

Ferry Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Gabriola Island Ferry Advisory Committee

Date: April 28, 2008

Time: 6 – 8:30 p.m.

Location: Gabriola Golf & Country Club
825 South Road, Gabriola Island

Attendees:

<i>Committee</i>	<i>BC Ferries</i>
Andre Lemieux Steve Wohllebe Randy Young Eric Moeller	Captain Chris Frappell, Marine Superintendent Rob Clarke, Chief Financial Officer Steve Anderson, Manager, Fleet Deployment & Scheduling Don Cheshire, Regional Terminal Director Melanie Lucia, Regional Terminal Manager Carla Barthel, Terminal Operations Supervisor Amar Johal, Director, Sales & Community Relations Jane King, Manager, Sales & Community Relations
15 people in attendance	

1. Meeting called to order at 6 p.m.

2. Introductions.

3. Chair confirmed for remainder of 2008.

4. Approval of Agenda: The agenda was approved with a request for one public presentation.

5. Presentations:

a. Public Presentation – Jean McLaren

A long time resident of Gabriola Island spoke out against the rise in fares on April 1st and the salary increase for the Board of Directors and the new “inconvenience” (i.e. Experience Card) card with respect to delays at the terminals.

Chief Financial Officer, Rob Clarke responded by advising the members of the public that the Board of Directors increase has zero impact on the fares. The BC Ferry Commissioner has already set the price cap for the next four years.

FAC Committee member, Randy Young asked whether in five years it would make a difference. Clarke stated that in a recent editorial, the BC Ferry Commissioner has said that the maximum difference the new rates would make would be 5/100th of one percent.

b. Operations Report – Captain Chris Frappell

Captain Frappell presented the Operations Report, the following discussions arose:

FAC Member Eric Moeller asked what the dollar value amounted to with the 2% drop in traffic. CFO, Rob Clarke could not confirm the exact amount. He did confirm that across the

minor route groups traffic is flat with vehicle rider ship holding and passenger counts down. He further discussed the changing demographics on the islands (robust growth in the over 50 years of age bracket, and flattening for the under 50 years old), the strength of the real estate market and the decline in tourism, suggesting that commuter traffic may be being displaced retirees and part time residents who use the ferries less.

BC Ferry Marine Worker's Union representative, Richard Goode asked whether there would be an increase in costs with the schedule adjustments. CFO Rob Clarke advised the schedule adjustments were a direct reflection on the reality of the sailings and added time for a missed meal break.

Steve Anderson, Manager, Fleet Deployment and Scheduling explained the schedule adjustments were to also reflect a missed meal break in the afternoon, however, not possible for the morning shift due to traffic volumes.

Regional Terminal Manager, Don Cheshire confirmed the estimated costs for the foreshore stabilization project is \$850,000, which is currently scheduled to be completed by the end of June 2008.

FAC Member, Eric Moeller asked whether future improvements at the toll booth would include a card swipe for the Experience Card, in order to eliminate the current delays in processing. Regional Terminal Director, Don Cheshire confirmed a physical structure is being considered, however not for the immediate future.

BCFMWU representative, Richard Goode asked when the washrooms at Nanaimo Harbour would be upgraded and whether there would be a separate passenger loading ramp. Regional Terminal Director, Don Cheshire advised washroom facilities would be freshened up in the spring, and there are no immediate plans to replace the building. CFO Rob Clarke confirmed a big driver in the cost of fares is Capital Investment. Cheshire confirmed the Master Planning, which looks at the entire process, will happen late 2008/2009 which will include consultation with the community.

Further to the mid-life Upgrade with the *MV Quinsam*, a member of the public asked whether Descanso Bay can be dredged to avoid service disruption during extreme low tides, when the temporary replacement vessel, the *MV Bowen Queen* (which needs more water to dock) is in service. Regional Terminal Director, Don Cheshire advised the Terminal Asset Management team have looked at it, however the costs involved weighed against the amount of service that may be lost may not be justifiable.

FAC Member Eric Moeller asked what the costs of the mid-life upgrade for the *MV Quinsam* was compared to purchasing a new ship. CFO Rob Clarke advised the costs for the new intermediate vessel the *MV Island Sky* is \$57 million. He also confirmed the costs for the MLU are not finalized and are currently estimated at \$15 million, but could go as high as \$20 million. The MLU will add another five years of life to the ship, taking it to 45 years of operation (another 20 years).

6. Minutes of Previous Meeting – Review of Action Items – October 23, 2007:

- a. Jane King to forward the updated Organizational Chart. **COMPLETED.**
- b. Jane King to work with Steve Wohllebe on developing a new fax distribution list for use with the distribution of Service Notices. **COMPLETED.** Jane King advised the fax distribution service will no longer be available through head office due to the current Information Technology structure. Service Notices are distributed through the email notification network, which radio stations subscribe to for current Service Notice updates. The email notification sign up is located on the BC Ferries home page.
- c. BC Ferries to investigate if access to an Experience Card holder's account is possible in the event the card is forgotten. **COMPLETED.**

7. FAC Business:

- a. Electronic Signage – Descanso Bay: Regional Terminal Director, Don Cheshire discussed signage at Descanso Bay terminal when the ship is delayed. Short of cellular phone notification (through the email notification network), low cost signage is being considered including a light system, e.g. orange – up to 20 minutes late, red – cancelled sailing.
- b. Signage Cue Lane – Descanso Bay: FAC Chair, Andre Lemieux explained the difficulties tourists have when cueing up for the ferry at Descanso Bay. Regional Terminal Director, Don Cheshire confirmed signage for the start of the cue lane will be in place by the May long weekend.
- c. Washroom Facilities: an observation was brought to the attention of the FAC Committee with regards to the maintenance of the washroom facilities while the *MV Quinsam* ship is underway. **ACTION: BC Ferries to confirm what the crew protocol is for servicing the washrooms while the ship is underway.**

Bruce Mason of the Gabriola Sounder asked why there isn't a suggestion box available for customers. FAC Chair, Andre Lemieux advised the FAC is here to listen to concerns and bring them forward to BC Ferries at the Ferry Advisory Committee meetings.

