

BC Ferry Services Inc.

Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Meeting Details

Date July 23, 2014

Time 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Location: BC Ferries Head Office – Suite 500-1621 Blanshard Street

Attendance

Public Interest Representatives

Pat Danforth, Board Member, BC Coalition of People with Disabilities

Susan Gallagher, Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians

Hugh Mitchell, Canadian Hard of Hearing Association

Scott Heron, Co-Chair, Spinal Cord Injury BC

Jane Sheaff, Seniors Serving Seniors

Ernie Stignant, Disability Resource Centre/MSI

Mary K. Kennedy, CNIB

Marnie Essery, Inter-municipal Advisory Committee on Disability Issues

Les Chan, Disability Resource Centre

Barbara Schuster, CNIB

BC Ferries Representatives

Karen Tindall, Director of Customer Care, Customer Care Department

Garnet Renning, Customer Service & Sales Representative

Stephen Nussbaum, Regional Manager, Swartz Bay

David Carroll, Director, Terminal Construction, Engineering

Darin Guenette, Manager, Public Affairs

Bruce Paterson, Fleet Technical Director, Engineering

Sheila O'Neill, Catering Superintendent, Central Coast

Captain Chris Frappell, Marine Superintendent, South and Central Coast

Guests

Jeffrey Li, Project Manager

Joanne Doyle, Manager, Master Planning

Elisabeth Broadley, Customer Relations Advisor, Customer Care

Regrets

Valerie Thoem, Independent

Steve Shardlow, Training Manager, Terminals

Jeff Davidson, Director, Retail Services, Food and Retail Operations

Introductions

Co-Chairs Scott Heron and Karen Tindall welcomed the members of the committee
Review of Minutes – February 4, 2014

Karen Tindall reported on Action Items from last meeting

Note:

July 23 was Ernie Stignant's last meeting – Les Chan will be representing the Disability Resource Centre

Standing Items

Loading Practices

Stephen Nussbaum went through six months' worth of customer comments looking for trends in comments from persons with disabilities. He found no real trends but did find that requests for wheelchair assistance are growing, complaints often come from people who have not pre-booked wheelchair assistance but expect help, and complaints have to do with wait times for assistance. Other issues include vehicle positioning on car deck in relation to elevators. He added that there are more concerns expressed by single-time users as opposed to frequent travellers with BC Ferries.

Stephen Nussbaum explained that there is a pilot project at Horseshoe Bay terminal to use seatback covers to reserve seats close to walkways. Seats would be left open for seniors and people with disabilities. The design for the covers is being worked on and there may be an opportunity to put a similar system in place on vessels.

Susan Gallagher asked if the system was just for priority seating or for priority boarding as well. Stephen Nussbaum said that for now, it is just for seating but if successful, it might be extended to priority boarding as well. The trial is expected to begin in the Fall and he hopes to have an update for the next meeting in February. He shared artwork showing what the seat covers could look like.

Pat Danforth brought up the elevator break-downs on the Coastal class, Bruce Paterson said that BC Ferries has a full-time elevator manager, that breakdowns are recognized as a significant issue.

Mary K. Kennedy commented that plexi-glass windscreens near some elevators may pose difficulty for people with visual impairments because they could walk into them and suggested marking them with decals. She also said that they might impede movement for people with mobility issues. She hasn't seen anyone struggling with these windscreens, just expressing a thought. Bruce Paterson said that the windscreens are found on Coastal class vessels on upper car decks, and were installed after the fact to address door issues.

David Carroll commented that a family member is now using a wheelchair and when travelling with her on BC Ferries it drew his attention to wheelchair access concerns. He expressed frustration in the directions provided by staff regarding elevator access parking and noted frustration that elevators were being used by people who didn't appear to require them. He also said that the elevators fill up on the lower car deck, so that by the time they arrive at the higher car deck, there is no room for people there to board.

Jane Sheaff said that some people get frustrated if they have reserved wheelchair assistance and the wheelchair is not waiting for them when they arrive – or the wheelchair is there, but staff are not immediately available. Karen Tindall responded acknowledging this to be a communication issue and that BC Ferries Customer Service Centre (CSC) agents need to be clear at the time of booking that the reservation guarantees a wheelchair will be available and assistance provided but that there may be a wait once they've checked in at the ticket booth for assistance to arrive (set appropriate expectations). Karen said she would follow up with CSC staff to clarify messaging to customers booking a wheelchair reservation.

