

Ferry Advisory Committee (FAC) - Record of Meeting

Date	December 2, 2021	
Committee Name	Northern Sunshine Coast	
Routes	7 (Saltery Bay-Earls Cove), 17 (Comox-Powell River), 18 (Texada Island-Powell River)	
Attendees	FAC	BC Ferries (in person or WebEx)
	<i>Chair(s):</i> Kim Barton-Bridges <i>Members:</i> Patrick Brabazon, Jacquie Donaldson, Paul Kamon, Kelly Keil, Warren Kiland, Jim Palm	Brian Anderson, Peter Simpson, Carrie McIntosh, Natalie McCall, Captain Jan Brockhausen, Jordan Knutsen, Dan McIntosh, Darin Guenette <i>Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure:</i> Lynda Petruzzelli

Introductions and Opening discussion		
<p><u>Meeting notice and virtual format:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertisement: Due to a miscommunication and shortage of time prior to the meeting once the venue was confirmed, BC Ferries did not book an ad in the Powell River Peak. • Virtual format via WebEx: BC Ferries coordinated a WebEx option for attendance virtually. However, the audio connection for the participants attending virtually did not function adequately. <p><u>Feedback/Comments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The FAC expressed disappointment that no ad was placed, as they like to see public hear of the opportunity to attend. None at this time. • BC Ferries acknowledges the WebEx connection was not sufficient to allow full involvement for all attendees. <p><u>Resolution/Agreement:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BC Ferries will ensure ads are booked to promote public attendance to future meetings. • Learning from this first attempt at including WebEx for virtual attendance, BC Ferries will strive to coordinate a well-functioning virtual connection at future meetings. 		
Action Item	Responsibility	Deadline

Book newspaper ads with sufficient advance notice.	Darin	For future meetings
Ensure virtual option for attendance functions fully for attendees.	BC Ferries	For future meetings

BC Ferries updates
<p><u>Update:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>Vessel Operations: The Island K’ulu’ta will remain in service on Route 18 until December 14, at which time the Island Discovery will return to the route. Captain Anastasios Tasoulis is now the Senior Master for Route 18 as well.</p> <p>The recent mandatory vaccine requirement for all ship board crew have not resulted in crew shortages for these three routes. Operations teams continue to work on schedule options as part of the Texada-Comox direct service pilot restart. BCF will follow up with Kim, Doug, and Warren for further discussion.</p> <p>A reminder of the sailing cancellations in place for the evening of December 11 and morning of December 12 on Route 7, to allow for replacement of a generator and Right Angle Drive (RAD) unit.</p> <p>Finally, a working group of BC Ferries reps are discussing pain points and options for improving connectivity between all three routes in the area and Route 3 (Langdale-Horseshoe Bay) as well.</p> <p>Terminal Operations: Saltery Bay Berth 2 is currently out of service, with an expected return to service as of December 12. The vessel is using Berth 1 with no expected impact to operations.</p> <p>With increased traffic in peak seasons, improvements to flagger deployments are being considered to increase flow of traffic into the terminals and minimize roadway congestion. The team is looking at the possibility of using mobile point-of-sale technology for Route 18 loading processes as well.</p> <p>Connectivity between FAC and BC Ferries. BC Ferries is aware that FAC members are interested in knowing the most efficient way to connect when day-to-day operational issues/questions arise. Cognizant of not overloading local operational managers, and wanting to ensure FACs know how to reach out, BCF asks FACs to use Darin as a first point-of-contact and he can reach out to BCF reps. In the event Darin is not available, they can reach out to Carrie as well.</p> <p><u>Feedback/Comments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Related to the crew vaccine conversation, the FAC shared experiences of customers seeing occasions where crew members were not wearing face coverings properly, or at all. This inconsistency with policy is disappointing and can send the wrong message to customers. Jan acknowledged that crew members must adhere to the same face covering rules as customers, and that regular reminders are provided. As follow-up on FAC-BC Ferries communications, the FAC expects to be given opportunity to input ideas/comments prior to BC Ferries making changes to service. <p><u>Resolution/Agreement:</u></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BC Ferries agrees to connect with the FAC for feedback prior to service changes. 		
Action Item	Responsibility	Deadline
Contact FAC for opportunity to input into service changes.	BC Ferries	Prior to each service change need.

