

MEETING SUMMARY #2
KINGSTON FERRY ADVISORY COMMITTEE PUBLIC MEETING
KINGSTON YACHT CLUB, KINGSTON, WA
TUESDAY, MARCH 25, 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

- David to meet with Kingston Chamber
Meeting will be scheduled.
- Talk to transit partners about improving connections, work to get transit agencies to attend future public meetings
Planning Department to seek meeting with Kitsap Transit, transit agencies will be invited to future FAC public meetings (June, October).
- Add crosshatching and signs on SR 104
WSDOT Olympic Region plans to add crosshatching when striper is functional, and they are looking for funding for signs.
- Focus studies more on recreational traffic for the Kingston route
Planning Department is incorporating this into ongoing Ferry Financing Legislation work.

Introductions and Agenda Review

FAC Chair Walt Elliott

Walt Elliott, Ferry Advisory Committee Chair, welcomed everyone and recognized attendees: Rep. Christine Rolfes, Commissioners Dan O'Neal and Elmira Forner, and Jill Satran from the Governor's Office. Walt stated that this was a chance for the public to meet the new Assistant Secretary of the Ferries Division. David greeted everyone and pointed out that we are taking notes on everything you're saying and we'll take it back and review it. Walt reviewed the agenda, went over rules for the meeting, and pointed out the written comment forms.

New Assistant Secretary, WSDOT Ferries Division

Assistant Secretary David Moseley

David thanked the group for the opportunity to be there. He said we are here to listen to you – we are taking notes and will use them and post them on our Web site.

David said moving forward involves restoring public trust and confidence in the system. It is the ultimate career challenge for him. This is only his 17th 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 today, and we will open bids this week to begin this process.
- 2) Maintain the boats we have. We have to get through an intense period of maintenance over the next year or so with the least disruption to customers. There has been no disruption on the Kingston route so far, but we can't make guarantees that it will not be affected in the future.
- 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).
- 4) Getting to know people in ferry-served communities, FACs, local elected officials, and customers.

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. David provided his e-mail address and phone number to the group.

Public Questions and Comments¹

1. Nancy Tietje, Executive Director of the Kingston Chamber, said Kingston is in crisis. SR 104 is regularly completely blocked. Last summer someone lit a trash can on fire and the fire truck couldn't get to it because of the gridlock. Vehicles exceed the speed limit, there are accidents, and businesses' driveways are blocked. We are beyond crisis and action is needed.
2. Holly Knowles asked if anyone from Kitsap Transit (KT) was there. (No one from KT was there.) She is disabled, and when KT decided not to stop at the terminal anymore this is difficult for her. KT cut a lot of runs, when they could be helping get people out of their individual cars. Ferries has told her a wheelchair may be available but is not guaranteed. She is not able to get to the terminal by bus, so she drives now. We need options. Kingston is growing, and if we're not addressing that we're sunk.
3. Walt said the terminal drop-off lane is used to queue HOVs and the buses can't get in there.
4. KT buses don't stop for us at night because they can't see us. We don't all live in town and can't walk home if the bus doesn't stop.
5. Carla Martin has lived here for 7 years and the fares have doubled in that time. There has been a lot of talk about commuters, but what about people who use the ferries for social reasons, maybe once a week? That's too few times to use bulk passes. The legislators are trying to fix that and we appreciate the response but you need to keep in mind those who need to use the ferries regularly but not as a daily commuter. It is easy to take the Bainbridge ferry as a foot passenger to Seattle events, but if she wants to come back to Edmonds on the 11:45 p.m. ferry, there is little choice but using a car at that time.
6. Nels Sultan of the Kingston Express Association commented that he hopes we include foot ferries as part of our plans. For the cost of a 144-car ferry you could purchase more foot ferries, and the savings would flow through the Port of Kingston with their plan for cooperation on terminals. He hopes that a Kingston/Seattle ferry is part of the draft long range plan (LRP).
7. Steve Young asked why the new ticket system doesn't work. Why can't you print on the receipt how many more rides are left on a ticket or flash it on the screen longer? He proposed that the Kingston fares should be a couple dollars lower or the Bremerton fares a couple dollars higher because the Kingston route is half the distance of the Bremerton route. The Kingston route makes money for the system. We should have parking like others have.
8. Julie Hixson is a 10-year commuter and has seen prices go up phenomenally. It is cheaper to live here and work in Seattle. With prices going up, and the buses don't work for her, in order to have a home life she keeps a car on the other side of the water. But she wonders now if it would be more affordable to live in Seattle and not take the ferry anymore. She hopes there will be foot ferries from Kingston to Seattle, or even Kingston to Edmonds, to decrease the car load on the big ferries.
9. Dr. Linda Paralez, Kingston FAC member, said of David's four priorities, none speak to how to get the ferry system out of the mess they've gotten into. She said there needs to be a fifth priority: a solid business plan that incorporates additional ferry service/capacity for Kingston – we need to be “investing in a new vision.”
10. Does the State still own the lot across from Kingston lumber, and can we use that for a holding area? Can revenue from a State parking lot support a walk-on ferry?
The State owns that lot. That revenue would fall under miscellaneous revenue - a

