

Kitsap Transit

Connecting Communities

PRESS RELEASE

M/V Solano acquired from San Francisco fast-ferry operation

February 23, 2021

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Photo courtesy of WETA

BREMERTON, Wash. – Kitsap Transit has purchased the M/V Solano, a 125-foot-long power catamaran that can travel at 32.5 knots with a full load, for approximately \$1 million from a California ferry operator, adding another high-speed passenger-only ferry to its fleet.

The sale of Solano by the San Francisco Bay Area Water Emergency Transportation Authority (WETA) closed on Friday following approval by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The federal government has an interest in the vessel that dates back to 2004, when the City of Vallejo, Calif., used a federal grant to buy the 320-passenger vessel for \$11,165,604 from Anacortes, Wash.-based Dakota Creek Industries.

“This is a great opportunity for us to expand the fleet but also to provide a greater level of reliability to our community, in the form of a first-class spare vessel,” said John Clauson, Executive Director of Kitsap Transit.

Kitsap Transit plans to have the Solano transported from Mare Island, Calif., to Bremerton and then to a dry dock in the Puget Sound region for, among other things, re-branding, new upholstery and

replacement of worn parts. Meanwhile, Kitsap Transit will explore the feasibility of modifying the vessel to load passengers from the vessel's bow. As a bow-loading vessel, Solano could potentially serve as a spare on Kitsap Transit's planned Southworth/Seattle route, which is anticipated to launch this year.

Solano entered service in the San Francisco Bay Area in 2004, operating on the City of Vallejo's BayLink service until ferry operations were transitioned to WETA and rebranded as San Francisco Bay Ferry.

In 2019, Solano carried 217,884 passengers on the Vallejo and Richmond routes. Required by the California Air Resources Board to meet stricter air quality standards, WETA concluded it would be more cost-effective to sell Solano than retrofit it.

WETA listed Solano for sale through a broker for more than \$4 million, but the COVID-19 pandemic weakened the market for used ferry vessels. Rather than reimburse the federal government for its interest in Solano, WETA found a mutually beneficial solution in transferring the vessel to Kitsap Transit.

Kitsap Transit hired Elliott Bay Design Group to examine the Solano and deliver a pre-purchase inspection report. The sale includes spare parts valued at approximately \$2 million. In addition to paying WETA \$1,017,250, Kitsap Transit's commits to maintaining the Solano for nine more years, the remainder of its useful life under federal rules.

Kitsap Transit will seek bids for a crew to deliver Solano, for ground transportation of the vessel's spare parts and for a marine engineering consultant to develop a scope of work for the Solano's upgrades in dry dock. The vessel's U.S. Coast Guard Certificate of Inspection expires at the end of July and will need to be renewed.

About Kitsap Transit

Kitsap Transit has been operating friendly, convenient public transit since 1983. The transit agency for Kitsap County carried more than 3.8 million riders in 2019 across a multi-modal system of routed buses, passenger ferries, paratransit shuttles, vanpools, and worker/driver buses for the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard.

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