

# Northern Sunshine Coast Ferry Advisory Committee

## February 21 Meeting Agenda

Tuesday, February 21, 2023

1:00pm – 3:00pm, Powell River Town Centre - Malaspina Room

### Meeting Purpose

**1. Share information by providing the Ferry Advisory Committee with:**

- Updates on corporate and route-specific activities, plans and projects
- Answers and updates on route-specific questions and concerns

**2. Hear feedback and initiate action by:**

- Hearing from the Ferry Advisory Committee about potential solutions to areas of concern
- Generating trackable action items and next steps to address areas of concern raised by the Ferry Advisory Committee

**3. Increase transparency and accountability by providing a public venue where:**

- Community members can observe and hear the information and feedback exchanged between BC Ferries and the Ferry Advisory Committee
- Actions and solutions to concerns can be identified, recorded, tracked and reported

Topic	Time
<b>Intros and welcome</b>	10 mins
<b>Information section</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. BC Ferries Operational updates</li> <li>2. Marine superintendent               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Vessel swaps/maintenance</li> <li>b. Crewing updates</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Terminals               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Parking at Bubbler Bay</li> <li>b. Route 17 loading on upper deck</li> <li>c. Crewing update</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. Customer experience updates               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Cameras</li> <li>b. Making it right</li> <li>c. TAP reservations</li> <li>d. Charging stations on ferries</li> <li>e. Local vendors</li> <li>f. Signage on Texada</li> </ol> </li> <li>5. Electrification of Island Class vessels</li> <li>6. Follow up from BC</li> <li>7. Route connectivity</li> <li>8. Texada – Comox direct link</li> </ol>	45 mins
<b>Discussion section</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Crewing update</li> <li>2. Data collection</li> <li>3. Communication</li> <li>4. Protocol for cancellations</li> </ol>	1 hours
<b>Final Questions &amp; Close</b>	5 minutes

## Northern Sunshine Coast Ferry Advisory Committee Meeting Topic Log February 21, 2023

**NOTE: notes summarizing the general discussion of meeting participants is included in the appropriate section of each agenda item in the table below.**

Text in black was information sent to all meeting invitees prior to the meeting as part of the agenda. Text in **blue** are notes taken during the meeting as each item was discussed. Text in **red** captures a follow up action and parties responsible.

**Meeting attendees:**

BC Ferries: Capt. Claudiu Raduta, Megan Caldwell, Peter Simpson, Natalie McCall, Steve Anderson, Tamara Olson, Arielle Houghton, Tudor Popa, Alexander Wright, Andrew Weigold

Ministry of Transportation & Infrastructure:

FAC:

Public:

Operational Updates	
<b>Marine Superintendent</b>	<p><b>Schedule of repairs/replacement vessels; any schedule changes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Started February 9, the Queen of Cumberland was deployed on route 7 and will continue until March 31. The Queen of Cumberland is comparable in size to the Malaspina Sky when the gallery decks are in use. Gallery decks do add additional time to loading and unloading, which affects the on time performance of the vessel, they also limit the number of over height vehicles on the main car deck, and they will only be deployed when traffic levels warrant it. The capacity of the Queen of Cumberland is 76 AEQ on the main car deck, without the ramps in use.</li> <li>The FAC requested communicating when new vessels are on the route that have lower as this can help influence community member’s travel schedule especially during long weekends and spring break.</li> </ul>

