



Ferry Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Northern Sunshine Coast Ferry Advisory Committee

Date: April 29, 2008

Time: 12:00 p.m.

Location: Recreation Complex, Arbutus Room
5001 Joyce Avenue, Powell River

Attendees:

<i>Committee</i>	<i>BC Ferries</i>
Bill Cripps	Rob Clarke, Executive Vice President, Finance & Chief Financial Officer
Jim Johnson	Captain Gordon Nettleton, Marine Superintendent
Jane Cameron	Steve Anderson, Manager, Fleet Deployment and Scheduling
Ted Cooper	Captain Jack Renton, Senior Master, <i>MV North Island Princess</i>
Ken Barton	Captain Wayne Maxted, Senior Master, <i>MV Island Sky</i>
David Moore	Amar Johal, Director, Sales & Community Relations
Denise Reinhardt	Parv Bal, Regional Director, Terminal Operations, North Region
Barbara Price	Dean Banman, Terminal Manger, Northern Islands
Allan Cramb	Jane Victoria King, Manager, Sales & Community Relations
Bob Astrope	
Ruth Sauder (Regrets)	

1. **Meeting:** was called to order at 12:02 p.m.

2. Introductions:

Chair, Bill Cripps introduced two new Committee members: Allan Cramb and Bob Astrope. He also acknowledged the good work of the previous chair of five years, Greg Aivazoff and made a statement: "To make this committee work, we need to work on solutions and to keep it positive."

3. The agenda was approved with two additions:

- a. Item 6. l. Winter schedule year round – Saltery Bay to Earls Cove.
- b. Item 6. m. Member of the public request to the FAC Chair on fare discrepancy on the Saltery Bay – Earls Cove route.

4. Presentations:

- a. Public: there were no public presentations.
- b. Operations Report - Captain Gordon Nettleton presented the Operations Report and the following discussions arose:

Chair, Bill Cripps asked for the extent of the passenger injuries reported in the Injury Statistics page. Chief Financial Officer, Rob Clarke informed the Committee that the amount of incidents that become claims amount to approximately 400 per year and that BC Ferries carries over 21 million passengers per year.

Manager, Fleet Deployment and Scheduling, Steve Anderson discussed the reasons for the schedule adjustments for Saltery Bay to Earls Cove. The adjustments are designed to increase the gap between the a.m. and p.m., particularly for the summer where the On Time Performance in the a.m. was affecting the start time of the p.m. shift. He also advised the schedule adjustments have been calibrated to suite the double-ended vessel (*MV Island Sky*) and to help connectivity with Langdale.

Captain Wayne Maxted provided an overview on the new ship, the *MV Island Sky* that will service Saltery Bay to Earls Cove. He advised the cruising speed was expected to be 14 ½ knots, with a capacity of 125 cars and 600 passengers and crew. He further advised it would likely be licensed for just above 450 passengers.

The *MV Island Sky* was originally expected to be in service this summer; however the ship is behind schedule. The ship will be deployed to Saltery Bay. There is no specific plan to reverse that, in spite of the persistent rumour that it will soon be moved to the Bowen Island run. All ships are built as a 40 year asset, and are designed to be moved around. This ship can operate on eight different routes. Timing for in-service for the *MV Island Sky* is now late October in order to ensure crew are fully trained on everything.

FAC Chair, Bill Cripps asked for clarification on the rumour of a change in the propulsion system. Senior Master, Captain Wayne Maxted confirmed the ship was initially designed with a conventional propulsion system, however when the vessel was tank tested in Denmark it didn't meet the design criteria, so it went to a right angle drive system. When the ship was tank tested with the new propulsion and four right angle drives it passed all criteria and also reduced the size from 110 meters to 102.4 meters overall. Captain Maxted also confirmed the process of this ship has been going on for six to seven years and reiterated the new propulsion system is a very heavy duty system and is currently being used world wide.

FAC Chair, Bill Cripps asked whether the speed of the vessel will support the schedule with the current vessel the *MV Queen of Tsawwassen* running between 14 and 17 knots. Marine Superintendent, Captain Gordon Nettleton advised the ship will run more efficiently with loading/unloading as it is double-ended and won't have to be turned around.

