

Meeting Details

Date: May 10, 2023
Time: 1:30 pm – 4:00 pm
Location: Webex

Attendance

Public Interest Representatives

Marnie Essery, Intermunicipal Advisory Committee on Disability Issues – Co-Chair
Pat Danforth, Victoria Disability Resource Centre
Hugh Mitchell, Canadian Hard of Hearing Association
Matthew Ellies – Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada, BC
Captain David Willows, Chair of Saanich Peninsula Accessible Advisory Committee
Scott Heron, Peer Support Specialist, Spinal Cord Injury BC

BC Ferries Representatives

Karen Tindall, Director of Customer Care, Customer Care Department – Co-Chair
Bruce Paterson, Director, Naval Architecture, Fleet Technical
Steve Shardlow, Training Manager, Terminals
Camrin Hillis, Regional Manager Terminal Operations
Rosa Marinelli, Director, Corporate Marketing & Customer Experience
Angela Soucie, Director, Consumer Marketing & Digital Experience
Hannah Smith, Manager, Consumer & Digital Marketing
Christopher Leduc, Lead User Experience Designer
Leslie Meyer, Regulatory and Policy Manager

Guest

Cheryl Forsyth, Customer Relations Advisor, Customer Care

Regrets

Susan Simmons, Advisor for Special Olympics, Victoria
Dr. Jie Zhang, Seniors Serving Seniors
Song Hu, Seniors Serving Seniors (Alternate)
Neil Belanger, Chief Executive Officer, BC Aboriginal Network on Disability Society (BCANDS)
Captain Chris Frappell, Marine Superintendent, Shipbuilding
Melanie Lucia, Executive Director, Terminal Operations
Jeff Davidson, Director, Retail Services, Food and Retail Operations
Chris Morris, Terminal Operations Superintendent

Introduction

Co-Chairs Karen Tindall and Marnie Essery welcomed and introduced the members of the committee. No changes to the minutes of the last meeting (November 23, 2022).

Updates from Public Interest Representatives

Chair of Saanich Peninsula Accessible Advisory Committee - Captain David Willows

- Noted a few issues with the Salish vessels and slope of the vehicle deck on the lower deck. The ramp on vehicles will not operate if parked on the slope.
- *Queen of Cumberland* – accessibility restroom is good but would like to see a large changing area to accommodate older passengers.

Canadian Hard of Hearing Association - Hugh Mitchell

- No new concerns or information to share with the committee.

Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada, BC - Matthew Ellies

- Noted the BCF mobile app has been released, a few issues that he shared:
 - issues with voice over and the landing page
 - quite a few issues with the screen reader were noted and an opportunity for improvements to be made

Victoria Disability Resource Centre - Pat Danforth

- Regarding the app – Pat shared that she had some difficulties with the new app.
- No new information to share with the committee.

Peer Support Specialist, Spinal Cord Injury BC - Scott Heron

- Noted that he has been with this group for 35 years with the goal to help families and individuals with spinal cord injuries to adapt and thrive.
- Scott shared that another successful Sunset Dinner Cruise took place on March 11 onboard one of the Spirit vessels and the buffet area was utilized for the event. A big thank you to Zoe King, Manager Customer Care and Chief Steward Melissa McDonnell who assisted with organizing and providing a successful event for members. The event went really well and all attendees enjoyed the evening. The group looks forward to another event next year with the hope of doubling the number of attendees.

Intermunicipal Advisory Committee on Disability Issues - Marnie Essery

- On recent travels with BCF Marnie observed concerns with large family groups using elevators resulting in passengers that require the elevator for accessibility needs and elderly/frail passengers waiting longer than necessary.

- It was noted that only one gender neutral accessible restroom onboard and it was suggested that announcements to passengers when they board so that they can prepare where they are located onboard.
- Marnie witnessed some dogs off leash on the car decks.
- Marnie asked what is the best process in nominating a BCF employee? Karen advised that our general feedback area on our website is the best way to nominate an employee. Customer Relations will share with the appropriate management team.
- Coastal Naturalist Program (informs, educates and inspires passengers about the wonders of BC's coast while travelling on board BC Ferries), the committee is looking for an update if this program is going to be available this summer? Rosa advised that sadly, the Coastal Naturalist Program will not be returning this summer due to resources and budget. We are hopeful that it will return in the summer 2024.
- Marnie asked if there are wheelchair accessible picnic tables available at the terminals.
- Suggested that summer terminal vendor/kiosks offer local goods like produce and local offerings would be helpful/beneficial to passengers.

Action: Camrin confirmed that Swartz Bay terminal currently has round picnic bench style tables with overhangs that accommodate accessibility needs. He will check with other terminals and update at the next meeting.

Updates from BC Ferries

Rosa Marinelli – Director, Corporate Marketing & Customer Experience

- Advised the group that customer engagement session was undertaken to gather feedback and suggestions for the buffet areas on the Spirit vessels and The *Coastal Celebration*. Our main challenge is staffing right at the moment. The buffet will most likely not return to the vessels. We are looking at introducing a new amenity in this area in the future and we are still reviewing customer engagement suggestions and feedback.

