

## Gabriola Island Ferry Advisory Committee Meeting

**Overview: GAC Hall, Gabriola Island, November 2, 2015**

### **In Attendance:**

Committee: Steve Earle, Chris Hock, Howard Houle, Jane McCall Woods, Heather Nicholas, Jim Ramsay

BC Ferries: Mark Collins - VP Strategic Planning and Community Engagement, David Hendry- Strategic Planning Director, Captain Lewis MacKay- Marine Superintendent, John MacDonald- Terminal Operations Regional Manager, 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 for May 2016.

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Issues Summary and Resolution Plan

### **A. Issue:      Fare reduction idea**

**Definition:** In the previous meeting, the FAC has asked BC Ferries to consider a fare discount trial for Route 19 (after 9 pm, 25% off). BC Ferries explained that planning the current passenger and upcoming vehicle fare promotions (50% off across all routes) took place in the meantime.

However, the FAC suggests that their idea to offer 25% off all fares (vehicle and passenger) after 9 pm can still be considered. BC Ferries replied that they first need to analyze results from these promotions prior to considering anything else. As well, a great deal of work is being put into development of Fare Flexibility and Digital Experience Initiative concepts around fare discounts and pricing, and implementation is set to being within the next two years or so.

**BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution:** consider whether a future ‘route specific discount’ may be possible.

### **Action Plan:**

Action	Responsible	Date
Let FAC know possibility of a future fare promotion for Route 19	Mark	End-January

### **B. Issue:      Nanaimo terminal kiosk**

**Definition:** John noted that there was a meeting to explore options for a kiosk at Nanaimo Harbour, and what type of material may make sense to display, and BC Ferries is awaiting feedback still. Chris indicated he could work at re-engaging parties involved and get ideas/concepts to BC Ferries.

**BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution:** none required.

**Action Plan:**

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

**C. Issue: FAC proposal to MOTI re: road safety near Descanso**

**Definition:** The FAC has sent a proposal to the Ministry of Transportation to address safety concerns near Descanso Bay terminal, with suggestions for improvements. The Ministry has indicated that they will do a full day analysis ‘on the ground’ in the near future and get back to the FAC.

**BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution:** none required.

**Action Plan:**

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

**D. Issue: Community engagement ideas**

**Definition:** The FAC is working on ideas for which issues require deeper community engagement, and how to facilitate more open lines of communication to/from BC Ferries. Mark suggested that his new section, Strategic Planning and Community Engagement, was formed to better address/create initiatives such as this. FAC will likely reach out to BC Ferries when more specific ideas have been formulated and an idea of the extent of support BC Ferries could provide is understood.

**BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution:** none required.

**Action Plan:**

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

**E. Issue: Vehicle fare promotion**

**Definition:** Darin notified the FAC that BC Ferries would be offering a 50% discount on vehicle fares from November 16 to December 19, following the pattern used in the recent passenger fare promotion (Mon to Thurs and Saturday, select sailings eligible). The goal of the promotion is to shift traffic from busy sailings to lower demand sailings and to encourage ‘incremental (new) traffic’.

Discussion followed on future possibilities around fare setting ideas (by length, type of discounts, etc.).

**BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution:** none required.

**Action Plan:**

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

**F. Issue: Operational issues review**

**Definition:** The FAC suggested that the lack of 1:50 pm and 2:25 pm sailings on Saturdays and Sundays has caused problems of overloads and confusion. Thus, they would like to see those sailings re-instated, particularly because their estimates show that Route 19 cost-saving targets were notably surpassed.

BC Ferries reminded the FAC that the route specific savings realized during the Service Level Adjustment process will not be shared for a variety of reasons, and that the overall system wide targets were met. BC Ferries is open to receiving ideas from the FAC and/or community for ways to adjust schedules or increase service if:

- The business case rationale makes sense, or
- The community offers an idea to recover the costs of additional service.

Further discussion happened around an idea such as a pilot service change, used on a temporary basis to understand if new service at least covers the cost of adding the service. Finally, the FAC noted that, if any Saturday/Sunday service could be added, it would make sense to first implement during the peak summer season, as this is when the impact of the ‘missing sailings’ is noticed the most. The FAC noted they would like to address BC Ferries soon to re-explore possibilities for Saturday and Sunday schedules.

**BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution:** none required.

**Action Plan:**

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

**G. Issue: Terminal upgrades**

**Definition:** BC Ferries has identified three areas required upgrades:

1. The Descanso Bay berth needs rebuilding.
2. Nanaimo Harbour trestle needs an upgrade.
3. Nanaimo Harbour ramp needs an upgrade.

For all these projects, BC Ferries is looking at all options that will enable minimal disruption to regular service, and once option is to carry out the Nanaimo Harbour trestle work in the near term, with an expectation of a minor disruption...and then work on the other two projects later. Another option is to conduct all three projects simultaneously in 2021, with an expected closure period of one to two months. BC Ferries will coordinate ideas and provide more detailed plans for closures once they are set.

**BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution:** update the FAC on terminal upgrade plans.

**Action Plan:**

Action	Responsible	Date
Share decision on terminal upgrades with FAC	BCF	When plans set

**H. Issue: Operational update**

**Definition:** Captain MacKay noted that traffic levels have been increasing in the past year, and there are no plans to refit the Quinsam for a couple of years. He added that traffic and on-time performance stats are available on the BC Ferries website.

**BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution:** none required.

**Action Plan:**

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

**I. Issue: Cable ferry update**

**Definition:** Mark provided a summary of the status of the cable ferry due to enter service on the Denman Island-Buckley Bay route soon. At present, Vancouver Shipyards (SeaSpan) still owns the vessel and is conducting trials, and therefore BC Ferries is very limited in what they can communicate about the ferry. In general, there is much misinformation in the community; however the vessel is meeting all technical requirements so far, including:

- speed targets using one engine
- Load capacity (weight)
- Cables are not rusting/deteriorating/too heavy and performing as planned.
- Fuel consumption is as projected or lower.
- Vessel is meeting current schedule requirements.
- Overall project is on budget.

Once BC Ferries takes official ownership, more detailed information and plans (crewing levels, trial, in-service dates, etc.) will be communicated.

**BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution:** none required.

**Action Plan:**

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

**J. Issue: Customer Satisfaction Survey**

**Definition:** Mark pointed out that some concerns have been raised by Minor route FAC members that the information gathered through the Customer Satisfaction Tracking (CST) survey process may be used to make decisions that affects routes not included in the survey.

He also noted that most of the Minor routes are not part of the CST, and that they have direct avenues for suggestions, feedback, and consultation with BC Ferries management. Having said this, he sought FAC thoughts on the survey and whether they feel being surveyed in some way in the future is important.

The FAC said that because Route 19 is part of the CST process, it is possible some regular users may feel they are ‘over-surveyed’. The current questions may be too ‘Major-centric’, and a focus on the more basic elements of service may be helpful. Finally, they noted that it may be valuable to see some sort of action happening that addressed the survey feedback provided by respondents.

**BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution:** Include FAC input with other FACs and consider if any future survey process makes sense for Minor routes.

**Action Plan:**

Action	Responsible	Date
Analyze FAC input on future survey considerations	Mark	As applicable