

WASHINGTON STATE FERRY

PUBLIC HEARINGS - JANUARY 2009

Bremerton, Washington

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PUBLIC COMMENT

Reported by: Linda M. Grotefendt, CCR  
License No. 3013

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 1: Thank you. First of all, David, I want to thank you for coming here tonight. I think you're doing a great job in a very tough situation.

Let me just say on behalf of the City of Bremerton and, I think, of all of Kitsap County, we are absolutely opposed to Option B. We believe that the Governor promised that she wouldn't bring new taxes. Option B is an unfunded mandate. It basically puts the burden of additional service or continuing the level of service we have now on the local taxpayers, and the Governor promised she wouldn't do that.

We believe that the ferry system has been neglected for 20 years and, unfortunately, you have adopted that neglect; and that we're part of the State highway system, we're part of the gas tax, and that the system should be funded out of gas tax. And we believe that the current level of service should be maintained, at least over the next number of years, until the State figures out an appropriate revenue source to appropriately fund the ferry system.

Now, having said that, we realize that there are going to be changes in the size of the boats and the kind of boats you're running. But we would in no way support any kind of cut in the number of boats that are servicing our community nor the level of service that we currently get.

20 years, the Legislature has gotten to this point where

they've neglected to support, in any real way, since Initiative 695 and 747, this ferry system. And now they're trying to throw the burden back on the local taxpayer because they didn't have the courage to deal with this issue.

What our position is: Continue our level of service. The Legislature needs to support this. I think the difference is about 80 million. They need to find that in this session. We're working hard with our local legislatures to make sure that happens. We in no way support this unfunded mandate from the Governor's office for a reduction in service in Plan B.

Thank you very much.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 2: Yes, I don't usually speak in public, but I would like to make it a larger strategic question. I think that we are on the cusp of a grand change in the way we live and have lived. From 1945 until 2005, we lived in an energy-abundant/energy-cheap situation. For the next 65 years, it is my belief we are going to move into an energy-expensive/energy-scarce situation, which is going to completely change all habits and patterns of life.

Now, the ferry system -- or let me put it this way. The key to Washington's -- not prosperity, but being able to thrive in a very difficult situation is dependent upon the Puget Sound. That's where all of the economic activity of significant proportions will take place. And without a vigorous and developed ferry system, the whole of Washington State will suffer the

consequences.

As it presently stands, Washington State, in this new age that we're going to go into, can, if it develops the resources, of which the ferry system is a critical part -- it will do much better than the rest of the country. If it lets it slide, you are condemning Washington State, and especially the west side of the Sound, to a rather difficult and not very pleasant future.

So if you start talking about scaling it down, what will happen in the Washington ferry system is that the less money that goes into it, the vigorous that is done (sic), the more the system will decline.

The 5.7 billion deficit is grossly underestimated. And if we hold this discussion in another four years, in 2012, I think you're going to find we're in a very different situation, and everybody is going to try and will be -- you know, the revenue streams -- they will be under -- everybody will be trying to get their piece of the pie.

And so the people who are responsible for defending the ferry system had better damn well make sure that they don't let it be downscaled, because that is tantamount to disbanding it just when it's most needed.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 3: I would like to say thank you to our host tonight for having this meeting. I have some concerns as a taxpayer that works over on the other side. I'm very dependent

upon the ferry system to get to and from work. I see these proposals as possibly negatively impacting my ability to get to work on time, and other people that I work with that have to be at work on time.

So what I would like to see Washington State Ferries do -- if they do implement these changes, I would like to see them change the ferry schedule, if they're going to slow it down. Because I know, myself, I have to be at work at 7:30. My coworkers have to be at work at 7:30. That is not negotiable. If I'm not there at 7:30, I would have to change my hours, and other people I work with would have to change their hours.

The second point is: Passenger-only boats have been tried in the past without very much success, because there hasn't been the funding for it. Also, they're at full capacity. People have to wait for other ferries.

If you go to the passenger-only boats, how are they going to be funded? By raising Kitsap County taxes? I live over here because this is where I can afford to live. If you raise Kitsap County taxes, that's going to negatively impact rent rates, property taxes, so I am very opposed to that.

So thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 4: I just have a few comments. I don't think I'll take up the three minutes. With all due respect, I'm not going to thank you for this. I know that it's mandated that you have to do this.

Your actions over the last several years at the Department has ruined all trust this community has with any actions that you may take. I don't have confidence that you will heed any of our advice that we give you and our opinions, but there's a few things I'd like to say and get on the record anyway.

Plan B is a joke. It's completely unworkable for this community. It would devastate this community and Kitsap County in general. Property values would plummet, quality of life would suffer. Plus, you'd have an increase in car traffic on our highways at a time when we desperately need to reduce that.

I feel that you gentlemen need to act as an advocate of this service, and you're not acting as an advocate for this service by even producing something like Plan B. It's just disgraceful and you should be ashamed, I think.

The passenger-only option in Plan B -- well, as you should know, that's been voted on and failed twice in this community over the last several years. The reason it's failed twice is because people in this community feel-- rightly so, I think--that that is a responsibility of the State.

Passenger-only was quite popular here when it ran -- when the State ran it. When it was pulled, you know, quality of life suffered here. And it's something that the State should run, I think. And if you're not going to run a passenger-only boat, then you should at least run reliable service with car ferries. And doing that with one boat is not possible.

I don't think that this community would support a passenger-only with their tax money. So we need two boats, and we need increased capacity on those two boats, two larger boats.

That's all I have.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 5: Well, I am totally opposed to Plan B and, if anything, I believe that Bremerton deserves better service, because most of the people in Central Kitsap who drive to Bainbridge do so because gas used to be cheap and they decided that they had a better ferry schedule up there so they would take the Bainbridge boat.

But the fact is that gas prices are going to go back up again. It takes an hour or more now, from Central Kitsap, to get to Bainbridge, so it doesn't make any sense for anybody to drive up there. If they're complaining about a 50- or a 55-minute ferry, and your driving time, it makes more sense to drive 15 minutes from Central Kitsap to a 50- or 55-minute boat.

That being said, I'd like to go on and say: What are we going to do when they decide to tax us on our vehicle miles driven? And that is coming up in this state, along with not being able to burn wood in your wood fireplace. There's a lot of things coming down the line.

So I think that we should get realistic and decide that we are going to support a ferry out of Bremerton that is going to add -- to bring new businesses in, make the Bremerton area prosperous. We have a beautiful, almost-new downtown that we can work with.

We have so many advantages that we can't afford to take ourselves off the playing field.

And, you know, the number of people that go to Seattle to work bring home a paycheck that we didn't have to build a road for, we didn't have to run a sewer for or extend a water line. That is good, clean money coming into our community. If we want things like a four-year university and a quality place to live, then we have to understand that, somewhere in government, somebody has to help pay for it.

And maybe we have to go after Indian casinos, or whatever, to get more money. Or maybe people are going to change their lifestyle a little bit. Instead of spending four bucks for a drink at Starbucks, they might spend four bucks every once in a while on paying a little higher tax so that we have a good ferry and that we have a good transportation system.

And just tell me, what would the Eastside do if the State transportation system came in and said, "Well, you know, we can't afford that 520 Bridge anymore, so we're going to reduce that; we're going to close it 12 hours a day"?

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 6: Thank you. Good evening, David. The reason why there are so many of us here, I'm sure, is because these ferries are totally important to our communities. Whether it's commuters or people who go to the doctor or they go shopping or they go to the ball game or they have visitors just riding on the ferries for fun, these ferries are extremely important to our

communities over here.

And unfortunately for all of the work that went into Plan A and Plan B, in my view, neither one is something that the Legislature can actually vote on. Neither one gives us a set of choices that we can consider. We're going to have to look at those two plans and some other studies and then figure out what to do.

So I'd like to turn around and address my fellow citizens here. We need a plan in the Legislature that we can vote on, and I believe that you have the expertise to design that. So I'm inviting all of you tonight to join me in designing Plan C, for "citizen's plan."

And I believe that the expertise here, with all of our facts, all up and down the Sound, with all of you on our runs, you folks know so much about these ferries. And there is so much information online. Everything we need to know is online. All of the studies, all of the budget data -- it's all there, and you've got all this expertise in everything.

So here's my proposal, is that, starting immediately -- it will take us a few days to get this organized, but we've got the Internet and we've got facts. I would suggest that we look at the whole route system, ask ourselves: Are we or are we not going to keep sailing to Canada, to Vancouver? What service do we want? What sailing schedules would we want? What kind of a maintenance strategy would we have? How many boats would that mean we need to

have, and how many boats would that mean we need to buy?