- d. New Schedule with Departure Bay Departures/Arrivals: BC Ferries confirmed neither schedules are designed specifically to connect. The schedules are established based on required levels of service.
- e. Nanaimo Harbour/Duke Point Terminal: CFO Rob Clarke advised there is no active plan in place with respect to moving the Nanaimo Harbour terminal to Duke Point, adding, to do that it would involve building a new berth at Duke Point. However, it is something that will be looked at in the Master Planning process, particularly if there is a capacity issue. Using Duke Point would double the capacity and cut the trip length in half.

- f. Cut-off Times: FAC Chair Andre Lemieux confirmed people seem to be satisfied with the new cut-off times, noting he has not received any complaints of late.

- g. Late arriving, FAC Member, Steve Wohllebe requested consideration of the issue of traffic congestion on Terminal Avenue on Friday afternoons and long weekends be added to the agenda. A bus divider installation on Terminal Avenue is causing a choke point for the ferry traffic, particularly during busy traffic periods. Regional Terminal Director, Don Cheshire confirmed the City of Nanaimo did not consult with BC Ferries when they made the change and that it is not a BC Ferries issue, as it is an issue that was created by the City of Nanaimo.

8. New Business:

Director of Sales & Community Relations, Amar Johal presented a review of the FAC Appointment process, the FAC Survey Results from last fall, an update on the Experience Card and BC Ferries Environmental Initiatives. The following discussions and highlights arose:

Director of Sales & Community Relations, Amar Johal noted that the Sales & Community Relations departments have been tasked with a six week deadline for Minutes and Action Items, following the FAC meetings.

FAC Chair, Andre Lemieux stressed to the public in attendance, the improved communication networks developed over the last few years between the FAC Chairs, BC Ferries and the provincial government. "Better communication, we understand each other better and it flows both ways with trust."

FAC Member, Eric Moeller suggested the FAC strike a sub-committee to investigate the communication link between the public and the FAC Committee. "Often we don't hear back from the public – a lot of articles in the *Gabriola Sounder* – multitude of issues – we hear nothing. As soon as there is a problem – then we hear something. Find it very frustrating – public don't do anything until the last minute."

A member of the public requested clarification on the \$75 load on the Experience Card and whether there would always be a discount. CFO, Rob Clarke confirmed, the discount is applicable until you no longer have sufficient money left on the card to pay a discounted fare.

FAC Member, Randy Young advised of some of the glitches encountered with the launch of the Experience Card, such as the fact that the initial instructions did not explain the wiping off of the wax from the back of the card was required in order to register it. He also stated, in the long run, the Experience Card is an excellent idea.

FAC Member, Randy Young also raised the issue of traveling as a senior and having to present your seniors card, along with the Experience Card and asked whether there could be a decal attached to the Experience Card if you're a senior. CFO, Rob Clarke advised proof of the seniors card is required to ride for free as it is tracked and the government is then sent a

bill for reimbursement to BC Ferries.

FAC Member, Eric Moeller asked for clarification on who has access to the card, for example tourists. CFO, Rob Clarke confirmed, anyone has access to the Experience Card, and provided an appropriate loading of the card, access to discount rates.

CFO Rob Clarke advised the infrastructure is not yet in place for card pooling. He also confirmed the cost of the first phase of the project is \$1.3 million with an objective to create more efficiencies in the system, be much more cost effective, and make it easier to spend money on our ferries. FAC Chair, Andre Lemieux confirmed the facilitation and implementation with input from all Chairs has been a worthwhile experience. "BC Ferries has listened to all the concerns."

Further to the Experience Card and the lengthy line-ups at the toll booths, it was suggested by Bruce Mason of the *Gabriola Sounder*, that people could improve their efforts to reduce emissions by having everything ready before they reach the toll booth.

The question was raised around fuel efficiencies with the fresh water ferries, by putting in catalytic converters. **ACTION: BC Ferries to investigate what the fresh water ferries are doing to save fuel and report back to the FAC.**

CFO Rob Clarke advised a Capital Improvement Project is currently being implemented to eliminate the dumping of raw sewage into the sea, at a cost of \$40 million.

9. Other Business:

FAC Chair, Andre Lemieux stressed his concern over the negative comments directed to the BC Ferries staff at the booths. "I feel really sorry for the staff – I don't know how to deal with it – was thinking of writing an article in the newspaper – one case – 10 minutes – attendant had to go home – I don't know how to deal with the issue – but it exists."

A member of the public asked whether there is any truth to the rumour BC Ferries is privatizing the smaller routes. CFO Rob Clarke advised BC Ferries has to file a plan with the BC Ferry Commissioner every four years seeking Alternative Service Providers. BC Ferries would remain responsible for the route, however the objective is to identify whether someone else can operate the route to the same standard or better, for less money. "If someone can do that, it is in the best interest of everyone." However, he reiterated this is not privatizing, rather making sure BC Ferries feet are held to the fire by providing the best service at the least cost. Clarke also confirmed that subsidies to any ferry route would not change during a Performance Term if that route were to be contracted out. The Alternate Service Provider plans are available on the BC Ferries web site.

10. Next meeting: October 2008.

11. Meeting adjourned: 8:15 p.m.

Approved:

Andre Lemieux, Chair

Date: June 7, 2008

Captain Chris Frappell, BC Ferries

Date: June 4, 2008