

Campbell River-Quadra-Cortes Ferry Advisory Committee Meeting

Overview: Heriot Bay Inn – October 21, 2015

In Attendance:

Committee: Jim Abram, Noba Anderson, Terry Hooper, Bertha Jeffrey, Uschi Koebberling, Rod Lee, Michael Lynch, Vince Martin, Ester Strijbos, Paul Ryan

BC Ferries: Mark Collins - VP Strategic Planning and Community Engagement, David Hendry- Strategic Planning Director, Captain Al deKoninck - 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 for May 2016.

Issues Summary and Resolution Plan

A. Issue: ‘Cortes Connection’ priority loading

Definition: Cortes Connection is a private business that offers a bus service to/from Campbell River, and also transporting blood/oyster/water samples, freight, or mail. It was pointed out that this customer has been receiving assured loading every time they use the 10:10 am (from Cortes), 11 am (from Quadra), 4:10 pm (from C.River) and 5:05 pm (from Quadra) sailings...regardless of whether they need the guarantee of travel.

BC Ferries confirmed that assured loading is currently provided on Route 23 for emergency services on a call, hydro outages and mail delivery. As well, they are reviewing assured loading practices that are in place across all routes, with a goal of ensuring logic and consistency.

The FAC suggested that Cortes Connection only be provided assured loading for the sailings that they are actually operating as a passenger bus service, as it seems they have been receiving this benefit for many years when it is unwarranted.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: Review assured loading procedures in place for Cortes Connection and ensure this privilege is granted only when necessary.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
Re-establish assured loading as only when necessary for Cortes Connection	Al/Jeff	As soon as practicable

Inform Cortes Connection of their 'new' assured loading entitlement	Jeff	COMPLETE
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B. Issue: Reservation system

Definition: FAC had previously asked if reservations on Routes 23/24 could be implemented, and BC Ferries explained that they could not (IT systems, inability to stage vehicles separately, unstaffed terminals, etc). This time, a new query came to consider Route 24 reservations, particularly for the first sailing of the day, when customers often line up the previous night in order to guarantee a spot.

David explained that the current IT-related upgrade project called ACE consists of four parts; customer relationship management (CRM), reservations/booking/ticketing systems, card services, and fare flexibility (FFDEI) initiatives. The first components are expected to be implemented on the 'Major routes' in the 2017/18 fiscal year, with other routes to follow afterwards.

The FAC asked if there may be any short-term solution possible to see reservations in place on Minor routes, but BC Ferries said that ACE needs to be the thorough and efficient way to figure out what may be possible.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

C. Issue: Campbell River shade option

Definition: Jeff summarized the steps BC Ferries has taken in seeking possible options for providing shade for customers at the Campbell River Terminal, which included planted trees, potted trees and a 'shade structure'. None of these ideas were feasible or desired by the FAC, who introduced a new concept of an 'awning type cover' that would cover the foot passenger walking area, with benches, along the fence line between the ticketing building and waiting room.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: explore cost and feasibility of 'shade awning'.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
Obtain cost estimate and feasibility of installing an awning along the fence line at C.River terminal	Jeff	When able

D. Issue: John Hodgkins’ ‘cost/revenue report’

Definition: Gabriola FAC Chair John Hodgkins recently released an analysis indicating that some ‘route targets’ set in the Province’s 2013/2014 Service Level Adjustment process were exceeded, and that BC Ferries should therefore consider adding back sailings/service. Two of the routes with the highest savings above targets were Route 19 (Gabriola) and 23 (C.River-Quadra Isl).

Mark explained that the overall goal of the SLA process was to achieve system wide cost savings through the removal of certain sailings across several routes. He added that this goal was achieved, and that re-evaluating the savings for each route was not being done. The BC Ferry Commissioner mandated cross-subsidization across all routes a few years ago, and this has resulted in the fare caps to be set at approximately the rate of inflation for the next Performance Term.

As well, some revenue erosion estimated may not have occurred as much as expected, but overall utilization of the system did increase (one of the goals of the SLA process). The bottom line is that the Province was satisfied with the results of the SLA process and overall cost savings targets were reached. Some discussion followed on how fares have been set, and that they are not related to distance travelled on a given route.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

E. Issue: Sailing cancellations

Definition: One Route 23 sailing was canceled during four consecutive days in September, as BC Hydro needed to lay cables across the strait between Campbell River and Quadra Island. Due to an acknowledged lack of communication to BC Ferries by Hydro, ferry customers were provided with three days’ notice of the first cancellation. Al clarified that BC Ferries did choose to cancel those sailings, instead of delaying them, as Hydro required a ‘clear zone’ around their barge, and cancelling would sailing would allow the remainder of the sailings to keep on schedule.