And then look at the budget and figure out: Where could we take the savings and find the money to build those boats and operate that system? And then hand this Plan C over to the Legislature and say, "This is what we would like to have for our ferry system."

I'm confident that you folks can do that. It might take us a few weeks. I'm going to pass around a yellow sheet and ask you to sign up. My suggestion is we go through the facts. We've got a good fact organization with people like Joan, who can help get us organized. Give us a couple of days to kind of get this running.

I'm not going to run this. I'm not proposing to make this the Seaquist plan. I think it ought to be the citizen's plan, because all of you are quite capable of doing all this.

So I invite you tonight to -- let's get together and write Plan C, that's a workable ferry system that delivers for us what we need.

Now, it's important that we do this not only because we need it, but because we're crashing down into a severe recession. We have to have a decent ferry system in order to pull ourselves out of this recession. We can't slide down here and end up with a wreck of a system.

We're going to need a good ferry system. We're going to need to be building boats and operating them well. That's going to be part of our economic recovery, because this ferry system is so

important to the economy of the West Sound here.

So I think we can do this. I invite you to join me, and let's go get 'em. Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 7: I am Matt Ryan, from Brownsville. The first thing when I saw Plan B, I wondered why we spent \$50 million to put a tunnel through downtown Bremerton when you cut the ferry service in half. The next thing is, I hear these things about these studies. I never hear anybody talking about the destinations that people go to.

And, for a great number of years, when I was younger, I operated an employee benefits practice out of this county using the ferries. And I don't believe we can have that economic base here if you take away those opportunities.

The other thing is, I looked over on the other side of the Sound. They're going to want to tear down the Alaskan Way Viaduct, and the mayor wants to put in surface streets, and I wonder how we're going to get access to our ferry terminal when we have stoplights every two blocks or every block.

So I think there's more to this than just our ferry in the planning. And when it comes to foot ferries, David, I think you were the planner when I was on the Transportation Planning Board and talked about what a bad idea that these foot ferries were and how they were economically unviable. And I wonder why -- and I see that the State has dropped out of that business and it's unviable for them. Why do you think it's viable for a county?

And so I don't think we have the means to support the deficits that would be created on that. The transit among the buses have a 90-percent subsidy, and I don't think we'll ever see that on the foot ferries. So I would urge that we go either to Option A or Option C.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 8: Good evening. I'd like to thank you for taking the time to come to Bremerton and to talk to the citizens. My name is Art Castle. I'm executive director of the Home Builders Association of Kitsap County, representing nearly 600 companies and over 15,000 employees. My comments will be fairly brief.

I'd like to thank Senator Kilmer, Representative Seaquist, and Representative Rofus for their work on this effort. But simply, Plan A is an insult to Kitsap County and the entire Olympic Peninsula, and Plan B is irresponsible and unacceptable.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 9: Thank you. I think it's safe to say, when it comes to the State's approach to ferries, and particularly with regard to financing ferries, the boat's been heading in the wrong direction. My concern is, the answer isn't, then, to sink the boat. It's to right the ship.

And I want to make sure that what comes out of this process is a solution that really honors three things. One, we need to honor our riders and their needs. The cuts to service that are

proposed here would be devastating to riders and to ferry communities.

I attended many of the meetings that WSF has had over the last year, and what I heard in Bremerton and in Southworth was not that we need less service, but we need more; not that we should have no backup when a boat goes down, but that we need to have backup, because it has real impacts on people's lives.

Second, we need a solution that honors ferry communities. I reject the notion that this actually saves any money, because it doesn't consider the impacts of these cuts on our communities. Our economy here in the West Sound is reliant on our ferries. They are the lifeblood for us.

I also reject the idea that we would shift from viewing passenger-only ferries as a beneficial service, but supplemental to auto ferries, and shift to viewing them as a replacement. If that's not an unfunded mandate, it's, at the very least, an abdication of what I see as the State's responsibility to offer this critical service.

And finally, I think we need a solution that honors our pocketbooks. For too long, we've looked to ferry commuters and pulled money, in terms of more and more fares and higher and higher fares, out of their pockets.

I think there is some good work that has come out of this, particularly with regard to some of the operational changes that are being proposed; things that can save us money, things that can

drive more people to be passengers and get fewer automobiles, particularly at peak.

If that means we can save money and not build huge terminals, I think that's smart. It respects us as taxpayers and as ferry commuters. And frankly, it doesn't make a lot of sense to have a nice three-car garage if you don't have a working car to put in it. We should focus on boats that work rather than huge terminals.

But I ask you to continue to look at how we can build boats more affordably. I ask you to look at how we can deal with administration of WSF more affordably. And finally, I just ask you to hear us.

Too often, I think government agencies come out with a preliminary plan, get public input, and then the final plan looks just like the preliminary plan and you haven't heard us. I'm asking you to hear us.

You've got a room full of people who feel very strongly about this. I feel very strongly about this. We want to right the ship. You've got a lot of people in this room who are willing to put their oar in the water and get this boat headed in the right direction.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 10: Thank you. There is little doubt that the State of Washington is looking at some tough times economically. And the typical reaction from Washington State to a

downturn is cut, cut, cut. While cutting the fat away is good, cutting into the meat of a transportation service is the beginning of a death spiral.

It is particularly a death spiral for those holding jobs and need the ferry access from Kitsap to the business centers of Seattle, Bellevue, and Everett.

With the growth enjoyed through the Puget Sound in the past 10 years, including Kingston, Bainbridge, Bremerton, and Port Orchard, this is the time to actually invest in our marine highways with additional ferries for Bremerton and Southworth, not reduce them.

Would you think about reducing the lanes of the 520 Bridge in tough economic times? No. It's time to invest in creating a compelling marine highway system that will continue to support the economics in Kitsap County and expand its position as a valued vacation spot for Washington State.

Expansion of the ferry system to Bremerton, Bainbridge, Kingston, and Port Orchard is more important now than ever before. Not only do we need a 64-car ferry, which you have already contracted for, but it is imperative in the West Sound that we have a 144-car ferry at the same time the 64-car ferry is placed into service. Therefore A and B doesn't work

Cut the meat not the fat (sic). As I said, cut the fat, not the meat. It is time for WSF to start its own internal cost-cutting. This can be achieved by cutting the fat out of

WSF's costs for terminal improvements, used for engineering and designing its own ferries, and used to sustain a bloated procurement process that adds 30 percent to each ferry cost.

Why is WSF spending money on evaluating Bainbridge Island's terminal improvements? Why is WSF spending money on designing ferries internally? Why is a 30-percent increase added to the price of each boat? The State of Washington needs to get out of designing ferries. It's like United Airlines designing an aircraft and asking Boeing to build it.

Furthermore, WSF needs to stop spending money on terminal transit improvements for Bainbridge. The WSF needs to cut costs by strengthening its procurement process. WSF procurement process produces a 180-page procurement document when a typical procurement document for a ferry is 20 pages. Todd Shipyards places a 30-percent hassle factor on each ferry they build because of WSF bloated procurement processes.

Cut the fat, not the meat. Spend the money now on boats that float. We need a 144-car ferry and a 64-car ferry for the West Sound now. Ferries offer a particularly flexible investment in transportation. Unlike fixed roads or mass transit that operates on a fixed infrastructure, ferries can be moved to new routes, can be sold, can be replaced with units of a different size.

A 64-car ferry has limited ability to fill the needs or backup for Bremerton and Kingston. But building a 144-car ferry has a much greater flexibility. You know this, and so do I.

Car-ferry transportation is critical to maintain the economic stability of Kitsap County and the West Sound. Car-ferry facility has a broader access to tourism destinations and locations of all our varied resources. Regionally, many businesses and professionals in the West Sound depend upon car access to Seattle, Edmonds, Everett, and Bellevue population centers.

Do your job, gentlemen.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 11: Hello, gentlemen. I'm just a local commuter. I catch the 4:50 every morning, because I need to be at work at 6 o'clock. If we do Plan B, Plan B does not work. I won't get home to pick up my kids. Daycare closes at a certain time, and it just doesn't work. I mean, that's it. It doesn't work for me at all. And there's many people that ride my same 4:50 that would feel the same.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 12: Hello. I'm Eric Harold. I live in Bremerton here. I don't have anything new to say. I just want to reiterate that I like everything I hear from the people sitting behind me.

It's my understanding that the most immediate cause for our funding distress that we're going through right now occurred when we lost funding from car tabs, things like that; things that we had and that we voted away -- or people voted away. So it's time that we voted back that funding again.

