

Northern Sunshine Coast Ferry Advisory Committee Meeting

Overview: Powell River Town Centre, November 1, 2016

In Attendance:

Committee: Jack Barr, Kim Barton-Bridges, Patrick Brabazon, Alan Davis, Myrna Leishman, Sandy McCormick, Jason Rekve, Karen Skadsheim, Doug Skinner, Ken White

BC Ferries: Mark Collins - VP Strategic Planning and Community Engagement, David Hendry- Strategic Planning Director, Captain Al de Koninck - Marine Superintendent, Jeff West - Terminal Operations Superintendent, Darin Guenette-Public Affairs Manager

Meeting Highlights:

The objective of the meeting was to: discuss previous issues and explore options for addressing issues brought to the FAC from the community.

The next meeting is planned sometime during spring of 2017.

Issues Summary and Resolution Plan

A. Issue: Salish Orca update

Definition: Salish Orca is currently undergoing sea trials, which have been successful thus far. This vessel is expected to arrive in Canada sometime around the end of 2016, with Transport Canada certification and crew training to follow prior to an estimated in-service time on Route 17 of spring 2017.

Crew size will only be determined after Transport Canada completes their process, but it should not exceed the current crewing level on the Queen of Burnaby. The Burnaby is certified for service until the end of March 2017, and will be put up for sale once the Orca is in service.

The Orca will operate on natural gas as a primary fuel, but will be capable of an instantaneous switch to using diesel fuel if required. Fueling of the Orca will occur in Comox, via a fuel truck twice each week, during the overnight period. Note: first responders in Comox and Powell River are both being provided with information regarding the natural gas, prior to the Orca entering service.

As three Salish Class ships are being built to replace two current vessels, there should be increased flexibility to see another Salish vessel relief the Orca during maintenance periods, at least in the off-peak season. Further discussion happened around balancing the costs of operating the ferry service and having sufficient relief vessels available for contingencies.

BC Ferries input/follow-up: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

B. Issue: Burnaby summer breakdown and schedule disruptions

Definition: Mark Collins noted that a letter from Corrine Storey was placed in the Powell River Peak soon after the Burnaby’s maintenance issues in July, where it was removed from service and alternate service/schedules were implemented on Routes 7, 17 and 18 on short notice. The letter apologized to the customers of the region and acknowledged that BC Ferries failed to adequately address operational issues and communicate ‘real-time’ delays and overloads to customers...causing long waits and inconvenience to many.

BC Ferries has since developed effective solutions to these operational and communication weaknesses, and will be able to implement the solutions if a similar out-of-service situation happens for the Burnaby in the future. This includes wide communications channels and real-time updates to customers where and when they are needed. One key aspect is the ability for Earls Cove employees to now provide sailing-by-sailing accurate information on overloads (if they occur, and how many vehicles involved) to the Operations Centre and Horseshoe Bay terminal; particularly useful for customers headed to the upper Sunshine Coast prior to them ticketing for Langdale.

The FAC noted that Service Notices are still not being received in a timely manner. BC Ferries is working on improving both the details/content of the Service Notices and how quickly they are issues and emailed out. As well, vessels have been empowered to provide more proactive information to the Operation Centre.

BC Ferries input/follow-up: Summary: BC Ferries has identified the weaknesses that occurred during the Burnaby breakdown, and have established practices that will ensure accurate and timely communications to customers.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

C. Issue: Easy Rider motorcycle event

Definition: BC Ferries confirmed that the Easy Rider motorcycle event that happened in the Powell River area on Labour Day weekend went very well, as far as ferry travel

plans went. All arrangements were coordinated in advance and participants travelled when they wanted.

BC Ferries input/follow-up: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

D. Issue: North Island Princess update

Definition: i. Next refit. The NIP is currently scheduled for a maintenance refit April 10 to June 5, 2017. The work performed is intended to allow the vessel to remain in service until a new vessel replaces it on Route 18. During this refit, the MV Tachek will provide service, and because of the lower capacity of this ship, additional sailings will be added (Note: Texada reps ask for opportunity to provide schedule options during refit)

ii. Replacement. Minor 44 Class summary to follow later, and this will cover the topic.

BC Ferries input/follow-up: consider seeking Texada input for refit schedule.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
Discuss refit schedule options with Texada reps	AI	Once refit planning underway

E. Issue: Route 17 triangle sailings

Definition: FAC asked if BC Ferries would consider conducting a ‘triangle run’ trial once the Salish Orca enters service; where the vessel would stop at Texada Island once in the morning and once in the late afternoon when transiting between Comox and Powell River.

BC Ferries plans on introducing the new vessel on the current schedule, to ensure the current schedule is learned well by all crew and customers, prior to considering any changes. As well, a dock-fit process at Blubber Bay would need to occur.

BC Ferries input/follow-up: consider formal request from FAC to trial a triangle run option two days per week for the Salish Orca when it makes sense.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
Consider ‘triangle run pilot’ as official request	BCF	When applicable

F. Issue: Saltery Bay cellular service

Definition: Customers have noted lack of reliable cel service at Saltery Bay terminal, and FAC members suggest installation of an amplifier.

BC Ferries has previously approached Telus about installation of a signal amplifier, but the proposal was not acceptable. Similar results when ‘off the shelf boosters’ were considered.

BC Ferries input/follow-up: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
Send details on ‘more robust’ cel service amplifier to BC Ferries	Alan	When able

G. Issue: Route 7 summer schedule analysis

Definition: After previous analysis of whether the Route 7 schedule should have ‘early morning sailings with a mid-afternoon gap’ or ‘later morning service and no gap’, there was further discussion on the pros/cons of the two options and search for any other ideas.

