

**MEETING SUMMARY  
WSF PORT TOWNSEND / COUPEVILLE VRS PARTNERSHIP MEETING  
COTTON BUILDING, PORT TOWNSEND, WA**

Wednesday, July 25, 2012 5:15 – 7:15 p.m.

*Note: This meeting summary represents notes from the Washington State Department of Transportation Ferries Division (WSF) Partnership Group Meeting, and is not a formal transcript or minutes. It is provided as a record for the staff, group members and public in attendance, and other interested parties.*

**Welcome**

WSDOT Assistant Secretary David Moseley  
Heather Rogers, Berk & Associates

David welcomed the group members and thanked them for coming.

Heather went over the agenda.

**Current System Usage**

Brian Churchwell, WSF IT Department

Brian discussed system usage statistics (see page 3 of the handout packet).

**Questions & Comments**

1. (Ralph Young) What percentage of the total of all riders have been making reservations?  
*We can look that up for you. When we went live we expected some bugs so we started with only 50% of the boat space available to reserve.*
2. (Kim Younger) Do you have something that shows the new system compared to the old one?  
*We used to have 70% of the vessel reserved, with a 40% no-show rate. It is about the same now. We have not lost customers. Hopefully once we speed up our transaction time we will increase our ridership.*  
So you're still at 50%?  
*Yes, with a 92% show rate.*
3. (Tom Thiersch) So right now an average of 8% of people no-show and are forfeiting their deposits?  
*Yes. These statistics are a little low because of system glitches that we've been dealing with. When we get the bugs worked out it will be better.*

**Rollout Experience**

Brian Churchwell, WSF IT Department

Brian discussed the lessons learned from the rollout (see page 2 of the handout packet).

**Questions & Comments**

1. (Tom Thiersch) The communications were great; the brochures and handouts that you provided were great. You boiled down the business rules into easy to understand handouts. I thought it was a little late in coming, but a great effort.
2. (Christina Pivarnik) In our informal polls of visitors we have only heard positive comments. The one thing people seem to appreciate the most is that they can rely on getting on the ferry.



3. (Bob Clay) I think the reservation system accomplished the major goal of eliminating no-shows and maximizing the number of vehicles on each sailing. You proved that the prepay reservation system works and can work on other runs. Also, predictability is key for riders on this run so that we can maximize the use of our marine highway system. I'm very happy.
4. (Ralph Young) I have not heard any screaming or hair pulling, and you all don't look any worse for wear. We've asked the ticket takers and crew how they think its going; they shrug, they seem fine.
5. (Kim Younger) Having customer service staff onsite was helpful; I would suggest that next time they have a laptop with wi-fi connectivity so that they can walk people through where they have questions.
6. (Christina Pivarnik) I think the website should emphasize the fact that when reservations are full there is still 50% of the boat open for vehicles. It should be more obvious.
7. (Tom Thiersch) Is there a way to ask the customers if they were impacted by a full sailing?  
*That would be a good question to add to our survey.*
8. (David Sullivan) Yes, if there were a way to measure the impact of being able to make a reservation rather than just getting in line. Also, the word "full" doesn't seem appropriate for reservations. Maybe "taken" would be better.
9. (Bob Clay) Before you roll this out on other runs you should get together with your commercial customers and do a mini partnership with them. That way you can get the problems worked out prior to rollout.
10. (Christina Pivarnik) When I'm traveling by ferry I'm always on the WSDOT app; I love it. It helps you make decisions; it would be so cool if we could make our reservations from that app.
11. (Ralph Young) I don't see any new signage except for a sign at Coupeville covered by a garbage bag. Is it not necessary to divide traffic into separate lines for reserved and standby?  
*So far we have not needed to.*  
So the reservation system is doing what it's supposed to?  
*It's hard to say; we can't compare apples to apples, we will have to see as time passes.*  
Is traffic down?  
*No, the stats say the numbers are the same as before the rollout. We are up 18% in fiscal year 2012, part of that being from getting the second vessel on the route last year. The signage at Coupeville is a distance from the terminal and it's manual, so by the time we change it the message is different. We will look at that, and the sign that is covered by a bag.*
12. (David King) I don't know if anyone has thanked you yet, but I would like to thank you all on behalf of the community. Thank you very much.  
*Thank you Mayor.*
13. (David Sullivan) I think this has been incredible evidence of ferries listening to the public and incorporating our feedback.
14. (Kim Younger) It would be nice if the system were faster. From my observations your staff seemed stumped; it added stress for them. You should make sure people are more comfortable with it before future rollouts.  
*We will work on making the process more intuitive for future rollouts.*

### Customer Input Survey

Heather Rogers, Berk & Associates

Heather discussed the customer survey results (see pages 4-10 of the handout packet).