Obviously, things don't come for no money, so we need to put up or shut up as well. I mean, taxes are going to go up

everywhere in the country. I think, here, you can't get more for less. You just can't get it.

This community needs this service to maintain a vibrant and viable Kitsap. Who knows how much it's going to cost to reinstate the ferry system at the time when gasoline and everything, travel by road, becomes prohibitive and then we want to try to do something again. Then we're going to have to try to be catching up to something that we cut off here.

So I hope it doesn't happen. I appreciate your time tonight. Thank you for everybody that came out tonight.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 13: Thank you very much. At first, I wasn't going to come, and then I thought: Well, this is crucial.

I came here in 1994 as a Navy wife. I've used this ferry multiple times, crossing, raising families, going to the University of Washington; and now I work in Seattle for Children's Administration, a very crucial office.

I understand, working for the State, having to come upon this financial crisis, and I'm hoping that maybe we can make a compromise between Plan A and Plan B. Food for thought.

Anyway, I agree with some of my fellow riders here. There has been -- rider capacity is down due to Bremerton not being reliable. As a rider who has used the Kingston, the Bainbridge, and the Bremerton ferry in order to get to my job, I have found that Bremerton is the first to shut down, so I have to always have

an alternate route to go.

The second is that, because of recent changes in our nature, we really do need to have those two car ferries in case of a natural disaster. We need to be able to be there for Seattle in case we need to eliminate (sic) people and move them out of there quickly.

The next thing we need to do: If Bremerton is going to shut down one of the ferries for whatever reason, they need to have Metro be able to transport us to some of the other ferries. So that way, we can get to work. All of us are working families. We have jobs. We have needs too.

Another thing. If you're going to reintroduce the foot ferry and want to take out the car ferry, how about keeping the car ferries during the high-volume times and using the foot ferries when they are not at that high volume, or to supplement?

And if you're going to increase rates, how about giving us in Bremerton a tax -- you know, a bit of a break, so that when we go to pay for our fee, we could show our Washington State driver's license as showing that we're residents here? And that way, we will have a reduced fare. Somehow, some way, we have to come up with a compromise.

And the last thing is that these ferries do reduce traffic. They are part of the Department of Transportation. We do have taxes that are being paid to help us, and we do need to tap into them, and we do need to be assertive in getting that money too.

We're here for tourism, we're here to be able to go to Seattle functions, and we're here to work. You can't take it away. You can't shut us down. We really do need a compromise, perhaps the two.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 14: Good evening. I want to thank you for calling this meeting so we could air our thoughts. I'm very, very distressed at either of these plans, because Plan B is going to be such a huge hit to the State. The ferries are probably the best mass transit across the water.

It's not realistic for us to hop a bus from Bremerton to work in Seattle. So, you know, in the whole state of the economy, with hybrid cars and trying to think about how to conserve gas and conserve resources, the ferry system is the best way for Bremerton and all of us over here to get to Seattle.

Why put us all on the freeway, just to cause more congestion across the freeway and the bridge? It just does not make sense.

I've been riding the ferry for 10 years on every possible run. I've got a day that is very variable. It can be as short as four hours, and it can be as long as 14, 16 hours. I mean, cutting the ferries, as for Plan B, is just -- it's unconscionable. It's absolutely ludicrous.

And if cuts have to be made, and only if they have to be made, they need to be made across the board. You can't save certain runs and say, "Oh, but not you, and everyone else." It

needs to be across the board.

I just think that the ferry system has been so forgotten and lost for so long that we have to do something to stand up and save it. There's been comments that you can cut and cut and cut and, eventually, it's just going to go away, and it's going to cut even people coming from Seattle over here.

So we have got to protect our families. We've got to protect our economic well-being, and that is to keep the ferries running, because they are a huge mass transit across the water.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 15: Good evening. My name is Joan Dingfield. I am a Bremerton commuter, and I have submitted written comments for the record, and I'd like to make sure that they are part of my testimony.

MR. MOSELEY: They will be.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 15: Great. And actually, I would like to say that those written comments really focus on courage as we go forward here. I know I've mentioned this in the past. I was delighted to hear the mayor mention the word "courage," tonight, because the work that you have ahead of you is going to require a great deal of courage.

I am really pleased to see the turnout here in Bremerton tonight. I see many, many, many familiar faces of commuters. Like the last speaker, my schedule varies a lot. I'm on a lot of different boats, and I see a lot of different people, and I think that it's a testament that they are willing to take time out of

what ends up being a very long day to come and share their thoughts tonight. So that's why I would like to give them more time, because I know I've been involved in this process along the way.

But I appreciate Representative Seaquist's willingness to be an activist. And the courage that I am encouraging in my written comments, that the system, which is Washington State Ferries management -- it is the labor leaders that are involved in Washington State Ferries, it is the Transportation Commission, it is the State Legislature, and it is the Governor's office.

I'd like to acknowledge the representatives from almost all of those agencies that are here tonight, including the Governor's office, because I'm glad to hear that you're listening. I think it's very important for the people in this audience tonight to now move forward with a different sort of courage too.

We are going to have to be very active during this next legislative session, to make sure that our voice is heard during this process and that we become a unified and more organized voice. And I am willing to work on that at some time. It is a little hard to find time in the day, and those of you who commute understand that very well. There's not a lot of extra time. But we are going to have to do that.

So I would encourage us all to stay tuned with this during the legislative session. It's going to be very long. These funding issues are going to be very, very complex.

And I appreciate the outreach that you have been doing, but there's a lot more to be done. So thank you very much.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 16: Good evening. Thank you. As a Bremerton resident, I want to support Mayor Bozman and Representative Seaquist and everybody else who has been saying that Plan B is simply unacceptable. I want to disagree with the one person who said we need a compromise between Plan A and Plan B, because, in my mind, that would mean a compromise between the barely acceptable and the totally unacceptable, which, in my view, is not acceptable.

I wanted to thank you. I want to draw attention to an unconscionable statement in the Executive Summary, an unconscionable failure to be realistic. Let me read.

"For the last 10 years, the Legislature has filled the funding gap created by the I-695 budget cuts by allocating transportation funds to WSF that would have otherwise supported the highway system." This is nonsense. WSF is part of the highway system, and an essential part of the highway system.

I think, particularly, if you take away nighttime service in Bremerton, you're going to have a devastating effect on quality of life here. You're going to make it very hard to attract the kind of residents and workers to this community that will gradually continue to improve the community the way it's been improved over the last few years.

You have to consider, also, the environmental effects of

this, because, certainly, there will be, I would imagine, quite a number of persons like myself, who go into Seattle for evening activities. And if we can't get a car ferry back -- I need my car when I'm in Seattle for physical reasons and for reasons of flexibility. And if I can't get a ferry back to Bremerton, I'm going to end up either driving around Tacoma Narrows or taking the Bainbridge ferry and driving a great many more miles and polluting the atmosphere and filling up Route 305 and so forth.

This community, under Mayor Bozman's leadership, has made enormous strides forward. Anything like Plan B would be to take it many more strides back. Think about all the people who we hope will inhabit the new apartments that have been built on the waterfront here with the idea that we can have people here who can step onto a ferry and work in Seattle. What are those people going to do, if they exist? And I think that it's absolutely unacceptable that the State should consider diminishing the quality of life for a significant segment of its residents.

If more money has to be found for this, then more money must be found for this. I'm not going to say -- as a member of the public, I feel -- as somebody quite well-known said in another context recently, I'm not going to tell you where I think it can come from. I think that's above my pay grade. But somebody should do it.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 17: I cannot pretend to be as

eloquent as people before me. I agree with everything except a compromise between Plan A and Plan B. And when somebody says, as it was noted in yesterday's "Kitsap Sun," that we don't have any money, that stops any conversation.

As the gentleman before me said, I hope you will listen. Well, I hope you hear what everyone is saying to you and not just sit there and absorb and go back and do what you think you want to do.

Bremerton is my ferry. It's the ferry I take all the time, to go to work and to go to play. Plan A is insufficient because, if I don't take the 10:30, I'm stuck with the 12:50, and that's silly. It's absolutely absurd.

Plan B is just humiliating for anybody in Olympia to have even thought of writing. It's as if Bremerton is Cinderella with a couple of evil stepmothers and a slew of evil stepfathers.

I would like to see that changed. I would like to see the golden chariot come and have Cinderella go in her pumpkin and have a little bit of orange on the next ferry in Bremerton.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 18: My name is Robert McConkey. I'm a long-time business person. I've lived in Bremerton for 30 years. My wife takes the ferry every day to work in Seattle. And I think there's been a lot of really good stuff here, and I'm glad that you're here listening to us.