	<p><b>ACTION:</b> Fleet/Scheduling to examine historic traffic data during the month of March and highlight any times where travelers may experience waits and communicate these times to the community relations team to share with the FAC and service notices.</p>
<p><b>Terminals</b></p>	<p><b>Parking at Blubber Bay Terminal</b></p> <p>School bus – spring and fall bus has to drive against traffic up to 1 km and it’s a single lane</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BCF is not currently planning on making any changes to the road leading to the terminal. There are currently locations to drop-off and pick-up at the terminal.</li> <li>• FAC expressed a safety concern over the single lane road leading to the terminal, especially at the 9:20 am and 3:00 pm ferries as they experience traffic overflow and the school bus and vehicles carrying walk on passengers must drive into oncoming traffic to make drop offs at the terminal.</li> <li>• BCF confirmed any concerns regarding road improvements, not a part of BCF property are under the of the Ministry of Transportation (MOTI). BCF cannot make changes to the highways or any roads that are not on their property. In some cases traffic has been changed in the holding area to accommodate traffic flow.</li> <li>• FAC and community members are also encouraged to reach out to their MLA with concerns.</li> </ul> <p><b>ACTION:</b> BCF team will relay the concerns and information in their meetings with MOTI</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> Terminal Operations will look into operational procedures at Texada terminal before the summer to ease traffic congestion and mitigate safety risks. CR will report back any updates and proposals to the FAC at the follow up meeting in May.</p>

### **Request for Upper Deck – Loading Salish on Rte 17**

Customers make a request for the upper deck at the ticketing booth, but the procedure is not consistent. Some people need to access pets, or for medical reasons would prefer to stay in vehicle.

- Once the new process has been created, it will be shared with the FAC and posted on the community page. BC ferries will continue to promote and look at new ways to advertise the Community Pages.

**ACTION:** Terminal Operations is meeting ahead of the peak season to discuss ways to make these requests more standardized. CR will report back any updates on the procedures to the FAC at the follow up meeting in May.

### **Crewing Updates**

- BCF is hiring Casuals employees this year, instead of Seasonal employees. This practice should increase employee retention.
- Job fairs will take place in Powell River.

**ACTION:** CR will share upcoming job fair dates and locations with the FAC - COMPLETED

## Customer Experiences

### Cameras

FAC requests to have cameras installed at terminals where there is no staff/crew walking the line-up (such as Texada) so that they can see what is going on.

- A project is in place to review current cameras, and what is required at minor terminals for Operations, Security and Safety.
- FAC noted that cameras on BC ferries terminal property will only see the first few cars.
- All cameras need to be located on BCF property due to security and privacy concerns. Additional considerations are also needed including equipment has access to power, maintenance and the required IT.

### Making it Right

FAC would like clarification on the policy regarding last ferry cancellations and reimbursements for expenses. Those routes not requiring reservations or with low reservation use should not be penalized because they don't have a reservation.

Can this be noted on service notices that this is not only for reservable routes?

- If a cancellation within our control occurs (e.g. mechanical issues, crew availability, human error) that prevents you from reaching your final destination on the same day, as planned, you can submit a compensation request to our Customer Relations department. These are reviewed on a case by case basis <https://www.bcferrries.com/contact-us/making-it-right>
- Service Notices go to all customers, not just those who have had a sailing cancelled, as such making it right is not included on all notices. The 'Making it Right' form is sent proactively to reserved customers who have had a cancellation along with instructions on what to do. Those that are at the terminal are informed by the terminal operations team.
- The 'Making it Right' compensation policy does not only apply to people with reservations, rather anyone who has had a cancellation due to a cancellation that is within BCF's control. All cases are reviewed on a case by case basis.

**ACTION:** N. McCall is working with the customer experience team to develop a card that can be handed out at the terminal when there is a cancellation within our control. This card would include information on the making it right program.

### TAP Reservations

Update on TAP and how last minute specialist appointments will be handled.

Request to have TAP reservations included in the automated call that is used to obtain TAP number

- Route 17 is not typically a route that sells out on reservations. **If there are no reservations available, residents should contact the call centre to discuss.** For last minute specialist appointments, customers are advised to ask the doctor if they qualify for Medical Assured Loading, when the wait in the terminal would cause undo harm.
- TAP is a Ministry of Health program and the patient gets the TAP confirmation number from the government 1-800 phone number, not from BC Ferries. There is no integration between the BC Government and BCF systems.
- The current project to update TAP is expected to receive an update in April 2023
- FAC members voiced concerns about the Saltery Bay to Earls Cove connection since this route does not have a reservation system, the TAP reservation cannot be used for the entire journey from Powell River to Vancouver for medical appointments. Is there a way that the TAP form can give you priority on a non-reservable route?
- If you receive Medically Assured Loading (MAL) then you may get priority loading. BCF terminal staff do their best to help those who have medical emergencies or needs to get on the ferry although with high volume sailings this cannot always be secured.

