

# Ferries work 24/7 bringing vehicles to island

**M**any visitors to Port Aransas will say that one of the most entertaining parts of their visit is the ride aboard the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) ferry boat between Port Aransas and Harbor Island.

The ferry ramps are, of course, at the west end of Cotter Avenue near Roberts Point Park and on Harbor Island at the end of the State Hwy. 361 causeway. Ferries shuttle vehicles and pedestrians across the Corpus Christi Ship Channel, a distance of a little more than a quarter of a mile, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The only times the ferries pause are when a storm threatens, forcing them to seek protection.

Six ferries, each of which can hold up to 20 vehicles, serve Port Aransas. They are the William G. Burnett, B.L. DeBerry, J.C. Dingwall, Mark G. Goode, R.E. Stotzer, Jr. and Arnold W. Oliver. All named for former Executive Directors of TxDOT (the most recent being Raymond E. Stotzer Jr.). Each trip takes from three to 10 minutes, depending on the weather and ship traffic in the channel. While some fidget at delays while large



Six ferryboats, not all in service at all times, bring vehicles to and from Port Aransas.

vessels move up and down the channels, others see the ship traffic as a great opportunity to get a much closer look at one of the vessels.

TxDOT has established some rules for the ferry, including:

- Don't sit on the rails.
- No fishing or swimming from the ferry.
- Turn off your vehicle as soon as you are parked, or when directed to do so by the ferry deckhand. Set your parking brake and turn off your head-

- lights.
- No smoking is allowed anywhere on the ferry, including inside your vehicle.
- Do not tamper with any life-saving equipment.
- Animals, other than seeing eye and hearing dogs, are not

allowed on the deck of the ferry. Animals must remain inside their owner's vehicle.

Follow the directions of the ferry deckhand while driving on and off the ferry.

The maximum length for combined vehicles (such as a car and boat) is 65 feet, the maximum width allowed is 96 inches, the maximum height is 13 feet 6 inches and the maximum gross weight is 80,000 pounds.

Although there are five loading docks on each side of the channel, the number of ferries operating at the same time is determined by the traffic demand (a sixth ramp on the Port Aransas side is used only for ferry maintenance). During peak periods, such as during Spring Break and major holidays, waits for the ferry can run an hour or more.

You can get a look at ferry traffic by setting your computer browser to the South Jetty Website, [www.portasouthjetty.com](http://www.portasouthjetty.com), and clicking on the link to the ferrycams on the left, or by going directly to the ferry camera site, [www.cityofportaransas.org/ferrycam.cfm](http://www.cityofportaransas.org/ferrycam.cfm). Last year, the ferries carried 1,083,199 people between Port Aransas and Harbor Island, with the busiest month being July, when 114,306 people were carried. Even in the slowest



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