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Update: West Seattle's 2010 Water Taxi season is off & sailing

April 5, 2010 at 7:23 am | In [King County Water Taxi](#), [West Seattle news](#) | 18 Comments



7:23 AM: Just back from Seacrest, where the [King County Water Taxi's](#) first West Seattle-to-downtown run of 2010 left right on time about half an hour ago. We'll add video of the sailaway shortly; above, our [iPhone](#) photo of the first two passengers at the portable-farebox stop (or, if you're using ORCA, the portable reader). Lots of info in [our preview from last night](#). ADDED 7:52 AM: Here's the sailaway, which took 2 minutes as the Rachel Marie backed away and pivoted to point toward downtown.



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Fairly quiet, you might notice - when we were at a Ballard shipyard for [our sneak peek at the RM as it underwent renovations](#), we were told that would be one noticeable difference. Right before boarding began, by the way, we caught inaugural captain Neil and crew member Ben on camera:



As for whether the Water Taxi really will run year-round from here on out - we checked last week with [King County Executive](#) (and longtime Water Taxi advocate) [Dow Constantine](#)'s transportation specialist [Chris Arkills](#), who says the funding question has yet to be worked out, but that Constantine "remains committed to it." P.S. Remember that the season-opening party for the Water Taxi (which returns as a WSB sponsor as of later today) is this Sunday, noon-2 pm at Seacrest, with free rides all day.

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18 COMMENTS »

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What's the crossing time? This boat "looks" faster than last year's boat.

Comment by Robert2715 — April 5, 10 8:08 am #

We'll have to either wait for an early rider to weigh in (or, I might sneak in a trip if time allows in a couple hours) - when we did our preview, they were going to experiment to find the sweet spot between speed and fuel efficiency. It's definitely CAPABLE of going faster than the Sightseer.

Comment by WSB — April 5, 10 8:24 am #

Will the Metro shuttles be running on Sunday?

Comment by Gina — April 5, 10 8:25 am #

I caught the 6:50 and disembarked at 7:01. Comes in south of the ferry terminal so the car ferry traffic can be an issue getting across Western. Also, you have a short hike on a long gangway to Western, unlike the other dock which was almost flush with the street.

The boat is bigger and quieter but substantially less organic; tightly enclosed main deck, very little open deck space and no fore deck access. It is spacious, attractive and comfortable with sturdy tables and seat benches.

Oh and oh yeah; the dock is awesome! It is completely stable, with no thought of rock and roll. I will not miss the thrill of negotiating the dock at all.

Comment by Linnea — April 5, 10 9:32 am #

I will miss the organic character of the old boat, and the crisp sea breezes across her bow.

Perhaps someday, we can have a boat that helps us reconnect, as we cross the Bay.

Comment by Mark — April 5, 10 10:45 am #

How was the bike storage situation? Hopefully no bungee cords on this modern boat.

Comment by Robert — April 5, 10 1:46 pm #

What has/will happen(ed) to the old boat, the "Sightseer"? It had a charming, third world quality about it (and I mean that in the best possible way). When you were standing on the bow, you and your toddler knew you were in for a real adventure. The Puget Sound was just inches away! And you paid somebody to ride on this thing! We'll miss her...

Comment by Val Vashon — April 5, 10 2:42 pm #

Where are the Schedules? In years past Metro has come out with a tri-fold schedule with a map of the land shuttle routes on it too.

Comment by Noelle — April 5, 10 2:56 pm #

Thanks for the comprehensive report, Linnea.

As much as I love the water taxi, and riding boats in general, I've never managed to ride the WT more than once or twice per summer.

I'm especially happy to hear that the dock is a lot more stable, as they had claimed it would be, when the construction was getting underway. I've occasionally had minor mobility issues, at times over the years, and always dreaded walking along the old dock if it was bouncing around significantly.

I'd usually try to get down to the loading slip, before the boat was near enough to create a decent wake, and then just hold on tight to the metal railing as the boat docked and unloaded.

I've never learned how to swim, so have had a fear of being tossed into the water if the dock was bouncing a lot, and I was walking near one side or the other.

I made two trips last WT season, and on the first, brought along a cane. That gave me quite a bit more confidence. The second time, maybe a couple months later, I was feeling more confident on my feet in general, so debated as to whether to take the cane. Opted to leave it at home, since I didn't want to otherwise hassle with it, or possibly leave it behind somewhere.

I walked down to the loading slip well before the boat docked, but there was still some significant wave action going on. So, as soon as I stepped off the ramp eastbound, onto the dock, I stayed in the center of the dock and walked at a fairly fast clip to get to the other section, so I could hang onto the railing for dear life! 😊

Mike

Comment by miws — April 5, 10 2:56 pm #

Val, the Sightseer is an Argosy Cruises boat, so I would imagine she'll just go back into their regular fleet. (Unless she's maybe old enough/been run enough hours, to earn her retirement.)

Mike

Comment by miws — April 5, 10 3:03 pm #

How is the beer and wine selection? 😊

Comment by [Bob Loblaw](#) — April 5, 10 4:17 pm #

Rode the boat home this afternoon after work:

- Left at 4:41 got in about 4:52-ish. Maybe 25 - 30 people were on that run. It was great.

- The not so great part is the shuttle waiting around for 13 minutes before it leaves (5:05). They should really work on syncing up the boat and shuttle schedules. As an everyday commuter, that 13 minutes of sitting around waiting for the shuttle to leave (for no apparent reason) is likely to make me think about taking the bus.

Comment by sna — April 5, 10 5:34 pm #

The shuttle-waiting-around-for-no-apparent-reason has been the same for the past two years. The drivers are apparently judged about how closely they follow the schedule, rather than how they serve customers. I'd much prefer if they just went-most people hopping on the shuttle are doing so just because it is there (IMHO).

miws - Not to minimize your personal danger, the old dock was entertaining — Like when the lady with stiletto heels attempted to walk down it. I took a certain amount of pride in being able to walk down it in tune with the galloping and swaying. But probably not if I needed a cane, so it is an improvement.

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Lastly, I inspected the USCG license for the Sightseer and was a little shocked to see that it was first certified in 1962...about a year after my birthday. Oh well, the Space Needle is younger than me too.

Comment by JayDee — April 5, 10 6:01 pm #

The new pier caught me by surprise! I got so used to the old wobbly one that I must have adapted a way of walking on it. I almost fell because I was expecting it to move and it didn't!

I'm glad there is some kind of shelter at Pier 50. Wonder what it was like down there last Friday evening.

Comment by BadwolfZanda — April 5, 10 9:53 pm #

The Sightseer is still at Pier 55, sans Water Taxi paint job- she's got an attractive new blue stripe. Never fear, you'll still see her plying the waters of Elliott Bay.

Comment by Chuck — April 6, 10 9:33 am #

Wow, had my first ride on the new boat this morning and I can NOT agree that it is 'quieter' than the old boat. Really intense vibration during the whole crossing and VERY loud noise from all the metal rattling due to the vibration. Shut off my laptop to avoid damage ... FAR louder and more vibration than I can ever recall on a Washington ferry. Taking my earplugs on future voyages if this is standard now.

Comment by KPinSEA — April 6, 10 10:12 am #

Sorry, "quieter" referred to external - as in noise while under way or leaving/arriving at the pier. Thanks for the review on the internal acoustics - I haven't taken a test ride yet!

Comment by WSB — April 6, 10 10:17 am #

Re: the question on bike storage, there are two bike racks that look like they'll hold 6 or 7 bikes each, no more bungees.

Comment by KPinSEA — April 6, 10 11:34 am #