I'd like to echo what Mayor Bozman has said and what Larry

Seaquist has said. I think there's really been some good stuff said here tonight.

But I want to also bring up a couple really important things. I think one of the things that was missed was that, when we voted for I-695, the message that we were trying to say was not that we want to cut off the ferry system. The message that we were trying to say as voters is, we want to be more efficient and more creative and have a better utilization of the money. And we, as ferry riders, have seen, for years and years, such a waste of money in the ferry system itself that we're irate, okay?

And when we see these things put together and we see Bremerton -- pardon my French, but sucking the rear tit -- because they are. When we cut a ferryboat, we cut it from the Bremerton run. Why the Bremerton run? That's the big question. So it's an equitable system. If we cut money, we cut things equitably across the board.

Okay, just one or two other points. The inequitable part of Plan B, the inequitable cutting of the Bremerton run is something that I just want to speak vehemently against. And I echo the sentiments: Neither one of these plans work. We need to come up with a plan that is equitable. We need to come up with a plan that is actionable.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 19: Good evening. One of the reasons I moved to Bremerton was that they did have a ferry system

and it would work with where I'm working and what I do. It's a trust that I put in the State, that that system would be there through the entire time I work. I believe that I could be forced to move or find a different job. And that applies to a lot of other people.

And I also think that there's a real flaw in the study. It says in there that only one-third of the people take the ferry to go to work, and two-thirds of the people take it discretionarily. I tell you, the ferries I take, two-thirds of the people are not taking it as a discretionary trip. They're going to work. They have to be there.

I don't know where that methodology came from or how that number came about, but it is unbelievable. I cannot believe that two-thirds of the people are not going to work but are using the ferry for something else.

I also believe it would be very damaging to the local economy and all of us. And I also believe that the State that complains about the federal government passing mandates down to them is willing to do the same thing to the counties. I mean, the Governor spoke about the federal government doing that to her, and yet the same State is willing to do that to Kitsap County.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 20: Good evening. Thank you for being here. I'm fairly new to the Bremerton area, about a year here. I'm an active commuter; take the ferry three to four times

a week. Also commute regularly to Portland, Oregon, on the Amtrak train. And would you believe that Amtrak is reporting record commuters? There are so many commuters between Seattle and Portland now, it's amazing. And many of us come over here on a ferry.

Sometimes I get off the train, and I come in around 10:00 p.m.; come over to the ferry terminal. I walk 10 minutes, sit down, buy my ticket or have my pass, and I'm amazed and mystified. A huge ferry is waiting out there, and there are only about 25 people getting on. And I scratch my head and say: Why can't we be more economical here?

Maybe the last ferry at night could be the walk-on ferry. There aren't very many trucks and cars going on at that hour. So one idea is: How about scheduling some of the smaller ferries -- the 64, you say, or whatever the numbers are, and being creative in scheduling?

I'm looking at this little schedule, your schedule. Why not advertise on here which ferries are which? So if I'm a trucker and I wanted to get over to Bremerton from Seattle, I know that I've got to get the 7:50 or the 6:45 or the 9:05, but forget the 10:30 or the 12:50, because it probably won't accommodate my tractor-trailer or truck.

This thing is not helpful. It doesn't tell me which ferries are which. It tells me the time, but how about defining sizes? That could help truckers, business people, commuters.

I regularly come in late. I leave early. So there is a need for regular commuting. I agree with some of the people here, that the morning ferries are packed and should be continued. The later evening ferries could be variable.

In Portland, Oregon, the TriMet bus system has downsized their buses, because, at night, you've got a huge bus with one or two people on it. So now they've shrunken the bus to about two-thirds the size, and it's running biofuel.

So creative scheduling, variable ferry sizes. And how about ferry love? What do I mean by that? We have a lot of people who love boats and the nautical life here. I don't know if this is a violation of union rules, but why not employ volunteers to help out? Cut your overhead. People talk about the overhead and the staffing of the Washington State Ferry system. Why not employ some volunteers to do things that are not critical, that are not, you know, requiring Coast Guard approval, etcetera?

Be creative. I love ferries. I would volunteer maybe three hours a week to do something. You know, maybe helping with paperwork. And I'm sure a bunch of folks in here would.

And another thing is, to add to what the gentleman just said before, I'm mystified by the statistic about commuting versus discretionary. I see so many commuters. I'm one of them. I do not believe, in this economy, that commuting is downsizing. And rather, once President Barack Obama takes office, we're going to see an increase in the need for mass transit. I just wrote to

Senator --

Okay. Anyway, I do object to both of these budgets and hope that you will listen to the people in this room. Commuting is very important to this area.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 21: Thank you very much for hearing us. I'm here to represent some of the business owners. I am a business person in Bremerton. Thank you so much to everybody for coming.

I have a plan too. It's not Plan A, it's not Plan B. But my office is currently way up on Kitsap Way, and, next week, I'll be signing a lease for office space right down here in downtown Bremerton.

One of the main reasons I'm moving my office here is because of the ferries. I need access, and I need access on a regular basis. Any cut to the system whatsoever would impact my business. Sorry. I'm a little bit nervous.

So please, hear our voices. There's a way of life here in Kitsap County that we also want to protect, and it's very, very important to us, and the ferries are part of that.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 22: Hi. I just want to say I'm here for one reason: because my voice has not been heard over the past few years. My husband and I have written many emails, and there was one email that got put into one of your annual reports, and it was a correction to your schedule. You called Bremerton

"Bainbridge." And we wrote numerous emails giving ideas and giving our input. I didn't have time to personally attend some of the meetings.

I want to say that this is the tip of the iceberg. I'm not thankful that this many people came out, because I want you to see reality. There's many, many more people that do not know the impact that it is going to have on their lives. They're too busy making their day-to-day living.

Nobody is really -- they've kind of touched on this subject tonight, that, in this age, when everybody should be concerned about the environment, our carbon footprint is very important. And we, as responsible commuters for our employer, were rewarded for commuting by the ferry and by walking and by bicycling and all these options.

We can't bicycle around Tacoma and then go back up to Seattle. And it is not practical for us, in the dark, to bicycle to Bainbridge Island, okay? I live in Central Kitsap, and it's responsible for us to be able to have a ferry to go to work.

Now, you have mentioned the two goalposts in your speech when you opened the session tonight, as if this is the parameters we have to work in. And I agree with Mayor Bozman, that this is unacceptable, that this should not be the only parameters that we need to work within. There should be other options.

In the past, you have not listened to us, and many people gave up and they did not try to speak to you, because you weren't

listening. We did not have a discussion. We had a one-sided mandate that was unfunded.

And that's why I'm speaking tonight, solely because there is a court reporter, and my words will get into the system for sure, okay?

And in revenue. As someone mentioned earlier tonight, the vote has failed twice. So there's other options that have not been explored. My husband wrote emails about advertising. Now, I don't see, online or in this report anywhere, where you have even taken into consideration the revenue that could be brought on by advertising.

Why do we have to constantly give you options? As someone else said, it's above our pay grade. We can help. We can give you ideas. But there's many people -- this came upon us so suddenly that we didn't have a chance to really prepare.

So please, I would only -- I would ask that you do not -- this is unacceptable, and that you do give us more time and that you come up with viable plans, outside of those parameters, that are acceptable to Kitsap County and all of the people that do commute.

And the study is flawed. It is not showing that the study -- nobody can believe -- anybody -- you can make a study and make it say whatever you want. But take an accurate study of the real commuters in this county.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 23: Hello. This is the first meeting I've ever attended, and I'm doing so because I'm just irate. I have been riding this ferry, for four years now, into downtown Seattle every day, most days and Saturdays. I'm a tax accountant. I have to take late ferries during January through April.

And the reason you say there's not enough commuters is because you're taking the surveys on Saturdays. I've witnessed that on several occasions. All the people who ride on Saturdays are joy riders and families going to do their fun thing. I asked the ferry workers why they weren't doing it on Monday or didn't announce the survey, and they had no response for me.

Also, I get irate when, if a boat goes down on another run, who takes the fall? Bremerton. Bainbridge is never affected. If Vashon/Fauntleroy lose a boat, we give them the boat, and we're stuck with waiting two hours for boats or sitting so close to people that we can't even breathe on the boats.

So I don't know where you're getting your answers as far as there's no commuters, because you've just not -- you don't want to hear from us. You ask us on Saturdays when none of us are riding. I just work on Saturday, so I can catch you guys.

