

MEETING SUMMARY #4
PORT TOWNSEND/KEYSTONE FERRY ADVISORY COMMITTEE PUBLIC MEETING
CAMP CASEY, COUPEVILLE, WA
THURSDAY, MARCH 27, 2008 – 6:30 – 8:30 P.M.

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

Action items and responses

- Work on connecting with Google to provide ferry information
Information Technology Department is working on linking with Google Transit.
- Focus studies for Port Townsend/Keystone route on recreational traffic/weekends
Planning Department is incorporating this into ongoing Ferry Financing Legislation work.
- E-mail *Steilacoom II* performance summary to Port Townsend/Keystone Partnership Group.
Traci Brewer-Rogstad sent this e-mail.
- Provide Partnership Group with options for adding sailings to route.
We have a proposal that we will present to the group. Funding is available to start the additional sailings in May.
- Meet with Jefferson and Island Transit to try to better coordinate schedules.
Planning Department will schedule meetings.
- Finalize reservation program.
Operations and Information Technology Departments are working on this.
- Coordinate with chambers of commerce to communicate reservation program to the public.
Communications Department is working on this.
- Address passenger overload issues.
Operations Department is working on a plan.

Introduction/ New Assistant Secretary, WSDOT Ferries Division

Keystone FAC Chair Julia Hodson, Assistant Secretary David Moseley

Julia Hodson, Keystone Ferry Advisory Committee Chair, welcomed everyone and asked them to introduce themselves. Julia then handed the floor over to David, the new Assistant Secretary of the Ferries Division. David thanked everyone for coming.

David said moving forward involves restoring public trust and confidence in the system. He said this was their opportunity to provide input, and we were primarily there to listen and establish a partnership and a dialogue with the FAC, ferry riders, and local elected officials. This is only his 19th day on the job, but he has clear priorities, including:

- 1) Build six new vessels on time and on budget. The Governor signed new boat legislation Tuesday. We had a blow to building the new boats today - we opened the one bid we received and it was about \$9 million over our estimate. Now we must do a clear review of our options and figure out how we get new ferries on the route quickly.
- 2) Maintain the boats we have. We have to get through an intense period of maintenance required by the U.S. Coast Guard over the next year or so with the least disruption to customers. We have little flexibility with so few boats.
- 3) Work on the 2007 ferry financing legislation to look at a long-term sustainable future for the ferry system. This work is in progress and in partnership with the Transportation Commission and the Joint Transportation Committee (JTC). The 2009 legislative session is really critical for the future of the ferry system.

- 4) Getting to know people in ferry-served communities, FACs, local elected officials, and customers. Earlier today David also met with the Port Townsend/Keystone Partnership Group, and he will be in Port Townsend Monday with Secretary Hammond.

David said the way he approaches his work is like most managers: focus on the basics. At Ferries, this means ensuring that our boats are well-maintained and can provide reliable service. Establishing a culture like this provides a good basis to deal with the surprises that come up. David provided his e-mail address and phone number to the group.