FAC Member, Allan Cramb asked how wide the lanes are on the vessel. Senior Master, Captain Wayne Maxted confirmed the lanes are standard lanes, eight and half feet minimum. Allan Cramb expressed concern that occasionally on the current vessel you can't get out of your car on the ship because of the width of the lanes and specific loading and parking situations.

5. Minutes of the Previous Meeting –Review of Action Items:

- a. BC Ferries to provide the FAC with on-time performance records for the 9:30 a.m. arrivals at Little River on Route #17. **ONGOING**. The FAC acknowledged they would like to continue receiving the on-time performance records.

- b. BC Ferries to email the Safety Incident slide to the FAC. Future Operations Reports to include the Safety Incident slide with the reporting time frame included. **COMPLETED.**
- c. The FAC requested a dollar value for the Community Investment Program as well as the advertising/marketing budget for BC Ferries fleet wide. **COMPLETED.**
- d. BC Ferries to email a copy of the Business Structure presentation. **COMPLETED.**
- e. FAC requested that the discount rates be reviewed and an update be provided at the next meeting. **ONGOING.** CFO, Rob Clarke provided an update later in the meeting.
- f. BC Ferries to investigate improvements to the public service announcement system and suggested the FAC monitor for feedback. **ONGOING.** Regional Director, Terminal Operations, North Region, Parv Bal advised the Terminal Operations Supervisors and staff are better versed at updating customers and do their best to engage customers in the lot with updates. FAC Chair, Bill Cripps confirmed it is difficult to hear an announcement when in the car. FAC Member, Denise Reinhardt confirmed it was appreciated when the Master announced the arrival time in minutes on board the ship. **ACTION: BC Ferries to ensure staff continue to inform the public of the arrival times at the booth and that the Masters continue to announce the arrival times on board the ships.**
- g. CFO, Rob Clarke confirmed BC Ferries would ensure this message is communicated to the government. **COMPLETED.**
- h. BC Ferries to confirm whether identification will be required for registration and use of an Experience Card. **COMPLETED.**
- i. BC Ferries to make a presentation detailing the implications for the two schedules. **ONGOING.** Included in the Operations Report.

6. FAC Business Items:

- a. April 1st Fare Increases: FAC Chair, Bill Cripps provided the following statement on behalf of the FAC Committee:

"The continuing fare increases on BCF continue to raise concerns about the erosion of the economic and social health for communities served by the minor routes. An 11% increase over the last 5 months and a projected 100%+ increase from 2003 to 2011 does not bode well for the small coastal communities in British Columbia. The single most important BC Ferries issue for citizens in these communities is ticket cost.

The NSCFAC recognizes that this upward spiral can only be changed if the BC Government makes changes to either the Coastal Ferry Act or the current Coastal Ferries Service Contract with BC Ferries. There are two significant initiatives underway to encourage the Government to act on an urgent basis. The first initiative is being undertaken by the Powell River Regional District with support from elected officials from other minor routes, ferry dependent communities on the BC Coast. The second initiative is an ongoing one by a committee of the chairs of the FAC's (CCFAC) in these same communities. The CCFAC is meeting regularly with MOT representatives to discuss reports they have developed to show negative impacts of fare increases on coastal communities and to discuss strategies to sustain ferry service on the non-major routes. The NSCFAC is involved with and supports both these initiatives.

People are making plans based on current and projected fare increases to 2011. The time for action is now; before irreversible decisions are made that further negatively impact our communities in the long term."

FAC Member, Bob Astrope requested the statement be forwarded to the Association of Vancouver Island Coastal Communities (AVICC).

