



Meeting #4
Bainbridge Ferry Advisory Committee Public Meeting
Bainbridge Commons
Bainbridge, Washington
Monday, June 23, 2008: 6:30 – 9:00 p.m.

Note: This meeting summary represents notes from the Ferry Advisory Committee (FAC) public meeting, and is not a formal transcript or minutes. It is provided as a record for the staff and public in attendance and other interested parties.

Introduction

Martha Burke, Bainbridge FAC Chair

David Moseley, Assistant Secretary, Washington State Ferries

Martha Burke, Bainbridge FAC Chair, welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming. Martha introduced WSTC Commissioners Bob Distler, Elmira Forner, and Dan O'Neal, and Representatives Appleton and Lord. Martha introduced David Moseley.

David said that we're at a very important stage in developing the long-range plan. He was excited to see that there were three members of the Washington State Transportation Committee (WSTC) at the meeting. He said that this meeting would focus on the specific items in the legislation which WSF is to evaluate, including operations and improved service without large expenditure of an already constrained budget. He stated that the format of this meeting maximizes the opportunity for the public to give input and that feedback and comments will be incorporated into a meeting summary that will be posted on the WSF Web site.

David took some time to review the March public meeting and what has been accomplished as a result of the comments and questions he received at that time.

- A theme from the last round of public FAC meetings is a need for better coordination between WSF and transit agencies. He has been talking with some of the transit agencies and will schedule some meetings with Jefferson Transit.
- As of Sunday, June 22, full-fare, single-ride tickets for all routes will expire 90 days from the date of purchase. Previously they expired seven days from the date of purchase.
- The 30-minute lock-out has been removed. Riders can now charge multiple cars to the ticket system.



- He said that after a request to add bicycle enhancements, WSF implemented a south side bicycle lane with a new signal just after Memorial Day.
- WSF was asked to synchronize the lights on Hwy 305. David said that he has had conversions with Olympic Region DOT about this. Although, it will be a challenge to coordinate all the way to Agate Pass, he thinks that improvements to the system can be made.
- David said that he has met with Gordon Black of the Washington Bicycle Alliance and that he and his staff are in regular communication with the bicycling community. David said that Gordon has been helpful in looking at the design of the new vessels and making suggestions to better accommodate bicyclists.

David introduced Rob Berman.

Presentation

Rob Berman, Planning Consultant

Rob walked the attendees through an information packet. He stated that WSF has a specific legislative directive to be here tonight and to gather public input. He encouraged attendees to look at the details of the legislation on the boards and in their packets. The WSF will use the information from these FAC meetings and the Washington Transportation Commission surveys to a draft long-term plan, scheduled to be released in late November/early December.

The key concept in this process is adaptive management. The WSF wants to keep costs low and be as efficient as possible. There is an imbalance of supply and demand. This means that during specific times there are a lot more vehicles showing up to ride our ferries than we have space for. The resulting problems are congestion, underutilized ferries, unhappy people and people who don't use the system.

The bottom line is that WSF has to find a way to manage demand and increase efficiency. The planning team developed a long list of strategies to study. Rob directed the attendees to the nine strategies in their packets and to the nine boards around the room.

Rob gave an overview of the nine strategies.

- Pricing has been identified as one of the best ways to manage demand. Pricing strategies are peak pricing, mode-shift pricing (use other ways of getting on the ferry), off peak pricing, and simplification of the pricing structure. We're looking at this as a revenue neutral option.



- Reservations can also be effective for the system. This primarily applies to cars. There are examples listed here that you can look at online when you get home. A reservations system means reliability both for customers and WSF. It moves the queue from dock to online.
- Transit access enhancements refer to the connections with buses and trains on either side of the ferry.
- Technologies for improved fare collection go hand in hand with the reservations system.
- Non-motorized access enhancements would improve access for pedestrians and cyclists. Lots of ferry terminals have opportunities for this and most ferry runs have space for this.
- Enhanced user information would allow riders to view routes online, plan multiple routes, and be able to see availability in real time.
- Promotion of non-single occupancy vehicle options includes strategies to show people that you don't have to drive on the ferry. We could work with private enterprises like Zipcar. This might work best for heavy commuter routes.
- Managing dock space could include using a metered exit queue. The philosophy here is if we could manage better, would not need as much infrastructure.
- Parking and holding refers to space at the terminals and could extend reservations to parking.

