

Kitsap Transit foot ferry runs aground in Jefferson County

By Ed Friedrich

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BREMERTON — Kitsap Transit's research ferry ran aground Monday while en route to the Port of Port Townsend to be hauled out of the water for the winter.

The Rich Passage 1 nosed onto the beach while going through narrow Hadlock Cut between Indian Island and the Jefferson County mainland, John Clauson, Kitsap Transit executive director, said from the boat early Monday afternoon.

The skipper took the catamaran on the wrong side of the channel marker, Clauson said. The two and Clauson's son were the only people aboard.

The skipper tried to back off the beach, but the boat didn't easily break free, so he shut it down to prevent sucking anything into the water jets. By the time vessel assistance arrived, the RP1 was high and dry.

Clauson said the afternoon tide won't be very high and they'll probably have to wait until Tuesday morning before the boat floats free.

Coast Guard experts inspected the boat and didn't find any damage other than some scraped paint, Clauson said.

"It's not really how I planned to spend my afternoon," he said. "It could've been a lot worse. It could've had some major damage."

Kitsap Transit completed wake testing on Rich Passage 1, including four months while carrying paying passengers, on Nov. 2. Preliminary results indicate the catamaran's wake is small enough to operate in Rich Passage, but scientists continue to analyze data and will produce a final report in March. They'll have a preliminary report Friday at the ferry subcommittee meeting.

The boat was supposed to go to Port Townsend earlier, but the state needed it to help out on the Seattle-Bremerton route for a couple weeks when car ferries were broken.



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