

Ferry Advisory Committee (FAC) - Record of Meeting

Date:	October 18, 2019
Committee Name:	North & Central Coast
Routes:	10, 11, 26, 28

Attendees:

<p>For the FAC:</p> <p><i>Chair(s):</i> Evan Putterill</p> <p><i>Members</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mark Schlichting , Barry Cunningham • Pete Kovanda, Fred Robertson • conf call: Toni Ziganash, Lisa Pineault 	<p>For BCF:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jeff West, David Hendry • Peter Simpson • Lance Lomax • Darin Guenette • Brian Anderson • Zoe King
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Points of Information/Agreement:

<p>1. Booking challenges across Route 28 and the northern routes in general. FAC noted there are occasional problems with getting bookings and wondering when the new website, including booking functions, may be operating. Zoe noted that the new website will be launched in early 2020, and it will provide the ability for customers to make all booking arrangements (vehicles, passengers, waitlist, lounge space, cabins, etc) online. FAC members noted that if customers were able to understand the likeliness of moving from waitlist/standby to confirmed status, this would help them understand if they should make alternate arrangements. Jeff noted that there are a wide variety of variables (vehicle type and length, loading arrangements, etc) involved in understanding how many people on the waitlist will actually get on the sailing, and this may change sailing-to-sailing. Thus, it is very difficult to give customers a realistic idea of when they may get on a sailing. Further discussion followed around the challenge of capturing information about how many customers are not joining the waitlist once they are told that the sailing 'is full'. BCF noted that a customer may be enquiring about multiple sailings, so tracking when they ask about a full sailing may not provide useful data. Generally, BCF booking agents don't have access to 'where in the queue' someone may be on the waitlist...so this info is not given.</p> <p>Lisa suggested that BCF should look at capturing the number of waitlisted customers that are actually loaded on sailings. Related: the 'overloads' stat in the route reports does not include waitlist customers, but it is agreed that would be valuable.</p> <p>Discussion followed around discouraging no-shows and understanding whether most customers are commercial or non-commercial. This included exploring pros/cons of unaccompanied freight not being an option on BC Ferries vessels.</p>

2. Summer schedule. Mark noted that the Route 28A (Central Coast connector) schedule does not provide for connections to northern ports, without an overnight in Bella Bella. Although the number of customers looking for this service may be low, it is not convenient. Peter noted that the structure of the contract BCF operates within is designed to provide southern connections only, and thus the schedule is built to satisfy this. The sheer number of customers travelling north has shown to be very low, so this makes sense.

Mark also asked for feedback from other Central Coast FAC members on how the frequency of Route 28A is working. Toni noted that the fact that the connection from Ocean Falls to Bella Coala takes 10 hours is not at all useful for customers, nor does the 'quick turnaround' promote anyone staying in Ocean Falls. Peter explained that the 4 day/8 day cycle for Route 28A service happens because the Sea Wolf needs to be in Port Hardy every second day, and thus it cannot be in the Central Coast ports on a weekly basis (every 7 days). As well, the fact that there is one crew operating Route 28/28A, the schedule must be set as to connect traffic in Bella Bella, and still get the crew somewhere at the end of their maximum allowable crew day. FAC asked to see utilizations stats for Route 28 and 28A separated. BCF agreed this makes sense.

BCF noted that Route 28 will operate June 3-Sept 30 for 2020 and bookings should be open for all Northern routes in early November.

3. Overlength resident rate access. Mark noted that Central Coast residents are not getting residents rate with overlength vehicles. Zoe noted that both underheight and overheight extra-length vehicles are applicable to the lower resident rate. Discussion on hostling extra-length when a customer was also travelling continued. It was noted that for a certain total length, one will find it is less expensive to 'separate a trailer' and book it as a hostel, and customers do have this option.
4. Route 10 customer accommodation. As the winter service on Route 10 is an overnight service, there may not be enough cabins available for all customers...can the Aurora and Raven lounges be made available? Zoe confirmed that the Aurora can be booked year-round, on both Route 10 and 11. It may be that customers are not being told that they have the option to book the Aurora lounge when no cabins are available. Mark suggested that the winter rate for the Aurora lounge should be lowered, as the customers are almost only residents. Evan added that perhaps the lounge could be open free all winter for residents, but full cost during peak season.
5. Brochure racking on Sea Wolf. Pete Kovanda noted that he has heard from an operator that racking cards on the Sea Wolf is 'too difficult'; may be the number of cards or cost. It was agreed that BCF reps can put operators in touch with Marketing (who manage this process) directly...as maybe there can be something tailored to Route 28.
6. Route 11 shoulder season. Evan noted that Route 11 communities may be putting pressure on the Ministry to look at increasing sailing frequencies in 'both shoulder seasons'.
7. Resident rates for North Coast (Prince Rupert and area). Residents look to the ferry more so in the winter, as highways may not be reliable. Thus, they are keen in seeking a reduction in fares, if possible. However, it was noted that the resident rates in place for other communities are already set at the off-peak rate...not a discount from that rate like what is being suggested here. Evan noted that this may be a good case for the community to seek a discount from the Province.

8. Route 26 update. Peter Simpson shared a proposed Route 26 schedule to be implemented once the expanded service is put in place. He explained some of the timing rationale and asked for feedback from Evan and the community at a later point. As for implementation of the expanded schedule, Lance noted that the new crew members that are needed have not yet been found, as job postings are just ending. The initial challenges include the lack of housing in the area, which looks very difficult. BCF has looked at establishing some sort of accommodations, but the cost is prohibitive. There are also still discussions ongoing with the Union, but currently the estimate for when this service may be set up could be later, with the end of March 2020 the latest. Note that January 2020 is still the target implementation and we were making 'best efforts' to achieve this. Crewing structure will provide the ability for emergency call-outs almost anytime, if crew are available.
9. BCF updates. BCF noted that there website revamp is expected to be launched in early 2020, and that the fare flexibility initiative (dynamic pricing for major routes, depending on demand) will follow soon after. As well, both Current Conditions and parking lot info will indicate the percentage of space available on the new website, instead of space 'taken' as is now displayed.
N.Sea Wolf to undergo refit in March/April 2020, and Nimpkish will be the relief vessel.

Action Items¹:

Item	Who	By When
1. Look at capturing data indicating the number of waitlisted vehicles that get on a sailing, and at capturing all vehicles left behind when a sailing leaves.	Jeff	Completed-in future reports
2. Report Route 28A and 28 utilization stats separately.	Peter	future mtgs
3. Communicate that resident rate is available to overlength vehicles.	Jeff/Zoe	End-Dec
4. Ensure customers asking for cabins are told the Aurora lounge is available year-round for booking.	Zoe	Completed-agents offer
5. Consider a winter rate (low or free) be available for Aurora lounge.	Lance	Completed-no changes
6. Consider a communications update regarding Route 26 expansion (talk to Pub Affairs).	Darin	As soon as reasonable

¹ Significant Service Request (SSR) requiring detailed analysis and formal decisions from BCF should be submitted using the SSR process. Submission of a SSR should be noted as an Action Item.