

WASHINGTON STATE FERRY

PUBLIC HEARINGS - JANUARY 2009

San Juan Island, Washington

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PUBLIC COMMENT

Reported by: Linda M. Grotefendt, CCR
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PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 1: Have the powers that be ever reconsidered this whole initiative thing that started this all off some years ago, by Tim Eiman, when great deals of money were taken away from the ferry system, and then we were just cut short at that point? I mean, is that a question that you have addressed at all? Is there anything you can do about the initiative process; getting that tax back on licensing, for instance, in terms of the automobiles?

MR. MOSELEY: I'm taking that as a comment that that's what you'd like to have done.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 1: Yes, yes.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 2: My name is Terry Sanders. I live in Friday Harbor, on San Juan Island. I use the ferries as necessary to conduct business on the mainland or get supplies or whatever.

I've heard that the Governor, which I happened to meet last 5th of July, over on Orcas -- she proposes to get rid of the Sidney run, because of a cost reduction. But they don't mention all the income that the State receives by international travelers that come in and are renting rooms and buying meals and other things, that the State is getting State tax on. That is not included in the cost thing. I haven't heard anything mentioned about that, other than Anacortes has mentioned that.

And another comment is that most of these meetings that I've

gone to -- they are obligatory. The State has to hold these meetings to take public input, but they don't really have to accept any of the input, or revise. You know, it's basically: They have the meeting. "Okay, we've had the meeting. Now let's go do what we want to do."

And, also, this meeting is like -- the only people who could really come to it are those people that are unemployed or are government officials that can take off and officially come here and represent. So it's not really open for the general public.

Those are my comments.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 3: Hi. My name is Dan Zaehring. I'm a resident of Friday Harbor, a business owner, and a resident representing myself. I have lots of comments I could make. I'll refrain them -- bring it down to three.

The first one is: Both the legislative mandate and the report talks about taking each of the route sheds and treating them somewhat uniquely, because they are different. And yet, when I look at all of the verbiage that talks about the ridership, there's a huge averaging out that is occurring.

For instance, commuters are considered nondiscretionary, and everybody else is considered -- excuse me. Commuters are considered nondiscretionary, and everybody else is considered discretionary, as though going to a doctor on the mainland or a number of the other things that we find vital somehow are categorized as nondiscretionary (sic).

The other one is, "frequent" is considered someone who goes at least seven times a month, which, in this town, if we were going seven times a month, our bill for the ferry ride alone would be up into several thousand dollars a year. A frequent user for us is significantly less. But there's lots of us who go less frequently. So that's the first issue, about the sheds.

The second one has to do with the long-range sense of the ferry and what it does to island-served communities such as the San Juans. Over the course of the ownership of Washington State Ferries, the amount of property-tax values that has increased in the San Juans, which produces property tax that goes to the State, is a huge increase percentage-wise, and, percentage-wise, what comes back to our island is relatively small.

And at least some of those factors need to be taken into consideration in terms of the infrastructure value of the ferry, and I don't see any real reference to that other than maybe one sentence.

Then lastly, for about seven years after I-695 passed, I basically said to our fellow community members, "We're complaining to the wrong folks. It's not the Ferry folks who control how much money is available for the ferries. They just deal with what they've got."

This year, and particularly after reading this long-range plan, I'm a little bit less convinced of that. I feel like, particularly this year, with everybody tightening their belt, if

the Ferry folks are not advocates for the true value of the ferry system to this state in general, who is?

And it feels like this thing is almost an Eeyore report, and Eeyore was the arch pessimist, and this sounds like the best plan is: Hopefully, we can keep what we're doing or less. And maybe, Plan B, you could survive it even less. And I hate to say it, but politically, Eeyore doesn't get anything out of Olympia.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 4: Hi. My name is Don Nixon, and I'm here as myself. I'm an employee of the Port of Friday Harbor, but I'm not speaking in any way representing the Port.

I'd like to speak briefly to the idea of the augmentation of public service that is Washington State Ferry's public service that is mentioned in Plan B; the idea that, if the service is cut, that this might be picked up by private or local public entities. And I think that there are two things that you might be interested to hear comment on.

One is: Would the facilities of the ferry system be available to these other entities? And my point there being that, if you are travelling from the islands or Anacortes, or whatever route, that, if you are obliged to go to a different place because it's not a Washington State Ferry run, then you are making a choice between two minor services as opposed to an augmented service.

So I think that it would be important, in that case, that the existing terminal facilities be available to whatever vessels were

doing it. I think the current Keystone arrangement speaks to the possibility of that. You can bring both passenger-only and non Washington State Ferry vessels into the facilities of the system.

The other is in terms of fares. And I think there's -- it's not clear to what extent fares on these other systems would be in any way curtailed or controlled by the ferry system, and I think this would have to be a free-market situation in which to make it all work so that, whatever system came up, I think that that needs to be addressed.

And I would offer that there is precedent for all of this. If you look back to the mosquito-fleet routes of the first part of the 20th century, that was what was perceived largely as a private operation, but due to freight and mail subsidies that existed at that time, there was, in fact, a mix of essentially public and private funding going into that.

The idea of small boats serving very specific routes was well-established. There were favorite runs that were, in many cases, the small steamers that ran a very limited route but were well-described.