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.

general line item. However, the Legislature has directed us not to be engaged in foot ferry service. We are to serve vehicles and passengers together. Counties have been given the opportunity to be involved in foot ferries, and King County will be next year.

11. The manager of the Port of Kingston said the port is working with DOT to provide parking for foot ferry riders. He said Rep. Rolfes and the legislature addressed a technicality that would have prevented ports from providing PO service. However, there is a grant that has been held up until they toll the SR 520 bridge or the urban partnership agreement is changed. They are still working on this and are optimistic. They are probably a year and a half away from service.
12. Diana Everist Cox has been commuting regularly from Bainbridge Island for 12 years and is stuck driving because there is no coordinated system with the ferries. She gets stuck in recreational traffic when she is trying to get home. With her property taxes up 50% this year she wonders if it is worth it because the cost and issues are overwhelming. Bainbridge has a good transportation hub. We have a train going to downtown but if you're going to the north end your options are very limited. She is willing to vanpool, but there is not enough people and coordination.
13. With the new carpool lanes on SR 305 in Poulsbo, 90% of the vehicles are in the non-carpool lane. Carpool lanes are a great idea to reduce congestion but he doesn't think they're helping much. When the *Hyak* and *Yakima* were out of service, and we only had one car ferry on the Bremerton route, why didn't we put the *Walla Walla* on the Bremerton route and put the *Kitsap* or *Tillikum* on the Kingston route? The *Walla Walla* holds more cars and a lot more passengers.
14. Tom Waggoner, a Kingston business owner, is concerned that we are anticipating a 38-39% ridership increase by 2030, because traffic on Main Street is already killing downtown. He invited David to come back and go over the problems in the community. There have been meetings with DOT in the past, but they need someone in the middle. He thanked WSP for the way they've been handling traffic for the last 5-7 years with the tally system. The only area of improvement is with the ferry system - they don't keep track of overloads.
15. Annie Huddleston said the last time she tried to get answers from Ferries the answer was "talk to your legislators." Some of the legislators listened, but we need better answers. If Ferries uses their lot to full capacity it will be helpful, but summer is about to hit, and driveways will be clogged. There was a fire at the community center and the fire truck couldn't get downtown. She wants it to be a higher priority to move the ferry traffic to the north lanes. She said there should be a ticket booth in the holding area. Ferries cannot keep using the excuse that they lost funding because of I-695. We should exempt ferries from the sales tax on fuel to help operating costs. Kingston, Bainbridge and Mukilteo are subsidizing other runs, such as the Vashon PO ferry. She is against a peak surcharge. Instead of moving operations money into other accounts, stop raising fares. How many people work at the 2901 building? There is an administrative glut downtown. All we need are clean safe boats that depart on time. We don't need art, food service, wireless. Keep it simple.
16. Three points: 1) Fares: the 80% recovery figure doesn't really exist. Kingston pays more; others pay less (e.g. San Juan Islands). It should not be seen as one system – it should be looked at route by route. 2) Our roads are blocked by traffic. We need crosshatching or more signs that tell drivers not to block intersections. 3) Peak hour surcharges: commuters can't change their hours. Do not raise fares. Let the delays take care of the lines instead of raising fares.
17. Holly Knowles commented on bus service on the Seattle side. Going from Edmonds to the UW takes one bus. Edmonds to Northgate takes two buses. It takes three buses to get to where she works now. The transit agencies (Community Transit and King County Metro) don't work well together. Why do you need two buses to go a shorter distance? She also commented that WSP should do more security outside of the main commuting hours.
18. Most commuters subscribe to e-mail alerts but are frustrated because they rarely go out in a timely fashion. She checks before she leaves work and expects to know

when the ferry will leave the dock. But the e-mail alerts come out 5-10 minutes before the regular sailing time. She says ferry alerts for this run have a “spin the wheel” of excuses. The boats should not wait for cars – keep moving and keep the schedule.

