

Meeting Details

Date: November 16, 2016
Time: 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm
Location: BC Ferries Head Office – Suite 500-1621 Blanshard Street

Attendance

Public Interest Representatives

Scott Heron, Co-Chair, Spinal Cord Injury BC
Hugh Mitchell, Canadian Hard of Hearing Association
Barbara Schuster, CNIB
Les Chan, Disability Resource Centre
Pat Danforth, Board Member, BC Coalition of People with Disabilities
Jane Sheaff, Seniors Serving Seniors
Sandra Jenkins, A/Marnie Essery at Inter-municipal Advisory Committee on Disability Issues

BC Ferries Representatives

Karen Tindall, Director of Customer Care, Customer Care Department
Monique Turgeon, Superintendent, Terminal Operations
Bruce Paterson, Fleet Technical Director, Engineering
Melanie Lucia, Director, Catering Operations
Steve Shardlow, Training Manager, Terminals
Garnet Renning, Customer Service & Sales Representative, Customer Care

Guest

Cheryl Forsyth, Customer Relations, Customer Care

Regrets

Stephen Nussbaum, Regional Manager, Swartz Bay
Jeff Davidson, Director, Retail Services, Food and Retail Operations
David Carroll, Director, Terminal Construction, Engineering
Captain Chris Frappell, Marine Superintendent, South and Central Coast
Darin Guenette, Manager, Public Affairs
Hanna Leavitt, Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians
Mary Ellen Meunier, Seniors Serving Seniors
Mary Kay Kennedy, CNIB
Marnie Essery, Inter-municipal Advisory Committee on Disability Issues
Valerie Thoem, Independent

Introduction

Co-Chair Karen Tindall (KT) welcomed the members of the committee.

Review of Minutes – March 8, 2016 meeting. Minutes approved by the committee.

Matters arising from the minutes

Jane Sheaff (JS) advised that Mary Ellen Meunier, representing Seniors Serving Seniors is stepping down, please remove from the list of committee members, JS will continue representing Seniors Serving Seniors

JS handed out copies of the Seniors' Services Directory 2017-18, A Community Resource Handbook for the Capital Regional to the committee

Standing Items

Loading Practices

University of Victoria (UVic) Accessibility Project:

Monique Turgeon (MT) updated the committee on the UVic project. A pilot has been put in place on Route 2 (Departure Bay to Horseshoe Bay). The pilot project is using a Via-Mobile 25, the unit attaches to the base of wheelchair. The motor is an assistive device that helps move the chair forward and up ramps, and improves stability while loading. It also doesn't add any additional width of the chair, and is less cumbersome than other options. MT shared that the hope is to expand to the rest of the fleet once the pilot has been completed.

BCF is also looking at a radio frequency ID tags to help track and locate the wheelchairs. This would involve placing a chip on the wheelchairs and could improve managing the logistics around whether the chairs are located onboard the vessels and at the terminals. This could greatly impact efficiencies for staff (inventory management) and customers from a customer service perspective.

Scott Heron (SH) asked if this is being piloted on the route where we get the most requests and MT advised that this route was chosen as the technician for service support resides in this location.

KT advised that BCF has a challenge with moving wheelchairs back and forth and this would be highly beneficial if we are able to put it in place. Mel Lucia (ML) advised that this would also help in not over-committing resources to our customers and therefore not disappointing our customers when they reserve this service.

Pat Danforth (PD) discussed the use of scooters, and asked that this be kept in mind when considering ramp issues and upgrades. As well, PD noted the impact on customers unloading and needing to meet the waiting Handidart and the time sensitivity of this happening.

MT advised that a pilot to provide shuttle service to and from the vessel is 2-3 years out and will depend on the outcome of the risk assessment once it has been completed. There needs to be long-term plans at adapting the terminal, terminal development upgrading and she advised that it is on the list for consideration.

Induction Loop System:

ML discussed the installation of the Induction Loop System on the Queen of Oak Bay.

Hugh Mitchell (HM) advised that he tested the induction loop that was installed on the Queen of Oak Bay on June 29th, 4 loops in total have been installed. HM moved around to various locations to test the equipment and advised that ship ad hoc and regular pre-recorded announcements came through at an acceptable level. The loop worked well and consistent on the return trip also, the volume was an issue in some instances. The induction loops removes ambient/background noise.

KT showed an example of the signage used onboard the vessel indicating where the induction loop is located so that passengers are aware. Questions arose regarding is there a standard and there appears to be 2 different types of signs onboard the Queen of Oak Bay.

Bruce Paterson (BP) advised that he has spent a few years researching details around installing on metal vessels and the induction loops will be on all new upcoming vessels. BP was pleased to report to the committee that the three new Salish vessels have the induction loops incorporated into their vessel specifications and confirmed that he recently was on-site on the Salish class vessels and they are currently being installed.

KT added that the Terminal Construction group are championing to add to the ticket booths also and as we go forward with our master planning at the terminals this will be considered. HM agreed that this would be highly beneficial for the loops to be installed at the ticket booths and the foot passenger areas. MT asked if the induction loops affect pacemakers at all and BP confirmed that they do not affect pacemakers.

Action: KT to follow-up with Marketing on the types of signs used to indicate the induction loops

Vessel Development Update:

BP provided an update on the upcoming vessel replacements and mid-life upgrades.