Marnie Essery said that the wheelchair process is much improved, but that people do not know how to find out about service available. She is working on a booklet with the Municipality called Help in Helping Yourself and requested information to include. Karen Tindall said it was a fantastic idea and asked Marnie to let her know what information she needed. Marnie said that when driving on, staff are helpful in getting her close to the elevator, but 80 per cent of the time when she travels Horseshoe Bay – Departure Bay she cannot get out of her vehicle because of other cars being parked too close to her vehicle. She said this happens often on the Queen of Cowichan and the Coastal Celebration, generally at busier times. Capt. Chris Frappell commented that the lane widths are the same on those vessels as others, and Karen Tindall requested that Marnie let BC Ferries know each time this situation happens, to allow immediate follow up with the ship to ensure employees are made aware of the problem.

ACTION(S):

- Stephen Nussbaum will provide an update on the seat back pilot project at the next meeting.
- Jeff Davidson to review possibility of adding decals to Coastal Class windscreens near elevators on car deck to improve visibility
- Karen Tindall will follow up with Customer Service Centre staff on proper messaging to customers booking wheelchair reservations. (complete)
- Marnie Essery to let BC Ferries know what information she requires for the Help in Helping Yourself brochure
- Marnie Essery to contact BC Ferries with any future loading concerns

Induction Loop Technology

Bruce Paterson provided an update. He was part of a group that went to Norway, where all new builds incorporate induction loop technology.

Bruce confirmed:

- Induction loop technology was written into the vessel specifications for the three Intermediate Class Ferries (ICF) to be built in Poland
- Induction loop is expected to be installed in the lounge area of the Queen of Oak Bay when she undergoes her $\frac{3}{4}$ life refit, following a successful demonstration by Advanced Listening Systems on a Coastal class vessel to confirm it won't interfere with other electronics onboard. T-Coil technology will be used, but not in the cafeteria at this time
- Induction loop technology has been written into the specifications for mid-life upgrades of the Spirit vessels (in the lounge areas)
- There will be signs to indicate this technology is available.

Susan Gallagher asked if the announcements could be put on digital screens. Karen Tindall commented that not all vessels have digital screens that allow for a text scroll of the announcement script, but it might be a possibility to look at it for the future.

ACTION:

- Karen Tindall will pass Susan Gallagher's suggestion on to Marketing to incorporate into a future announcement project, related to re-recording of the digital screen video/announcements (complete)

Vessel Developments

Bruce Paterson provided a presentation on vessel development projects including:

- Denman Island cable ferry
- Three new Intermediate Class Ferries (ICFs)
- Queen of Oak Bay's $\frac{3}{4}$ life upgrade
- Queen of Capilano mid-life upgrade
- Queen of Cumberland mid-life upgrade
- Spirit Class vessels' mid-life upgrades

Hugh Mitchell asked why BC Ferries had chosen to use a cable ferry for the Denman Island – Buckley Bay route, Bruce explained that the cable ferry will be extremely efficient in terms of fuel consumption, crewing needs and cost and that they will be very reliable.

For the three new ICFs, Bruce Paterson explained how studies had been conducted to see how close all vehicles will be to the elevators. Pat Danforth asked if there would be a sharp metal lip on the threshold of the accessible washroom, similar to what is found on the Skeena Queen. Bruce Paterson said that planners haven't gotten to that level of detail yet, but that the concern was noted. He said the lip was there to prevent water from splashing in to the washroom when the deck is washed. Darin Guenette asked if there would be changes

to vehicle lane width for the three new builds, Bruce Paterson said they would remain at 2.6 metres, the North American standard but that BC Ferries has asked for additional room around the elevators and vehicle deck perimeter.

Shelia O'Neill said on the Queen of Oak Bay, the gift shop will be doubled in size, the video arcade is being eliminated, there will be accessible changing/family washrooms and changes to the kids' zones. Pat Danforth raised concerns after hearing that the family rooms on the Coastal class ferries are not wheelchair accessible, but it was confirmed that the rooms are designed to be accessible, including the washrooms found inside the family rooms. Mary K. Kennedy asked if there will be handles on the inside washroom/family room doors, Bruce Patterson said that the trend is now to use sliding doors for accessible washrooms, but there is no guarantee about what BC Ferries will use. Susan Gallagher raised the need for braille inside and outside the accessible washrooms. Karen Tindall said she would check on whether there is braille in the accessible washrooms on the Spirit vessels before they are upgraded and confirmed that it is in place outside the washrooms on the Coastal vessels. Karen said she would put the request forward to Jeff Davidson for the signage package. Les Chan shared a comment from a paraplegic acquaintance who said that the washroom on one of the Coastal vessels has a great layout.