Rob described the process for creating the long-range plan. The WSF will incorporate input from the nine FAC public workshops held in June, continue to study the best operational strategies, incorporate information from the Washington State Transportation Commission survey and then create the draft of the long-term plan by September.

Public Comments and Questions

1. What systems did you study? *BC, Istanbul, Sweden, US East Coast, Texas, Martha's Vineyard, Nantucket, Maritime provinces in Canada.*
2. Which ones are commuter ferries? *Istanbul*
3. What would change if a reservations system were successful? *We're trying to manage peak ridership. It would allow us to use the current boats.*
4. If you are looking at pricing, would you have different prices for different routes? *That's why we're here and that's what we're going to discuss in the small groups.*
5. I would be careful about saying that there is always walk-on space on the Bainbridge Ferry. *Technically, there is capacity available at this point.*
6. I'm surprised that you would limit this to a revenue neutral conversation. *We will look at other revenue scenarios at a different time in this study.*



- 7. Could you have off-site vehicle ticketing kiosks so someone could buy a ticket away from the terminal? *Yes, this is one of the key things about reservations is that there would be flexible options for ticketing.*
- 8. Could you put a ticket kiosk under the Viaduct? *That's definitely a possibility. We'd like to hear these suggestions in the small group discussions.*
- 9. How do you police it? Seniors, students would pay less. Would this be on the honor system? *There has to be some sort of personal connection.*
- 10. Can we see what everyone has to say at all the FAC meetings? *Yes, they'll all be online. You can leave your e-mail and we'll send them out. Or you can check the Web site in mid-July.*
- 11. When you come back in September, as part of the package, we'd like to see what the commission has to say. Can we see what's being proposed from the WTC? *Bob Distler stated that the WTC will put the survey results on the Web for feedback as well.*

David reiterated that the current system is not financially sustainable into the future and that's why WSF is here today and why this study is so important. It's critical that WSF provide good, sound information to the legislature so that they can make the tough decisions.

Format of the Meeting / Ideas for Strategy Development

Diane Adams, Public Outreach Consultant

Diane said that David and his staff were at the meeting to listen and to get input from the public. Diane encouraged people to fill in a comment form at the meeting and take one home to friends and family. Diane introduced the four parts of the meeting; dot exercise, a small group discussion on reservations, a small group discussion on pricing, and then a session to capture additional comments.

Diane explained the dot exercise and asked participants to think about which strategies are most beneficial to them as a WSF user. She asked them to place the dots on display boards representing each of the nine strategies according to their individual priority (one or more on any of the boards).

The dot break-down was as follows:

1. Pricing	46
2. Reservations	24
3. Transit Access Enhancement	51
4. Non-motorized Access Enhancement	28
5. Enhanced User Information	37
6. Technologies for Improved Fare Collection	15
7. Non-Single Occupancy promotion	11



8. Traffic and Dock Space Management	15
9. Parking and Holding	11
None of the above	16

Workshop #1: Reservations

Ray Deardorf, Planning Director

Ray spoke in detail about a potential reservations system. A reservations system needs to be flexible and WSF would have the flexibility to vary how spots are reserved (some months in advance, some weeks in advance, some days in advance, some hours in advance) and how many spots will remain unreserved (first come, first serve). The system needs to be convenient for the customer – available online, phone or walk-up. Customers need to be able to view the wait list online in real time. In addition, riders need to have access to the terminal and know where to go. The system could use transponders, license plate recognition, etc. The system could be adjusted daily to accommodate current situations, have the ability to book reservations for multiple reservations. Ray stated that one of the benefits of the system is that it could be linked to demand pricing.

