

BC Ferry Services Inc.

Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Meeting Details

Date July 13, 2011
Time 11:00 PM - 3:00 PM
Location Conference Room – Spirit of Vancouver Island
Swartz Bay Sailing

Attendance

Public Interest Representatives

Pat Danforth, Co-Chair
Scott Heron, Disability Resource Centre
Susan Gallagher, Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians
Hugh Mitchell, Canadian Hard of Hearing Association
Barbara Schuster, Canadian National Institute for the Blind
Kiran Aujlay, BC Wheelchair Sports

BC Ferries Representatives

Karen Tindall, Director Customer Care, Customer Care Department
Peter Simpson, Director Operational Strategy, Fleet Operations, Co-Chair
Bruce Paterson, Fleet Technical Director, Engineering
David Carroll, Director, Terminal Construction, Engineering
Jeff Davidson, Director Retail Services, Food and Retail Operations
Captain Chris Frappell, Marine Superintendent, South Coast
Bill McCormick, Customer Service Agent, Customer Care
Phil Jones, Senior Chief Steward, Catering Operations
Maureen Donovan, Operational Training Advisor, Fleet Operations and Training
Julie Birlew, Consultant, Fleet Operations and Training

Regrets

Mary-Kay Kennedy, Canadian National Institute for the Blind
Jane Sheaff, Seniors Serving Seniors
Ernie Stigant, Multiple Sclerosis Society
Valerie Thoem, BC Coalition of People with Disabilities
Jeff Joyce, Director, Operational Training, Fleet Operations and Training
Stuart Leslie-Young, Catering Superintendent, Food and Retail Operations
Paul McDaniel, Regional Director South, Terminal Operations

Introductions

Co-Chairs Pat Danforth and Karen Tindall welcomed the members of the committee.

Review of minutes – January 26, 2011

The minutes of the meeting of January 26, 2011 were approved. Matters arising from the minutes include:

- Update required with regard to the creation of brochures, vessel specific for accessibility needs (evacuation, etc.)
- Update required with regard to the development of a BC Ferries standardized education and assessment program
- Provide committee with "Terminal Design" information

Standing Items

Transport Canada Recommendations

Peter Simpson advised the committee that Transport Canada has proceeded with the issuance of the 'gazetted' Regulation with respect to passengers requiring special assistance in the event of an emergency. The newly adopted Regulation can be found in the *Fire and Board Drills Regulations* (SOR/2010-83) which states:

" MEASURES RESPECTING VESSELS
THAT CARRY PASSENGERS

PASSENGER COUNT AND DETAILS

- Passenger count **10.** The master of a vessel that carries passengers shall, before the vessel embarks on a voyage, ensure that the following information is both communicated to him or her and recorded:
- (a) the number of persons on board; and
 - (b) details respecting all persons who have declared a need for special care or assistance during an emergency."

Karen Tindall advised the committee that BC Ferries has added a link to the customer facing, corporate website which will advise passengers requiring "special care", as defined by the *Fire and Board Drills Regulations*, with the self declaration process. This link, in conjunction with the vessel specific brochure and the newly implemented C-Mist program will greatly improve the customer experience for those with accessibility concerns and will not cause any delays in service. Discussion ensued.

Action: Karen Tindall will provide the information to community associations and ask that they communicate the information to their members and distribution lists.

Training

In Jeff Joyce's absence, Karen Tindall provided the training update.

Maureen Donovan and Julie Birlew spoke to the committee with regard to their involvement with the development of a standardized education and assessment program which will provide employees with the training required to effectively assist

persons with disabilities. Maureen Donovan and Julie Birlew asked the committee if they could provide any suggestions with respect to:

1. Appropriate terminology
2. Approaching customers
3. Practical procedures

Pat Danforth stated that Marine Atlantic training is the leader in the field and that it would be beneficial to utilize their training program as a model and refine it where required. Pat also suggested that it would be advantageous to provide a simulation module in the training program which would include persons with disabilities to gain a realistic perception of what is required between the passenger and the employee.