Public Questions and Comments¹

1. Marcy Jaffe thanked David for coming. Sometimes public comments bounce around. We lost car capacity and this is our best opportunity to maximize public transportation. You have to call three different systems and pull out all their schedules to figure out your travel - it needs to be easier. Google is offering the opportunity to put public transportation information in one place to help you plan your trips: google.com/transit. 35 places in the world have already allowed Google to use their information, and Island and Jefferson Transit are 2-3 weeks away from integration. We need ferry information included on this, and we need someone in the organization to give the OK. I've been e-mailing since November about this and have been given a series of reasons such as losing money in the budget. The summer season is coming and you need to make the connections work. I have been at this mission for 10 years. Google has an agreement in place with the state. I am willing to help make it happen. This side is ignored by transit. *We are working on connecting with Google to provide ferry information. Your other point is harder, and we hear it a lot: the transit system is not well coordinated. We need to work with our transit partners on that. Island County is doing a good job. When we were in Bainbridge on Monday they were complimenting Kitsap Transit, and when we got to Kingston on Tuesday, people were saying Kitsap Transit does things for Bainbridge but not for us. It is a big problem and we need to engage in conversations with our transit partners to search for reasons why they say it can't be done. There are places where it's been done.*
2. Today's bid for building the Steilacoom II design ferry was a 50% increase in price. That boat has major problems with winds and waves and it is not safe. You might consider dropping that boat – it is too small and doesn't belong here. Political will was that we had to have that boat, but it should be dropped rather than spending close to \$27 million. *I don't think we're going to spend \$27 million. We need to analyze the issues. Keep in mind that 1) this boat was built 2 years ago for \$12 million. Part of the problem is that we only received 1 bid. The Island Home is a superior boat to the Steilacoom II. We're moving as quickly as we can to build Island Home boats. We need our options to be informed by an analysis of the bid that came in. We have to look at a lot of options. Some of those options we may have looked at before, but under different assumptions. We need to refresh our thinking about it with this new set of data.*
3. You should examine re-hulling the Steel Electrics. Is there a possibility to take one of the Steel Electrics and re-hull it? You could get it back in service sooner than building an Island Home. *We now have a new set of circumstances and we will review all of our options. The Legislature made it clear that we weren't to spend another dime on the Steel Electrics. We have to have a broader discussion. A new hull or "hull transplant" for the Steel Electrics has been estimated at \$20 million per boat. The U.S. Coast Guard said we can talk about it, but it would need to meet new design requirements, and we won't get 30 more years out of it. It would need to be a 6 to 8 month, multi-million dollar job, and we would only get 2 to 3 more years of life out of the vessel.*
4. Re-hulling the Steel Electrics wasn't economically viable yesterday, but look at it today in light of the cost of lost business and the cost to citizens - \$10 million is nothing. You're

¹ Public participants are named if they identified themselves clearly or were already known by WSDOT staff. Those not named did not clearly identify themselves and were not identifiable by WSDOT staff.

- looking at the cost of the boat and the length of time you would get to use the boat – you're not looking at the cost of lost business and the cost to citizens.
We hear your point. Today's events changed some assumptions. Nova Gattman is here from Sen. Haugen's staff and will collect comments for Sen. Haugen.
5. The Olympics will be in Canada in a couple years – are there plans to market the ferry system?
We are working with the Governor's transportation subcommittee and are in discussions with visitors' bureaus. We are looking at running 8 hours a day in the winter in 2010 - round trips. We're involved in planning.
 6. If you spend time and effort marketing in Canada, you don't want them to squeeze through a keyhole to get to the Olympic Peninsula. You need to give them a product to get around.
 7. What is the status of renting a boat from another system? Are you looking in Canada?
Our staff has been searching the Web and talking extensively about this since this situation started. We are looking primarily in the U.S. because if we lease a foreign vessel it would require a change to the Jones Act. That's not impossible but it would be tough to do in a short period of time. I had experience with this in Seattle and it took 4 years.
 8. I heard that the funding for an extra ferry on the Edmonds/Kingston route didn't pass. Is there any chance for that?
We did not get that funding, but we have asked for it before and I'm sure we'll ask for it again.
 9. Julia praised the state maintenance crews. Because of them, we got 20 more years out of the Steel Electrics than anticipated.
 10. The Steel Electrics needed to be replaced in 1968. We should condemn the ferry system for keeping them in service as long as they did.
 11. Transportation Commissioner Elmira Forner said the commission has to represent the entire state – highways, bridges and ferries. She wonders how we do as well as we do with the ferries, with all the restrictions on running and building ferries. Ferries have to be built in Washington. There are not many shipyards that can build the type of boat required. She is amazed we even have one bid for the new ferries. State budgets are divided between transportation, the general fund, and capital fund. The transportation budget is further divided among agencies like the Washington State Patrol and the Department of Licensing. Frankly, we need more money - we're maxed out. Then we have unforeseen and significant expenses like the snow removal this winter. We need to put more money into transportation.
 12. If building in Washington is an impediment, why aren't the commissioners doing something about that? There is too much finger-pointing between the Legislature and the ferry system. The commission has to stand up for the people.
David received a phone call today from the Governor's office letting him know that the Governor said to reporters today that maybe we have to look at the build in Washington restriction again.
 13. The commission doesn't have authority to spend the money.
 14. The commission should tell the Legislature what reality is. I listened to the commission hearings on ferry funding, and there is no over-riding state law that requires the ferries be built in Washington - no constitutional basis. The Legislature wrote it into bill; they can take it out just as easily.