19. A member of the Kingston FAC commented that since I-695 the Transportation Commission and the Legislature have saddled riders with increases in operations costs through unmanageable fare increases. It used to be that people who rode ferries made an average of \$45,000 a year – now it is more like \$95,000 a year. It costs his family over \$45 to visit him. What can we do about a long-term constant funding source for operational costs?
20. Ferries should be integrated. Los Angeles, San Francisco and elsewhere have integrated trolleys, ferries, buses, trains, subways. Of course it costs - what's the vision? It should be people being moved by various modes. People have to go through all these machinations, and we're exasperated. It's been done, you don't have to invent anything. We need to bust the political obstacles.
21. Property tax on ferry commuters?

Jill Satran said the Transportation Commission is looking at long-range funding strategies. By December they will have a recommended plan for additional funding sources so commuters may not be charged so much.

Commissioner Forner said the Transportation Commission is trying to find sustainable funding for all transportation, and don't want to steal from other budgets.

Rep. Rolfes said none of the legislators are talking about a property tax to pay for ferries. The Transportation Commission may bring that forward but it is not an option the Legislature has.

Commissioner O'Neal said the Transportation Commission is not looking at imposing property taxes. The basic question is where the money is coming from. The ferry system is not self-sustaining, so the funding needs to come from taxes. 75% of operations is paid for by fares, and that is higher than most transit systems. But this is also a highway. We are looking at options, and we have a survey underway to get ferry users' ideas – it has been done on this route. There is no magic bullet. It costs to run the ferries, and the funding has to come from some tax source.

Traffic Issues

WSP Lieutenant Steve McCulley and Trooper Matthew Black
Jayne Davis, WSDOT Ferries Division North Regional Operations Manager
Steve Bennett and Vicki Steigner, WSDOT

Walt directed the conversation to traffic – speeding, blocking driveways and isolating the community. The tally system doesn't go into effect in time to deal with overloads on ferries. Summer traffic fills up the holding lane and shuts down the travel lane. Reduced capacity on the Port Townsend route exacerbates this. Walt handed the floor over to WSP.

WSP Lieutenant Steve McCulley works with Homeland Security. His division has been in place for three years. There are 55 troopers in that division. Lieutenant McCulley introduced Trooper Matthew Black, who deals with law enforcement and security around the Kingston and Mukilteo terminals.

We only have so many resources. We have a great relationship with Ferries and we meet with them weekly. We monitor the lot with video cameras and get it filled. Ferries is receptive to working with us.

We can't eliminate the back ups but we can mitigate them. The tally system is one way, putting up signs is another. With 500 sailings a day, we can't be everywhere – we go where we're most needed.

We have been able to leverage federal funds. We've put more troopers on boats and also added security that you don't see.

We're always open for comments and the best way to get them to us is through your community leaders – we meet with them and work together.

Public Questions and Comments

1. Carla Martin said one day traffic bogged down just past the tally area – it is supposed to be two lanes, but there was only one line and traffic couldn't get around it. If there's a back up along there, is there supposed to be space for the ferry traffic to be off to the side?
If the back up is past McDonald's, they start the tally system. Sometimes it takes a while to start because it involves turning eight signs and there are only two people to do it - sometimes one. The incident to which Carla referred may have been during a transition time. They do their best to get traffic to move to the shoulder.
2. You should give tickets and maybe that would get people to move to the shoulder.
3. Is the tally system implemented at other times than Sunday afternoons?
Yes.
4. In spring and summer, Wednesday through Sundays there are back ups but no tally system. If the community sees a back up, who should we contact?
The WSP phone number in the phone book. All the troopers have Blackberries and get e-mail alerts. They look at forecasts and calendars, but sometimes they don't have the manpower to hit every moment of busy traffic. Sometimes they don't know about all the events going on. There are four terminals they're in charge of, with four troopers and one sergeant. Normal troopers in the area also help out.
5. We are grateful, and glad for the tally system.

