

Washington Governor selects Eastern Shipbuilding to build hybrid-electric ferries

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by Shipping Telegraph



Photo credit: Washington Governor Bob Ferguson.

Washington Governor Bob Ferguson chose the \$714.5 million bid from Florida-based Eastern Shipbuilding Group to build three new 160-vehicle hybrid-electric ferries.

Washington State Ferries (WSF), a division of the Washington State Department of Transportation, will move forward with the contracting process, following the first competitive bid for ferry construction in more than 25 years.

Two shipyards submitted bids. Governor Ferguson said Eastern's bid was 6% lower than WSF's own engineer's estimate, and significantly lower than the other bidder.

"We're restoring domestic service to pre-pandemic levels years ahead of schedule, improving crew retention, and soon will bring our first hybrid-electric vessel into service," Governor Ferguson said. "After careful consideration and conversations with legislative leaders, I believe Eastern is the best option to build these critically important vessels at a fair cost to our taxpayers."

The shipyard bid is only part of the new build process. There is an additional approximately \$150m for the first vessel for owner-furnished equipment, construction management, WSF crew training, and risk contingencies.

This brings the cost of the first vessel to approximately \$405m, the second to \$360m, and the third to \$325m, as contingency risk decreases with lessons learned from each previous construction.

The announcement comes amid an aggressive push by Ferguson's administration to improve ferry service.

In March, Governor Ferguson announced his plan to delay the hybrid-electric conversion of two of the state's largest ferries until after the 2026 World Cup. As a result, WSF expects to return to full domestic service this summer, for the first time since 2019. One hybrid-electric conversion has been completed, on the Wenatchee, which is expected to return to service later this month.

In June, a second vessel was added to the Bremerton route for the first time in three years, cutting wait times by an hour. A third vessel was added to the Triangle Route connecting West Seattle, Vashon Island and Southworth, also for the first time in three years.

Beginning July 4, WSF will add a second vessel between Port Townsend and Coupeville for seasonal service for the first time in five years.

In a statement on LinkedIn, Joey D'Isernia, CEO of Eastern Shipbuilding Group, Inc. said his company was "honored" to be chosen "for this transformational project in the great State of Washington."

"For over four decades, our skilled team has built high-performing ferries – many of which remain in service today – including the LONG ISLAND and Staten Island Ferries," D'Isernia said. "We look forward to delivering best-in-class vessels that will serve the residents and visitors of the Puget Sound region for generations to come."