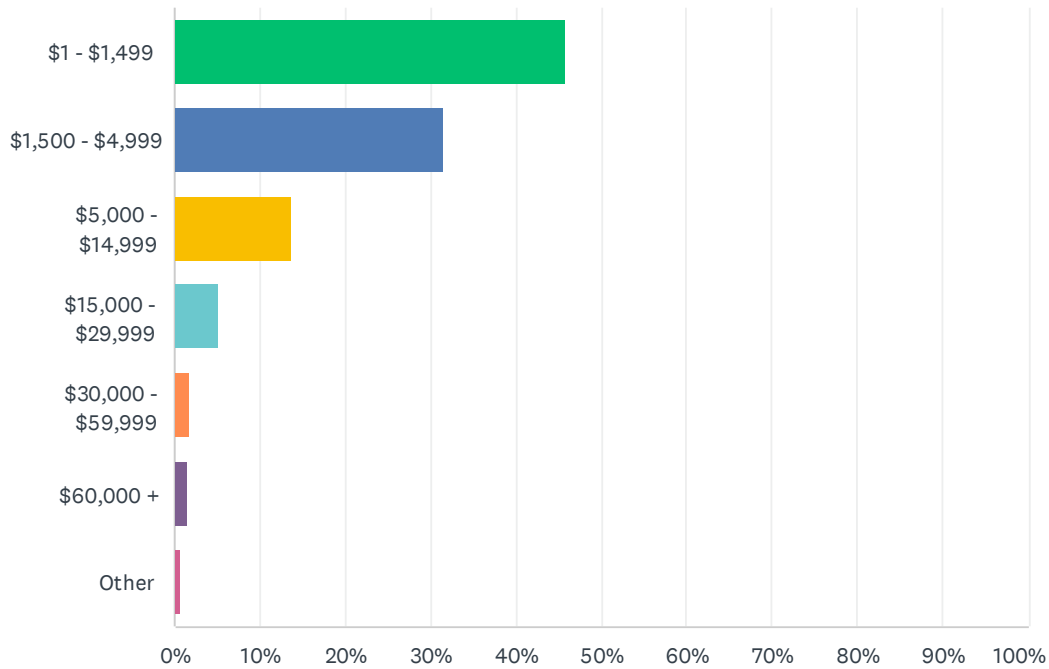
Answered: 497 Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Reduce vehicle wait times	29.18%	145
Provide service during schedule gap times	35.81%	178
Help catch up when boats fall behind	6.24%	31
Prevent cancelled sailings	12.27%	61
Help keep the two-boat schedule on schedule	16.50%	82
TOTAL		497

Q6 Thinking about the past 12 months, please estimate the annual financial impact on you and/or your family caused by reduced ferry service, delays, and cancellations