Also, a situation happened earlier in the year when one of the radar systems was not functioning at a time when fog existed in the area, resulting in some sailing cancellations on Route 23 as well. It was agreed that this was unfortunate timing for the radar system to break, as otherwise the vessel can sail in fog conditions.

In a related note, the FAC suggested that the timing of the Powell River Queen refit was not planned well, as the level of traffic demand could not be handled adequately by the

relief vessel, the Bowen Queen. Al replied that the time of that refit was set as it was the only time the Bowen Queen could be made available this year, and that in the future BC Ferries intends on reverting to the traditional refit period of mid-winter, when traffic is lower.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

F. Issue: Service notices

Definition: The FAC noted that it seems that Service Notices are issued with very little, if any, actual advance notice for customers to react. BC Ferries noted that on a very short route such as Route 23, sometimes the situation requiring a SN to be issued happens quicker than the notice can go out.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

G. Issue: Tachek noise update

Definition: Al provided an update on BC Ferries plans to mitigate previous concerns raised by the FAC about excessive noise from the Tachek. He summarized as follows:

- Tests were carried out and did find higher levels of ambient noise.
- Thus, when the Tachek goes into refit (June-Aug 2016), ‘hospital silencers’ will be installed to reduce this ambient noise significantly.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

H. Issue: Cortes projects update

Definition: Jeff noted that the newly installed generator at Whaletown Terminal is very quiet, and will only be used in the event of a power outage. As well, an electrical upgrade should occur in December or soon after.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

I. Issue: Quadra staffing and emergency runs

Definition: The FAC noted there are some community concerns when BC Ferries is not an available service during after-hours emergency runs, and when the Route 23 ferry does not hold to wait for an ambulance coming off of Route 24. To the latter point, as specific recent example was discussed where an elderly lady with a broken leg was being transported from Cortes Island, but the ambulance had to wait for the Route 23 ferry to complete a sailing in order to get off of Quadra Island.

Jim suggested that BC Ferries should require that Route 23 crews be available at all times for emergency service, regardless of whether employees want to be available. Al replied that, where crews live, and if they make themselves available for after-hours call outs, cannot be dictated by BC Ferries, and that approximately 40% of current crew members live on Quadra Island.

He added that BC Ferries is not deemed an official ‘essential service’, and therefore have no contractual requirement to be available at all times for emergency service. BC Ferries takes a ‘best efforts’ based approach to providing after-hours availability, and both the Operations and Security Centre and BC Ambulance are provided with a list of days when crews are/are not available for call-outs.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

J. Issue: Whaletown washrooms/waiting room

Definition: Jeff summarized that the current portable washrooms at Whaletown are emptied twice per week in the summer and once per week in the winter months. He added that crews check the state of the facilities regularly to see if extra cleaning may be required.

As for plans to upgrade the waiting room, Jeff said that the preliminary design work is underway for a replacement to the waiting shelter. The project requires approval at the December capital meeting for a final decision on when it will proceed.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

K. Issue: Operations Report

Definition: Capt de Koninck provided a summary of recent and near-future vessel and terminal developments related to Routes 23 and 24 including traffic and on-time performance statistics. Specifically, he noted that traffic volumes have been increasing and that the Quadra Queen II will be the relief vessel for the summer 2016 Tachek refit mentioned earlier.

Al noted that the Tachek will be obtaining a ‘higher license’ certification, allowing for an increase in maximum number of passenger capacity. Therefore, he asked Cortes members to let him know of any special events planned that may see a surge in foot passenger demand.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date

L. 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).

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

M. 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.

Mark pointed out that most of the Minor routes are not included in the CST, but rather these routes are involved in the FAC process, whereby they have direct avenues for suggestions/feedback/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.

Some discussion around the CST process followed, including that fact that Route 23 used to be included until the community asked BC Ferries to stop surveying these communities. In general, the FAC members agreed that there may indeed be some value in being part of a survey with questions more relevant to the issues of commuters and communities that rely on the service heavily.

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