So I think we have -- if it does come to a Plan B, and I think there's potential for that and there are vessels available that might serve that well, but it does need to be addressed in some detail as the plans move forward.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 5: Hi. I'm Robin Jacobson. I live

in Friday Harbor, but I work in all of the islands because I'm on the staff of the San Juan Islands Visitor's Bureau. One of the things that we hear constantly from visitors, whom we are encouraging to leave their cars behind, is that, by the time they pay for the parking and then they pay for the passenger fee, they're either breaking even or they've lost money. And so that is something that is a consistent complaint.

So as much as we would like to see people leave -- some of the people leave their cars on the other end, that's not a workable thing. The other issue with leaving your car behind is that, for Friday Harbor, that will work much better than for the rest of San Juan Island or for Lopez or for Orcas.

So even with the seasonal transit possibilities, which we have in a very well-planned schedule on San Juan Island, we don't have that on Lopez, we don't have that on Orcas. We may not have it at all on Orcas next year -- this year. And so that is an issue. We don't have bus systems.

And, you know, even if there were people that would take advantage of that, there will always be people that want to get out in nature and enjoy sitting in a park, being educated by the interpretive signage, etcetera, where a bus schedule is just not going to work for that.

So I would hope that, in addressing the other things that you are on the islands, that you're also considering what people need when they come to visit here.

And then, on the other end, with the visitor industry, the hospitality industry, the cost of doing business in these islands is, as you know, extremely high. So when our residents, who own and operate facilities in the islands, need to go off-island for doing business, it's a very expensive thing for them, so their rates go higher, of course, because they have to cover that.

So it gets very complicated, the economic picture in the San Juan Islands. I would just hope that those can be looked at separately from down-Sound, where -- it's very different here. I know you've heard that before, but we just actually are very different.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 6: My name is Charis Pruitt, and I've lived here for 20 years. I came here in 1988, when I was 15 years old, so I have seen the changes that the ferry system has gone through. I've got three things.

One, I'm a football mom, okay? My kids are into sports, and we have to go to Orcas or Lopez for sports events. Now, if you get rid of the interisland ferry, it's not going to be as easy for them to get -- you know, get to the other islands.

And two, I have to go off-island once a month for medical reasons, and that is just crazy. But we have to take our car, and we have to drive to Anacortes and Mount Vernon and stuff like that.

And the third thing is, my sisters own two businesses in

Friday Harbor. But they also say, "Hey, come to Friday Harbor, and we can hook you up with a bicycle tour or something." And so they have people, hotels that have agreed to work with them. They stay at the hotels. They have certain restaurants they eat at.

Then they leave Orcas after they get done riding their bikes, and then they go to Lopez, and they do the same thing there, and they have hotels they stay at there. And they come back to Friday Harbor and do kayaking and going on boat trips.

So if the ferries are not going to help with their business, they're not going to be able to run a business. I have, also, friends who have other businesses, that do well drilling over on the islands, and they have to take their drill truck to Orcas and to Lopez. And the only way they can get those hugaciously (sic) large trucks is on the ferries. So that would mean he wouldn't have a job and his seven employees won't be having a job, which would mean unemployment has skyrocketed.

And I think -- I think Olympia thinks we're all a bunch of rich people. We provide for the rich people, because we wanted to live in this community the way it is. It's really nice, it's pretty safe, and it's good company. I mean, look at this; pretty cool.

And I think Olympia thinks that we're just a bunch of rich people. We're not. We're catering to the rich people who come up, buy land, build big houses, and stay in them for two weeks in the whole year. We're their maids or -- they don't clean their

house. We clean their cars. And if we don't have a ferry system, we can't provide for these people.

So thank you very much.

MR. MOSELEY: This is a public-testimony period. I'm not supposed to break in and mention something, but she raised something that I meant to mention in my comments.

I was coming here, I was up with Captain Jack in the wheelhouse, and he actually took a call from someone on an issue which she raised that, somehow, the impression has gotten out there that Plan B would eliminate the interisland boat, and it does not. The interisland boat is in both Plan A and Plan B, so I just wanted to clarify that it would --

MR. DEARDORF: It will be less frequent, but you would still have interisland service.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 7: Yeah. Hi. Howie Rosenfeld, from the San Juan County Council. I've been asked to read a statement from State Senator Ranker. Before I do, I want to point out that both the San Juan County Council and the San Juan Ferry Advisory Committee have issued a response to the proposed plans, and I'll leave it to my new colleague, Council Member Pratt, to read the bullet points. But we are adamantly opposed to Plan B and take the position that we barely have enough service now and not enough for the future and cuts are unacceptable.

And Council Member Pratt has copies of both our response to the plan and Kevin's statement, if anybody wants a copy. So let

me read his statement.

"It is critical that we maintain the Anacortes/Sydney ferry run because of the very serious economic impacts and job losses that would result from this cut. Ferries play a vital role in our regional economy as part of our State highway system. A recent study conducted by E.D. Hovee & Company on behalf of the Economic Development Association of Skagit County found that ferries are vital to the economies of the communities that they serve, and the Sidney route is particularly important for tourism access, both to Vancouver Island, B.C., and the northern Puget Sound region, including Skagit County.