Mark reminded all that BC Ferries would need to analyse whether simply ‘adding mid-afternoon sailings’ (trial or full-time basis) would expect to be a break-even prospect. As well, a specific and official request of any service addition would need to be submitted.

Karen and Doug agreed to draft and submit an actual request to BC Ferries.

BC Ferries input/follow-up: analyse and reply to any official service change request.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

H. Issue: Westview loading procedures

Definition: Customers are expected to ‘self-load’ on the last daily sailing from Westview, and FAC seeks clarity on rationale. BC Ferries confirmed this has been a process in pace for some time, likely because of traditionally low traffic volumes. He added that ticketing agents are expected to give clear direction to customers, but that extra staff have been planned, subject to budget approval, to be in place during the 2017 peak season.

BC Ferries input/follow-up: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

I. Issue: Bicycle fare

Definition: As FAC members ask if the current \$2 bicycle fare is necessary or makes sense, BC Ferries notes that they are looking at reducing or removing this fare.

BC Ferries input/follow-up: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

J. Issue: Experience Card top-up levels

Definition: FAC members noted that as the top-up levels on the Experience Card rise, it becomes more difficult for some people to top up their balance and thus access valuable discounts. Discussion followed on how the top-up levels are set and ideas for helping certain groups access the card.

BC Ferries input/follow-up: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

K. Issue: Amending the CFSC

Definition: It was clarified that BC Ferries can either ‘move sailings’ around in the schedules or add new sailings, if there is a reasonable expectation of breaking even. Otherwise, if a community is seeking increases to the current minimum sailing levels in the Coastal Ferry Services Contract, they need to submit this request with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure.

BC Ferries input/follow-up: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

L. Issue: Overlength vehicles

Definition: Feedback had been sent to the FAC from a driver of an overlength vehicle, who was disappointed that he had been overloaded at the expense of loading standard vehicles.

BC Ferries input/follow-up: AI noted that sometimes larger vehicles are held from a load due to efforts to efficiently use the total deck space, however, they are accommodated at the next sailing opportunity.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

M. Issue: Route 3-7 connectivity

Definition: In hearing of people who are worried that they may arrive at Langdale after leaving a Route 7 sailing and may not get loaded on the Rout 3 ferry, BC Ferries noted that the current schedule timings are designed to allow reasonable driving time between these two routes, but that sailings cannot be guaranteed as connections.

Further discussion around reservation cut-off times and policies, and if/how these two routes could be looked at as more of connecting network sailings. To this, the FAC suggested that customers who arrive at Saltery Bay with a Route 3 reservation be loaded/unloaded on the Route 7 vessel to maximize their chances of getting to Langdale in a timely manner.

BC Ferries input/follow-up: Analyse if/how a trial may be designed that would see Route 3 reservation customers unloaded earlier in the sequence at Earls Cove.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
Consider establishing a trial for Route 3 reservation customers to unload early at Earls Cove	Jeff/AI	As soon as reasonable

N. Issue: Electric vehicle charging stations

Definition: The FAC wondered if electric vehicle charging stations could be set up on vessels (particularly the Salish Orca) or terminals, and BC Ferries explained that there are significant constraints (stations have to be where EV are staged at terminals, and risks with plugging vehicles into ship power) that do not make this feasible at this time.

BC Ferries input/follow-up: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

O. Issue: Operations report

Definition: On-time performance on all three routes show is strong. A new Senior Master, Capt Martin McConnell has been appointed on Route 18. The North Island Princess will be in refit April 10 to June 5, 2017.

BC Ferries input/follow-up: AI is proposing an ‘ops meeting with FAC’ in mid-January, that will include Capt Lance Lomax.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
Coordinate ops meeting in January	AI	as soon as reasonable

P. Issue: Vehicle discount promotion

Definition: BC Ferries is coordinating a 50% fare discount on passenger vehicles, across all route, at select sailing times, between November 14 and December 18. Details can be found on bcferrys.com.

BC Ferries input/follow-up: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

Q. Issue: Minor 44 Class project

Definition: BC Ferries is standing up a ‘Minor 44 Class’ project. Highlights include:

- New class of vessels to be the new, smallest class in the fleet
- Two ships built first, with up to five more to follow
- First two vessels to be deployed on Route 18 and 25, allowing retirement of North Island Princess and the Howe Sound Queen, by approximately 2020.
- Vessels to be 44 AEQ and 300 people capacity
- Near Coastal 2 classification; deployable on large variety of routes
- Engagement sessions planned in applicable communities; seeking input on amenities

BC Ferries input/follow-up: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

R. Issue: AEQ restatement

Definition: BC Ferries has recently standardized the calculation of the measurement of area on a deck used to approximate the average space of a vehicle – the AEQ (automobile equivalent). One AEQ is now 2.6 m X 6.1 m of deck space.

This restatement will affect utilization figures, and this fact will be stated in the next report provide to the Ferry Commissioner. New AEQ's:

- Queen of Burnaby: 168
- North Island Princess: 38
- Island Sky: 112

BC Ferries input/follow-up: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

S. Issue: FFDEI update

Definition: BC Ferries in continuing work in the Fare Flexibility and Digital Experience Initiative project, with significant updates in point-of-sale, website and ticketing technologies over the next two years. This will in turn allow for dynamic pricing to be offered on the Major routes, followed by the other reservable routes, starting in 2018. The overall goal of this work is to increase discretionary traffic travel by offering discount opportunities in lower utilized sailing times, to interact more efficiently with the customer and to bring in new traffic to the system.

BC Ferries input/follow-up: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		