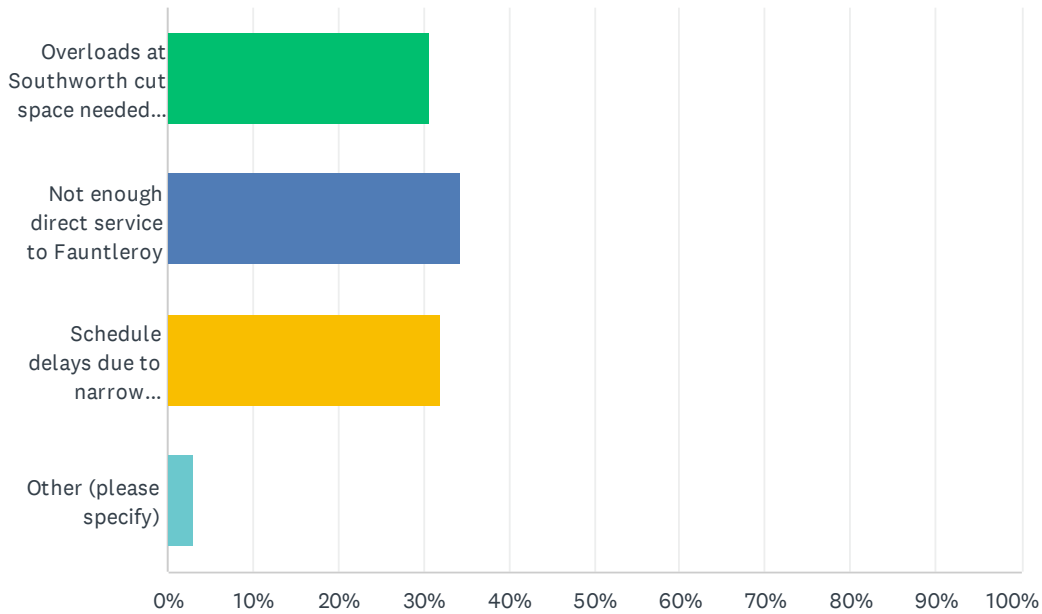
Answered: 488 Skipped: 12



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
\$1 - \$1,499	45.90%	224
\$1,500 - \$4,999	31.56%	154
\$5,000 - \$14,999	13.73%	67
\$15,000 - \$29,999	5.12%	25
\$30,000 - \$59,999	1.64%	8
\$60,000 +	1.43%	7
Other	0.61%	3
TOTAL		488

Q7 We have sorted the weekday sailing schedules into four blocks of time. For each one, please suggest your highest priority issue for WSF to solve. Early Mornings 4:00 am to 9:00 am (select your highest priority to solve)

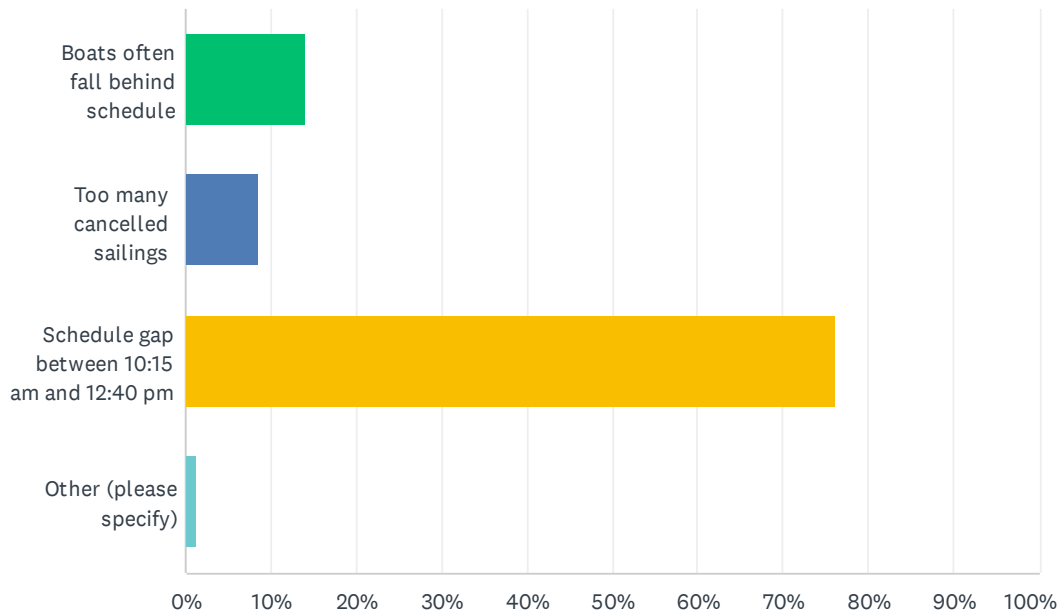
Answered: 478 Skipped: 22



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Overloads at Southworth cut space needed for Vashon commuters	30.75%	147
Not enough direct service to Fauntleroy	34.31%	164
Schedule delays due to narrow departure spacing / inadequate loading time	32.01%	153
Other (please specify)	2.93%	14
TOTAL		478

Q8 Morning 9:00 am to Noon (select your highest priority to solve)