Action: Rosa will speak to the Catering group about the gender neutral restrooms available and ask the Catering/Operations teams to make additional announcements for passengers for wayfinding on the vessels to the accessible restrooms. Dogs should be on leashes – she will look at signage to see if we can make any improvements and advise vessel teams to make additional public address reminders and ask crew to enforce.

Bruce Paterson – Director, Naval Architecture, Engineering

- The committee reviewed a PowerPoint presentation on Vessel Status Update. Two Island Class vessels were introduced in 2020 and began operating on the Texada – Powell River and Alert Bay - Port McNeill routes. In 2022 four new vessels began operating; two-ship service on the Nanaimo Harbour to Gabriola; and a two-ship service on the Campbell River and Quadra Island routes.
- The committee was asked for guidance and feedback about the accessible chair lift on the Island Class vessels. This chair lift provides passengers the ability to access the upper deck sundeck area. Since the introduction of the new vessels the accessible chair lifts have had very little to no demand. The chair lifts can be

problematic to use from a maintenance perspective. The chair lifts have not had the anticipated use. The subject of exploring and considering having the accessible chair lifts not available for use was brought up.

- Passenger lounges and restrooms are situated on the main deck for easy access which includes an accessible restroom. All passenger facilities and amenities are offered on the main car deck of the Island Class vessels.
- Scott Heron shared that he doesn't see the necessity to have the accessible chair lift available when all passenger amenities included the accessible restroom available on the main car deck.
- Captain David Willows added that he was in agreement with Scott's comments. The chair lifts would likely have more value on longer sailings (40 mins+).
- Co-Chair Marnie Essery commented that improved communication and educational awareness about what is available to passengers is important. Scott agreed with Marnie that informing passengers prior to loading the sailing is key as this sets up passenger's expectations. Marnie had no further concerns.
- The committee's general consensus and opinion, after discussion, was that the accessible chair lifts do not add value to the Island Class vessels during the sailings for passengers with accessible needs.
- Bruce welcomed any further feedback on this topic. Committee members were urged to contact the Co-chairs; Karen Tindall and Marnie Essery. Additionally, committee members are welcome to contact Bruce directly with further feedback, comments, suggestions or concerns relating to eliminating the accessible chair lifts on the Island Class vessels.

Action: Karen will share, by email, the Vessel Status Update presentation to the committee.

Chris LeDuc, Hannah Smith, Angela Soucie - Web App Update/Complimentary Travel Assistance Program (TAP) Bookings

- The group shared that free bookings with TAP travel has been available since April 26. We offer free reservations and travel for patients travelling to and from medical specialist appointments as part of the BC Government's TAP. Free reservations are provided for TAP customers on all bookable routes.
- Web App Update – Chris shared app stats to present, very good success and feedback with the app so far. 71,692 apps (Apple) have been downloaded and 23,985 apps (Android) to present.
- Total app bookings since the launch is 48,020 and trending up with customers.
- Voice over, voice assist trialed with the app and concerns are still being addressed. The feedback so far is that the app doesn't work well with voice over and not calibrated/connected from first page through to other pages. We are aware of the issues and looking at making improvements with new releases of the app. A demonstration of making a TAP booking was provided.
- Karen shared that the first goal with providing free TAP bookings to customers is to make it less expensive for passengers travelling on TAP. Welcomed the committee to provide any feedback/suggestions to clarify any information on our website.
- Captain David Willows noted that Accessible Fare Identification (AFI) information is missing in the new app.

Action: Chris to look into this.

Break: 3:13pm-3:23pm

Steve Shardlow - Training Update

- Steve shared a presentation “BCF Academy Operational Training/SEA Training” with the committee. The primary role is to train operational employees with Accessibility Awareness during this mandatory training. Steve welcomed any suggestions and feedback from the committee.
- Karen asked the committee for any suggestions of any organizations that have accessibility training programs/resources.
 - Captain David Willows suggested the ‘Rick Hansen Ambassador Program’ had programs led by Mike Prescott may have some additional resources.
 - Pat Danforth suggested Victoria Disability Resources.
- Marnie commented that the aging demographics will likely play into our need as well. She voiced her concerns with liability issues for BCF. Suggested that a refresher course be available to staff possibly every two years and that BCF hold staff accessibility awareness events.

Action: Steve will discuss with the Operations’ teams on how we can enhance our accessibility training for our staff and update the committee at the next meeting.

Other Business: Karen Tindall – Director, Customer Care

- Accessible Fare Identification (AFI): Karen advised that reduced fares are available for BC residents who have a permanent disability and their escorts. This is a provincial government program that BC Ferries administers. Previous name was Disability Status Identification (DSI).
- The provincial government requires that cards are to be renewed every five years and passengers will need to re-apply prior to their card expiring. As of November 7, 2022 application proof of disability can be signed by a physician or Nurse Practitioner.
- Accessibility Legislation Compliance, effective September 1, 2022: Karen reviewed the federal legislation and confirmed with our legal team that BCF is not regulated under this Act but we are compliant under this Act. It was also confirmed that BCF is compliant under the provincial Accessibility Act.
- Karen welcomed the committee to share any questions or feedback.

Meeting Adjourned: 4:00 pm

Next Meeting Date:

Wednesday, November 22, 2023 1:30 pm – 4:00 pm via Teams