FAC Review
<p><u>Update:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> BC Ferries has sought feedback from all FACs on how the FAC process works to ensure it's productive for all involved. Approximately 80 members from all 13 committees completed a survey this past summer, from which common themes arose. One of the common themes included a request to improve communications. BC Ferries is considering the potential to increase meeting cadence, including a virtual update session open to all. New route reports summarizing operational and performance information related to each route will be developed and circulated to FACs regularly. Another theme was around Service Notices (SN), specifically the challenges with timeliness and content. To address content, BC Ferries recently added a Customer Service agent into the Operations & Security Centre (OSC – where SN are issued, and are in 24/7 contact with terminals and vessels), who can be dedicated to focussing on altering tone to provide more useful information for customers. To address timeliness, some back-end processes have recently been changed, and SNs should now be received by subscribers much sooner after being posted on BC Ferries' website. Other key themes included reviewing the current Terms of Reference (TOR) common to all FACs, the structure of membership on committees, and other aspects of how FACs are established. This conversation with all FAC Chairs started this past summer and will continue in follow-up meetings. The overall goal is to develop options to review and improve the entire FAC process. Related to this point, discussions held during the annual BC Ferries-FAC Chairs meeting in August resulted in BC Ferries forming working groups to implement improvements to some of the bigger 'pain points' common to many FACs, such as website Current Conditions information and a lack of understanding around the reservation process. <p><u>Feedback/Comments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kim relayed that communications problems continue to frustrate customers; BC Ferries-FAC, BC Ferries-BC Ferries, Service Notices, and other forms included. She added that Current Conditions information is not always helpful and can be hard to find, as is the webpage dedicated to describe how space is allocated on sailings for reservations. Kim suggested that one of the website schedule aspects that could use improvement is that when one selects a specific date for a table showing timings 'in one direction' of a route, the table with times in the other direction does not change to that same date. Kim also believes that it isn't clear that Saver Fare is fully prepaid, and she has received inquiries from community members who were confused and thought the payment for Saver Fare was the reservation fee, e.g. why am I paying \$37 for a reservation?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FAC members expressed that the reservation allocation information is in a difficult place to find on the website and suggested that we provide this information on the actual booking pages or at least a link to this information to make it easier to find. <p><u>Resolution/Agreement:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work to continue on aspects of communications, including the specific analysis underway on Route 3-7-17-18 connections. 		
Action Item	Responsibility	Deadline
Advise FAC when next website release is planned	Darin	December
Ensure feedback regarding schedule direction and dates, clear communication about Saver Fares being prepaid, and the more effective placement of reservation allocation information is passed along to the web team and the appropriate working groups	Darin	As information is learned. Notes/info learned: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both directions cannot be shown on schedule tables Saver fare payment note forwarded to Customer Care Suggestion sent to include a link to this page from the 'Book Sailings' menu.

Commissioner FAC review		
<p><u>Update:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The BC Ferry Commissioner's office has started a review of how the FAC process functions, looking at multiple aspects. They are in early stages, and their consultant has started meeting with BCF employees. They'll be carrying out interviews with both BCF reps and FAC Chairs to explore areas for improvement and will finish by preparing a report, which is expected to be complete by Spring 2022. More to come. <p><u>Feedback/Comments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> none <p><u>Resolution/Agreement:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> none 		
Action Item	Responsibility	Deadline
n/a		

Website/wifi updates
<p><u>Update:</u></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website: Since the new website was launched last fall, BCF has been receiving customer feedback and making regular upgrades to improve usability. All feedback is welcome to feed into these upgrades. • Wifi: Earlier this year, BCF announced we would be installing wifi infrastructure at 14 terminals, to allow customer access to the internet while waiting at these terminals. Exact timelines for when these upgrades happen is expected to be finalized late-January. <p><u>Feedback/Comments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • none <p><u>Resolution/Agreement:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • none 		
Action Item	Responsibility	Deadline
n/a		