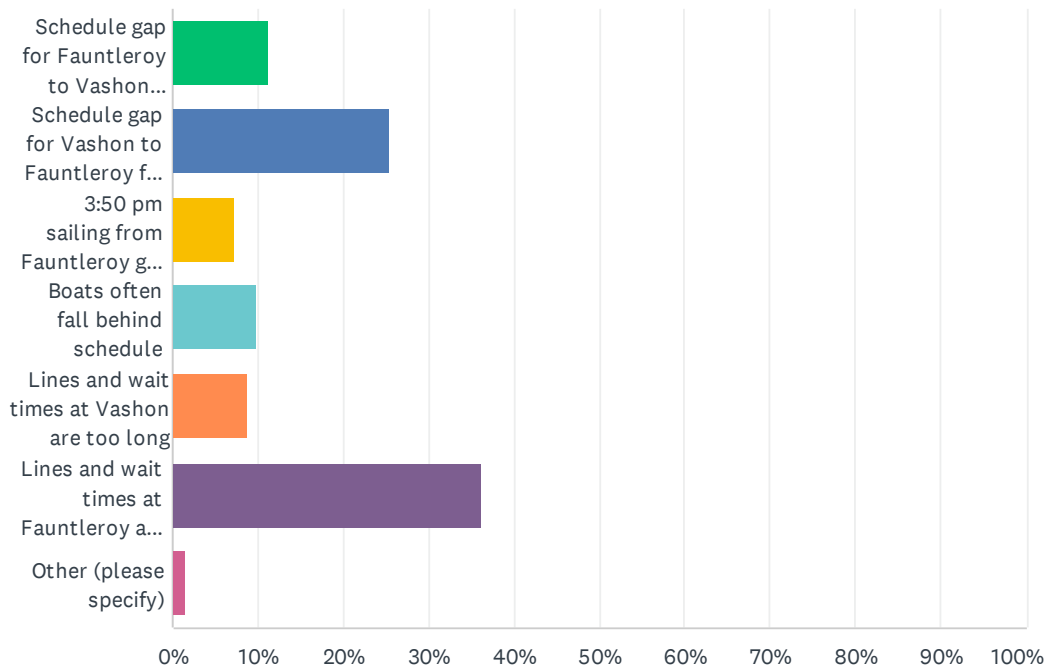
Answered: 499 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Boats often fall behind schedule	14.03%	70
Too many cancelled sailings	8.62%	43
Schedule gap between 10:15 am and 12:40 pm	76.15%	380
Other (please specify)	1.20%	6
TOTAL		499

Q9 Afternoon Noon to 6:00 pm (select your highest priority to solve)

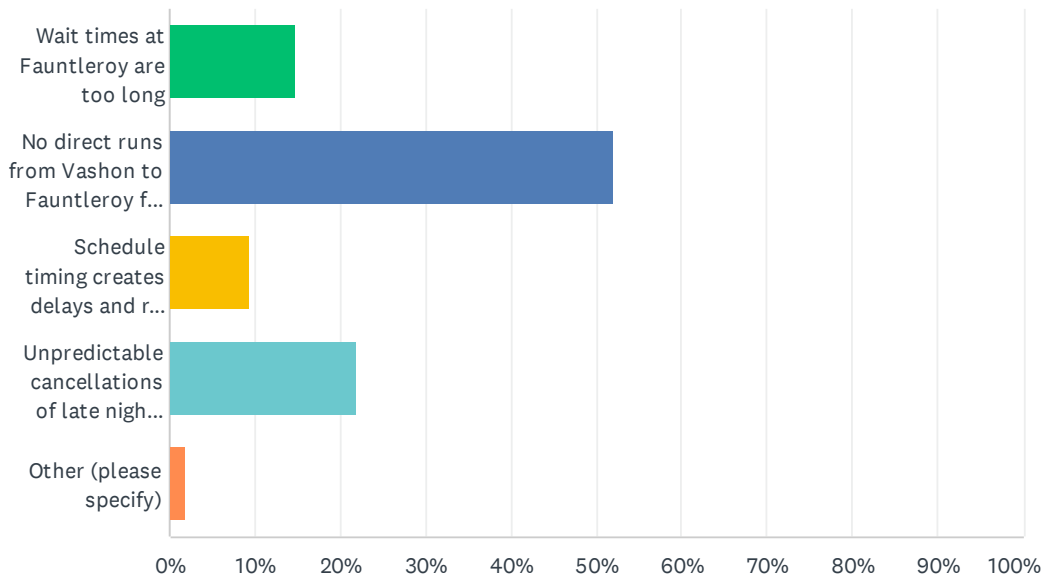
Answered: 498 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Schedule gap for Fauntleroy to Vashon between 11:30 am and 1:15 pm	11.24%	56
Schedule gap for Vashon to Fauntleroy from 1:40 to 3:20 pm	25.30%	126
3:50 pm sailing from Fauntleroy goes to Southworth before Vashon	7.23%	36
Boats often fall behind schedule	9.84%	49
Lines and wait times at Vashon are too long	8.84%	44
Lines and wait times at Fauntleroy are too long	36.14%	180
Other (please specify)	1.41%	7
TOTAL		498

Q10 Evening 6:00 pm and later (select your highest priority to solve)

