

**Whatcom County Ferry Advisory Committee**  
Minutes, March 14, 2024

Call to Order, Pam Gould

Roll Call

Present: Janice Catrell, Rich Frye, Pam Gould, Diane Harper, Carol Landt, Todd Lagestee, Thomas Philpot

Absent: Catherine Shornick

Flag Salute and moment of silence

Business Meeting

Minutes from February 22 meeting accepted

Welcome to County Councilmember, Jon Scanlon, and Gary Poole, Roland Middleton and Randy Rydel

Agenda amendments: none

Gary Poole, Senior Master, gave update on dry dock. At this time there are not firm dates for dry dock. Current thought is that will be mid May to Mid June. Expecting bids back March 26th. Mr Poole explained at length about fewer options available and that a firm contract has not been made at this time. Bellingham no longer has capacity to do work, so boat will have to go to Seattle area. Mr Poole will notify islanders of delay, and uncertainty March 15th. Discussion included concerns about safe parking on main land.

Randy Rydel, Public Works, gave a presentation on ferry finances. He used a slide show and a question and answer period. His graphs, some prepared without cost of the dolphins added to Fare Box, showed an anticipated shortfall at the end of 2024 and worsening in 2025. Currently ridership is down. A breakdown shows: cash fares Peds 12%, vehicles 18%. Punch cards peds and vehicles 69% with trucks coming in at or below 1%.

Whatcom County Code Chapter 10.34 Ferry Rates, Proposal

Diane Harper proposed an amendment

2nd by Tom Philpot

Five for, Todd Lagestee against, Richard Fry abstain

Passed

Chair requested vote on entire proposal

six for, Todd Lagestee abstain

Passed

## Discussion regarding Public Works Fare Increase Proposal

Executive Satpal Sidhu had stated he was considering 15% increase by Executive Order. See proposal attached to agenda. The 15% isn't across the board and Exec had called punch card rates "discounted fares". Topics included rebalancing fares and appropriate lower rate for multiple ride cards. For the future, Roland Middleton said, "a ferry district will be looked at". Unincorporated Whatcom County continues to get smaller, approx 90,000 residents vs 200,000 residents in incorporated areas. Jon Scanlon shared that Liz Kosa is pursuing new, long term ways to fix road fund. Possibly a) state funds b) tax district c) looking at other countys' models. There will be a meeting on March 18th to discuss fare issues.

## This year's drydock

Requests from all for a safe place to park this year and in the future. An attendee stated that had been quoted \$800 for a place in someone's yard, for this spring's drydock. There has been a stationed guard in the past, but not last year. Request to County for government-to-government discussions with Lummi Nation to find solution. Roland Middleton states that a future lot is planned.

## Report from ad hoc Electric Ferry and New Docks Committee

See attached. Tom Philpot presented and stated things just getting going. That provided sheet "only the beginning". Roland Middleton requested that one person be identified for him to coordinate with. Tom Philpot will be this person. Chair Pam Gould asked to be cc on communications to stay abreast of committee work. Included in discussion was Rich Fry "ditch current ferry and use one like Guemes has." Diane Harper felt more issues needed to be included. Tom Philpot agreed.

Change of meeting day Committee members agreed to change monthly meetings to the first Wed of the month starting in May.

## Open Session

Peter Earle: Advocates a county wide district. Feels it is polarizing for Executive to change fees on his own.

Ralph Steele: Shocked by Executive's proposal. Justification missing for increased fares. "(I) believe the surplus is still there". Against a fare increase.

Final remarks, Meeting March 18th at Grange because better TV screen. Possible that better screen will be purchased by Meeting Place.

## Committee Schedule

March 18th, Special meeting, 6pm Grange regarding fare increases

March 19th, County Council Committee of the Whole, 2:30

April 11, Public Works and KPFF, Introduction to new ferry and infrastructure

7:40 adjournment

Submitted by Carol Landt

Attachments:

Minutes from February 22, 2024

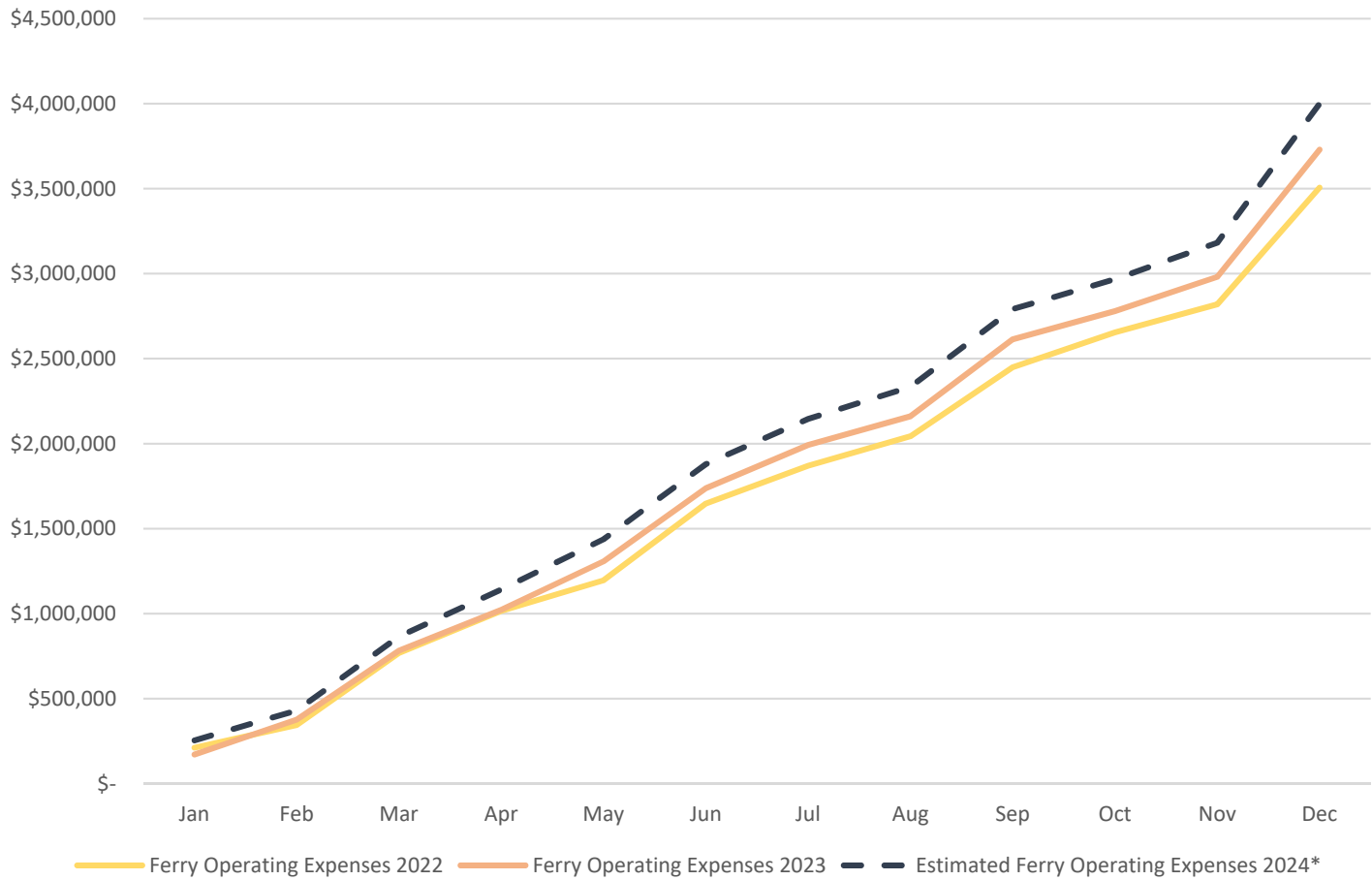
Rydel PW Expense and Income Graphs

Rydel PW Graphs and Numbers for Ferry Discussion 2024-03-05

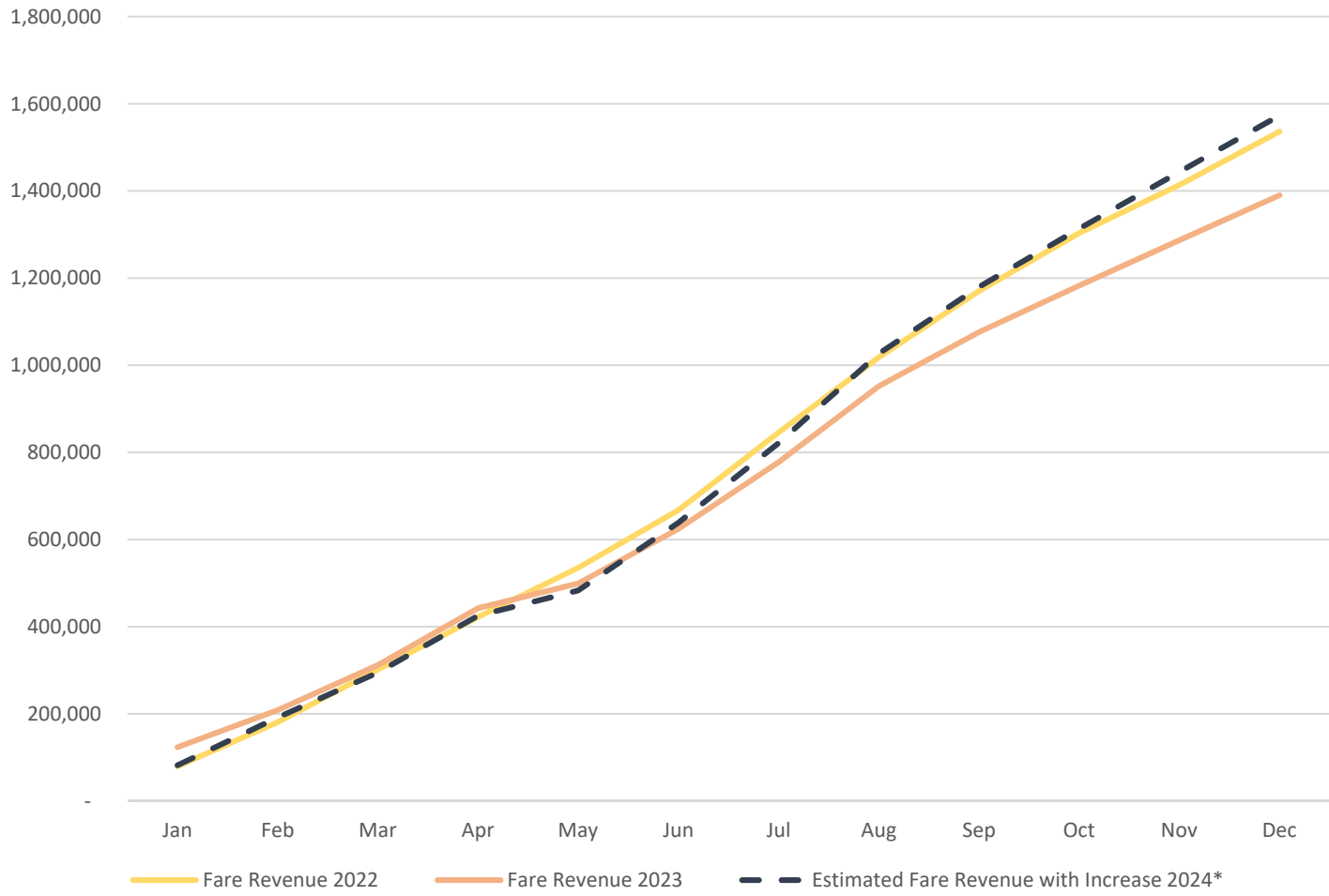
T Philpot, New ferry and dock ad hoc report 3-14