"Even a partial elimination of ferry service on the Anacortes/Sydney route would threaten thousands of jobs in the five counties of the northern Puget Sound region, impact up to 30 million in payrolls, and as much as 126 million in related spending, and reduce State and local revenues that are generated by related economic activity.

"Further, the elimination of this run one year before the 2010 Olympics in B.C. is unrealistic, as they expect upwards of tens of thousands of visitors, generating millions of dollars in revenue in the coming year.

"As a member of the Senate Transportation Committee, one of my priorities will be to clarify that ferries are essential to the economic and community health of our region and that they deserve the full support of the Legislature. And, as someone with

firsthand knowledge of how important these ferry runs are to the communities that rely on them, I will be doing everything I can to support the Anacortes/Sydney ferry and ensure its continued presence as a valuable economic stimulus to our region."

That's from Senator Kevin Ranker. And I would just like to add my concern, that someone else mentioned, that these public meetings are not pro forma, just checkoff for Washington State Ferries. If the vast majority of the people come forward -- and you had over 900 at the Vashon meeting, 200 at Bremerton, that Plan B is unacceptable, I hope it means something and we're not just here blowing hot air.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 8: Hi. I'm Rob Degavre. I'm on the Ferry Advisory Committee. I think it's important we understand Plan B. The central fact of Plan B, as it affects this community, is that it cuts out a ferry. We call it the Sidney ferry. It is not the Sidney ferry. It's a ferry -- 80 percent of the capacity of that ferry serves this community. Only a very small percent of that capacity serves Sidney.

If you look at our total capacity in the spring and fall, if we drop that third ferry, we'll lose about 20 percent of our capacity, on the islands here, for getting to Sidney. And I don't think that, if you dropped 20 percent of the capacity and you dropped 25 percent of the frequency of the sailings, that you'll be able to meet the basic requirements to the economy of this

island.

For example, trucks in the morning. I don't think, with the two ferries, you can get all the trucks here in the morning. And I don't think, also, with two -- I'm saying two ferries -- two mainland ferries. Also, with two mainland ferries, I don't think you can service the cyclical need for the island. People leave the island in the morning and come back in the evening. I don't think two ferries can serve that either.

It would fundamentally change the economy. It wouldn't meet the requirements of the economy. What really, I guess, upsets me is the politicians who are supposed to represent us, like Mary Margaret Haugen and Kevin Ranker -- when they write about this, all they write about -- the letter that Howie just read there is only about the Sidney run. This is not about the Sidney run; it's about the runs to this island.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 9: My name is Anne Sheridan, and I'm here as an island resident and also a business owner. I've been really interested and sort of -- since I've lived on the islands, which has been since 1991, on the change of the service, and starting to have a better picture of how the ferries work and serve our community.

And, you know, I don't think there's anything that impacts our community, economically and our lifestyles, as profoundly as the ferries. Plan B -- looking down the road at Plan B, I

personally see our community as not sustainable, given our current economic system. We're already struggling to sustain our tourism, which has become such a huge piece of our local economy. And I'm not one of those people who thinks we should just have more and more and better.

I think that even Plan A is not a very positive picture of the future. You know, it doesn't look at what can happen. It looks at: Can we just hang on to what we have? Someone else said an Eeyore-type picture. And I think that, you know, we all have to be realistic but, ultimately, if you look at the economic engine that the islands and the tourism in this area brings, I don't think that it is really represented as the powerful factor that it is.

You know, the connection with the Sidney run to Canada and that route, bringing people back through the islands, through this whole Puget Sound regional -- I mean, it's a big economic engine.

And we also look at the fact that, you know, when you look at pictures and tourism that the whole state promotes, you know, ferries and the islands -- they're all out there. They're just part of what is a picture of: What is Washington State? You know, we're part of that glowing picture. But this proposal, this Plan B, is like a stranglehold. It would kill us.

And I think that economic sustainability has to be a part of the planning, and I don't see that anywhere in this. And I understand that the part that the Department of Transportation and

all of the State thing -- that they're looking at how to pay for this, and that's a huge problem. But I do think that economic impact is -- you know, is really not the part here that it needs to be.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 10: My name is Gene Knapp, and I live on Orcas Island. I'm on the San Juan County Council. In past history, I was a county prosecutor for two terms.

House Bill 2358 requires the Washington State Ferries to, quote, "consider the impacts on user capacity and local communities." There has been no economic analysis.

Plan B may violate State law. Plan B is not acceptable and should be rejected. Plan A should be adopted, and it is a minimal level of service.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 11: My name is Lisa O'Brien. I live outside of Friday Harbor, on San Juan Island. I'm a business owner as well as a resident.

My husband produces a television show on the island, via satellite. He's been doing it for years. Our new business is tourism-based at the beginning, and it's all video-based. We use the ferry system as part of our business. Limiting the interisland ferry would make this job harder than it already is.

We live here because we love it here, not because we came here to get rich, because, trust me, there's a saying on the

island: "You have three houses or you have three jobs." Right now, I'm at five, and I'm a business owner.

I'm doing what it takes to put my kids through school and live on the island. We don't go to the mainland because it costs too much, which means that we pay whatever it is that is necessary at the grocery store. And when you're feeding girls that eat like a football team, it costs a fortune. But that's our price of living here.