Diane presented the three workshop questions and attendees broke into small groups to discuss:

- Do you see a reservations system helping you? If so, how?
- If not, what concerns do you have about a reservations system?
- If WSF implements a reservations system on your route, what specific things should be part of it?

Public Comment and Questions

The first seven questions were asked after the presentation. The remaining questions were gathered during the small group workgroups.

1. Will there be an ability to change reservations at a cost? Isn't this sticking it to the commuters? *There would be some incentive. But that's a policy decision that can be made.*
2. How is it working at Port Townsend? *That system is based on a crisis with the boats. It is set up in a way where people can make a reservation without any payment. There are no shows.*
3. So, how much of the boat is reserved? *In Port Townsend 50% of the boat is open to reservations, but the amount reserved can change depending on community needs.*
4. In Port Townsend, do the people with reservations get there earlier than 30 minutes anyway or are they showing up later because of the reservations? *When they get a reservation they have to get there between 90-30 minutes before sailing. We need the 30 minutes so we can figure*



out how many people showed up and communicate with the people who are waiting.

5. Is it possible to that have a cost incentive so that you don't have to have that 30 minute wait? *Yes, right now we need that.*
6. What are we trying to achieve? *Take the queue away and assure customers that they will get on the boat with a reservation.*
7. What is the benefit to the Ferry system? *If customer satisfaction is up, ridership goes up.*
8. It would save time and have increased reliability, especially on Sundays and during the summer.
9. It would reduce the queue.
10. I would use reservations for special events or to catch flights when I know I have to be somewhere by a certain time.
11. What if you have last minute travel needs and the boat doesn't have standby capacity?
12. You should keep 50% or less reserved.
13. I think it would cost too much more.
14. There should be a route differential fee system.
15. I would be willing to bear the lifestyle opportunity cost.
16. Yes, I would rather spend time other ways.
17. Keep a certain percent of capacity reserved for frequent users.
18. Need preferred access for regular riders.
19. What is wrong with how the system works now?
20. Need to know percent of recreational vs. commuter users.
21. Need a good way to deal with people who miss a reserved sailing, especially when it's out of their control.
22. Can you roll your reservation over to the next sailing?
23. Reservations may be better suited to special purpose trips.
24. It needs to make it easier to plan time and trip.
25. It needs to be easier, not more difficult, from customers' perspective.
26. Benefits need to outweigh implementation and operating costs of system.
27. How much queue could it really reduce?
28. It increases predictability but only if vessels are on time. If vessel is late, how much decision do I have about what boat to get on?
29. Reservations "done right" is an improved service. Even if you have to pay extra, you get something in return for your money.
30. What about people scalping spaces on the system?
31. What will this do to spontaneous tourism? Box them out?
32. It disenfranchises some people who can't manage the Web-based system or people who can't pay a premium for reservation.
33. There should be a fee for no shows but not for changes or cancellations.
34. The phone system has to be to a live person.



35. There needs to be some means to accommodate people who don't have credit cards.
36. There needs to be multiple day booking options for commuters.
37. No additional fee if fare is paid at time of reservation.
38. If you get there early enough to get on the boat before your reservation you should be able to.
39. What happens with unplanned delays or a no-sail boat?
40. We need better transit.
41. There would be a loss of flexibility.
42. Greater challenge to commuters
43. What about commuter only sailings?
44. Use reservations during commuter hours only
45. Could you get an extra vessel for reservations only?
46. Could you use for pedestrians and bikes as well?
47. Charge different prices for different reservations.

Workshop #2: Pricing

Ray Deardorf, Planning Director

Ray Deardorf introduced the pricing options including peak-pricing, mode-shift pricing, off-peak pricing and pricing simplification.

Ray said that WSF has the flexibility to target pricing by route according to demand (time of day, time of year) and integrate the system with frequent user policies. The legislation is asking WSF to simplify fares (for example: several routes would share the same fare) and Ferries is required to keep a senior discount.