Zoom recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NLODkMZnRKY>

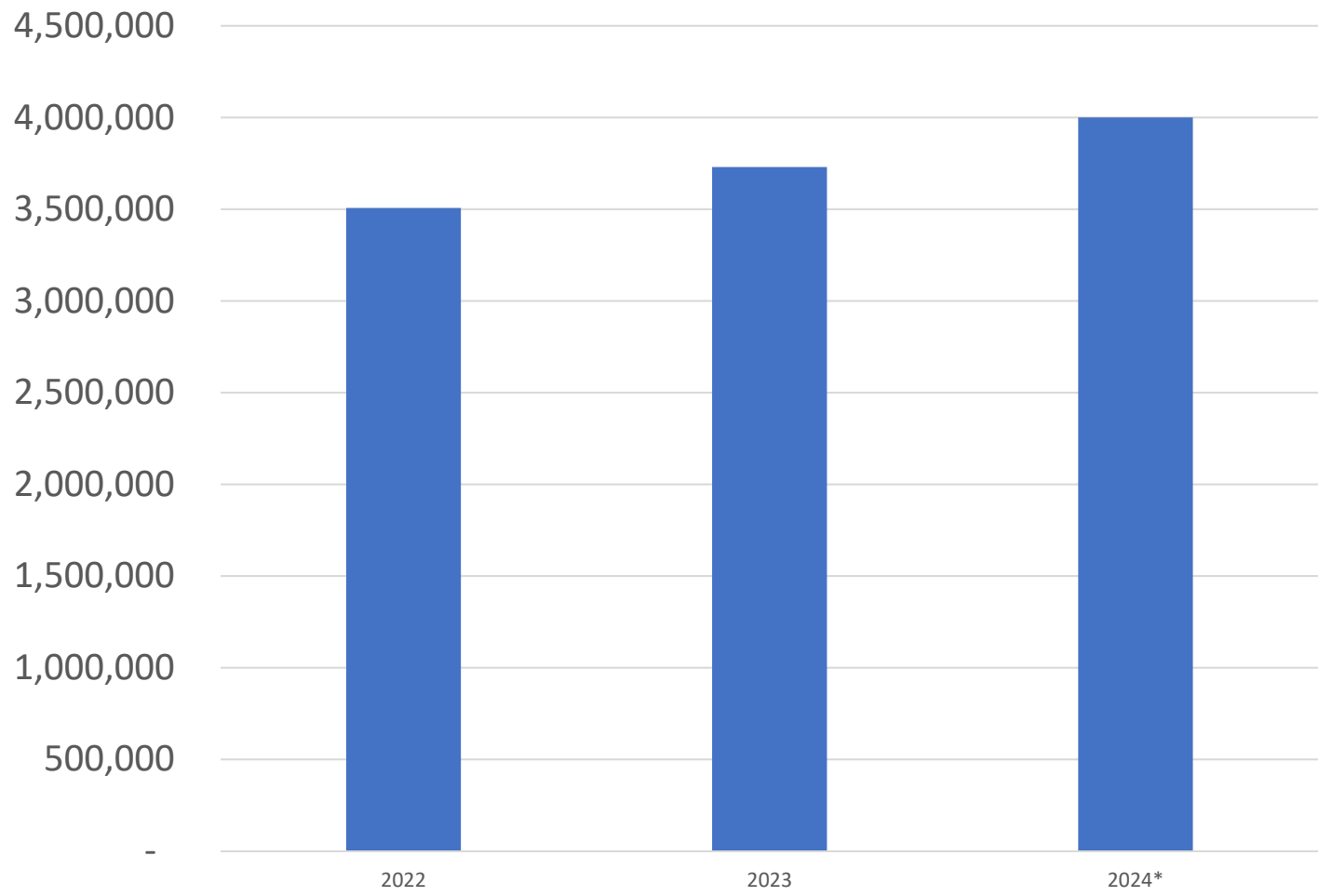
### Annual Ferry Expenses if dolphins had not required repairs