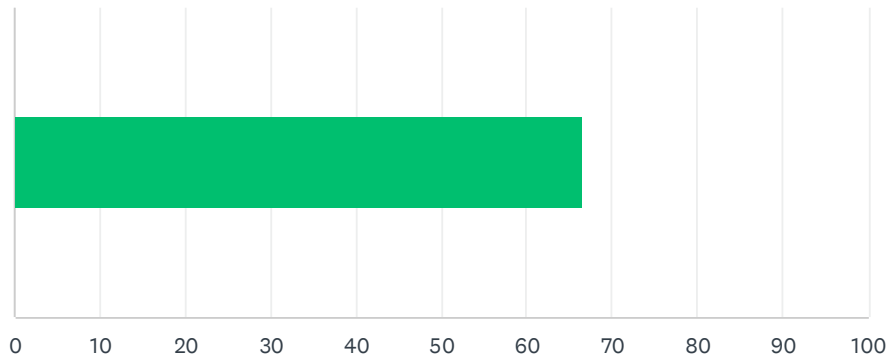
Answered: 496 Skipped: 4



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Wait times at Fauntleroy are too long	14.72%	73
No direct runs from Vashon to Fauntleroy from 6:40 pm to 10:05 pm	52.02%	258
Schedule timing creates delays and run cancellations	9.48%	47
Unpredictable cancellations of late night sailings	21.98%	109
Other (please specify)	1.81%	9
TOTAL		496

Q11 Please rate, on a scale of 1 -5, the difficulties you encounter in using Fauntleroy way as a holding lane for ferry traffic. (1 being no difficulties, 5 being severe difficulties).

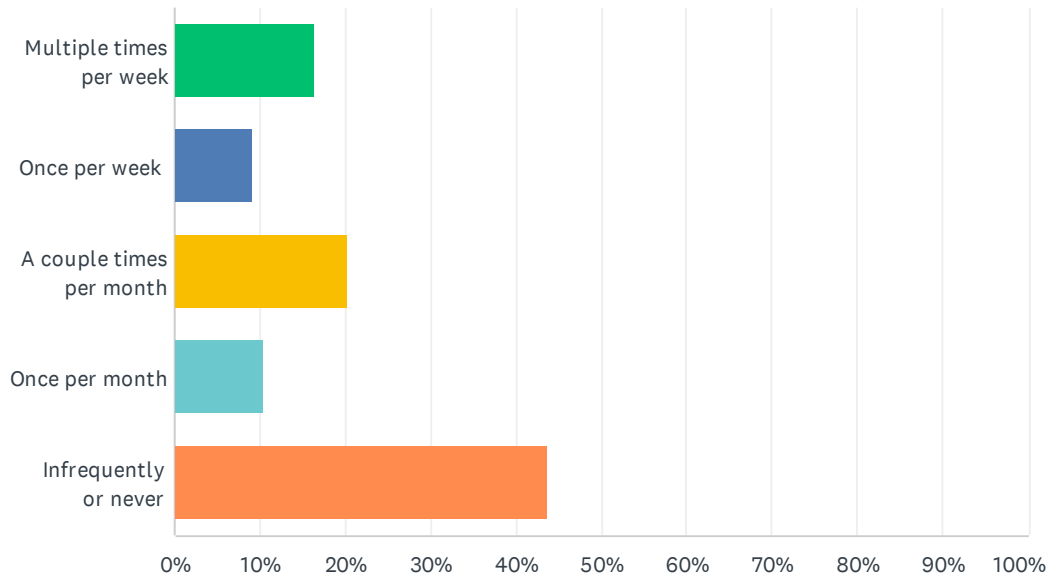
Answered: 493 Skipped: 7



ANSWER CHOICES	AVERAGE NUMBER	TOTAL NUMBER	RESPONSES
	67	32,815	493
Total Respondents: 493			

Q12 Additional transit related questions: please help us gather more data about our community needs! About how often do you utilize public transit as an option either on Vashon or the mainland - busses, light rail, water taxi etc. (excluding Washington State Ferries)