### Charging Stations on Ferries

Is it possible to add charging stations on the ferries? Is this under consideration?

- The Bike Experience Project is investigating E-bike charging in phase 3. This falls under capital planning for future vessels.
- Charging stations aboard vessels for vehicles would be part of new vessel planning. Concerns with safety and reliability of electric vehicle charging stations on board vessels continues to be a consideration. BCF is investigating having charging stations at ferry terminals as part of its future planning.
- An FAC member requested more information e-bike charging project. BCF is currently working to update the website with project information and updates. Currently, the Customer Experience team is conducting a task analysis. The project is still in the early phase and the bcferries.com website will include updates as they unfold. In regards to timelines, we're currently in phase 1

	<p>of the project which includes the entire bike experience at terminals and onboard ferries.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> CR to provide updates at follow up meeting in May for when Website will be ready.</p> <p><b>Local Vendors on Board and at Terminals</b></p> <p>FAC would like to increase support for local businesses. Is there a social procurement policy for local businesses at terminals and on vessels?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All information and application process for vendors is available on the BC Ferries website <a href="https://www.bcferrries.com/our-company/procurement">https://www.bcferrries.com/our-company/procurement</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Sign on Texada</b></p> <p>FAC requests a sign at the Texada gas station. The current sign does not give much info and customers waste much time getting to terminal only to find out about service disruptions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Signage on third party property, must get approval by MoTI and/or land owners. Restrictions regarding light emissions from signs, and concerns from local residents must be also be adhered to.</li> <li>FAC expressed concern around the location of the Water Taxi pick-up/drop-off. The water taxi is located 11 km drive from where the ferry docks. Because there are no buses or taxis on Texada Island, this distance can leave people stranded if the water taxi only provides service one way.</li> </ul> <p><b>ACTION:</b> BCF is reviewing the signage information sent to FAC and will provide an update on what and if changes can be implemented. The signage does need to remain on BCF property.</p>
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**Information Section – for review prior to meeting**

<p><b>Electrification of Island Class Vessels</b></p>	<p>Updates to follow</p> <p><b>UPDATE:</b> As set out in Performance Term 6, we plan to enable full electrical operations on Route 19 and Route 23.</p> <p>Early design work and hydro upgrades for terminal electrification are now getting underway.</p> <p>The initial design work is expected to take a year to complete and will include further engagement with First</p>
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	<p>Nations and stakeholders.</p>
<p><b>Follow up from BCF</b></p>	<p>FAC would like to see a record of items brought forward and how they are being resolved/dealt with. A suggestion that there is a zoom meeting 3 months after each in-person meeting (midway between meetings) to follow up on action items.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community relations team will set up a virtual meeting following the in person meeting to review status of current action items. This meeting will be for FAC members and Community Relations to report back. - COMPLETED</li> </ul>
<p><b>Connectivity between routes</b></p>	<p>Thank you for your efforts. FAC has been hearing that people are overjoyed that there is communication between terminals and/or ships and vessels are waiting.</p> <p>Warren has been hearing about cancer patients going to Comox for treatment. What can be done about the cut off if they make a reservation on Route 17 and due to schedule, cannot make cut-off</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BCF 30 minute cut off period for reservations on this route is modified as needed. If you have a reservation the teams will do their best to honour it within a reasonable time frame.</li> <li>• An FAC member asked for clarification as to why semi-trucks are unloaded from vessels first, noting frustrations with driving behind slower vehicles while rushing to catch the connecting ferry.</li> </ul> <p>Vehicles, including over height are loaded based on operational efficiency. Loading the overheight vehicles first leads to less re-arranging to already loaded smaller vehicles which could result in delays.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FAC suggested placing a sign for a Powell river lane to help account for the number of passengers travelling from Horseshoe Bay to Powell River.</li> </ul> <p>As there are multiple operational challenges at Horseshoe bay due to the topography around the terminal, separating traffic further is not possible at this time. Customer Experience will continue to investigate how best to account for travelers that are connecting at different terminals and where their final destination may be.</p>
<p><b>Texada-Comox direct link</b></p>	<p>The FAC has requested, through FOI, details of the \$250,000 costs associated with a Direct Link.</p> <p>FAC would like follow up on suggestions regarding sailing adjustments that would help travel to Comox</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BC Ferries has concluded its review of the proposed schedule for a Texada Island – Comox pilot.</li> </ul>