What I don't understand is why you say that the ferry system needs to be self-sustainable or self-sufficient. Every time we get on a ferry to come back from the mainland, we're paying to use our freeway. We pay gas taxes. When they have gas on the mainland at 2.50, we're paying 3 or better.

We pay high road taxes -- or we pay road taxes. We pay high real-estate taxes, meaning your home taxes. We pay for living here. You can't take or limit our freeway from us. A lot of us use the interisland ferry to get to work, back from work. There's a lot of people on Lopez that work over on San Juan and vice versa.

We are -- we cannot stress to you the importance of the ferry system here. We cannot express to you enough how we really are different from the rest of the ferry system, because we are stranded without you. And we really need it to keep it the way it is, if not make it better.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 12: Hi. My name is Greg Zervace.

I live on San Juan Island in the town of Friday Harbor. I've been sitting here, trying to get an overview and be practical here. And yeah, right now, your Plan A, which is a continuation of existing stuff, is bare-minimum service.

We all -- all of us that live out here feel we actually should get faster turnaround time with the existing ferries. You know, I think, if the workforce of the people who actually man the ferries hustled instead of strolled, we could probably get another run in per day, easy, which would help the community at large.

But what you have to look at for out here is: We're the northern end of the ferry system. We're quite a bit further north than anything else. From Keystone on down, those are convenience routes, if you really want to be realistic about it. They're shortcut routes. People can still conduct commerce by taking the long drive around. Out here, we can't.

You have to view the Anacortes-to-the-islands route, whether it's directly to Friday Harbor or directly to the ferry landing at Orcas, as an extension of U.S. Highway 20. Nothing else is acceptable, you know, the way I see it.

And as far as the international part of it, you know, that's just a little added-on extension. But it helps our islands a bit, and it probably, certainly helps Anacortes a lot and Sidney a lot. So from the standpoint of that, one, I think you should ask the City of Sidney to help pay for some of the costs if they want to keep the run.

And two, me being in the lodging business and me looking at my occupancy percentages, I can see a real drop-off in occupancy, and I correlate that to probably how often the international ferry needs to run. And I'm always looking at offering great service at the least overhead, and so I'm sure the ferry-service people are too.

Realistically, you could probably whack off two more months of the international run; end it probably at the end of February. Or not February. End it at the end of October and start it up again at the end of March, and that saves considerable money, but you don't have to eliminate the international run. And certainly, if you get some subsidies from the City of Sidney, that certainly helps make it economically viable.

And I think that pretty much covers all my comments, so thank you very much.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 13: Yes. My name is Lance Evans, and thank you all for being here today. My job, 9:00 to 5:00, so to speak, is as the executive director for the Orcas Island Chamber of Commerce. I'm also newly appointed to our county's Ferry Advisory Committee. But today I'm addressing you more on behalf of both our visitors to the island and our business members.

Let me take first -- as you've heard before from some of these other speakers, that the businesses that I represent -- and if I can, let me speak for them right now if they're not on board.

And I just came on at Orcas.

The sense you've heard, I will simply second, that business, in a ferry-dependent community, really and truly does rely so heavily on the ability to get on and off the island, get merchandise on and off the island, and be able to commute in some reasonable fashion.

So a reduction in ferry service truly hurts our business and commerce within the islands. Again, I go back to the term "ferry-dependent" as a key element for our county.

Second to that -- and let me -- I just got off the phone before I came out here and, in fact, had someone in my office visiting the island and loving the fact that they were here showing off to a friend from Germany what a great spot this is here in the San Juan Islands. I'm speaking to those who believe this already.

But the reality is, they just wanted to share with me, in our visitor's center, what a treat it was to visit this glorious part of our state. I think that also obviously ties right into the issue of: We rely so much on our visitors coming to the island and -- our islands, plural. And, again, a reduction in service starts to get us off-kilter in that regard. And I guess I would just encourage no reduction of service.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 14: I'm Roger Sandwith, and I would like to ask you how many trips the ferry is going to make, that's

going to be different from A and B, to and from all the islands, including the interisland ferry, so that the people can know whether they are going to get off, whether they vote for one or the other. And what is it going to cost? To say that it's going to cost 2 percent, and, if the fuel goes up, then we'll go up -- I mean, that's not giving us a cost.

The reason there's less riders is because of your cost. And I don't know about your ferry advisor, Bobby Ditmer, from Orcas, but when he makes a statement that the San Juans are the richest in the state, he can buy my place if he wants.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 15: I don't know if you guys covered this or not, about healthcare. I came in late. I live out on San Juan. I work for Island Hospital Home Health, and the ferries are vital for us providing care to people that can't get out of their house to doctors' appointments. We have nurses, we have physical therapists, occupational therapists, social workers that rely on this interisland boat, and a reduction of service would be devastating to our patients.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 16: I'd like to second what the previous speaker said. One of the functions of government is to look after the health, safety, and welfare of its citizens, and I do believe that -- just in terms of healthcare, that you have to keep a viable, relatively frequent interisland service going.

I work part-time at the ferry landing, and one of the things

I notice, that when we go back to the old way--and I've been here 30 years, so I remember when we had one ferry that served all of the islands--it hugely slows down things when people have to back on.

30 years ago, it may not have been so bad. But nowadays, you get people that -- I tell them that "you've got to put your car in reverse and back up," and they look at me like I am crazy. Some of them I don't think have ever put their cars in reverse before.