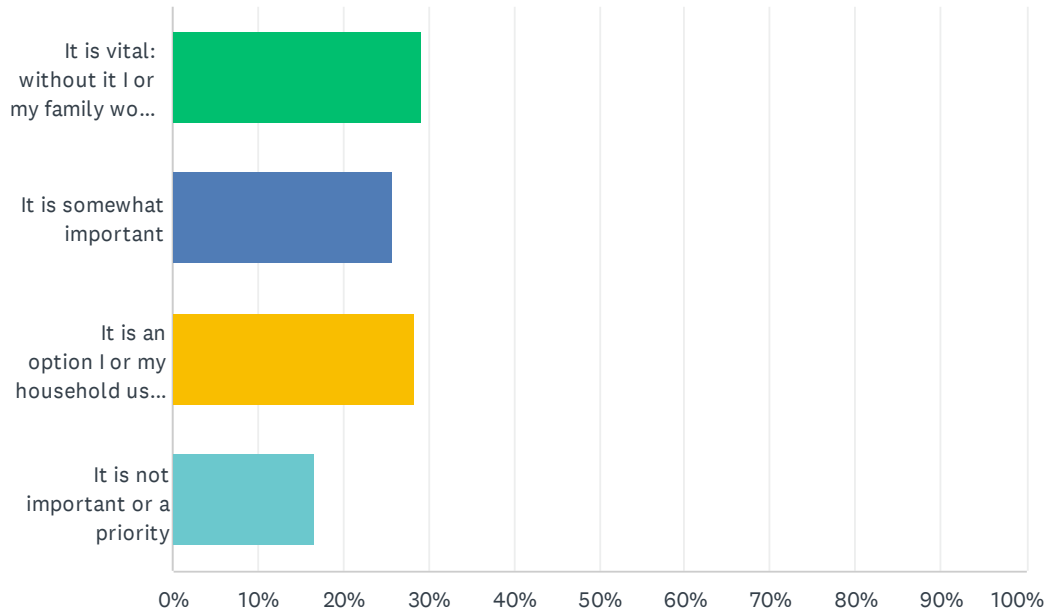
Answered: 500 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Multiple times per week	16.40%	82
Once per week	9.20%	46
A couple times per month	20.20%	101
Once per month	10.40%	52
Infrequently or never	43.80%	219
TOTAL		500

Q13 How critical is public transit on Vashon or the mainland (busses, light rail, water taxi) to your household?

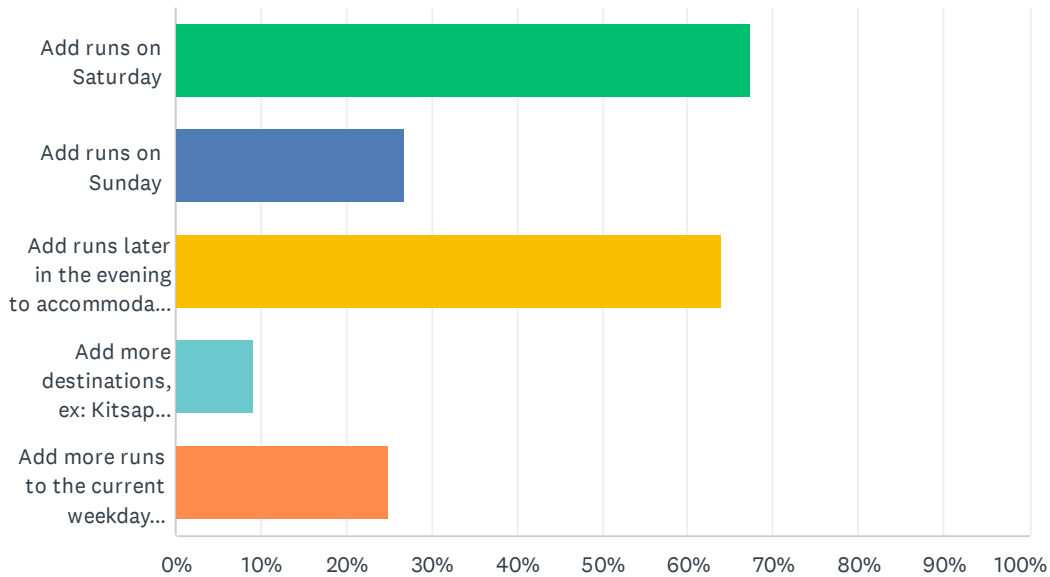
Answered: 499 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
It is vital: without it I or my family would experience severe impacts to the household	29.26%	146
It is somewhat important	25.85%	129
It is an option I or my household use when convenient	28.26%	141
It is not important or a priority	16.63%	83
TOTAL		499

Q14 Please pick your top two priorities for potential water taxi expansion.
 Note that this question is for informational purposes only, and does not imply a commitment to expanded service from any agency. But it will help Islanders for Ferry Action advocate for Vashon.

Answered: 492 Skipped: 8



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Add runs on Saturday	67.28%	331
Add runs on Sunday	26.83%	132
Add runs later in the evening to accommodate sporting / cultural events in Seattle	64.02%	315
Add more destinations, ex: Kitsap Peninsula, West Seattle, Des Moines	9.15%	45
Add more runs to the current weekday schedule	25.00%	123
Total Respondents: 492		