	<p>While we understand the strong desire of the Texada Island community to have service directly to Vancouver Island, the solution desired by the community is not affordable at this time given all the other pressures across BC Ferries' system.</p> <p>We would like to thank the Ferry Advisory Committee members who worked closely with the community to bring forward a proposal. We worked with our fleet deployment, financial, and operational teams to carefully analyze the proposal including costs and potential revenue gains. The estimated annual cost of the proposed service is approximately \$250,000. This costing includes consideration for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased labour costs and crewing implications of providing the service (ticket, terminal, deck crew etc.)</li> <li>• Increased fuel costs associated with longer travel times for the vessel</li> <li>• Minimal revenue increase as we are shifting travel from one route to another, i.e. minimal traffic increase overall</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">FAC Texada reps read a letter to reiterate their feedback on the Texada direct route and their request for more information.</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">BCF Executive Director of Communication and Community Relations, K. Johnston, acknowledged the concerns of Texada Island residents and noted the FOI is the best method to retain commercially sensitive data that we are under legislation not to disclose.</a></li> </ul>
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<b>Group Discussion</b>	
<b>Crewing Shortage</b>	<p>Update on recruitment and retention. Sailing cancellations in ferry dependent communities has a significant impact.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BCF is gearing up for a large recruitment push for the end of February in preparation for the busy summer season. Local job fairs and targeted advertising will also be taking place around the fleet. Crewing remains to be a top priority. We look forward to sharing updates soon.</li> <li>• <a href="#">BCF has been working on advertising campaigns, job fairs, and moving seasonal positions into casual positions. We are looking at different ways of hiring for the summer as we recognize seasonal has been difficult for those that want more job certainty. We are working to ensure that we not only that we have enough staff but are able to build in redundancy.</a></li> </ul>
<b>Data collections</b>	The FAC would like to know who is travelling (reason for travelling) and which sailings are overloading.