Dave Carroll stated that the second step of developing the accessibility guidelines is to create awareness amongst staff and to engage the Marketing Department to generate the appropriate signage to assist passenger awareness.

Karen Tindall advised that the Training Department has received training materials from Marine Atlantic and has used them to develop the materials presented. The training manual has been delayed in order to seek advice from the committee.

Peter Simpson suggested that we will require a core group of trainers for continuity. Discussion ensued.

Action: Committee to take a 2nd review the documentation provided by the training department and comment on terminology, etc.

Loading Practices

In Paul McDaniel's absence, Karen Tindall spoke to the committee about the ongoing construction and loading practices at the terminals.

Foot Passengers

Karen Tindall advised the committee that the process for assisting passengers on and off the vessels who require a wheelchair and an assistant takes about fifteen minutes per person. To streamline the process BC Ferries has implemented a reservations system through our Call Centre. On June 1st, we acquired a new wheelchair to pilot at our terminals and onboard called the Staxi. We intend to conduct a review of these Staxi in October 2011 to determine if they meet our customer and employee needs.

Vehicle Passengers

Karen advised the committee that our internal working committee reviewed the process for vehicle passengers requiring space beside an elevator and a process has been put in place to ensure a more consistent experience for customers. We are working towards separate holding lanes at the terminal to ensure those that require elevator accessible parking on the vessel are loaded in the appropriate manner.

The minor vessels / terminals have limited space and are equipped with four spaces that are of a first come first serve basis; however, Powell River has a high volume of elevator requirements and as such has its own process.

Karen informed the committee that "Accessibility, Evacuation and Safety" brochures have been developed for most of the vessels in the fleet. These brochures will also provide information related to the "Self Declare" process and for those requiring

assistance. A secondary brochure has been created that targets our foreign customers and provides information related to evacuation and amenities.

Vessel Developments

Island Sky

Bruce Paterson advised the committee the elevator onboard the MV Island Sky was deemed non-compliant with Canada Transport. It is scheduled to receive a new elevator car and doors compliant with Canada Transport in January 2012. In the interim, BC Ferries is doing its best to make the existing elevator work. Jerry Lightburn advised the committee that there is a bathroom on the vehicle deck and a passenger area to ensure passengers are as comfortable as possible.

Quadra Queen II

Bruce advised the committee that Transport Canada has modified the layout of the enclosed accessible lounge at the aft of the ship with an accessible washroom.

Klitsa

The lounge on the main car deck provides room for passenger movement which has been well received by the public. Dave Carroll advised the committee that there is now an additional loading lane which has added better access to the foot passenger walkway.

Chilliwack

Bruce advised the committee that the Queen of Chilliwack will be in service on June 14, 2011.

Phase 1 of this project is now complete and included upgrades to doors that seal the main car deck in sections (with the elevator being in the centre) which will prohibit anyone staying on the car deck during vessel movement; an evacuation system that is now a "slide" system which is an improvement over our current system of davit-launched lifeboats for people with mobility challenges.

Phase 2 – updating the passenger areas to our current standards of accessibility and design. This is to take place in spring of 2012.

The Queen of Chilliwack will be operating on three routes in the upcoming years, including Route 40 (mid-coast between Port Hardy and Bella Bella and Bella Coola), Route 7 the Sunshine Coast (Powell River/Earls Cove) and Route 17 (Comox / Powell River).

Action: When the vessel relieves Route 17, BC Ferries will need to access the newly implemented processes to ensure:

- Those with disabilities are parking in the centre as there are only 3 parking spots available
- To ensure there accessibility once the vehicle gates are closed as the only access for entry is through the flood doors

Spirit Class

Bruce advised the committee that the mid-life upgrade for the vessels are scheduled for 2015/16 and 2016/17 and that planning needs to commence now to review layout; lifesaving equipment; and to review every aspect of the project. It is projected that each vessel's mid-life upgrade will cost \$120 million.