- b. Route #17 Un-Planned Capacity Reductions: The FAC requested clarification on licensing. Manager, Fleet Deployment and Scheduling Steve Anderson informed the Committee that a lot of time goes into looking at passenger licenses, particularly so BC Ferries does not over crew. The target crew required is based on historical traffic patterns. If a crew member doesn't show up, passenger compensation is looked at on a case by case situation and is handled by Customer Service in a Service Recovery Plan. On-going notification of special events also assists with crewing/licenses. Marine Superintendent, Captain Gordon Nettleton informed the FAC Committee BC Ferries does not always have a pool of crew available to call in on an extreme short notice, which can result in sailing with a reduced license (less passengers).
- c. Texada/Comox Ferry Berthing at Powell River - 08:00: FAC member Ken Barton brought up the suggestion that future schedule changes consider the docking of the Texada Island ferry before the Comox ferry leaves at 08:10. BCF acknowledged this suggestion and will consider it as part of any future schedule changes.
- d. BC Ferries 2008 Plans to Change/Eliminate Sailings: CFO, Rob Clarke confirmed there are no plans to eliminate sailings on route 7, 17 and 18. He also advised that flexibility doesn't apply to all routes and specifically to route 17, where the number of scheduled round trips during the day doesn't lend itself to this initiative.
- e. Route #3 Reservations Policy: Director of Sales and Community Relations, Amar Johal advised the Committee there has not been a policy change with honouring late arriving reservations at Langdale, when the Saltery Bay to Earls Cove ship departs 10 minutes or more later than scheduled. It has been a practice for the last year and credited the input of the FAC for its implementation. The FAC requested that this practice be advertised as it is not well known or understood and that it be identified on the website as part of the reservations process for Langdale departures on Route #3.
- f. Holiday Discounts on Minor Routes: CFO Rob Clarke confirmed the *CoastSaver* discount fares are being implemented on the major routes with a view to drive traffic to certain routes. However, the opportunity to implement *CoastSaver* fares on the Minor Routes is constrained by the fact that non-discounted fare revenues are currently below the Price Cap. He noted it is a discussion he would like to initiate with the Chairs. FAC Member, David Moore asked if there is an FAC for the major route group. CFO, Rob Clarke confirmed there was not.
- g. BC Ferries Marketing Budget - Value to Minor Routes: The FAC Committee requested confirmation on the initiatives within BC Ferries' Marketing Budget that assists their regions. Director of Sales and Community Relations, Amar Johal confirmed BC Ferries works hard to engage tourism/travel partners through trade shows, FAM tours with various tour operators, along with sponsoring travel/trade/consumer trade shows, through destination marketing, BC Backpackers, etc., as well as strongly promoting the CirclePac and SailPass products.

- h. Route #17 Cancelled Sailings March 29/30: FAC Member, Ken Barton received an irate phone call with the *MV Queen of Burnaby's* cancelled sailing at the end of Spring break due to advertised electrical problems. BC Ferries confirmed it was necessary electrical repairs that had to be done before the ship went in for refit (the following week), hence the unplanned cancellation.
- i. Status of Vessel Replacements/Schedule Changes: BC Ferries confirmed there are no immediate plans for vessel replacements beyond those already reported (e.g. *MV Island Sky*). CFO, Rob Clarke confirmed a report is filed with the Commissioner every four years for opportunities for Alternative Service Providers. Essentially, if another operator can supply the same level of service at a better price. The process is currently on-going with the Mill Bay ferry. The report has also been filed on the BC Ferries web site (Alternative Service Providers).
- j. Communication Protocol with *MV North Island Princess* Service Interruptions: As a result of the recent un-planned sailing cancellations, notification was made to the local schools; however the medical centre on Texada Island was not informed. **ACTION: FAC Committee member, Ken Barton to provide a list of key contacts on Texada Island for future unscheduled service disruptions.**
- k. April 1, 2009 - BCF Tariff Design Consultation: FAC Member, Denise Reinhardt, on behalf of the NSCFAC, advised the FAC is interested in being involved with the tariff review process, particularly with equity, especially with regards to discount rates and especially with ones that reward residents. "We want to have the opportunity to participate in the consultation in a full and fair way. We want the opportunity to hear and be educated and consulted in the process... If ferries rely only on Chairs, we will not get the full flavour and will not get a rich and full consultation. We're asking for education and consultation with respect to the tariff review process."