Bruce Paterson also provided information on the Queen of Capilano, which will go into refit January 2015 through May 2015. There will be changes to the passenger deck as well as the vehicle deck, including a pet area and a proposal for the construction of a "gallery deck" area only accessible by stairs which would hold approximately 17 vehicles. Changes will also allow passengers to board the passenger deck in Horseshoe Bay. Marnie Essery said that she has been contacted by a number of people from Bowen Island regarding the walk-on issue for the Queen of Capilano. Bruce Patterson said that there are no plans to add extra elevators but that the upgrade work will be done locally.

ACTION:

- Karen Tindall said will check whether there is braille inside and outside the accessible washrooms on the Spirit vessels and inside the accessible washrooms of the Coastal class vessels.
- Karen Tindall will provide Susan Gallagher's requirement for braille inside the accessible washrooms to Jeff Davidson.

- BREAK -

Terminal Developments

David Carroll, Joanne Doyle and Jeffrey Li did a Power Point presentation on terminal developments. They provided information on the work done on the Westview Terminal, including the width of walkways and automatic sliding doors, as well as updates to the cable ferry terminal upgrades and the Port McNeil work, both of which are underway.

Joanne Doyle discussed the Master Plan for Langdale Terminal. Mary K. Kennedy asked about the location of the BC Transit bus stop and whether there would be separate drop off

and pick up areas for the bus, Joanne Doyle said that it looks like there will be just the one stop near the terminal building. Susan Gallagher asked about the number of berths, Mary K. Kennedy asked if there will be bicycle lanes, Joanne Doyle confirmed there will be bicycle lanes and that the overhead walkway will be enclosed.

Training

No update

Other Business

Communication Opportunities: Scott Heron asked about content requests for newsletters and other communications. Karen Tindall said that there have been no requests for information but all are welcome to request this information for inclusion in their newsletters, and they can also request a staff member speak with their group about accessibility at BC Ferries. Pat Danforth said the BC Coalition of People with Disabilities has a monthly newsletter and that she would see about including BC Ferries information there. Scott Heron said Spinal Cord BC has a You Tube page where he said they are slotting in a BC Ferries information session. He said there is also a provincial newsletter "The Spin" which could be a good option to get the information out. He invited anyone with avenues to spread the information on accessibility to let him or Karen Tindall know. Karen also said that presentations can be tailored to any group's needs and groups can be any size.

Vessel Design: Susan Gallagher shared her observations about the high-contrast furniture and well-marked life preservers on the Spirit vessels, which she was pleased with. She also said that she was concerned that the "Don't drink the water" signs in the washrooms are not universal – that a person who does not speak English would not understand them, and suggested the use of a universal graphic.

Ernie Stignant said that he enjoyed the buffet recently but noticed there was no longer a buffet on the 9:00 pm sailings. Sheila O'Neill said this is because of a lack of uptake on later sailings and that resources were being re-allocated.

Susan Gallagher said there was no seating for people in wheelchairs – that they have to sit in the aisle on the vessels, along with the luggage. Karen Tindall mentioned that BC Ferries is working on a baggage program to encourage customers to check-in their bags and will let Jeff Davidson know about the seating issue.

Susan Gallagher expressed a few more concerns: that elderly people walking off the ferry are last to arrive at the bus stop and that by the time they arrive there is no seating for them on the bus, that a pole in the cafeteria in the middle of the aisle poses a hazard for the visually impaired and that the computer desks say "For Computer Use Only" and she feels bad about sitting there to play cards. Karen Tindall said she is welcome to use the desks to play cards.

Karen Tindall added that there is no update on digital signage to do with ACE but that she hopes to have an update in February.

ACTION:

- Karen Tindall to share Susan Gallagher's comments with Jeff Davidson regarding the 'Do Not Drink the Water' signage and lack of wheelchair space beside seating in the lounge areas with Jeff Davidson.
- Karen Tindall will provide an update on ACE digital signage in February.

Next Meeting

February 17, 2015