COVID impacts		
<p><u>Update:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BC Ferries noted that many capital projects were deferred due to the pandemic, but no material projects planned for Routes 7, 17 and 18 have been impacted to date. • The introduction of mandatory vaccination requirements for ship-based crew imposed by Transport Canada, combined with existing COVID challenges and staff shortages means the ferry system may see some isolated disruptions due to intermittent crew shortages. <p><u>Feedback/Comments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • none <p><u>Resolution/Agreement:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • none 		
Action Item	Responsibility	Deadline
n/a		

Upcoming projects		
<p><u>Update: Texada-Comox direct pilot restart</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BC Ferries noted that further schedule options were developed since last meeting with FAC members on the pilot restart. These options are being reviewed internally will be discussed with the FAC shortly. <p><u>Feedback/Comments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • none <p><u>Resolution/Agreement:</u></p>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BC Ferries expects to reach out to Warren, Doug and Kim in upcoming weeks to discuss the schedule options and how/when to engage the communities further. 		
Action Item	Responsibility	Deadline
Contact FAC reps to discuss pilot schedule options.	Darin	December/January

Customer Experience Team		
<p><u>Update:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Experience is a new division in Marketing. The Experience team consists of two manager, Natalie McCall for the Minor and Northern routes and Mika Desloges for the Major routes. The team has been formed to identify common, customer ‘pain points’, with an objective of addressing these and seeking improvements. The goal is to understand the entire customer journey, starting from the booking/planning process through to post-travel stage. The team is tied into several projects and bring a customer focus to these internal discussions. The Community Investment program is included in this portfolio, which is aimed at supporting community events/initiatives. <p><u>Feedback/Comments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific to the routes in this region, Natalie, members of the Operations team and others are meeting soon to discuss options specifically related to Route 3-7 connectivity, as well as how this related to Route 17 and 18 sailings at times. <p><u>Resolution/Agreement:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FAC members will be engaged on Route 3-7 connectivity ideas shortly. 		
Action Item	Responsibility	Deadline
Inform FAC on Route 3-7 discussions/initiatives	Darin	Ongoing as BCF internal options arise

Community Relations team		
<p><u>Update:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carrie explained that she leads a growing Community Relations team, with a goal of a more proactive and relationship-based approach to community engagement and discussions. The focus will be on finding way to connect and communicate with communities on a more regular basis, and to explore ways to increase shared understanding between communities and BC Ferries. The team includes Darin, and his work with the Ferry Advisory Committee, a new Community Relations Coordinator, Tamara Olson, who will be helping out with a variety of communication and outreach activities, and an Indigenous Relations role that is being developed now. 		

<p><u>Feedback/Comments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • none <p><u>Resolution/Agreement:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • none 		
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Action Item	Responsibility	Deadline
n/a		

FAC submissions
<p><u>Update 1: Route 18 overloads and additional round-trip request</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The FAC suggested that Route 18 vehicle traffic returned fairly notably this past summer, and they believe overloads are also happening more frequently during the off-peak season. • The midday gap on the schedule during the off-peak means more than a three-hour wait between sailing opportunities, and it was noted that is a particularly long wait for those who overload on the last sailing in the morning. <p><u>Feedback/Comments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warren asked if there were guidelines for whether an extra round-trip is initiated if a certain number of vehicles overloads on that last morning sailing, as this could be a clear indication for people to know when to stay in the terminal. • BC Ferries noted that this round-trip is in place throughout the peak season, but both the traffic levels are notably lower during the off-peak and the Contract determines the service levels. Thus, additional sailings in the off-peak are not added without a event/reason that would cause a known and significant traffic increase. <p><u>Update 2: Parking congestion at Blubber Bay</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warren shared that, as a school bus driver arriving twice each day at Blubber Bay, he often experiences vehicles lined up along the road leading to the terminal, all the way to where the road is only two-lane flow. Thus, in order to get down close to the berth area for pick up or drop-off of children, he'll need to drive into the oncoming traffic lane. <p><u>Feedback/Comments:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jordan Knutsen expressed concern for the risk of driving against traffic. <p><u>Update 3: Berth congestion at Westview around 8 am</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FAC members said that there appear to be more frequent occasions where the Route 18 vessel ends up delaying entry into berth at Westview just prior to 8:30 am because the Route 17 8:05 am departure has not left yet.