Pricing can help manage vehicle deck space. Ray said that one of the options is to encourage people to drive smaller cars by charging more for large vehicles or instituting a small car rate. Currently, cars between one foot and 20' pay the same price.

Diane introduced the workshop, questions and options. Facilitators led the groups through the following questions:

- Of the four pricing options discussed, would any of them change your ferry usage behavior, i.e. walk on, smaller car, carpool, bus?
- If not a pricing strategy, what other strategy would make it appealing for you to change your ferry usage behavior?

Options:

1. peak-pricing
2. mode-shift pricing



3. off-peak discounts
4. price simplification

Public Comment and Questions

1. How far off target is WSF in terms of revenue vs. expenses? *We don't know how big the system needs to be so we don't know what revenue needs to be. We had 80% recovery in 2004, now it's a little lower.*
2. What about bringing the car tabs back? *Maybe but that's not really up to us and it's another issue. Tonight we want to figure out how to manage demand.*
3. Can we be more efficient? *That's why we're here tonight.*
4. Employers often don't allow schedule flexibility so it wouldn't change my behavior.
5. I wouldn't have to wait through as many boats at peak times.
6. WSF needs to reward good behavior rather than punish bad.
7. Set base fare as peak fare, adjust down from there.
8. Don't levy bike surcharge or a surcharge to frequent users.
9. There should be an incentive price for electric or hybrid vehicles.
10. Need more size categories for cars.
11. Step price up significantly beyond base. Increased prices for vehicles when demand is high could be an incentive for some to change their times.
12. Like idea of lowering passenger fares.
13. Transit should work with employers to get vanpools or shuttles from terminal to work site.
14. Encourage walk-ons with cheaper prices (like downtown buses, which require better implementation for transit).
15. Managing deck space could change some but could also disenfranchise some. (e.g. contractors)
16. Route pricing should be used to shift demand to lower used routes.
17. Discount for ferry users using transit (combined pass cheaper than both together).
18. Offer activities (musicians, kite flyers) on non-peak routes.
19. You should pay by the inch and make it automated.
20. WSF should have off peak discount for commercial users.
21. Need better transit connections (particularly the Eastside light rail)
22. I need a flexible vanpool option – pay when I come.
23. Is the lower Bremerton fare cost effective?
24. Pricing affects economy of whole area.
25. Demographic shift will affect demand curve.
26. Small car pricing is regressive to low income people.
27. Discount pricing for all HOVs (not just vanpool) and for bikes.
28. Don't punish commuters.



29. Discount a combination ferries/transit fare.

Other comments from small groups

The following comments were collected during a small group discussion of ideas generally unrelated to any of the nine categories including pricing and reservations.

1. Need a bypass road at Colman Dock because the current lane configurations causes traffic jams.
2. Need secure bike parking on boats.
3. More amenities at the dock, or close by, would help if people have to wait for a different boat.
4. Better food concessions.
5. Encourage non-fare box revenue through concessions
6. Raise gas to \$8 a gallon
7. It would be nice to lower Hwy 305.
8. Need subsidy system
 - a. move from gas tax
 - b. as a mass transit and highway
9. Recognize that tourists are different from commuters. There should be a tiered system where resident/commuter fare should be less than non-resident fare and there should not be surcharges for residents. The off-peak fare could be equal to the low commuter fare. No expiration date on ferry pass.
10. Commuters deserve preferred access to the head of the line.
11. Improve the ticketing / paying process. We need proof of sale and type of fare to stop those cheating the system.
12. Technological improvements like transponders that would be the same for all uses and be portable to another vehicle.
13. Recognize that ferries are the only option for some communities.
14. How are you going to know what riders no longer ride? The WTC marketing survey doesn't capture.
15. WSF is a service to the people. Treat is as such.
16. There should be a separate Ferries Transportation Commission.