If we do have to do that on a more-regular basis, what you save on the one hand, you're going to lose on the other hand, because you're going to have a whole lot longer dwell time. I am in favor of -- even though, as somebody that lives there, most of the time I would love to have one ferry a day in terms of the peace and quiet, as somebody that sees the huge amount of interisland commerce that goes on, I recognize the need for a decent ferry service.

I'm for System A. In terms of the international sailing, what I don't understand is: Why not take it to maybe about six months of the Sidney run and just have one a day that's packed and full and let some people not get to Sidney that want to get that day. At least they have an option if there's a reservation system that works.

But have that one ferry packed to the gills, and you actually might not lose money on it. You might make money on it. And then have it available -- and have it a midday Sidney run and have the

capacity in the mornings and late afternoon and evening, when you need it more, to have the international run and do the Anacortes to the islands.

Good luck. I know you've got a rough job and no money.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 17: My name is Terrea Bennett. I live on San Juan Island, and ours is a water world, and if you cut our ferry service, you're cutting our throats. And I feel really emotional about it. I'm sorry.

My home is as important to me as your home is to you. And this is our highway, and it's basically a toll road. Toll roads are common in the country, and I would like to see the State of Washington open up more toll roads to cover costs. Maybe over the mountain passes, which are also high-maintenance, like the ferry system.

If the San Juans are strangled, then huge revenues will be lost, both to the State and to our county, and that money is going to end up somewhere else: in B.C. or in Oregon, or someplace like that. We won't have the benefit of it.

So I -- I support Plan A only to the extent that it is a very anemic solution, in my mind, and needs to be built up even more, because we deserve to have a good road system here, like everybody else in the state.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 18: I'm Ingrid Lynch, from Shaw Island, and I brought today an article from "The New York Times,"

stating that six other states are considering raising gas taxes to meet their needs. Now, I would suggest that we impose a tax on gas to cover our transportation needs; not only ferries, but tunnels and light rail and improved bus service, as well as roads.

This would not be a new tax. It would be resurrecting a tax that was hidden within the motor-vehicle tax that we had several years ago. When that package got thrown out, we threw everything out with it, but we didn't replace any of it.

As citizens of the state, we're used to paying those taxes. We did pay those taxes for these services. Just bring the tax back so we can maintain our services. It's not new; it's just resurrecting.

Yes, I think that's it. If I think of something else later, I'll say so, but I will urge you -- other states are doing it. It wouldn't be new. It would just be resurrecting, and we all know the issues we're dealing with.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 19: Hi. For the record, I'm Judy Hedreen, and I'm a tourist as opposed to somebody who lives on the islands, and I would just like to reinforce the comments of the people that live on the island.

I think that it's unrealistic not to have developed into this plan some sort of a growth for tourism, because I think it will significantly grow between now and the year 2030. I know that myself -- my husband and I each have our own businesses here in

the state of Washington, which I hope will get through this economy intact.

But we also -- I also do quite -- a fair amount of business in Europe. And every time we have clients that come to the United States, we always bring them to the San Juan Islands. I myself have been coming here since I was eight years old from out of state. We used to come from -- we didn't live in Washington. So I think that it's unrealistic not to have built this into the plan.

So I think I agree with the other people, that Plan A is a minimum and that, in fact, there needs to be a point in the future, at maybe periods of every 10 years, where you would then review the plan, look at capacity, look at the effect on the island residents as well as the other people.

We are currently doing an interisland tour. I mean, we didn't just come to one and stay there and go away. We're actually going around to the different islands.

So that was all; just from a tourist's point of view.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 20: Hi. Thank you for this opportunity. Listening to everyone, I can't help but enthusiastically agree and endorse the sentiments that have been voiced here today. But one thing occurs to me, that, looking at the San Juan Islands in the state, this is an easy place to cut the taxes, the services, because it's small, and you can kind of take the heat from here where you can't take the heat from the

entire state.

So I say to you: Can you find another duck to pluck rather than the San Juan Islands and reducing -- and I say that sincerely. Just being an observer of the passing scene, you're taking the easy shot at the smallest guy, and you're hurting these people very much.

And I've only lived here 20 years, so I'm kind of a newcomer. So thank you very much.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 21: I'll submit this "New York Times" article that states, "Some states, in a pinch, may raise gasoline taxes," so that that can be part of the record. It won't be standing alone.

And the other thing is, our gas prices have gone from \$1.75 a gallon to over \$4.00 a gallon. Who the heck is going to notice a quarter here or there? We're talking dollars of fluctuation. You know, a few years ago, when the Legislature didn't have the moxie to pass a 9-cent-a-gallon tax increase, we could only go for a nickel, because 9 cents would be way too much, and the gas went to over 4.50 a gallon.