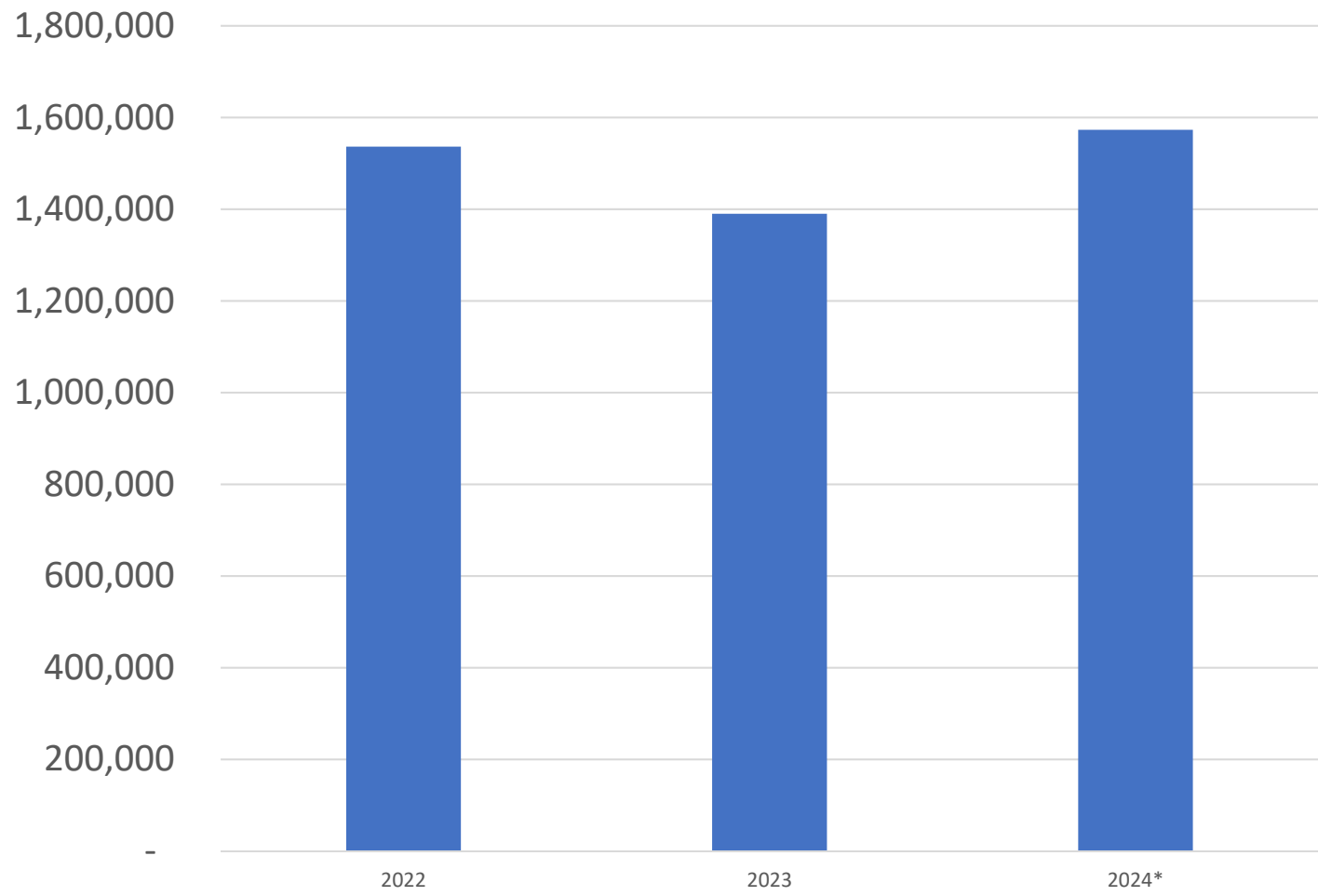
# Fare Revenue



### Operating Expenses without dolphin expenses



### Fare Revenue



# Graphs and Numbers for Ferry Discussion

Whatcom County Committee of the Whole

3/5/2024

# Revenue Collection

Budgeted	Actual	
\$1,600,000	\$1,389,880	Collected Fares
320,000	203,999	Ferry Deficit Reimbursement
250,000	82,000*	MVFT Attributable to Ferry *Estimate
<u>16,000</u>	<u>36,018</u>	Investment Interest
\$2,186,000	\$1,711,897	Approximately \$474k less revenue than expected