Operational Issues

North Regional Operations Manager Jayne Davis

Jayne Davis introduced herself as the North Regional Operations Manager. She said we are well aware of the challenge awaiting us this summer and we are in daily meetings that last hours about how we're going to help with the situation. Tom, Tim and Sarah show up for these meetings and we discuss how to manage traffic. On this side we want people to visit Coupeville. We need your help getting the word out and we need your patience. We're close to having good plans – we

want to get them done as quickly as possible, and we'll have more information as we get closer. We're optimistic about this because a lot of great minds are working together. It's great to have help from the community. We need to keep good communication. We're here for you. We'll be working with the communities before we get the reservation system in place, and we plan to get some form of concession on the Keystone side. We also plan to put literature about the communities on other boats further south to encourage people to come here.

Public questions and comments

1. How will you handle people that don't know about the reservation system or are not from the area? What if 40-50 cars an hour just drive up?
We'll have new signs along the way. We will communicate with them, for example, with a flyer about same-day reservations. We will have a process to handle people who just drive up. We don't want to be running the boat half empty just because people have not made reservations. We are adjusting our computer programs that we use for our existing reservation systems on the Anacortes/Sidney route and for the commercial vehicles on this route. If you want more information, please e-mail Jayne. Communication is key. Highway Advisory Radios (HARs) are being added at different points broadcasting information for people coming down the highway from Canada. This will be a massive communication effort. We're not going to fix the system this summer; it will be a learning curve, but we will work with you every step of way.
2. We would like to see Sarah or someone from the community approve the HAR message. Customers don't come to the island if they hear it's a 90-minute wait.
We want to provide accurate information but don't want to scare people away. We've had 2 to 3 phone calls a week with Whidbey Island leadership, and funding has been secured for 2 extra round trips a day for the summer season. We're fine tuning plans for this, because we need to clear traffic out on weekends. The route is already selling out by 4:00 on Sundays.
3. The community has to support this in a precise way. There is a proposal to have businesses (bed & breakfasts and visitor info centers) help people make reservations. There needs to be interaction and training if that happens. Hopefully we will work hard together. Our community has to step forward.
4. Why do passengers go home for free in Clinton?
It is a round-trip fare – they pay in Mukilteo.
5. What's the passenger fare in Mukilteo?
Double what it would be for a one-way trip.
6. I got a survey that had questions about fees for reservations. Tell me more about that.
This summer we will run a pilot test. We had to get the RCW changed for it. Last year we talked about fees and \$10 was considered too high. The survey is trying to get information on behaviors. There is a tariff freeze right now. The survey will feed plans going forward. We could see reservations systems with some fee or deposit in the future.
7. Why is the senior citizen fare \$1.95 – why not \$2 even?
You are the first person to ask for a fare increase!

Overview of Ferry Financing Legislation

Planning Director Ray Deardorf

Ray said that our goal is to find sustainable funding, and our path to that is the work we're doing to re-do the long range plan (LRP). He referred to two documents in the packets that were handed out – the presentation and initial forecasting efforts. This is a fast track effort involving a lot of players (Transportation Commission, JTC, WSDOT Ferries Division). We are building upon the 2006 study and direction from the 2007 legislation to deliver the revised LRP in January 2009. The Transportation Commission is conducting customer surveys and the JTC is concentrating on preservation and administrative costs and reviewing the current work.

We are looking at system sizing, the future fleet and terminal improvements. Our timeline is to first look at level of service (LOS) standards and ridership. In June we will be looking at

operations and pricing (that's where we would talk about reservations, peak period pricing, off-peak discounts, etc). Over the summer we would draft the LRP and in October, we would come out with a revised plan for review and public comment. We would finalize the plan by the end of the year and deliver it to the Legislature in January 2009.