Feedback/Comments:

- It was noted that previously a similar situation occurred around 12 noon, where both ships ended up at Westview around the same time, and one ship ended up delaying to allow the other to enter/exit the dock.
- Discussion followed as to whether the situation warranted looking at options to make slight adjustments to sailing times for either/both routes around that time, thus opening up the gap between when the Route 17 ship was scheduled to leave and the Route 18 one to arrive.

Resolution/Agreement:

- BC Ferries Operations teams to investigate and develop options for schedule changes, if warranted.

Update 4: Coastal Ferry Services Contract and current service

- Kim noted that the actual service being provided on Route 17 is both necessary and should be reflected as the core service in the Coastal Ferry Services Contract (Contract).

Feedback/Comments:

- Kim added that she wants to understand if there is a mechanism to get the current service written into the Contract.
- Brian informed participants that the current service on Route 17 has been incorporated into the Safe Restart Agreement, which supplements the Contract and is valid until the end of Performance Term 5. Unless otherwise identified by the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, current service levels will form the base of the Performance Term 6 preparations.

Resolution/Agreement:

- BC Ferries to share reference links to the Coastal Ferry Services Contract and Safe Restart Agreement with the FAC.

Update 5: Route 3 Saver Fare update

- BC Ferries has seen an increase of approximately 30% in these late evening sailings that offer a saver fare. It was noted that this helps open up space on higher demand sailings earlier in the day, as some of these customers move to later sailings.

Feedback/Comments:

- Nothing further on this issue.

Resolution/Agreement:

- N/A

Update 6: Community special events and traffic increase

- Warren noted that members will continue to let BC Ferries know about special events on Texada that may drive higher than expected vehicle traffic, he noted a recent hunting season resulted in higher traffic, thus causing overloads on Route 18.

Feedback/Comments:

- Warren added that although an occurrence like a hunting season is not an event, he hoped there is an awareness from BC Ferries when overloads are likely to result, and ideally any flexibility to consider adding sailings to help alleviate the effect would be beneficial.

Resolution/Agreement:

- N/A

Update 7: Protocols and communications for end-of-day cancellations

- Kim said that, in cases where customers are stranded at a terminal when the last sailing of the day is notably delayed or cancelled (for a variety of reasons), customers need to know what options they have, and she suggested BC Ferries should consider providing information and communication and having a protocol staff can follow to care for customers when these situations arise.

Feedback/Comments:

- Suggestions for information BC Ferries can provide include: list of hotels in the area (particularly useful if BC Ferries has agreements on favourable rates), how to contact BC Ferries to discuss possible expenses, and if food/beverage is available during long waits.
- Discussion followed around how to best get customers relevant and consistent information on services in the area.

Resolution/Agreement:

- Natalie will explore options and report back to the FAC.

Update 8: Medical travel reservations

- Kim relayed that customers travelling for medical appointments express they are unable to obtain a reservation on a bookable sailing, as they either may not be able to go to the departure terminal well in advance of their targeted sailing or they are overloaded. Recognizing that the TAPs travel program is coordinated by the Province, she wondered if there may be a way to include a free reservation for TAPs travellers.

Feedback/Comments:

- Discussion followed around possible options within BC Ferries' booking processes to address concerns of individuals travelling on TAPs forms. Potential enhancements to medical travel and reservations are being discussed between BC Ferries and the Province.

Resolution/Agreement:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BC Ferries will update FACs on the results of discussion with the Province around TAPs travel and reservations. 		
Action Item	Responsibility	Deadline
Discuss options or ideas to help alleviate the need to drive into oncoming traffic near Blubber Bay with terminal team.	Jordan	December/January
Discuss options to minimize/eliminate occasions when Route 17 and 18 ships met near Westview in the mornings.	Capt Brockhausen	December
Send link to the CFSC and Safe Restart Agreement to FAC	Darin	Completed
Explore ways to provide more customer information for end-of-day sailing delays or cancellations	Natalie	December/January