So I think it's just, you know: Get a grip, Legislature. Don't worry about getting reelected and worry about providing the services that the state needs. And if that means increasing a tax or replacing a tax, then do it. Serve us, please.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 22: I would just state that he was

talking about the interisland ferry, which is very important to us, but it's the whole ferry system. It's one and a whole. They are on the bad end because, a decade ago, somebody didn't have the forethought to say, "Oh, my God, we're going to need new boats." And now, all of a sudden, they're saying, "It's going to cost, it's going to cost." We know it's going to cost. It should have been costing 10 years ago so we, everyone, WSF and us, wouldn't be in the pickle that we're in now. But just because you guys are in a pickle, that doesn't mean we're not going to fight you for what we need for living here.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 23: Hi. I live on Shaw. My name is Peter Thelin. One of the things that I reflect upon is some scheme of price discrimination between the people that routinely use the service, and that would go for residential and commercial vehicles, because, from my point of view, that is the lifeblood of island life. And just in my studies as an economist, although recreational use of it is the lifeblood of a lot of island businesses, that tends to be a luxury good, and the people are less pricing-sensitive to it in their use of it.

And so a discriminatory pricing policy to some way identify the different populations and their routine use of it, I think would enhance the system. Something to consider.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 24: My name is Lynelle Foos, San Juan Island. It's a question. I had heard, in the last time around, that you were thinking of building a new terminal, and I

just wanted to comment. It seems like what we have is adequate. We don't need a Disneyland format, and it takes care of everybody and there's room for folks.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 25: I have been a resident of San Juan Island for the past 27 years. I first purchased property up here in 1976. Currently, I'm an artist and I'm raising my son here, with my husband. He's a musician, Robin Lohry, and we have been going to the Victoria Conservatory of Music in Victoria this winter.

Currently, we are not able to do that. My husband sailed Robin over there last Monday for his lessons, and that was exciting at best. It was a two-day trip, entirely. Currently, we are coming over to Orcas Island during the week to visit Matthew Olson, to resume our lessons with him.

I'm just here to say that I would like to support the interisland ferries to remain in their entirety. I think that it is an extremely important connection between the islands, both socially and economically.

It's very sad that all the people that were on the boat this morning, who really use the boat to get to their jobs on each of our islands, are not here because they're all at their jobs right now. I just want to support them, as they're not here to voice their opinions, perhaps.

Anyway, I would also support the continuation of the Sidney

run, at least through the winter Olympics that are coming up. So I think it's really, really important that we look beyond incorporating a more sufficient way of using our resources, but also to look to meeting the needs of the people, economically, here on the islands. And socially, our connectedness as a county is really important for the interisland run.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 26: My name is Level Pratt. I'm a member of the San Juan County Council. And what I'd like to do first is read the beginning of a letter that was written on January 13th and signed by all six members of the County Council and, also, the Ferry Advisory Committee.

"The San Juan County Council and Ferry Advisory Committee have jointly reviewed the December 19, 2008 draft long-range plan and reject the option of Plan B as an unrealistic representation of State Ferry service. By eliminating the Anacortes/San Juan/Sydney vessel, over 80 percent of the domestic service capacity on that vessel is eliminated for seven months of the year, which is a 20- percent reduction in daily service capacity during this period.

"Plan B does not meet the current or future service demands. There is insufficient information and time on both plans to allow the legislative bodies and community to participate in a meaningful review. Lack of a financing component, as required by ESHB 2358, makes qualitative decisions impossible.

"Plan B removes one vessel from a totally ferry- dependent community." And I just want to repeat that. We are a totally ferry-dependent community. And then I want to add, "Balancing the State budget for the 2009/2011 biennium should not be the justification for a long-term State service mistake."

And I've got some copies -- not enough for everyone, but I'll pass those out when I'm done. I'd like to speak as an individual now, and I just want to speak to something that David Moseley said in his introductory remarks.

He said that the Washington State Ferry system is not financially sustainable and has not been financially sustainable for a long time. And what I see is, the only reason that Washington State Ferries is not financially sustainable is that it does not have an identified and adequate funding source.

Washington State is making the choice to adequately fund some transportation systems and not others. One example of this that I want to point out is that Washington State law requires that ferries be built in Washington state, okay? Right now, we are missing a tremendous opportunity to utilize federal stimulus funds to pay for much-needed new ferry construction.

And I think I'll just close there. And I've got some copies. I'll just go ahead and pass them around.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 27: I'm Richard Ward. I've lived on Lopez Island since 1975. There's so many things to be addressed here, and maybe they are better addressed in writing,

but I'd like to talk about dedicated funding.

What we just heard is the truth. The Legislature can dedicate funding. When 695 was passed, it was voted on by a lot of people who don't use the ferries. It was voted on by a lot of people who didn't use the vanpools, in Eastern Washington, that that tab tax supported. And so on down the line. There are counties in Eastern Washington that had their law-enforcement budgets cut in half by 695.

Now, 695 was invalidated by the Court. Let's remember that. The Supreme Court said it was invalid. But courageous Governor Locke and the courageous Legislature hurried to pass it anyway. They did not have any other funding to replace the lost funding with. That's why we're sitting here.

One of our ferry representatives was lobbying Olympia a few years ago, and he was speaking to a State Senator from Spokane who interrupted him and said, "I couldn't care less about your ferries." This is where the problem is. It's not in this room, it's not in the State Department of Transportation. It's in the politicians and it's in the Legislature.

If everybody in this state had to use ferries, we wouldn't be having this meeting. We're taking care of mountain passes, we're maintaining bridges in Eastern Washington that get maybe 200 cars a day. We're talking about spending billions of dollars on a tunnel through Seattle. But we up here are a small population, and we completely depend on these ferries.