The LRP will outline options for a stable funding source and address balancing and/or adding capacity, managing demand, and operating efficiently. The first building block is LOS standards. It is like a measuring stick – how do you know when you're congested enough to add service? There are standards adopted by the Transportation Commission. It involves the number of vessels missed during a typical afternoon commute in May. There is a one-boat wait standard for most terminals, but there is a two-boat wait standard for Bainbridge and Mukilteo.

We are proposing a different approach to how we view LOS. When the LOS standard is triggered, we are proposing to employ different strategies to manage demand, such as reservations, peak pricing, etc. After that we would look at adding capacity. We want your feedback on this concept, then we will evaluate how we approach this. We are also looking at ridership data to see when standards would be triggered.

Public Questions and Comments

1. Is the standard at Mukilteo 2 boats instead of 1 because it's a short run?
It is because of the frequency – a 2-boat wait there is like 1-boat wait other places. It has to do with the Growth Management Act. The Mukilteo/Clinton route is defined as a highway of statewide significance. If the route regularly exceeds the LOS standard that the local government imposes, they can't issue building permits until they either bring it back to the LOS standard or change the standard.
2. The weekday commute is not meaningful on this route. What is going to be done in the revised measures to accommodate that?
We will identify routes where a different peak measurement is needed, and the Port Townsend/Keystone route is high on that list.
3. What is the time frame for when there will be space for two boats at Mukilteo? There are constant rumors they're going to do something. Will it be where the navy yard was before?
This has been a long process with the City of Mukilteo and the Port of Everett. We don't have funds to build a new terminal, so our terminal engineering department is looking at priorities and doing cost estimates to provide new information for an interim solution. We may be able to lease space next to the holding lanes. There is current information on this on our Web page. We are responding to the 2007 legislation. During this time frame capital improvements have been put on hold. We have great plans, but they cost too much. We have to make sure we are not overbuilding. We are looking for ways to improve service with less money. We are focusing on preservation and maintenance first before improvements and building new terminals.
4. In June 2007 the state Web site listed the Mukilteo Terminal project as starting in 2008, and that didn't happen.
Legislative Bill 2358 paused all those projects. Some design work has been done, but the plans are too expensive, so we are going back to the drawing board. We have a couple million dollars to continue environmental documentation, but not enough money to move forward with the two alternatives proposed before. We need information from the studies we're doing now.
5. Isn't the space where the navy used to be contaminated?
There have been a few concerns there but it is not a stop issue for the project. The concerns were largely financial. There was a huge clean-up before turning that land over to the Port of Everett.

Ray moved on to discussing ridership as the second critical building block toward the revised LRP. Ridership has dropped over the last few years. We are looking at local and regional population and employment forecasts. Findings so far include:

- The overall rate of growth is 1.3% per year, or a 37% increase by 2030.
- Vehicle ridership will grow slower than overall ridership
- Passenger ridership will grow faster than overall ridership
- Routes grow at different rates

We acknowledge that we need to do more work on recreational traffic on the Port Townsend/Keystone route. This route is forecasted to grow at a higher rate than others – closer to 60%. But this is based on a May weekday, and with such a small base, an additional 100 cars can drive the percentages quite high. We will do more work on that.