Also, you know, many people -- this is their livelihood, this is their job. If they don't have this ferry, they can't work, they can't support their family.

You say there's a big budget gap, but what happens if all

these people lose their jobs and then all that money goes away?  
So I don't really understand.

Students go to class via the ferry. All I ever see are students and commuters. People going to the hospitals in Seattle. I mean, that's a big thing too. People getting cancer treatment in Seattle. They can't do that if they don't have a ferry.

The late-night runs would cut out any entertainment in Seattle and people who have hourly jobs, or me, who work till midnight sometime.

So I just want to say that, you know, there are commuters riding these boats. You're just not paying attention to them. And people need this for their jobs.

Thanks.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 24: Okay, the first thing I would ask is, before you even think about a reservation system, figure out what you're going to do with the cars. If you've never been down to the Seattle terminal on a Friday evening, especially in the summer, please go there, because, if the terminal isn't already gridlocked, meaning no more cars can get in, there's a mile-plus-long backup just trying to get your ticket to get through the turnstiles.

So even if you have a reservation, you're not getting on the boat, because you can't get there. And unfortunately, the State has no plans to change any of the traffic for getting to the ferry terminal.

As far as the statistics go, I've been starting to look at some of the rider statistics on the per-run basis, and there isn't much of a difference from 2006 to 2008 on the commuter runs.

I'm on those runs. There's no way that there's been a 1-percent increase. It was probably something more along the lines of 10 to 20 percent from last year, over two years ago, just because of the rise in gas. So I don't know what's wrong, but somewhere -- you know, 2006 might be wrong and 2008 is probably more accurate, but the statistics aren't correct.

I'd also ask you guys to go back and look at the size of the boats. Chelan capacity is rated for 1049. I counted the seats: 850 inside. So, you know, I look at the other boats and it kind of looks the same way. There's not as many seats on the inside as they show on the Web site so, if you're planning around that, you're going to be short seats.

As far as the rest, in 2011, it reduces down to one boat. We'll have a superboat. That gives us 144 cars. By 2011, that's leaving 50 to 75 cars on deck, not getting to the other side, waiting two and a half hours for the next boat. You still have the capacity for the people.

Now, leaving Bremerton, you're going to have boats leaving at approximately 5:30 in the morning, 8:00 in the morning, 11:30 in the morning, which means all of the commuters have to try to pack on the 5:30 a.m. boat to get to Seattle by 6:30. Otherwise, they're stuck getting into Seattle by 9:00.

And again, as to night service, you start canceling night service -- that's going to drive more cars onto the ferries, because people aren't going to be able to depend on getting a ferry trip on the way back to this side. Because, on this side, the Kitsap Transit Service stops at about 9:00 p.m., so there is no transit option on this side after night.

In 2013, you're going to reduce that down to the Kitsap: 124 cars, 1200 passengers. That's leaving 90 to 100 cars on deck. That's leaving, you know, a couple hundred passengers behind, more than likely, waiting two and a half hours for the next boat.

2030, you know, somewhere in there, you'll get another boat, bump it up to 1500 passengers, 144-car capacity. Well, unfortunately, you're still running at 100 percent on the passengers, if not more; and you're still leaving 130 to 140 cars on the Seattle side, for example, where you don't have the capacity today.

So I've really got to ask if all that's been taken into account, because, to me, this is looking like nothing more than like a mortal death wound to the Bremerton run. If you make it so unpalatable to us, people will stop using it and, by 2034 or 2050, you're going to go, "Well, God, you know, it's like half the users of just 20 years ago. Let's start canceling the run, because it's no longer making sense to run it."

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 25: Okay, I'm not going to thank you for coming because that's your job. You get paid for it. But

I would like you to actually hear what we have to say, because you guys listen a lot, but you don't do anything about it.

I've been commuting for 11 years now, and, when I first began commuting, the 6:25 was so short of seats people were sitting on the floor, in the aisleways, out on the deck. Have you noticed it rains here? Yeah. Not -- that's not conducive to good commuting.

It's not very handicapped-safe. We have to preboard so we don't get run over. And do you know why we get run over? Because people are running for seats. Oh, that's right; those seats you say that are empty. Yeah, I fail to notice that on the 4:50, the 6:20, and the 7:20. Yep, those boats are full.

Those boats are full for a reason: because we do not have livable jobs over here. We are raising families. We are raising children who will be the next voters, who will be the next taxpayers. What you're asking for is for Kitsap County to take a decline in our economy, a raise in unemployment. That's what will happen.

I work for a corporation, a major corporation. I'm just a cog, a little peg that goes around. They don't care that you cut our boats. I have to be there at 6:00 a.m. I barely make it, because your boats don't run on time.

You want to know how thrilled I was last Friday when I came in and heard it twice? "We're sorry, but the first sailing from Bremerton will be the 6:20." Okay, where is that email at 3:00 a.m.? Do you know what time that email got to us? 5:15. When we

emailed and complained, do you know what the response was? "We sent it in a timely manner." You sent it after the boat would have already been gone, okay? Is that efficient? I don't think so.

So if you put as much efficiency into your planning as you do into actually running these boats, I'm really scared. And, you know, what will happen is, we'll be driving around, and if anyone has ever driven with me, you do not want me on the road. I'm barely awake when I get to the Kitsap County transit center, and I've drove here, all right? And I am a hazard. I know this. That's why I take the ferry and a bus, because driving around is hard, which I did on Friday. But thankfully, I was so angry I had enough adrenaline to get there. I took a lot of people with me who were also coming here because they did not get that notice.

All right. So, gentlemen, I would like you to go back to the board, because neither one of these options are acceptable; neither one. I don't think you've done your research.

There are extremely ill people that travel there every day, that the bus picks them up in front of the ferry terminal to take them to their hospital visits. Can you do any less? Are you going to condemn them to dying or moving? Because you know what I'm already looking at? I'm saying, "Bremerton is a dead town. I'm going to have to move."

Unfortunately, I have two terminally ill parents that I help take care of. And so does my sister and so do my brothers. Well,

we will move before I sit here and have no runs. But you know what I also think, and I hope the people here behind me can support me -- let's see how Bainbridge likes it when we all take their ferry. So I propose, for the next two weeks, we all carpool together and besiege their boats. Don't be passive. Take a stand.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 26: Good evening. I have been commuting by bus and ferry for 21 years, so I've been riding the boat since the 6:30 was a 6:30--now it's a 6:20--and when the 7:20 used to be the 7:50. And the 7:50 was, you know, kind of empty at that time, where you could just have your choice of seats.

But now, as the years have gone by, it has been packed. I've seen it get crowded over the years. I mean, 21 years. That's a lot of years, okay? That's -- I've seen it all. I've seen all three terminals, all the construction. I've seen Kitsap Transit cut our buses so they could fund a Kingston passenger-only ferry dock that's not in use. You know, I've been to their meetings also.

I used to not drive a car because I was able just to catch a bus and catch the ferry. But then, when they cut us back, then I had to get a car, because Kitsap Transit caters to people with cars. And so then we get to take a park & ride. If you want to ride a regular commuter bus to the ferry, you had to pick them up at a park & ride.

And now the ferries -- no, for me, since I never took the

passenger-only, hardly ever, they were usually always on time for me. But when you're going to cut off a ferry, you are cutting my work.

I mean, it's not feasible for me, nor can I afford, to move to Seattle. I can't. I mean, right now, my job pays for my commute. I just pay a little bit over the hundred. Before, it used to be absolutely free but, because it's gone up and up and up, now I pay some money for it -- my pass.

But if you have Kitsap Transit doing their little passenger-only boats, you know those prices are going to be jacked. And I think, when they were running before, it was eight bucks one way and eight bucks another. I'm not paying that. That's pathetic.

And when we want to -- so I'll have to either take an earlier boat and then stay later, robbing my time with my grandchildren and my parents, who -- that's my sister. That was Lisa. I mean, I'll have to stay longer in Seattle, you know. I probably won't even get paid for it, because, like she said, our employers don't care that you guys cut our boats.

I mean, and we'll be -- if we all move, that will be robbing us of revenue, like the other people said. Our kids will leave. There will be no more people in the schools. If we left, there would be some people.

You know, I'll be spending all my money in Seattle if I move, which I probably won't be able to. I'll probably be unemployed,

so I'll be getting unemployment. Oh, then I'll have welfare and food stamps. All righty then, you know. Then maybe I can volunteer to work on the ferry.

Anyway, I just -- I think -- I agree with Mayor -- with the Mayor. Both plans are just horrible, and you do need to go back to the drawing board.