	<p>The FAC would like this data so that decision can be made accordingly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overload information is available on 6 month data reports provided by BC Ferries. The next reports are due to come beginning of June 2023.</li> <li>• FAC requests that BCF gather information on the reason for travelling aboard the ferries and their final destination to gain better insight on the nature of travel to inform conversations. This is something that other FACs have requested and is currently a project that BCF is investigating. By summer 2023 we expect an answer on next steps for this.</li> </ul> <p><b>ACTION: CR to update at May meeting</b></p>
<p><b>Communication – Within BCF; With Customers; With FACs</b></p>	<p>Service notices concerns over lack of information and timeliness.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This concerns has been brought up with our team and they will continue to work hard on getting information out in a timely manner. As a reminder, the fastest way to receive updates on sailings is on Twitter.</li> </ul> <p>Information on Current Conditions and Departure/Arrivals is not accurate and hard to find.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A project, including Current Conditions is being worked on and we will share an update as soon as available.</li> </ul> <p>FAC requests that BCF communicate better with FAC in advance of making decisions (eg. Sailing schedules, website changes, TAP reservations) for a better outcome.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This has been noted and we will continue to include FACs as one of our primary contacts when we have new projects and information to share with the community.</li> </ul> <p>Terminal to terminal when issues arise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>not discussed at meeting</b></li> </ul> <p>FAC would like better on board announcements when changes occur</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>not discussed at meeting</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>Protocol for cancellations due to crew unavailability</b></p>	<p>What is the protocol during cancellations for calling crew in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the event of a possible cancellation, our crewing team work hard to make their way through our crew lists and contact all available team members. Heads up to the community are given when at risk, to allow those travelling to adjust plans as needed.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We typically provide 2 hours notice before a sailing if it is at risk of cancellation, while we continue to look for crew. This is to allow travelers to make alternate arrangements if needed.</li> <li>We do our absolute best to ensure we find any available staff to fill empty shifts, including bringing crew over by water taxi from other communities. In addition to our recruitment campaign, we are working to give casual staff additional time onboard to ensure that they can get the experience they need as fast as to get certifications.</li> </ul> <p>Communications over cancellations – when does BCF make the call to cancel and notify</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only after all resources have been exhausted will a sailing be cancelled.</li> </ul> <p>Clarification on tickets sold at SB or Horseshoe Bay and ticket is handed over with a heads-up that connecting sailings (Langdale or EC) might be cancelled.</p>
<h3>Final Questions and Close</h3>	
<p>FAC requests and community questions:</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An FAC member requested that on the 7:10 pm sailing from Comox (Little River) to Powell River (Westview), which is already discounted to \$39 to increase vessel occupation, make a stop on Texada Island (Blubbery Bay). The request is for this service to be available 5 – 7 days a week. <p>Currently Texada Island residents going home from Powell River take the 3:00 pm ferry so they can make their connection in Powell River and avoid getting home too late. If the 7:10 pm sailing was available as a direct route to Texada Island, then the number of vehicles on this later sailing would increase and reduce congestion on the 3:00 pm sailing as well as provide data on the number of people who might travel direct from Comox to Texada Island.</p> <p><b>ACTION: BCF to provide update at May FAC follow up meeting.</b></p> </li> <li>A request was made to receive a list of all project leads for the multiple projects discussed during today's meeting so that members of the public could receive direct updates. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All project updates can be received from the Community Relations Team at <a href="mailto:engagement@bcferries.com">engagement@bcferries.com</a> and the community pages for Powell River: <a href="http://bcferriesprojects.ca/powell-river">bcferriesprojects.ca/powell-river</a> and Texada Island: <a href="http://bcferriesprojects.ca/texada-island">bcferriesprojects.ca/texada-island</a></li> </ul> </li> <li>Why does the TAP form include the full price of a passenger, not discounted at a seniors rate, when it is a senior that is travelling? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>TAP is a government program and all parameters are set by the ministry. It is not a BCF program.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Texada rep provided dates that increased traffic will be travelling on the route.</li> </ol>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This information was passed on to BC Ferries teams to assess what if any additional resources are available and/or needed.</li></ul> <p>5. A request was made to add an additional mid-day sailing, year round, on Texada to better accommodate work hours. FAC member requested an additional sailing at 1:00 pm and 1:50pm to allow for more time between connecting ferries to prevent any speeding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This this additional sailing is not currently being looked at year round due to increase costs</li></ul> <p>6. A request was made by an FAC member to add the same reservation and discounted sailing of \$39 on the 7 pm ferry from Langdale to connect to Powell River. Currently the discounted amount only goes from Horseshoe Bay to Langdale and does not connect to Powell River.</p> <p><b>ACTION: BCF to follow up on parameters of promotion.</b></p> <p>7. A request was made to remove the reservation on the last sailing from Powell River to Little River, which is seldom full, and discount the sailing. The intention would be to encourage more travelers on the last sailing and relieve traffic during the busy summer months on the earlier runs.</p> <p><b>ACTION: BCF to provide follow up to FAC meeting for May meeting.</b></p>
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