1. (Tom Thiersch) Executive and Premier users would be likely to be making the most frequent reservations, perhaps that is the source of their difficulty.
2. (Bob Clay) Is this how many you expected to be using the phone to make reservations?  
*We were expecting a rise in call volume, so we added extra staff and extended the call center hours.*  
Is there a way to find out if the phone users are doing that because they are on the road and are trying to change their reservation?  
*That might be a question for our customer service team; to ask if they are calling from the road.*
3. (Christina Pivarnik) From an operations standpoint, would it speed things up if people paid their full fares online rather than just a deposit?  
*The problem is that we don't want to be in a position of refunding cash at the tollbooths, so the deposit is for the lowest possible car fare. We also don't want our staff to be in a position of enforcement if people have paid for a senior rate or a smaller car size. Most people have to pay for their passengers at the booth anyway. We are going to remove the under 14' option because that has really been confusing people.*
4. (David Sullivan) Have you thought about adding a graphic that shows what under 14' vehicles actually are?  
*We are thinking about adding a link on our website that takes people to that information.*
5. (Tom Thiersch) By eliminating that section aren't you eliminating your ability to estimate space usage?  
*Reserving average size vehicles gives us a little cushion, which isn't a bad thing. We don't want to have to turn people away because they are 1' over what they reserved. It may become more of an issue when we are reserving more than 50% of the vessel.*
6. (David King) Will you ever be able to scan our reservations from our smart phones?  
*That is on the list for future improvements.*
7. (Robert Hammett) I use the Wave To Go pass and I frequently ride the ferries, but now you have to have the revalue card or they can't get to your account. My command is asking how they should set up an account with this system; they don't know how. The military tells us when to come and gives us a ticket, but we have to put up our own money to make a reservation and then try to get reimbursed.  
*This issue has been raised and we are working on how to make it easier for larger accounts that have multiple users.*
8. (Tom Thiersch) The issue of people who didn't make a reservation and show up as standbys – you should survey those people to find out why they didn't use the system. They didn't know to, they don't have a computer, etc.  
*We will work on that for the next survey.*
9. (Bob Clay) Tell me again why there is no standardized method of paying for WSDOT fares. You use ORCA, Wave To Go, etc. Why can't there be just one?  
*We hope to get there. It won't be with ORCA, which is for passengers not vehicles. It is our goal to consolidate those payment methods in the future.*

## **Terminal Projects Update**

Leonard Smith, WSF Operations Department

Leonard gave a brief update on terminal improvements.

1. (Christina Pivarnik) We have the film festival September 21-23. That draws a lot of people.

## **Wrap Up & General Comments**

Heather Rogers of Berk & Associates

Heather asked the group to go around and give any final thoughts.

1. (Robert Hammett) Have the text message alerts started working? I get email alerts but not text.  
*You should be getting them; we can check on that for you.*
2. (Christina Pivarnik) The fog caused you to cancel the press conference, are you going to reschedule that?  
*Yes.*  
We have a large following on our Facebook page here in Port Townsend, I could share information about the system on there.  
*We have a tip sheet that we can send to you.*

### Public Comments

1. I live on Whidbey and I used the old system. I was one of the people who made those multiple reservations because I wasn't sure when I would be coming back. I was looking forward to using the new system, but I found I have two choices: pay full fare or get the multi-ride revalue card that reupps every 90 days. I only use about 2 multi-ride cards a year, and you have no option in between. Something in between would be nice; the people on Whidbey are unhappy with that. Also, reading through your packet I see that your survey only asks people that are currently using the system. You should find a way to ask the people who aren't using it why they are not. I'm not coming over as often and I'm less likely to with the way the system stands.

### Conclusion

David thanked everyone for participating in the partnership. Meeting was adjourned.

### Group Members

Present	Name of Group Member
	Timothy Caldwell
X	Bob Clay
	Nancy Conard
X	Robert Hammett
	Ian Jefferds
	Helen Price Johnson
X	David King
	Ellin Larimer
	Lisa Lynes
	Brian Martin
	Jennifer Meyer
	Josh Peters
X	Christina Pivarnik
	Michelle Sandoval
	Diane Schostak
	Rick Sepler

X	David Sullivan
X	Tom Thiersch
	David Timmons
	Patricia Willesoft
X	Kim Younger
X	Ralph Young

**Project Team**

- David Moseley, WSDOT Assistant Secretary
- George Capacci, WSF Deputy Chief of Operations
- Marta Coursey, WSF Director of Communications
- Brian Churchwell, WSF IT Department
- Dwight Hutchinson, VRS Manager
- Leonard Smith, WSF Operations Manager
- Heather Rogers, Berk & Associates
- Rachel Waitt, WSF Terminal Engineering