

Salt Spring Island Ferry Advisory Committee Meeting

Overview: Harbour House Hotel, May 6, 2015

In Attendance:

Committee: Chris Gadsby, Peter Grant, Peter Grove, Howard Holzapfel, Wayne McIntyre, Howard Swierenga, John Wakefield

BC Ferries: Corrine Storey- VP Customer Services, David Hendry- Strategic Planning Director, Captain Lewis MacKay- Marine Superintendent, Steve Nussbaum- Terminal Operations Director, Monique Turgeon- Terminal Operations Regional Manager, 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 as a WebEx meeting during the fall of 2015.

Issues Summary and Resolution Plan

A. Issue: Terms of Reference review

Definition: This being the first meeting of a new, four-year FAC term, the general TOR was discussed. There was a suggestion from within the FAC to consider switching out half of the committee membership mid-term.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

B. Issue: ‘BCF 101’ review

Definition: BC Ferries has developed a document (nicknamed ‘BCF 101’) to provide high-level information about key aspects of coastal ferry service, including sections on: BC Ferries, the Coastal Ferry Services Contract, the BC Ferry Commission, fares and FACs. The main intent of BCF 101 is to bring all FAC members to a common baseline of understanding, to better facilitate issue discussions during meetings.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

C. Issue: Fulford project

Definition: David explained the background behind BC Ferries’ plans to help lessen traffic backlog and address safety concerns near Fulford Harbour. The two-phase plan was to first contribute to efforts to widen the roadway leading to/from the terminal, allowing a third lane to be added. But he noted that as plans for this phase unfolded, it became more and more complex and cost estimates increased approximately tenfold. Thus, BC Ferries determined that this was not a good investment.

BC Ferries then focussed on accelerating what had been considered Phase 2 (terminal improvements) of the Fulford project; with a plan to now implement changes in the 2018/19 fiscal year. David shared design diagrams and stated that the new terminal would accommodate approximately 145 vehicles (versus the current capacity of 60), thus removing vehicle lineups from the roadway.

Additionally, until this phase is completed, BC Ferries is planning measures to help better manage roadway traffic. This includes deploying extra employees at Fulford on Saturday mornings and working with new traffic control service to move traffic and minimize congestion.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: Coordinate public consultation process once the project is into detailed design.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
Nothing until detailed design		

D. Issue: ‘Three-terminal’ analysis

Definition: Analysis of whether all three Salt Spring Island terminals should operate has been happening, officially and non-officially, for some time. BC Ferries noted that the company is preparing for an overall ‘SGI strategy’, which includes reviewing the efficiency of all terminals, the possibility of a Saturna ‘short-link’ and the future of vessel deployment in the region. As part of this analysis, the Commissioner has suggested the BC Ferries take a look at how all three SSI terminals are being used.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date

n/a		
-----	--	--

E. Issue: Intermediate Class Ferries update

Definition: Two aspects of the ICF project (replacing the Queen of Nanaimo) were discussed; the design of the vessel, and the ‘scheduling exercise’ BC Ferries is conducting over the next year.

First, the vessel design. The FAC considers Route 9 in large part a notable ‘tourism utilized’ run, and this is why they have previously expressed concern that the most recent ICF design does not necessarily provide tourism-appealing amenities. To this, Bob Jones (a former FAC member) asked if the upper deck, outer seating area would be open to the public. BC Ferries replied that there is still uncertainty what the required crew complement will be, and this will likely determine if the outer decks are open to the public. Bob added that the ‘centre area’ would be a great scenic area if the upper decks do not end up available for public use.

Next, the scheduling project. BC Ferries provided a summary of the ‘ICF scheduling project’ that was recently implemented in preparation for the 2017 implementation of two new Intermediate Class Ferries (ICF) in the Southern Gulf Islands. The intent of the process is to explore opportunities to improve service while achieving greater efficiencies on Routes 5/5a/9/9a.

This scheduling project includes three phases of public consultation over approximately nine-months, followed by a fourth phase culminating in determining Route 5/5a/9/9a schedules to be implemented in 2017. These first three phases are:

- a needs assessment survey (April 16 – May 7)
- exploration of schedule options (summer 2015)
- determination of preferred option (fall 2015)

To facilitate these phases, a Frontline Working Group (internal BCF reps) and External Working Group (FAC reps, other key stakeholders) have been initiated, with the first EWG meeting planned for end-May.

The first significant public input opportunity was the online needs assessment survey, aimed at identifying what customers need from ferry service. The schedule exploration phase will include a series of open houses on each of the five islands, in Richmond/Sidney and on vessels.

The FAC noted that some SSI FAC members have been invited to participate on the EWG, and will endeavour to provide community input to the process. The first four EWG meetings are planned for May 27, June 8, 15 and July 7.

Final vessel design is still to be finalized, with a particular focus on getting the ‘lower deck’ arrangement correct. The FAC expressed keen interest in a possible meeting when the ICF design is finalized.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

F. Issue: Route 1-4 as Route 9 alternative

Definition: Harold noted that tourists do not seem to be aware of using Route 1-4 as an option to getting from Metro Vancouver to Salt Spring Island. He suggests this ‘throughfare’ option could be made clearer on BC Ferries’ website and/or in printed schedules. A public member added that the call centre has been known to not provide this option as well.

Further discussion occurred about possibilities for providing ‘full travel option planning’ service to customers, perhaps through future IT-related upgrades BC Ferries is working on.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: Make efforts to improve visibility of the Route 1-4 for customers.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. improve clarity of ‘Rte 1-4 option’ on printed schedules. 2. ensure ‘Rte 1-4 option’ is clear on website 3. ensure Call Centre training includes ‘Rte 1-4 option’ for SSI bound customers 	Corrine	As soon as reasonable
Check if ‘throughfare machine’ is listed as a feature on Skeena Queen on bcferrries.com	Steve	When able

G. Issue: Non-commercial overlength fares

Definition: Harold noted there is definitely a perception of unfairness for customers that are charged ‘commercial rates’ for each extra foot of length greater than 20 feet, and he asked if BC Ferries has any ideas for altering this fare. BC Ferries said that the challenge with making any change to this fare is the need to remain ‘revenue neutral, meaning that if the overlength fare is lowered, a different fare/s would need to be increased proportionately.

More discussion happened on the background/history of how this overlength fare came about and how FAC members are not able to provide logical or rationale explanations when they are asked to explain it.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

H. Issue: Size up the Savings

Definition: BC Ferries explained that a promotion that provides a discount for non-commercial over-length customers using Route 1 and 30 will be running again this summer...similar to the one in 2014. Details to be announced soon.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

I. Issue: Route 9 foot passenger reservation pilot

Definition: BC Ferries has just implemented a pilot (May 1 – September 7) that will allow walk-on passengers to book a reservation on Route 9/9a sailings from Tsawwassen. FAC members suggested that the 40-minute check-in required will not work well for customers using public transit to get to the terminal.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

J. Issue: Operations Report

Definition: Capt MacKay provided a summary of recent and near-future vessel and terminal developments related to Route 4, 6, 9/9a, including traffic and on-time performance statistics. Two specific things he pointed out were that there has been a recent focus on improving Route 6 on-time performance and that the Skeena Queen Mid-Life Upgrade is planned for early 2017. He also provided a basic summary of steps/dates involved in the plan to introduce the two ICFs into service in the region.

A miscellaneous suggestion was put to BC Ferries to consider issuing a notice to BC Transit when a ‘known heavy walk-on load’ would be arriving at Fulford terminal, so as to alleviate possible bus overloads.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		