Salish Class Vessels:

BP advised that he was just in Poland and attended sea trials for the Salish class of vessels with the first vessel (*Salish Orca*) being the first vessel scheduled to arrive in January, 2017. After the *Salish Orca* clears Canadian Customs and final inspections are complete, the vessel will be officially handed over to BC Ferries. Over the next couple of months, crews will be trained and familiarized in the operation of this new state-of-the-art ship. There is some testing to be completed (eg. testing of fitting berths, ramps and training). The *Salish Orca* is expected to start service in the spring of 2017.

The restrooms and elevators look good and have incorporated all the accessibility requirements. There is some striping that may need to be added by the elevators but all these details will be attended to once the handover has occurred.

BP found the vessel very spacious and a lot of room to move around, artwork looks good, performed well, efficient vessel and handled weather really well. Using natural gas as the primary fuel source is expected to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by approximately 15 to 25 per cent and reduce fuel costs by 50 per cent.

Salish Orca's sister ships, Salish Eagle and Salish Raven, are still expected to arrive in B.C. on schedule this spring and will start service in the Southern Gulf Islands later this year.

Mid-Life Upgrades (Spirit Class):

BP advised that the mid-life upgrades are on track for the two Spirit Class vessels (*Spirit of Vancouver Island* and *Spirit of British Columbia*) and the refits will take place in Poland. The timelines are tight to get the plans approved and the refit will take approximately 117 days. These vessels will include the induction loops and they will also be retrofitted to run on diesel and natural gas.

Cable Ferry:

Baynes Sound Connector – this new vessel is performing well and is on the warranty period. The recent Ferry Advisory Committee report was very positive.

PD commented that she likes that BCF listens, takes concerns and feedback seriously and appreciates the commitment to taking action on items brought forward.

Break: 2:10 - 2:30 pm

Terminal Development Update:

David Carroll (DC) sends his regrets and will be unable to update the committee today, an update will take place at the next committee.

Other Business:

Canadian Ferry Operator's Association (CFOA) Conference:

PD shared with the committee her positive experience and worthwhile attendance at the CFOA annual conference in Ottawa in September 18-20, 2016. The intent of the annual conference is an opportunity for companies and individuals to share their innovative products and services with senior representatives from Canada's ferry sector. The theme of the conference was "*Accessibility in the Ferry Sector*".

The Canadian Transportation Agency is the over-arching federal program which is an independent administrative tribunal of the Government of Canada that makes decisions relating to federally regulated modes of transportation. Its headquarters are located in Gatineau, Quebec. Many different regulations were outlined and the need for more defined regulations was discussed as this can improve and enhance accessibility for passengers. Staff training is one of the biggest findings and the need to train staff in how to interact in a positive way to assist successfully. Digital signage and smart phones were discussed for communication tools.

PD highlighted the great work with the deaf and hard of hearing that has been done and the addition of the induction loop was discussed broadly. The development of a priority boarding system is an exciting topic of discussion and PD expressed how proud she was to be able to discuss these issues moving forward.

The members of the CFOA voted to re-name the organization to the *Canadian Ferry Association* to better reflect the wide range of its members. Over the course of the two-day conference, over 200 attendees from Canada and around the world heard from experts in both the accessibility community and in the marine industry. The Honourable Carla Qualtrough, Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities, opened the conference with a keynote address outlining the importance of the ferry sector in Canada, and also announcing a series of consultations for Canadians to inform and contribute to the development of accessibility legislation.

The Canadian Ferry Association is the national voice of the ferry industry in Canada. With over 54 million passengers, 19 million vehicles and billions of dollars of goods transported annually, the ferry sector is a crucial part of Canada's infrastructure. Capt. Jamie Marshall, Vice President – Fleet Operations and Corinne Storey, Vice President – Customer Services from BC Ferries were also in attendance.

Digital Signage Project:

MT provided an update that the digital signage project has been completed at Swartz Bay and Tsawwassen is currently underway. The TV's should all display text so that all customers can enjoy this amenity and some monitors have been identified as way-finding at the terminal.

KT confirmed with the committee that safety announcements will be converted to text on the monitors onboard the ships and at the terminals. The technology that we are considering is still in the review process to ensure it meets all software requirements.

PD advised that she attended the National Accessibility & Inclusion public consultation (Federal Legislation) earlier this month and there was very good participation from the community which is a more universal consultation process, in person, on the phone and on-line, which will work with different organizations to conduct consultations. PD encourages the committee to participate in the on-line consultation (Federal Accessibility Act) as we would like it to be improved from the past.

Communication via Blogs:

SH discussed adding information to the Spin Magazine and he has written a blog to promote a farther reach of information and to share information and advice and specifically about BC Ferries. The goal is to run a series of blog posts and globally reach people travelling with BC Ferries.

Self-Declaration Information Cards:

KT discussed the self-declaration of customers requiring assistance in the event of an emergency. It is a safety requirement for the Master onboard the vessel to have a list of passengers who require assistance and where they are located on the vessel in case of an emergency evacuation and crew need to be aware and deployed to assist in the event there is an emergency incident which will have crew impacts. BC Ferries are prepared to assist customers if they self-declare while onboard. KT talked about an information card that is being handed out to passengers who purchase a disabled fare and will send a copy along with the meeting minutes.

Action: KT will email a copy of the card along with the minutes

Meeting Adjourned: 3:15pm

Next Meeting Date:

May 17, 2017