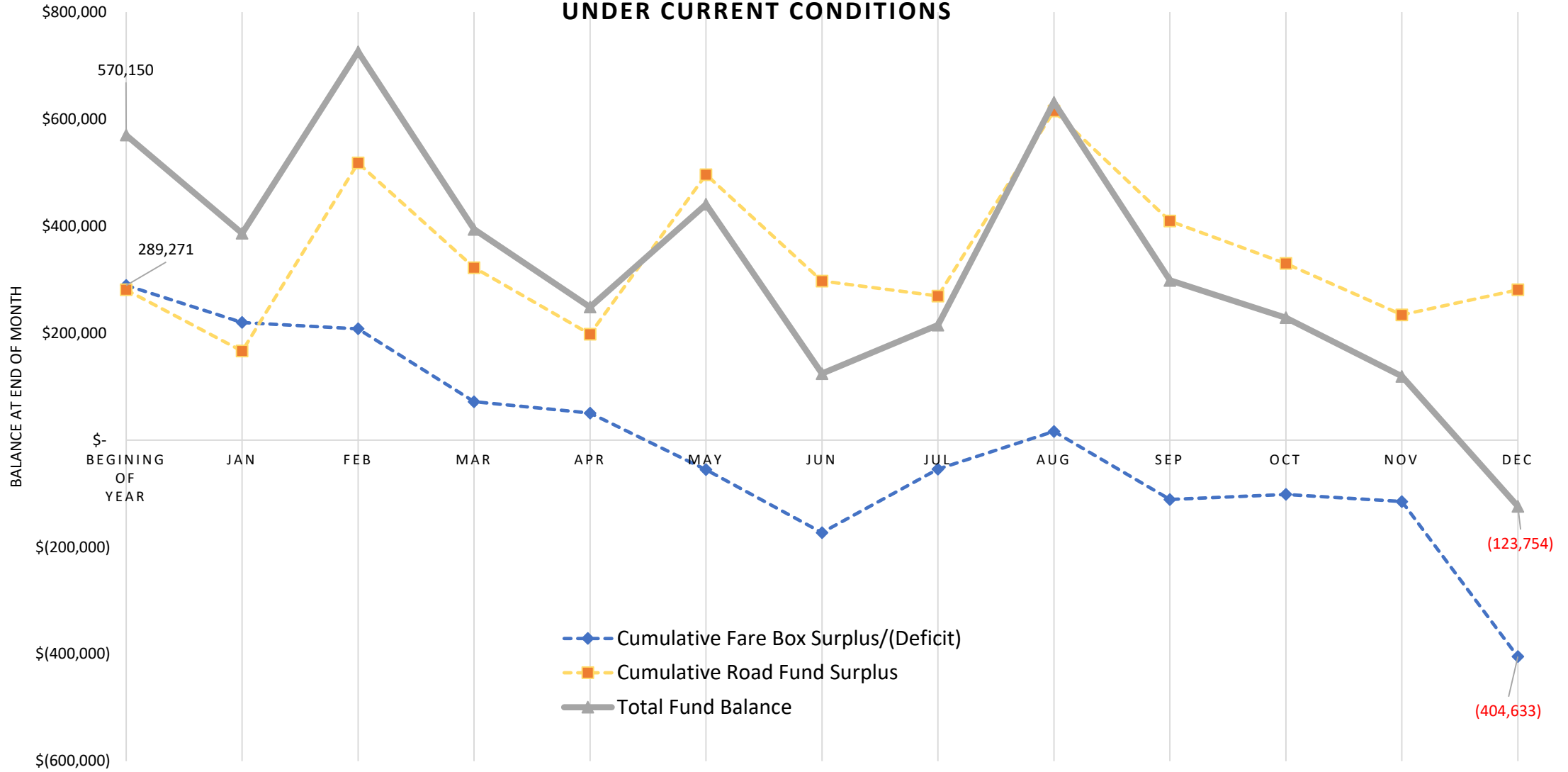
# Ridership

<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2021</u>
19,254	21,549	22,150 Single Ride Ped (10.7% decrease in 2023)
28,958	31,785	30,886 Single Ride Veh (8.9% decrease in 2023)
27,435	29,330	***Multi Ride Pedestrian (6.5% decrease in 2023)