Additional Public Comments and Questions

1. You mentioned synchronizing the lights on 305. Think about it as a train, when they come off the ferry, just get them off the ferry and go. They need to be on sensors.
2. Yellow paint the bows and the ramps and make them bike only. Put racks on the upper wings so you can rack the bikes. There are more than enough bikes for that space.



3. Bicycles take up no room, but contribute to ferry revenue. Can some of that money be used on bike improvements like bike racks and signage?
4. There was a new bicycle rack on the boat that was great. I sent an e-mail to Ferries to thank them and asked for more. It then disappeared and I was told it was not authorized. *We're working with the bike communities on these issues.*
5. There are a couple of problems with the new bike lane. There is a metal plate which is very slippery and a grate going the wrong way with slits the perfect size for bike tires to get caught.
6. Have you thought of the economic community impacts of what you are proposing? Tourists are driving people out of this community. Are you going to force people to quit their jobs in Seattle?
7. Keller Ferry is run by WSF and we're paying for it. It runs smoothly, why can't our ferries run like that?
8. What happens to sailings, reservations, etc. during special events on Bainbridge?
9. Thank you WSF for being here and being receptive. I'd like you to have an appreciation for our location and what we're dealing with. I understand that this route is not going to expand for 22 years. Our issues are just going to get worse.
10. We back up into the streets at night because there is only one kiosk running at Colman Dock. Can we get another one going?
11. The kiosk signs need to be better. It's hard to tell which ones are open and people are backing up and it's causing a real problem.
12. Why do you get charged for a bike on the roof but not on the back? It seems like there is plenty of air space and you're trying to conserve linear space.
13. Can you keep the north gate open after commuter hours so that bikes don't have to merge with cars?
14. There needs to be more staff at some times of day. I know of bicyclists who missed the boat because they had to wait in line behind a car. We're not taking up car space so why can't we bypass?
15. I'd like to comment on the potential for using the honor system for ticketing. Every system in the world uses some sort of honor system and I can't imagine that the problem will be large enough to be worth the cost of policing.
16. We need to think about whether or not ferries really go to the places and at times that they can make the most money.
17. You need to bring the boats to the people rather than the people to the boats.
18. I would love to see what WSF is looking at for cost saving measures within the system. Can you reduce the number of executives within the system? Will you be bringing that to us? *There are two sides, expenses and*



revenue. As we look towards 2009, we will look at the size of the costs and the size of what we need to deliver to the community.

- 19. The kiosks at Colman are really inefficient. Can you chart/benchmark efficiency? Also, where did the state patrol at Colman Dock go? People can cut in the ferry line south of Colman Dock (at King Street) because of the traffic patterns. It is illegal but people do it and it's very frustrating to those of us who follow the rules.
- 20. Please look at PSE model from a few years ago. They tried to do peak pricing and it didn't work. If the rewards are not sufficient, you will see backlash.

David thanked the group and said that it was an incredibly productive meeting. He provided the WTC commissioners present time to speak.

Elmira said that she is tasked with looking at the system from a whole system perspective. We look at the equity for the whole system, not east versus west. Thank you for your comments tonight, they are very helpful.

Bob said that we are here because of things we have no control over - \$30 car tabs and rising gas prices. The WSF is in a state of peril so please put pressure on your legislatures to fund WSF.

David said thank you for your energy, time and comments, and adjourned the meeting.

There were approximately 35 attendees. The public sign-in included:

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|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| Brian Reddick | Doug Lundgren |
| Kirk Robinson | Dave Russo |
| Douglas A. Rauh | Mary Ann Proctor |
| Jeff and Dianne Thompson | Paul Parker |
| William Eckel | Dan O'Neal |
| Joel Lelin | John Clauson |
| Susannah Arntson | Elmira Forner |
| Connie Lord | Mary Levin |
| Mendy Droke | Blair Scanlan |
| Debbi Lester | Bob Disler |
| Bibb Hejlp | Torin Larsen |
| Robert Cromwell | Svend & Edie Hartmann |
| Martin Simsak | Ty Anderson |
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There were no written comments submitted.