Oh, another thing. Okay. Real fast, this is a public transportation system. It should not be a business. It should be a nonprofit organization. The water is a highway. What, do you want to put tolls on all of our highways? Hello. But anyway, it should not be a business. It should be nonprofit.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 27: Good evening. I'm not from Kitsap County; I'm from Mason County. Your actions don't only impact Kitsap County, they impact a number of counties on this side of the water. I was born and raised in Bremerton, and some of us think there hasn't been a decent ferry since the Kalakala. Some of you don't remember the Kalakala.

And I understand that this not a question-and-answer session, so, probably, my questions will be rhetorical, but wouldn't it be fun to see hands go up in the front if you can answer these questions?

Who developed these plans? And how many of those who developed these plans commute on the ferry every day? This is part of the highway system. Our tax dollars should pay a heavier amount of the cost of this because it is part of the system and

our ferries aren't really much more than just floating buses, and it would be very nice to have those buses floating on time and very often.

So I thank you for being here tonight. I'm still somewhat skeptical that what is said will make a difference, because I think you come in, probably, with plans already formulated and decided. Nevertheless, thank you for being here, and I sure hope you'll listen to people on this side of the Sound. And, once in a while, why don't you take a whole week and commute every day on the ferry?

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 28: Good evening, gentlemen. Thank you for coming to listen to the commuters' voices. Often, we find that they're not heard.

I wanted to give you a few numbers, because you've provided many to us. I've commuted on this boat for 11 years. I've done the math. That equates to 4500 hours. Equating out, that's 188 days, which equates to 6.27 months of my life on this boat, straight.

What is my return on investment? Dirty ferries, rude ferry workers, inappropriate ferry schedules, cancellations without notices, and an inconvenience on my life and the commuters in this room.

I've commuted with many of these people in this room. I know these faces. I see them every day. I see the inconvenience it imposes on our lives and our families, our children. What I'm

asking is for you guys to take a step back and look at the real plan. You guys need to look at the people, not what may be in the best interest of your budgets.

I ask you to commute on this boat, just like the gentleman before me, for a week, to get an understanding of what we live through every day, day in and day out. Crowded ferries, hot ferries. I know these guys can attest to that. Cold ferries in the winter, hot ferries in the summer. The service is deplorable, it is horrible. I just -- I'm echoing the sentiments of the people behind me.

And I just want to know what our return on investment is. You know, it's all about a return on investment. I spend thousands of dollars on this commute. I bring my income here to invest in this community, to invest in my children's education, and to invest in a place I love.

And with this commute -- my 18-year-old daughter is leaving for college next year, and you know what? I'm thinking about moving, because I see this going downhill, as it has the last 11 years. And it's not going to get better, and I would just ask you to show us if it can get better, and show us it will get better.

That's all I have to say. Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 29: Hello. Thank you for coming. I too want to echo what pretty much everyone else here has said. I don't think we have heard one person here who has approved of Plan A, B, or whatever. They're just too ridiculous. They're

beyond comprehensible. I, too, think that, if you actually did travel for even just one week on this ferry commute, that you, too, would realize that.

And I agree with the statistics, with the one-third. I can look back, and I see people -- probably 90 percent of the people I see every day, coming to and/or from work.

I take the 4:50 in the morning, the 6:20, the 7:20. I have a variable schedule. I need to be flexible. I can't have runs cut, or I can't make it to work. And it's just -- it's really wearing. It's just -- it's really not a good plan. Either one of them are not good plans, and it's just not okay.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 30: Well, thanks for being here. If there ever was a good time to kill the ferries, this would be it. My name is Daryn Swisher. I moved to Bremerton in 1980 and grew up here, so I've already seen Bremerton die once in the '80s; don't want to see it again.

I'm a real-estate agent here, and I promote communities, and then I go out and find houses for people. I've heard it time and time again that, having a quick overwater connection is integral to this very community dependence to be successful.

Let's see. I'm also on the Bremerton Advisory Committee for ferries, and we absolutely -- I absolutely oppose Option A, oppose Option B, and support Option C. We urge the State to fully fund the ferries as a State highway, as it is, and pay for it with the existing gas tax and increased box revenues by enhancing the

service that you provide and truly reflect the demand that's here in Kitsap for both passengers and autos.

We've got a tunnel, great ingress, great egress. The citizens of Kitsap built a great place to be a passenger-only pickup spot and then turn it back over to the State. We're here; we're ready. It's important. It's crucial for our economic development.

I was just talking, outside, with Jamie, and she said that she had heard that 51 businesses had recently closed in the last few years here in Bremerton. And I know, from the people that I'm talking to, that it's tough.

A 30-minute connection that is quick and consistent is really important. It's obvious economic stimulus. Just look at Winslow -- or Bainbridge. It's critical.

Median house prices are also roughly \$100,000 less here on the west side. So providing a mass-transit solution, you also provide affordable housing opportunities to Washington State businesses that are struggling to be globally competitive. That's important.

A quick, convenient connection to Seattle offers the youth in town here, and in Kitsap also, an opportunity to compete and earn competitive wages besides just be left with the opportunity to work in the Navy or as PSNS or in the medical or service industries.

As the clean-tech industry and the alternate-energy sectors

become more economically feasible, let's catch on and grow with that. I mean, we could provide long-term contracts to Eastside farmers to provide biodiesel for our biodiesel initiatives; growing economic opportunities besides the internal combustion engines.

I mean, we've had talk of economic- and energy- development projects here. Well, let's look at pairing with academia and look at electric-motor technologies that are starting to emerge. It might not be feasible right away, but long-term.

So in short, projects here in Kitsap. We need you guys to keep the commitments, also, to the downtown developers who have heard, pledged, seen that we're going to have all this stuff waiting. We need to keep rolling with revitalizing our waterfront communities.

If you check out history, Washington -- this is off your Web site -- Washington State recognizes that ferries were a lifeline for many communities, and there was a need for reliable ferry service to meet growing demand in 1951. After numerous discussions with the State Legislature, over fares and service, Puget Sound Navigation Company sold all the terminal facilities and ferries, with the exception of the Port Angeles/B.C. route, for 5 million, to the newly created Washington Toll Bridge Authority, now known as the Washington State Ferries.

Please keep that commitment. Please fully fund the ferry system. And if you need to look outside of Washington to get

competitive rates on vessels, please do. Keep the service fully funded and better boats. Run it like a business and the service that it is, please.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 31: Good evening. I'm Alan Newberg, and I'm an artist and a business person in Bremerton. And I'm also a user of the ferry. I am not a commuter, but I do use the ferry frequent times. So a few things that I find are very important.

I moved to Kitsap County and Bremerton in 1989. And in that period of time, from then until now, the population of Kitsap County has increased by 100,000. We're approaching a quarter of a million people in this county.

During that same period of time, the ferry service to Bremerton has declined repeatedly. When I first moved to this state and this county, the big news was that we were getting passenger-only ferries as part of the ferry system. And we all know what happened to that. That went away. The first year, it wasn't even -- there was no staff to run the boats, which was kind of disconcerting.

So what we've seen is an increase in population. I think we can pretty much anticipate that the population of this county will continue to increase over time. We need more service, not less, much along the lines of what Larry Seaquist spoke of.

And what's important to me is the schedule, so I'd like to

have the schedule be reliable. One of the things I do is, I run a concert series. It used to be that I had people come from Seattle to my concerts that I scheduled. And then suddenly, if they missed the 9 o'clock ferry, they had to wait till 11:40 before they could get a ride back to Seattle.

Guess what happened to my Seattle clients. They stopped coming. Not to mention my Seattle musicians, who have difficulty getting to my gigs to perform them. And so this is a very major thing.

If I go to an event in Seattle and I miss the 10 o'clock, it's almost 1 o'clock before I can get a boat. Then it's an hour ride before I can get back here. We need a regular schedule so that there's a boat at least every hour.

Thank you very much.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 32: Hi. I'm glad to see your faces. I knew the names. I didn't know the faces. Now I do.

I live over here in Kitsap. I just bought a house in Minette. I commute every day. I work for a large aircraft manufacturing company. If I'm not in Everett, I'm in Seattle. If I'm not in Seattle, I'm in Renton.

I've got to have a means to get to and from my work. I had to quit working first shift because the boats are just hosed. They never run when they're supposed to. Or the backup is so excessive that I have to wait, and I end up getting to work an hour and a half, two hours late. Boss didn't like it, so now I've

got to work second shift. I took off four hours so I could come here and look at your faces.