<u>73,195</u>	<u>74,675</u>	***Multi Ride Vehicle (2.0% decrease in 2023)
147,673	156,219	Total Pedestrian and Cars, no trucks/trailers (5.5% decrease in 2023)

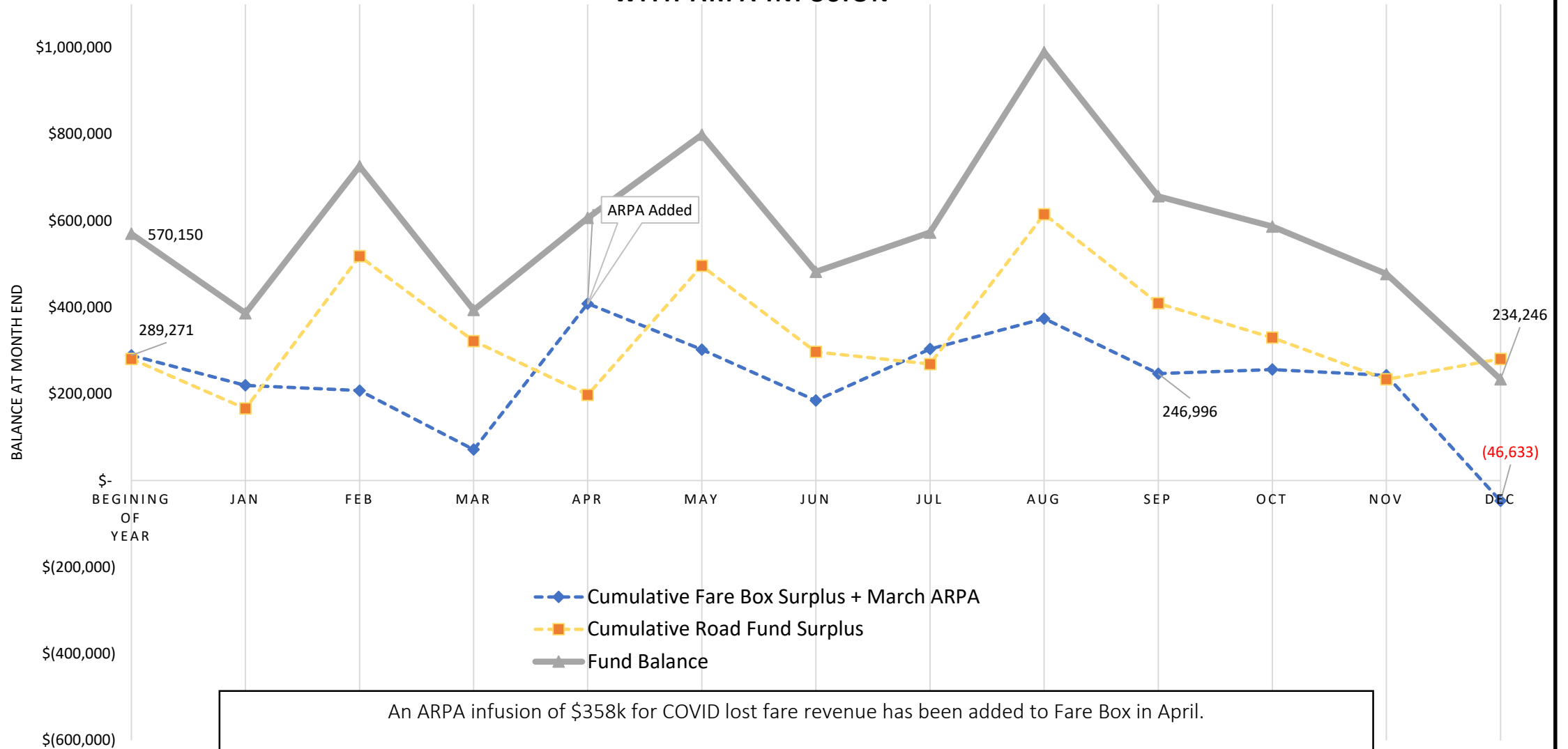
\*\*\* No readily existing data for these categories at this time