Jayne Davis introduced herself as the North Regional Operations Manager and noted that WSDOT Ferries is a partner with WSP. Jayne gave her phone number and asked people to please let her know if traffic problems happen. She deals with terminals, concessions, advertising, and calls about traffic. If a bus needs to come down, we want to accommodate that. We didn't tell them to leave the lot.

Jayne addressed an earlier question referring to the automated toll booth – we are testing this now at Bainbridge on weekends, and will test it here. The fare structure is very complicated. Jayne said she will stay afterward to answer questions.

Public Questions and Comments

1. Holly Knowles commented about the law about cutting in line. You don't have signs at the entrance to the Edmonds terminal about this. She wished there was a way to separate commuters from weekend travelers. She noted one incident where someone sat in the road and didn't move until someone let him in. What are you doing about line jumpers?
WSP is working with Ferries on where to put signs. The legislation provides WSP another tool for enforcement, but they have to witness it. If it is reported to them they can make the line jumper go to the end of the line, or put them in a "time out" after they get through.
2. Our ticket system is cumbersome. Have you looked into a more streamlined system like that of BC Ferries (cards)?
3. We need more signs for summer traffic when there are back ups. Summer travelers don't always realize the rules.
4. Nancy Tietje asked about crosshatching on SR 104.
We plan to do that. Our striper is not functional yet but we will do it. Unfortunately, that might help line jumpers. We are looking for funding for new, better, interactive signs. We will add signs on the route.

Vicky Steigner (WSDOT) talked about the remote holding plans. We still own land and drew up a plan in 2002. She explained the display board that she brought showing the plan. In 2002 we ran out of money, at 70% design. We saved our work, but there was a fire and the only piece left is the display board. The Legislature tried to get funding for us last session. We came up with several smaller pieces of this project but the Legislature said they all cost too much. They asked us what we could do for \$100,000, but we couldn't find an option. We will try to get funding during the next legislative session.

Rep. Rolfes said the legislators asked what is the funding source to actually do the project? They did not want to invest in design engineering without a plan to build. They need a more strategic plan. There is not a lot of extra money to go around.

Public Questions and Comments

1. Sonny Woodward said it is not just sitting on the ferry, but the whole experience. We haven't done a good job as a community letting people come through our town. Tourists don't anticipate waiting to find restroom facilities while in line. He challenges Ferries and DOT to solve the problem for the community and the Olympic Peninsula, to make the whole experience of riding the ferries great.
2. Why can't WSP say use the holding lane?
3. People don't believe we have so much traffic. We need a way to show this problem. WSP took aerial photos at Mukilteo – why not here? Take photos during Seafair - the busiest non-holiday weekend. It's not just holidays that the traffic is bad. *Ferries Operations can't record the length of the backup and how many times it happens per summer. Vicky Steigner provided her contact info to the group. WSDOT will include in our budget request funding for this type of equipment for the next biennium.*

Commissioner Forner said the Ferries Division and the rest of WSDOT have to come together. Paula Hammond and the Governor want there to be a clear understanding that they are one agency.

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. Do we need to have a summer Friday night LOS standard?
2. Do you ride the ferry during peak hours on a daily basis? You need to.
3. Don't only look at weekdays. If someone has a doctor's appointment, it is not acceptable for them to wait.
4. You're presuming commuters are the peak demand, but that's not true for the Kingston route. Are you addressing weekends?
We tried to size the system for an average weekday commuter period, but we acknowledge that Kingston traffic exceeds the demand on weekends, and what you want is for us to focus as much here on recreational traffic.
5. Nels Sultan said the load should be spread out with foot ferries.
6. On this route, the commuter load doesn't drive peak demand – look at recreational users as peak demand.
7. Walt said that although recreational users pay full fare, frequent users are paying more total for the Kingston route than recreational users.