Finally I want to say one more thing. There is a perception in Olympia that we're rich up here. Well, there aren't rich people sitting in this room. I know a lot of these people. I don't see any rich people here.

We have the most expensive real estate, some of that due to market forces created by second-home buyers. And we have wages that are 30 percent lower than on the mainland. There are people who can't afford to stay here because of the ferries and the way ferry costs drive up the cost of everything else.

The ferry increases have already hurt the San Juan Islands. They've already hurt us. Now, I know there are capital-budget issues here that I'm not addressing, but I want to keep it in mind that we're not rich, that we once had a dedicated funding source. Please keep those two things in mind.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 28: My name is Patricia McKay. I live on San Juan Island. I'm a member of the Ferry Advisory Committee, but I am speaking for myself today.

One of the things that I see that is totally lacking in the plan is that there is no economic impact study done to tell us what's going to happen when you raise the price of fares. It adds a cost to every gallon of milk, every loaf of bread, every can of vegetables we buy, by every islander that is feeding a family and trying to sustain on these islands.

Also, if you go to Plan B and we have AG trucks, we have dump

trucks waiting, we have the beer and pop trucks waiting, the bread trucks waiting because of the level of service that is provided, those costs are going to go up because those facilitators are going to have to raise the cost of what we get in order to pay for those trucks sitting at the Anacortes parking lot or the Friday Harbor parking lot because they can't get on a ferry to get home.

None of this is reflected in that plan, and it is a vital impact on our community, our bread trucks.

It was stated on the first round, and it's really important -- you talk about that you want to raise the passenger fare only half as much as the vehicle fare in years to come in order to get people on -- walking onto the ferry as opposed to bringing the car. But as long as you maintain the rates of parking in Anacortes, that's not going to happen, because three days of parking in Anacortes is the same as a car and driver coming across. And if you have to choose on whether to bring your car or to park and walk on, they're going to bring their car. So, you know, those are things that, in my personal opinion, have not been addressed.

And I would like to also restate what Level has said about asking the Legislature to please, once again, look at building ferries only in Washington. In today's economy, it's not a viable thing for us to look at. We're missing federal funding, and there's also no reason for our shipyards, since they are already so, quote, "overworked," to look at doing them for the cheapest

cost they can do.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 29: My name is Ken Rose, and I have Ken Rose Trucking, which, I operate a dump truck from Lopez Island. And as she mentioned, many times, I get down there at 5 o'clock in the morning to get on the 6:40. And you'll see me up at the front of the line, and many, many cars are going by me while I sit there.

I know many of you believe that we get priority loading and that I'm going to get on that sailing. Many times, I don't even get on that sailing. I was there early, but they have limited tall space, and that limited space is quite frequently, like, five -- maybe four to five, maybe even as much as six tall vehicles.

And so I hate to see any cut in service. This is -- this week -- here we are, in the middle of January, and I've been on this interisland boat with my dump truck three days this week. This is the slow time of the year.

And there's also many times, in Anacortes, that I arrive there an hour to two hours early and sometimes still don't get on those sailings.

The past year has been the best that I have experienced in a number of years, and it's because of the high fuel prices. Many people didn't come to the islands. And, therefore, there was more space available coming to the islands. But it still did not help me leaving the islands when I would leave early in the morning.

As far as the funding, I feel that we're not getting our share when you consider what it costs for snow removal in the passes. And they maintain those passes very well. I know there have been times they've been closed for a few days at a time, but they still are working, and many, many hours of overtime, etcetera, to keep those passes open.

And that is very important. I'm in favor of that. But I just feel that we're being short-changed here in the islands.

Also, the interisland boat -- I'm very much in favor of keeping that operating, mainly because it is one sailing that anyone that uses it can really depend on it being on time. It's very, very seldom it is ever off schedule. Whereas the main boats -- if we had to depend on those, lots of times, their schedules get off due to various reasons, and it would create a lot more problems as far as the truck traffic is concerned.

So anyway, I'm in favor of Plan A and very much would encourage you to go that way.

Thank you very much.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 30: I will be very brief, because I've got to get off the boat. Plan A is the only alternative that I can see that we can live with. If we have any cut to the interisland boat -- I'm a service-provider and contractor in San Juan County. I make my living on all the islands.

As it is right now, in the winter, I can't service a customer on the weekend, when they may be up here from Seattle on the

weekend, because I can't get there from here. Going to Anacortes to get to Orcas and then going back to Anacortes to get home makes kind of a long day and it's kind of cost-prohibitive.

So any threat to the interisland ferry -- as far as I'm concerned, it alone wipes out Plan B. So, you know, Plan A is the only ticket.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 31: I'd like to make one comment, and that's specifically on the notion of a reservation system. My biggest fear with that is, you know, for people that live on the island, most of our trips are not discretionary. We go because we need to go for some particular reason or not. And urgent reasons don't always fall in the category of medical, with medical reasons. They could be urgent family reasons, they can be veterinary appointments, or whatever; things that are very important to us.

My real concern is that, with the reservation system, if it's Plan A or Plan B, we're trapped here. You know, we might -- I know I can always get off the island now if I have to. I might have to wait, but I'll get off the island. My concern is it might be days before I can get off the island with a reservation system.