Jeff Davidson advised the committee that we are in the process of developing the functional requirements (i.e., size of washrooms, commercial outlets, access, etc.) We are also in the process of conducting various analysis including, accident analysis and ergonomic analysis, food service analysis and engaging business development consultants.

Committee toured the vessel and provided feedback for the upgrade.

Terminal Developments

Berth Standardization

David Carroll advised the that the new standardized berths will allow BC Ferries to have more flexibility with regards to which vessels can go into which berths. All standardized berths will have 1.5 meter wide walkways to allow safer passage for people loading and unloading our vessels. These walkways will have smooth transfers for people travelling with mobility aids. Additional terminal staff will be on hand to assist passengers with mobility issues and improved wayfinding signage is in the process of being developed.

Swartz Bay Berth 4 / 5

David Carroll advised the committee that berths 4 and 5 are undergoing construction and will be standardized and outfitted with the 1.5 meter walkways. It is anticipated that berth 4 will be back in service in February and berth 5 will be back in service in October.

Tsawwassen Berth 4 / 5

David Carroll spoke to the committee about Tsawwassen's berth 5 mid-life upgrade and the plan to revitalize the already existing ramp. David also advised the committee that during construction of berth 4's entirely new ramp, foot passengers now need to line-up and use berth 4 as the overhead walkway will be non-operational.

Foot Passenger Pick-up / Drop-off

The pick-up / drop-off area has been moved to a fenced off area to ensure passenger safety. This fenced off area will house a bus platform (platform has a membrane on the deck to avoid a tripping hazard) to accommodate buses (BC Transit and PCL). This new platform is closer to the terminal which is beneficial to our walk-on passengers. We anticipate this project to be completed by August.

Horseshoe Bay Terminal

David Carroll advised the committee that as part of the Federal Stimulus Program, funding has been provided to construct a new passenger overhead walkway and a small building to house an elevator which will provide safe passage to customers wanting to sight see at the nearby village.

BC Ferries Design Criteria

Phil Jones, Senior Chief Steward of the Spirit of Vancouver Island took the committee on a tour of the vessel. Please see Schedule "A" for the committees' comments/suggestions for improved accessibility.

Pre-Travel Information and Website Status

Karen Tindall spoke to the committee on the current status of the Unified Digital Signage project.

The status of the digital signage trial project at the Duke Point Terminal is underway but needs the approval of the City of Nanaimo as there are environmental concerns. Jason Bowman is in discussions with the City of Nanaimo and we hope to have the screens in place by the Fall.

Discussion ensued regarding assistance for those with hearing and sight impairments. Hugh Mitchell suggested that there needs to be better color schemes and captioning on the Coastal Class vessels; that announcements need to be better for those with hearing impairments; that pre-recorded messages with captioning be implemented; tactile map of vessels and more screens with captioning. Susan Gallagher suggested that screens and captioning need to be located at the terminals and that it would be beneficial for there to be colored directional lines on the floor for those with visual impairment.

David Carroll advised the committee that the PA system has been upgraded at major terminals and we are in the process of upgrading signage at the terminals.

Bruce Patterson advised the committee that the Coastal Class vessels were the first to reflect accessibility requirements. He also said we are evolving and making progress and that color schemes are a huge investment.

Karen Tindall acknowledged the accessibility challenges but also expressed BC Ferries' desire to make change.

Jeff Davidson advised the committee that we can revamp the signage to include tactile and brail as visual aids.

Action: Karen Tindall to research the production of tactile vessel maps for outside the Chief Steward Office.

Action: Major terminal walk-thru with committee members to identify accessibility issues.

Other Business

None as the tour took up the rest of the meeting.

Next Meeting

Date not noted.

Action: Karen to send out meeting notification.

Schedule "A"