# 2024 FORECASTED FERRY FUND BALANCE

## UNDER CURRENT CONDITIONS

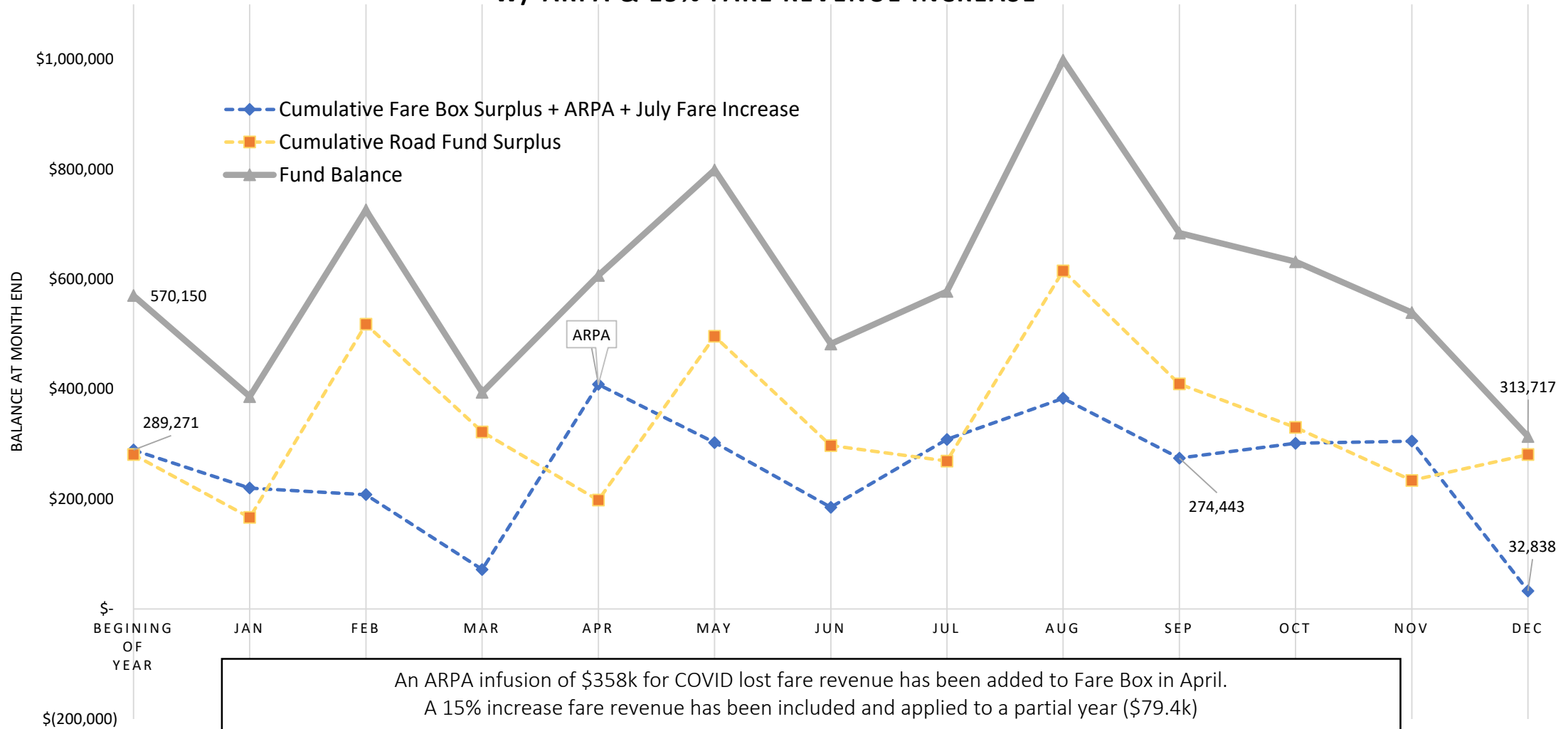


# 2024 FORECASTED FERRY FUND BALANCE WITH ARPA INFUSION



# 2024 FORECASTED FERRY FUND BALANCE

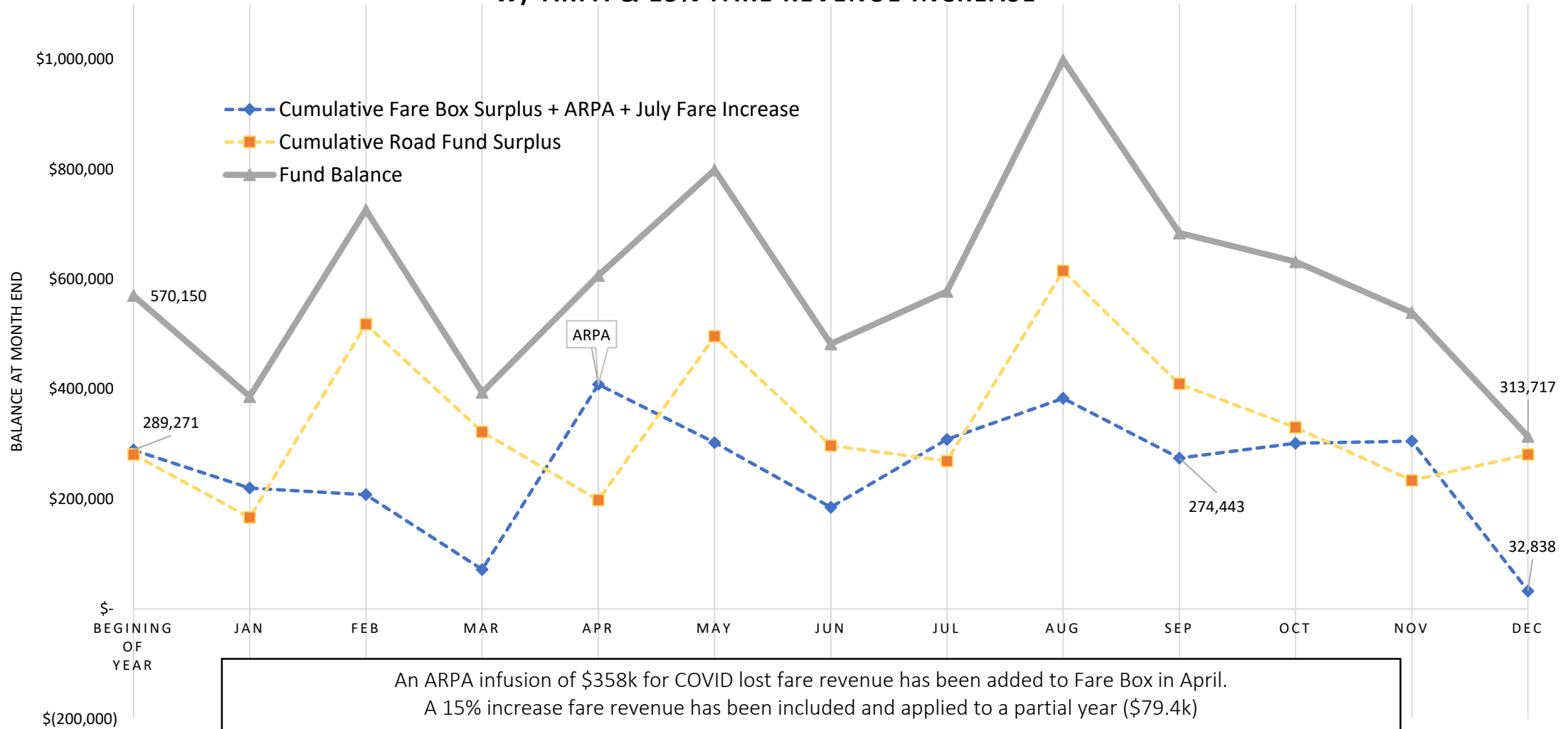
## W/ ARPA & 15% FARE REVENUE INCREASE



An ARPA infusion of \$358k for COVID lost fare revenue has been added to Fare Box in April.  
A 15% increase fare revenue has been included and applied to a partial year (\$79.4k)