Public questions and comments

1. Are these numbers based on more people riding together and more walk ons?
There is a fare differential between vehicles and passengers, and we are incorporating improvements like the Sounder train and other connections into the LRP.
2. Is this a strategy to get more people into fewer cars?
This is forecasting, not strategy.
3. Why can't you look at wait times for four weeks in May and average it out? That would provide a more realistic picture.
If we averaged a whole month, it would blur the results. A better solution would be for us to pick other days during the month to figure out where the peaks are.
4. If you can't increase capacity, your solution is to price people off the ferries. People have business and appointments that are not optional. This year I'm moving 50,000 people on your boats – I don't want to be penalized for it.
5. You're using sampling to come up with these ridership forecasts?
No, we are using a comprehensive transportation model which looks at population and employment growth.
6. Are you using actual counts from ticket sales?
Yes, and also origin-destination studies.
7. Do these forecasts account for escalating fuel costs?
That issue hasn't worked its way through the regional transportation models that we base our work on, so that is a big unknown. You would think it would further dampen the increase in vehicle traffic and add to the walk-on traffic, which is really what we want to do. Escalating fuel costs for the ferries may make it more feasible to drive around than take a ferry.
8. We already can't afford the fares. People who are moving here now can afford it, but people who are living and working here for island wages are being hurt. Now you want to raise fares more?
We are in a fare freeze right now until October 2009. We need to find ways to disperse the growth away from the peak hours. One way may be a discount during non-peak times. We don't want to raise fares. We've heard our customers.
9. Do you measure passengers by human bodies or by human bodies not attached to cars?
We measure where we collect fares. For example, on the Clinton side we don't collect passenger fares, but we double the numbers for the purposes of statistics.
10. This summer you're probably going to refuse passengers due to capacity limits. When you build new boats, I hope you don't take the Island Home design and reduce the number of passengers it carries, when ridership is increasing. We need more capacity than what these boats and the Steel Electrics had.
The Steel Electrics carried 650 passengers. The Island Home carries almost double that. We are reviewing capacity internally to lessen operational costs (the more passengers, the more crew, life jackets, etc. you need) but still be able to use the boats in the future. We want walk-on passengers to be able to board.
11. With EFS can you now differentiate between passengers in cars and walk-ons? Do you know how many are walk-ons?
Yes, we know how many are walk-ons – they use a different set of turnstiles. We do physical counts at Keystone, and there are turnstiles on the Mukilteo/Clinton route.

12. Commissioner Forner asked how many people in the room had received surveys. One woman received a survey when she was in line. Commissioner Forner asked what she thought of it. She said that she wrote lots of comments. She thought the reservation prices were too low – not for this summer, but the future. She would love to have a reservation system on the Mukilteo/Clinton route. She owns two businesses and when she has to go, she has to go right away. She is willing to pay to get on a specific boat. However, she does not want to have to get to the terminal a half hour before her reservation.
13. We're part of the transportation system. You have people using the Tacoma Narrows Bridge and the 520 bridge talking about \$3-6 tolls being too high for these multi-billion dollar projects, and we're already paying \$6 fares – it is way out of skew statewide. You should tell people on the Eastside you will only allow 1,000 vehicles across the bridge every hour.

Summation

Assistant Secretary David Moseley

David said we want to respect people's time so for those who do not wish to stay, this will conclude the formal portion of the meeting. Staff will stay afterward for smaller discussions. David said we will produce a meeting summary that will be posted on our Web site soon. We will also review the comments and use them as we move toward the revised LRP.

Approximately 25 attendees. Public sign-in included:

Sarah Richards	Mike Lauver	Marcy Jaffe
Tim Caldwell	Nova Gattman	Jennifer Meyer
John Kron	Pam Newman	Carol Jorgensen
Blair Scanlan	Mary Stoll	Eric Jorgensen
Paul W.	Mike Rudd	Jason Black
Paula Spina	Dick Toft	Phillip Parker
Brad Sherman	Barney	
Leanne Finlay	Elmira Forner	

WSDOT Ferries Division Staff

David Moseley, Assistant Secretary
 Traci Brewer-Rogstad, Deputy Director/Chief of Staff
 Ray Deardorf, Director of Planning
 Jayne Davis, North Regional Operations Manager
 Joy Goldenberg, Communications Manager
 Laura Johnson, Communications Consultant
 Melanie Coon, Communications Manager

Public participants

Julia Hodson, Keystone FAC Chair

No written comments were submitted at the meeting. Written comments received by April 30 will be added to this document.

Written comments received (transcribed)

- Pam Newman
 - Very organized. Moved along very well. Would have liked more specific info.
 - I have heard from a few different people that the Evergreen State ferry could work at Keystone except for a few low tides. Could we use that as the 2nd boat for the summer?