The part I'm having a hard time with is those damn Wave-To-Go passes. I got those Wave-To-Go passes to try to make it easy for me to account for the funds I need to have every month so I can pay for the passes so I can get on the boats so I can go to my work and employment so I can make the money to pay for the passes so I can get on the boat. You get the picture.

They expire. What's with that? I've got two of them: one for my car, one for my fiancée's car. I've got a motorcycle one. I've got two passenger youth cards for my kids, okay? They expire. My motorcycle one is in my wallet, and I guess the only thing it's good for is to sit on.

The other aspect I have with you people is that, when the summertime gets here, all the looky-loos come over from the Eastside, and they want to come over here and look at the mountains and pet the birds and do all the stuff, but they don't -- you people don't take it into consideration, the fact that the commuters have to get to work. And so we have to get in line, get a ticket from the Washington State Patrol and, hopefully, we get on one of the ferries.

I have to ride my motorcycle every day to and from work. Whether it rains, whether it's sunny, whether it's a beautiful day, I have to ride it just to get on the ferry so I can get in front of everybody. And that, to me, is -- the safety issues come

in. I'm not going to get into it.

But the way I get back at you people, obviously, is when we have the Oyster Run. All of us get on there all at once, and all the guys in the cars sit there with curled-up lips, because they can't understand how all the motorcycles get on first.

That's the only way we can get back at you guys, because you don't have enough scheduling -- the scheduling doesn't reflect the people who use the ferries. It reflects how much bling-bling you guys can save.

And you make the boats -- you know, I was in the Navy. I worked on aircraft carriers. I know what it takes to run a boat. It's not easy stuff. But when you have your ferry workers standing around, walking around, or sitting in the office when they should be out there chipping paint when the boats are under power -- those are the things they need to do.

I'm going to stay here in Kitsap and, if I have to move back to Seattle, I will, but I don't want to. I want to stay here. I love this community, and I bought the house. I intend to live here and retire here. But I need the ferry in order to make the picture whole for me. I'm sure many of the people here do.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 33: Gentlemen, thank you for being here. I make my living in sales and, in sales, I'm constantly being rejected, I'm constantly being hammered on. People are telling me "no, no, no" all day long. You guys have a tough job.

Most of us here would not want to be in your shoes. I feel like I have some appreciation and respect for that, and I just want to acknowledge that, okay?

I moved to Bremerton, I believe, in '99, and I did so because I wanted to buy a house and I couldn't afford a house on the other side. Things were booming at the time, and I just assume a lot of people did that. So dependence on the ferry system was very important.

And at that time, I actually attended a meeting. The passenger-service fares were going to rise at that time. And it was really curious to me at the time why the constituency that seemed to be able to least afford it would be the one that was asked to bear the cost, and why there was no, really, consideration of raising fares on Bainbridge.

In my work, I'm constantly being asked to find the money, so it seems to me the situation that you're faced with, ultimately, really is a political question. So I have some suggestions, and these might seem to be a little tongue in cheek. And I do so, really, with no disrespect for your position, because you're in a tough position. Nor do I do so with any disrespect for what's been said here, because I agree with the sentiments. But maybe there's a nugget in what I have to say here.

So here's a suggestion. The suggestion would be to change Plan B -- the first suggestion. And the change of Plan B would simply be to take a boat, one boat, off of the Bainbridge run.

And, of course, that would not be an option politically, I think. So really, the only alternative would be to go to Plan A, okay?

Another suggestion would be to take a Bainbridge boat, one Bainbridge boat, off of Plan B and Plan A, and that, of course, would force Plan C because, politically, it would not be an option.

Now, of course, with this, what we would need to do is make sure that everybody in Kitsap County received notification of this, and, on the back of that, there would be the proper representatives, if they weren't happy with the plan, that they could write to, with a self-addressed stamped envelope so that they could send it in.

What I'm trying to get at is, it's curious to me -- of course, you probably have statistics that can back up why the Bainbridge boat should be kept and why the other should not, but I'm sure there's also some way to justify this, some fairness doctrine or statistic. I'm sure that it could be done, because, if you want to find the money and the Legislature is pressured, they'll find the money.

Now, this probably isn't -- the next point is not maybe addressed to you, but the next time we have a vote for Kitsap County for a passenger ferry, we've got to throw Bainbridge a bone, people. I don't know what we throw them, but throw something in there so they'll vote for it, okay?

Another suggestion is to think of -- it seems to me one of

the greatest assets that Washington State has are the ferries. People love, from all across the country, to ride the ferries. So what if you were to serve gourmet meals as a loss leader, get the advertising out there, the tourism council out there, and make it something that people want to do? There's 300 million people in this country. If we get a small percentage of them, pack every ferry, that might solve some of your problems.

Again, I respect your position. Thank you for being here.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 34: Good evening. My name is Jeff Kerneen, and I've lived in Bremerton for about the last 15 years. First off, I do want to acknowledge the fact that you both have a very difficult task tonight. You get to sit there and take a whole bunch of arrows from people who are mad, and you really don't get to defend yourselves. So for that, please, if I say something that offends you, please don't take it personally.

The first thing I'd like to say is, I would really like to see the ferry system and the State stop blaming I-695, okay? It was overturned by the courts. It doesn't exist. Yes, the Legislature made the decision to cut car tabs, which did reduce your ferry funding. That's just kind of the way it is.

I've worked for many organizations, and I've been tasked with running those organization, and the simple fact is, every day I go to work, and I have to face two issues. One is: Am I getting the revenues I need to run the organization? And the second thing is: What are my expenses to run the organization?

I'm a true believer that the State Ferry system is efficient in virtually no way. I have literally seen crew members on your boats come out of the crew cabins with sleeping marks on their faces. Things are not getting cleaned. The bathrooms are horrendously dirty.

When it rains or when it snows, and they're supposed to be the safety people who are manning the rail on the ramp, they're hidden away in the corner, under the overhang so, that way, if somebody does have an accident, well, I guess they get to force their way through the crowd to get to that person who had an accident. If they're going to be part of the Inland Boatman's Union and they're going to be on that ferry and they're in charge of safety, they need to be out there doing that.

They don't do any of the things that you think they're doing. Trust me. I've been managing employees at companies for almost 20 years. You can always tell when an employee is not doing what they're doing (sic) if you just go to where the work is being done; do the observation.

I think a lot of people said some very, very profound things tonight about: Just ride the ferry for a week. You will be amazed at the things that you see.

I think the other thing, too, is that the ferry system is being held hostage by many special-interest groups. And unfortunately, and shame on us, the ones that are speaking, as I guarantee you that we have not put enough pressure on our local

legislatures to get us the funding. Because I guarantee you the Clinton run -- it gets all the funding it needs, because it's got Mary Margaret Househager as a chair of that commission -- of that committee. And they always get the funding. Isn't it amazing how that boat's -- always got two boats? And it's a 20-minute run. I find that just fascinating.

The other thing that I think, is, the ferry system needs leadership. I mean, I'm sorry. I just have not seen one ounce of leadership from the Washington State Ferries. And it is about making things happen. It's not about having a planning meeting after a planning meeting after a planning meeting. It's about getting things done. And getting things done means you have your planning meeting, or maybe two, you assign action items, and you do it and you get it done. And you're going to fail. There's no way that anyone could think you're not going to fail.

Well, let me just wrap it up real quick by saying: If you really want to know how bad it is, ride the 5:30 ferry from Seattle to Bremerton on the hottest day in August. You have a tinderbox waiting to happen. And that is not a joke. I have seen a lot of things happen that, if it wasn't for a few people with cool heads, it would turn into a full-scale riot. That's how bad it is.

So good luck to you, and I hope you can implement some of these recommendations tonight.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 35: Howdy. I've been on the

ferries for a while. I remember riding on the Kalakala and some of those other fellows way back when, and even boats with long smokestacks and black smoke. And yeah, the ferries, in the beginning -- fewer, farther between, the schedules less usable, and so on.

But looking over your report, or whatever this thing is that I have in my pocket, it's clear that one of the issues that we're dealing with here is a systemic issue that is not at a State level.

This is an international issue. We have a global economic crisis at hand. We have a new government that has been elected that's moving into the scene. These fellows think they're going to take some of my money and give it to everybody and get a much better situation somehow; or at least save us from having to go through the first global economic depression.

And because it's our money -- or my money, I suggest that we make a direct appeal, through our -- not our legislators, but our Congressmen and Senators, for support under the economic stimulus package.

There are a number of different things that we can appeal to, including new suggestions for propulsion, which I've heard earlier, which would perhaps be under the environmental portion, for a need.

Another is quite clear. We've heard it many times. These ferries are an important part of the economy here, and the economy

is being depressed by the ferries being removed.