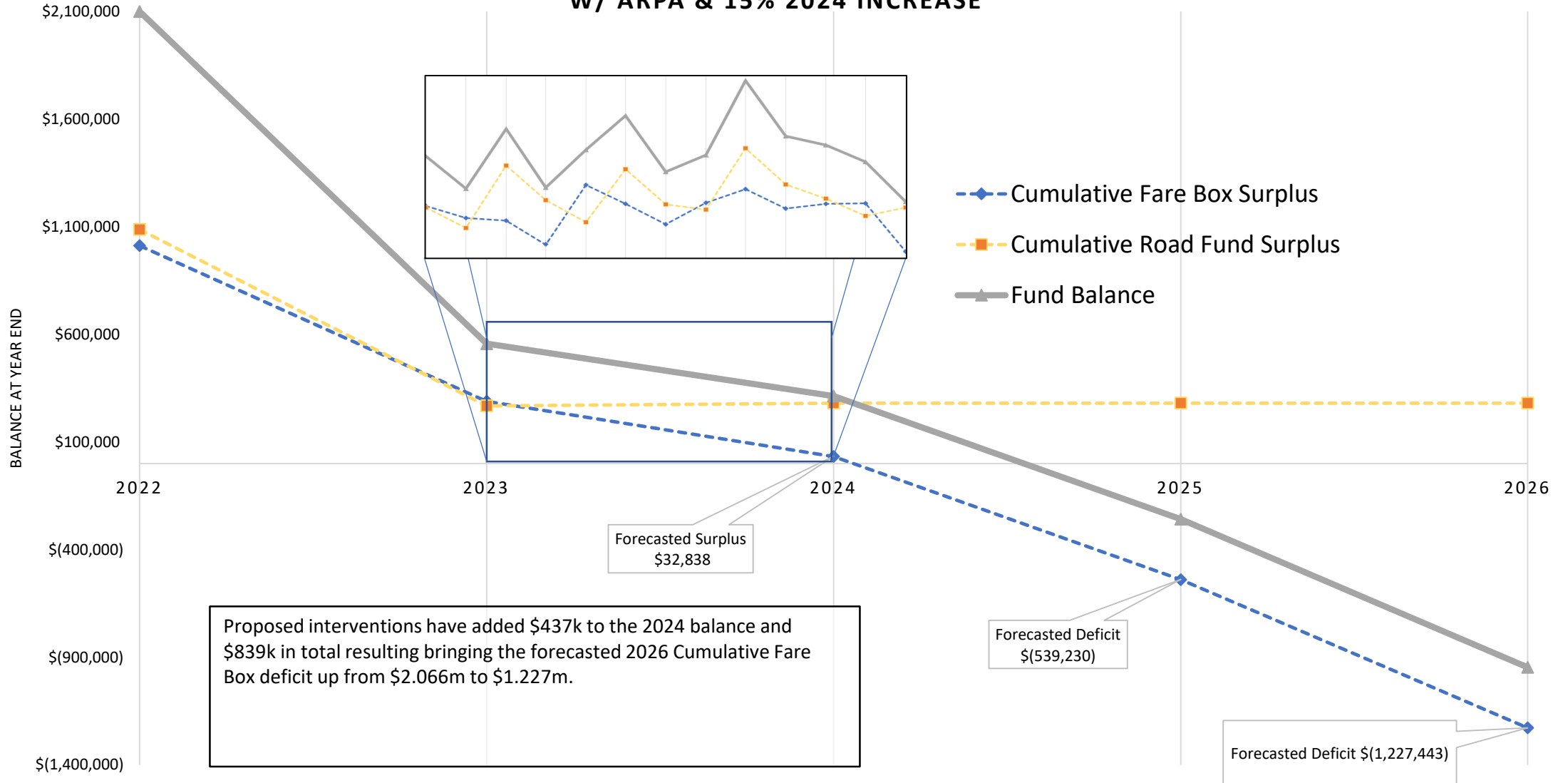
# 2024 FORECASTED FERRY FUND BALANCE

## W/ ARPA & 15% FARE REVENUE INCREASE



# FORECASTED FERRY FUND BALANCE THROUGH 2026

W/ ARPA & 15% 2024 INCREASE



Thank You for your time.

**To:** Whatcom County government (County Council, County Executive, Public Works Department) and its contractors (Kpff, Elliot Bay Design Works (EBDG), Puget Sound Energy)

**From:** Whatcom County Ferry Advisory Committee

**Subject:** April 11<sup>th</sup> WCFAC Meeting—Progress Update on the Whatcom County Electric Ferry & Terminals Modernization

**Date:** March 14, 2024

In order to more effectively carry out its advisory role, the Whatcom County Ferry Advisory Committee (WCFAC) appreciates the county's readiness to answer questions about the current status of this project and the county's plans and decisions on it going forward.

We have prioritized the following areas and questions for presentation and discussion at the April 2024 WCFAC meeting. Additional questions and issues will be reserved for future WCFAC meetings.

**Questions to be Answered at the April 11, 2024 WCFAC Meeting**

Vessel Design, Propulsion and Shore Power

1. Are the electric ferry vessel and terminal specifications the same as those stipulated in the documents EBDG prepared for Public Works in 2020? If not, what is changing, and how?
2. The 2020 ferry design calls for a “diesel battery hybrid” propulsion system of one diesel engine and one electric motor/generator on each propeller shaft. Is this still the current propulsion design?
3. Please compare the diesel battery hybrid propulsion system with the thruster propulsion system in use with BC Ferries and planned for the Guemes Island electric ferry. Please compare the two propulsion systems in terms of reliability and cost. (Thrusters are 360 degree steerable electric motor propeller units at either end of the vessel. They are powered by on-board battery storage which is recharged at the dock between runs. A back up diesel-powered generator on deck recharges the batteries in the event of shore power outages.)
4. The new EV ferry needs to overnight at the Lummi Island terminal because of its role as the sole EMS vehicle off the island. Please compare and contrast ferry on board battery charging requirements, charging at one or both terminals, and the implications for the EV ferry schedule.
5. How much electric power will the EV ferry require to maintain the current weekday schedule of 39 round trips/day? How will PSE deliver this power to the dock(s)?

### Project Management

1. Do the terms of the RAISE grant allow modification of the vessel design, for example its size and capacity?
2. What is the updated budget for the entire EV ferry and terminal modernization project? What is the county's strategy for securing the remaining required funds?

### Project Implementation

1. What are the possibilities and prospects for an unsheltered terminal and berthing on both sides during terminal modernization?
2. Is it possible to retain the current terminal width and design a narrower ferry, thus removing the need for extensive modification of the pilings and dolphins on both sides?