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

Public Questions and Comments

1. Holly Knowles asked if these numbers take into consideration the Hood Canal Bridge closure in May/June 2009.
This looks beyond that. We have other service plans for that.
2. Question about the plan to move the Edmonds dock. Is it responsible to build a terminal and then move it?
We felt it was a necessary expenditure. Current service gets disrupted by trains. Constrained ability to add vessels to the route.
3. Development in Port Townsend has increased. You should take this rare opportunity to respond to global warming and examine an integrated people-moving system to get people out of their cars. There is a huge amount of commerce through ferries as well.
Initial forecasts are aimed at the mid-week in May period. We will do more refined study on recreational peaks and trucks.
4. Steve Hawes asked what portion of the growth is from commuters.
We will do more refined study – it is a work in progress. At the June public meeting we will have more detailed strategies.

Operational Issues

Steve Rodgers, Director of Operations

Steve Rodgers introduced himself as the Director of Operations. He understands the issues because he commutes on the ferries himself. He said if operational problems are experienced, the operations staff needs to hear about it so they can immediately address the problems. It is

becoming more frustrating to ride the ferries and that is the last thing we want. If you can't reach the terminal supervisor, contact management staff.

Summation

FAC Chair Walt Elliott, Assistant Secretary David Moseley

Paul Lundy of the Kingston FAC said David has good priorities but we need to have a fifth vision: where are we going in the future? Other cities like New York and San Francisco are integrating transportation and making it work better. We also need to work with transit agencies. We need to keep working on SR 104 congestion, even though the project to add lanes hasn't taken off.

David committed to meeting with the Kingston Chamber. These are challenging times and we will do all we can to resolve the problems. We have heard clear frustrations and can't promise you will never experience these frustrations again, but we do promise to work hard. The issue of vision is very important, and we are working with the Transportation Commission and the JTC as part of our ongoing vision.

Walt adjourned the meeting.

Approximately 60 attendees. Public sign-in included:

Karen & Sim Wilson	Holly Knowles	Julie Hixson
Bill Crader	Karen James	John McCalister
Arleen Crader	Chris Imbach	Rex Lee Carlaw
Lou Foritano	Dr. H. Sam Anderson	Diana Everist Cox
Blair Scanlan	Steve Young	Nancy Tietje
Kelly Joines	Ray & Linda Thompson	C.C. Bud Young
Robin Bookey	Hugh Tucker	Vicki Steigner
Rebecca Pirtle	Pete DeBoer	Dr. Linda Paralez
Barbara Meyers	Rosalee Waggoner	Sonny Woodward
Steve Bennett	Lonnie Nyss	Paula Abel
Paul Lundy	Steve Hawes	Jackie Schurman
Douglas Rahn	Matthew Ogard	Ronald Cabral
Ken Jones	Evan Stoll	Christine Rolfes
Nels Sultan	Karla Martin	Barrows
Cameron Covington	Mary Bowen	Jill Satran

WSDOT Ferries Division Staff

David Moseley, Assistant Secretary
Ray Deardorf, Director of Planning
Steve Rodgers, Director of Operations
Jayne Davis, North Regional Operations Manager
Leonard Smith, Operations Design/Construction Manager
Marta Coursey, Director of Communications
Joy Goldenberg, Communications Manager
Laura Johnson, Communications Consultant
Melanie Coon, Communications Manager

Public participants

Walt Elliott, Kingston FAC Chair

Washington State Patrol

Lieutenant Steve McCulley
Trooper Matthew Black

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

Written comments received (transcribed)

- Lou Foritano
 - Found presentation and response to audience questions very disheartening. Same questions, issues, complaints over years of meetings. No evidence of an integrated approach across all means of transportation focused on providing cost-effective alternatives to cars and driving. Having a car ferry only discussion at this stage of prospective development, actual traffic and an array of environment/cost issues e.g. \$4 gas, global warming etc is ludicrous. I heard endless studies over long periods of time to get to the current MESS! Also narrow divisions of responsibility fundamentally make no one responsible for an aggregate solution. Appreciated Ms. Satran and as always Ms. Rolfes attendance.
 - Meetings need to have Kitsap Transit and “Sounder” reps present
 - Do not intend to attend future meetings unless I develop a sense you folks understand this as a transportation problem not a car ferry problem. I understand the state govt. caused this.