CFO, Rob Clarke confirmed BC Ferries is absolutely wide open to this, however the process with starting with the Chairs is a workable and manageable group size. FAC Member, Denise Reinhardt again stressed that the Committee in its entirety wants to be part of process of arriving at the principals for the working group's consultation. CFO, Rob Clarke reiterated with 12 FAC Committees the group's size would not be manageable or productive. He acknowledged the FAC Committee's request to be involved. **ACTION: BC Ferries to consider how the entire NSCFAC can become involved in future tariff design consultations.**

- l. FAC Chair, Bill Cripps requested clarification on why on the Saltery Bay to Earls Cove route, the winter schedule with the earlier sailing in the morning couldn't be maintained throughout the summer. Manager, Fleet Deployment and Scheduling, Steve Anderson advised if you were to run that early morning sailing in the summer, passengers may not make that last connection coming back (northbound) as they will be competing for space with Langdale commuter traffic on Route 3. To make the first sailing the same time as in the winter, we would have to lose the last sailing. In the summer, traffic volumes are higher and can't support a large gap in middle of the day. During the winter it works, as the first sailing in the PM can handle the volume of traffic that builds, but the summer traffic volume can't be managed by the first sailing in the PM if there is a large gap between sailings. The early morning sailing isn't heavily utilized so although it's convenient for the few who use it, it's not warranted.

- m. Public request to FAC Chair on fare discrepancy on the Saltery Bay – Earls Cove route: FAC Chair, Bill Cripps advised of a customer who left Powell River March 15 with a fifth wheel and returned after April 1 to a 15% increase in the fare. **ACTION: CFO, Rob Clarke to investigate why the discrepancy in the fare between the off-peak and peak and April 1st 4% price increase.**

7. BC Ferries New Business:

- a. FAC Appointment Process: Director of Sales and Community Relations, Amar Johal provided an overview on the upcoming FAC Appointment Process. He also advised the Terms of Reference for all the FACs will become generic. The Committee requested consultation before the generic Terms of Reference were finalized and pointed out that all four local governments for this FAC should be consulted, not just the Regional District Administrators as presented. **ACTION: BC Ferries confirmed the FAC and local governments will have an opportunity to review the TOR once they are completed to ensure there are no omissions.**
- b. FAC Survey Results: Results of the FAC Survey conducted in the Fall of 2007 were presented.
- c. Experience Card Update: Director of Sales and Community Relations, Amar Johal confirmed card pooling will be part of the Phase Two implementation. Currently primary card holders can only transfer money to the secondary cards. FAC Member Jane Cameron asked if she loaded \$100 vs. \$75 if it would still trigger the discount. BC Ferries confirmed it would.
- d. BC Ferries Environmental Initiatives: BC Ferries Environment Initiatives also highlight \$40 million in upgrades currently underway for the sewage treatment systems on the vessels.

8. General Discussion:

- a. FAC Member David Moore asked about the announced change in home porting for Salt Spring Island. CFO, Rob Clarke advised that this change is being considered because BCF has been unable to fill several vacant positions on the Island. He suggested that the high cost of real estate may be a primary factor.
- b. FAC Member, David Moore also asked about the BCF Route 7/17 Strategy Report that was prepared for the Ministry of Transportation and whether or not BCF would be willing to share it with the NSCFAC. CFO, Rob Clarke responded that the report is now 'owned' by the MOT and BCF are not able to provide a copy to the NSCFAC.
- c. FAC Member, Ken Barton made a suggestion regarding the use of the Experience Card for a through trip to Vancouver Island from Texada Island. Currently Texada foot passengers have to walk from the dock at Powell River to the Terminal to have their Experience Card scanned and then walk back to the dock to board the ferry to Little River. This is particularly difficult for the elderly and physically challenged but applies to all foot passengers. It is suggested that an 'Experience Card hand scanner' be made available for use at the dock waiting area in order to accommodate these people. A second suggestion would be to set up on board ticketing for these individuals.

9. Correspondence: None.

10. Next Meeting: Fall 2008.

Meeting adjourned 3:59 p.m.

Approved:

Chair, Bill Cripps

Date: July 17, 2008

Captain Gordon Nettleton, BC Ferries

Date: June 12, 2008