And obviously, I support -- I do not support Plan B. But in either case, I'm concerned about a reservation system that leaves us trapped on the island.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 32: I'm Marty Doyle, and I'm a resident and business owner on Orcas Island. And it has been over

eight years since I-695 effectively removed any kind of sustainable funding for the Ferry's capital and operating budgets, and this ES 2358 was almost two years ago, that was mandated. And still -- and continuing, the key issue is sustainable funding for the ferry systems.

And so I would urge you to take the strongest message back to the legislators, to the Transportation Commission, that we need some hard, tough choices, and we will support some hard, tough choices made for sustainable funding for the ferry systems.

And we recognize that, since the 1990s, capital considerations have basically been ignored and the need for capital funding for a ferry system. And if you help direct us, we will certainly make our will known to support difficult choices in funding for -- long-range funding for a sustainable ferry system.

And thank you for what you do to continue the ferry service that we have enjoyed. Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 33: I'm Jeinny Keith. I'm a property owner on Lopez, and I'm a musician, and I'm very active in musical groups. We have musical groups that are important to our society up here, that require us to be on the interisland boat, for rehearsals, for concerts, for performances. We're going to be just dead in the water without this interisland boat. It's really, really important to us.

Thank you. That's all I've got.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 34: Hi, there. I am Tom Collins,

from Lopez Island. I've just got a few comments from my notes here. To start out with, the transportation manager -- I'm not sure of your title. I'm sorry. It's outlining your new goals, and one of the new goals was to provide the best service at the lowest cost. Frankly, if you haven't been doing that in the past, or if the State has not been doing that in the past, you have been derelict in your duties.

Also, one of your comments about -- which we've heard lots about, and that was that the ferry system isn't economically sustainable. Well, my comment with that is: Get over it. It's not ever going to be economically sustainable, based on fares or some surcharges. You have to have funding from the Legislature. It's part of the highway system, just like I-90. That's not economically feasible either. And I guess I assume the ferry system still is part of the highway system. Correct? So that's -- it should be handled like the highway.

Now, I appreciate having meetings, but I'm always skeptical when I see two plans. The first thing that it brings to my mind is: It's a football. You provide a Plan A and a Plan B. Plan B is so bad, there's just no way that we could possibly deal with having a Plan B. So the football worked, because Plan A is the only thing that's acceptable.

I might have misunderstood. You indicated that the cost to run the ferry system for Plan A would be 3.5 million for 20 years. Is that each year?

MR. DEARDORF: That's the gap.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 34: Oh, the gap. Excuse me. The gap. Is that annually?

MR. DEARDORF: No. 22 years. Billion.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 34: Oh, billion. Okay. I was going to say 3.5 million -- I'll chip in for that. Anyway, Plan A, Plan B, 3.5 versus 1.4; not enough difference to justify the reduced services of Plan B.

That's about all I have.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 35: My name is Judith Larosko. I live on Orcas Island, and I was just in a meeting in Friday Harbor with a group of women who provided me with input they wanted to give to you. And I have four points to propose, and these are things we feel are important for consideration in your planning.

One is that we feel strongly that the Sidney ferry should remain on as an active run during summer months.

The second one is that we would recommend that you do not put an expiration date on the ferry passes. We feel those should be open-ended, as in many systems around the country.

The third thing is that we feel strongly that the ferries need to be painted and maintained. They are very, very shabby and have grown shabbier over the years. One of the suggestions we have -- and I realize this a union suggestion, but that, when the ferries are being -- after they're loaded, perhaps some maintenance, like cleaning, could go on during the rides

themselves.

Those are the suggestions we have. Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 36: Hi. I am Eleanor Hoague, from Orcas Island, and I doubt that you expected to have any sort of testimony in support of Plan B.

MR. MOSELEY: You would be the first.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 36: And so I would like to urge you to, in the future, tell us more -- this was raised before, but tell us what to do to put the pressure to bear, because it's very -- I mean, there are little bits of opinion that people have that may vary on the details, but it's clear that we want to have as thorough and as big a ferry system as we can so that we have appropriate help for tourists coming in and for our own needs.

But I think you're dealing with a lot of people who would give you support and would be willing to organize, but we're like cats, herding cats. And so, if you can give us feedback about what to do and how to do it, we can be as active as the union that -- and I'm a union gal, but that's keeping the boatbuilding, for instance, in the state of Washington. And so you need to tell us what we can do, I think.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 37: My name is Bob Myer. I'm with the San Juan County Council, and I'd like to reiterate Gene Knapp's comments. We really appreciate the Ferry system coming up here and going to all the communities and listening to the ideas that we have about the ferries.

And I also like the last comment. I'd like to point out that it's really important that our community and the leadership of the ferry system think of ourselves as a team, working together in Olympia, both in Eastern Washington and Western Washington.

We all want a good and solid ferry system. It's an important symbol of Washington state. Whenever you see Washington state advertised, you see somebody drinking a bottle of Eastern Washington wine with the Mt. Rainier in the background and the Space Needle and a ferry going by.

And so I really encourage you, as much as possible, and our community, to not look at the leadership of the system as our adversaries, but rather as our friends, working together. And to the extent that we can help you in any way in the upcoming legislative session, to give us the best possible service we can have, that's what we want.

So thank you very much.

(The public comment portion of the hearing
concluded at 2:25 p.m.)