So certainly, I think we fit under the basic tenets of the packages. I've heard it expressed that we don't have a package yet. If we're going to sleep and wait till they come up with a package and say, "Here it is," we're going to be too late. We have to be out of the foxhole before the bell goes off.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 36: Thank you very much for coming. As a professional engineer who rides the ferry to work, along with several others, we very much depend upon this marine highway in order for us to do highway and transit projects for the greater area.

I think it would be an understatement, though, to say that -- you know, it's the Legislature that directed you to reconnect with your customers. From what I've heard tonight, there's a serious disconnect with your customers on the West Sound.

I'd also like to point out that the Legislature says that you're supposed to "implement adaptive strategy while continuously improving the quality and timeliness of services." Plan A and Plan B, from an engineering standpoint, are obvious failures in engineering to do just that. You need a different plan.

I could, like many people, complain about the fact that those of us who live in Bremerton and provide highly technical professional service in Seattle are second citizens compared to those who live on Bainbridge Island. My wife has, several times,

in order for me to make a meeting when a ferry was inadvertently out of service, drove me like a mad rabbit up to Bainbridge to catch the ferry there, because I could get to the other side 30 minutes faster and, on my Blackberry, I could postpone a meeting about 30 minutes.

That took a lot of scrambling. Fortunately, she's driving, I'm talking. Not everyone here has that ability. I also have the ability to tell my employer, "Get lost. I'm going to retire." That's a large amount of money that, instead of coming to Kitsap County and the State of Washington, would go to an office in Seattle -- or excuse me, in St. Louis or in Tampa.

There are many professionals who are in that position. We live here because we love the West Sound. We very much appreciate working in a major metropolitan area, such as Seattle, and we very, very much appreciate the ferry system.

I'm a retired naval officer. I love that ferry. I very much appreciate the fact that you have tables on the ferry. I work there. I get a lot done.

And so I really think that you have, to put it bluntly, failed in coming up with a plan that the Legislature, who is a political animal, would be willing to put into practice to service those of us who are both your customers and also the voters who have to come up with the approval for what the Legislature is going to do.

I could be, perhaps, tongue in cheek, as some others, and

say, you know, "Why is it, as a naval officer, I see the most problem boats on the Bremerton run? That was very careful planning on your part. And why was it, if you all think that you can't afford Plan A and you need to cause a local agency, like Kitsap County or the City of Bremerton, to fund a capital program to build a ship to get us to work" -- "if you can't fund it, why do you expect they could?"

Thank you very much. I would just say, think about passenger ferries that are owned by Washington State Ferries. I'm a walk-on passenger. I love being a walk-on passenger. Thank you much.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 37: Thank you very much. I'm just here to say I'm a commuter and I walk on the ferry every day. And I think, if the State can't provide a business that can be affordable to all our patrons to take the ferry across to Seattle to work, then they should break up that monopoly and privatize it and let the private sector dictate how our commuting is going to run.

Thank you very much.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 38: Hi. Thank you. For the most part, I would echo what everybody has said here tonight, and I will take the time to write up lots of notes to echo that and submit those later. But what I thought I would just highlight is a couple of things that might have been said that really are meaningful to me and I would reinforce and a couple of things that I would just like to also highlight.

One is just to say, overall, I feel like it's insulting. And it's not personal, but it's insulting. I agree that Plan B shouldn't have even come to be, and Plan A is still insulting in itself.

I've lived over here about six years. I'm not a Washington native. I love the ferry systems. I appreciate that I sit on a boat every day and can work and can commute in that way. And I just -- it's hard for me to understand how the State views our ferries as any less valuable or important than the highway systems or the bridges or the buses or the trains.

And I don't know a lot about politics, and it's kind of been implied here tonight that it also seems like there's a catering to the wealthy. You wouldn't dare shut down the bridges to Bellevue and Kirkland. You never touch Bainbridge. But here we are in Bremerton, and we may not be as economically strong, and I feel like it's just unbelievable that it's obvious the treatment is different and the value of us is different.

One thing that was said in the beginning, that I don't think anybody has talked about -- but I had hoped the plan might quicken up our boats and get us across the water faster. And to hear you say you might slow us down is just unbelievable as well.

I realize, from an environmental standpoint and a gas perspective, we need to be responsible. But to think that there's not technology out there to get bigger boats and faster boats and not have the wake issues and get us across the water faster is --

it was a shock to hear that you might slow us down, and we're the longest route of all. It is really hard for me to get.

And related to the survey, I think you might have mentioned that. I'm a commuter during the week, and I did participate in the survey. I wanted to pull my hair out, because you asked me, like, 50 questions about reservation scenarios and you didn't get to anything that's really core. I think a lot of what you're hearing here today -- if the change was to reconnect with the customer and reconnect with the commuter, there might have been much more meaningful questions you could ask us.

I think, conceptually, we could give you feedback on what we think of a registration (sic) system, but all the details and the over and over scenario and questions -- I don't know what the value of those were. I feel like there's much more meaningful ways you could have spent your time gathering our feedback. And I think, if asked again, you know, and if asked of everybody, you might get some more valuable nuggets.

I guess the only other thing I can think of to highlight, that's been said but just to reinforce, is, it is also insulting that, as regular commuters and citizens, we are so inconvenienced by the tourists; so in the summers. And I don't drive on very much. I'm a walk-on passenger, and it's a rare occasion that I drive on. And I won't drive on in the summers on a Friday, because I know it's going to take me six hours to get back and forth, just sitting and waiting.

So I don't know what the solution would be but, if there was a way to have the system make it not so inconvenient to the regular guys for those tourists to come back and forth, those are some other ideas.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 39: Good evening. I am a county commissioner, and we do transportation planning too. And so we, as we saw the draft plan, began to wonder why we hadn't been consulted. We do have some expertise, and we've heard some wonderful expertise just in this room tonight. We have many resources here. And we believe that Option B is not an option. It is an unfunded mandate, as Mayor Bozman said.

Because Kitsap County has four highways that end at Puget Sound, four state highways, we look to the State to assist in moving across our marine highway. We expect to maintain the service and the access for our citizens who commute across to a neighboring county.

We also look to our citizens to help find solutions. And we would like the State to look to us to help find solutions. We know that budgets are tough right now. Ours are tough right now. They're tough for everybody. And that really does call for more and more partnerships and more and more innovations and looking at ways that maybe we had not ever considered before. And we're willing to partner in doing that, and we're willing to participate.

The County and the cities have already begun to discuss that, and we do plan to review, more carefully than I am going to give you comments tonight, this document, and submit them to you by January 21st.

But just know that we are willing and we are available to participate in creating a plan that works for Kitsap County and, to take some of the words that we've been hearing from citizens tonight, one that's reliable, that has creative scheduling, that looks toward new technologies.

We do think that Plan C is necessary, and I've already talked to Representative Seaquist about the way that we can begin to partner in reaching out to the citizens of Kitsap County to get innovative and solid ideas that could create a plan that works for Kitsap County, because Kitsap County needs to be a partner.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 40: I want to thank you, and I reiterate everything and support everything that's been said. I've only been commuting since I lived here, when I moved here in 2005. But I lived on Queen Anne, and I grew up in Tacoma, and I've done the I-5 bit. I've done Seattle bus rides. So I thought that was a lovely thing to do, to ride and commute on the ferry.

When I lived in Seattle, I would take for granted I could go down to Southeast Washington, and come take the Bremerton ferry, go to Seattle. And I'd go over, take Edmonds to go to the Olympic Mountains. And that's one reason why I moved here

But I'm not afraid of being in debt. I think we can be billions in debt by sending thousands of men over to war, and we can live with that. I think we need Plan D: Get in debt. So what if we're in the red? Ask for a federal bailout. Get our half of 10 boats. Who cares if we're 4 billion in debt? We can afford it. I think the country can afford it and we should go in debt to get it.

I think we need to be a service. We need more service. What else can I say? You know, get us our boats. Plan B is ridiculous. Yes, we are always insulted. I never understood that either. Bainbridge and everybody -- you know, they say it all.

But, you know, we're here in a Naval seaport. You know, we're defended. I mean, we're sitting in ground zero here. There's no reason we can't have the ferries, decent ones. You know, shame on you for letting them get rusty and, you know, all of them going out at once.

So I don't know what else to say. So get them. Get them for us. Let's go in debt. Who cares? You know, everyone is in debt. You know, the money isn't there. It's written off. We can do it. Federal bailout.

(The public comment portion of the hearing  
concluded at 8:49 p.m.)

