

WASHINGTON STATE FERRY

PUBLIC HEARINGS - JANUARY 2009

Bainbridge Island, Washington

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PUBLIC COMMENT

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PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 1: I'm Paul Vibrans. I've read the executive summary, and the main plan was way too much for me to get through in the short time available. But I do have some comments. One that just occurred to me today, right now, is that plan should compare the ridership of the ferries to the viaduct so that we can get some idea of how much -- what that tunnel versus what the capital cost of the ferry is. I bet the ferries are going to look cheap.

The plan should address the consequences of the decisions, A and B -- well, in particular, Plan B. What happens when nobody steps up to take care of the ride? The plan doesn't even consider private operation, and I think the plan needs to chide the Legislature a bit about their not wanting private operators.

If nobody is going to step up to the plate, no government is, private operators ought to be allowed to, with no restrictions: No Marine Engineers Beneficial Association, no Masters Mates and Pilots written into the legislation the way it is now.

The plan should address, on the capital side, building ferries in Washington. The ferries you build are really expensive because you won't let them be built in Germany or Alabama or China. And British Columbia gets theirs built elsewhere, because the B.C. prices are too high.

Sort of along that line, if you're getting rid of old ferries, can I buy one and put it on the Winslow run when you're not running it, or on the Kingston run when you're not running it? If there's going to be an every-other-boat gap, that could be filled by somebody. If you're not running, I'm not cherry-picking your passengers. You're not providing service. If I could make

money running a refurbished ferry, I'll try it. But right now, your plan doesn't address those sorts of things.

Your plan should address the ferry system's time to design and time to buy. In a commercial operation, two and a half years from the dream in the owner's eye to a boat that hits the water is reasonable. Washington State Ferries can't get anything built for six years or more. And I don't know why that is, political, inside your system. And your plan needs to address your internal problems, that maybe you could turn around and get your boats built faster.

Didn't take you that long to get the Island Home on line, because you were desperate. So somebody cut some corners there or stomped on toes or did something. Okay.

The plan should also address the possibility of just chartering out the operation completely.

The plan doesn't address, and should address, the effect that cutting service in Bremerton and Kingston will do to traffic to Bainbridge Island, the adequacy of the Agate Pass Bridge and Highway 305, because Bainbridge is going to then become really swamped.

That's it.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 2: I'm Steven McKinney, and my comments are going to be much more limited than the previous speaker, but I want to talk a bit about the reservation system proposed in Appendix G in the plan. Many of the people who will

be adversely affected by the reservation system couldn't be here tonight. They're sitting in their cars on the ferry-terminal dock, waiting for the next boat.

Most of the people -- or many of the people that commute in their vehicles from Bainbridge to Seattle drive beyond the downtown Seattle area for their work. Let me use my wife as an example. She drives to work to Sand Point every day. She gets off at 4:40 in the afternoon. It can take 20 minutes to drive from Sand Point to the Coleman ferry dock, or it can take two hours; not uncommon.

If she leaves Sand Point and sees that traffic is backed up from the Montlake Bridge all the way to University Village, she may try to swing over the University hill to the highway, which may very well be at a further standstill. It's not uncommon. And the situation is worse on those days when it's blocked up and there's a game of some kind downtown.

So my wife doesn't know, until she is most of the way to the terminal, which boat she could be on. So my guess is that she's probably going to be adversely affected by your reservation system. Maybe you can tell me what boat she should reserve when she is working at Sand Point, but I don't think you can.

If she's not able to reserve a boat, or does reserve a boat and doesn't make that boat, due to circumstances beyond her control, what happens then? I think that's all the comments I want to make.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 3: We're here because of one problem and one problem only. That's the failure of the Washington State Ferry system to budget properly for replacement of their boats. In prosperous years, when the State had a budget surplus, there were no requests to replace the boats. There was not -- there's not a sinking fund to amortize the cost of new boats over all the years of collecting funds. There is only neglect.

Can you imagine having your primary asset 40, 50, and 80 years old, with no plan to replace it? That's why we're here. If there had been a sinking fund, a charge each year to go into a fund to replace the ferries on a timely basis, we would not be here.

What's the effect of the ferry system? It transports workers and shoppers from one county to the other. Both counties benefit. That's a State system. They cannot be substituted, augmented, or replaced by county ferry systems.

I think both proposals are totally unacceptable and that a system that amortizes the cost of new boats and new capacity over the lifetime of the boats and adds those costs to the ferry runs, along with 50 percent of the operating costs, to come to a fare is a proper way to go forward. In this way, 50 percent of the operating costs and the incremental capacity increases would be charged to the ferry runs. The rest would be picked up by the State.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 4: Hi. I'm Terry Golden. I think one the problems here is not proper use of good management on the operating side. For instance, you're proposing a fuel surcharge when, if you look at, like, really well-run airlines, like Southwest, what do they do? They buy options on heating oil and basically not get sucked into paying, you know, very high prices. So that's something I think you should definitely look at doing instead of just saying to the passengers, you know, "Wall Street and Hillary are basically going to do it to you again," like they did to us in the Northwest over the electricity and, you know, put that in as a point.

The second point is, we're at the lowest interest rates since the Great Depression. I'm having a little hard time wrapping my head around why you can't afford, you know, the cost of, like, an extra billion dollars. It seems that, you know, if we were at, you know, super high interest rates, then, you know, that would make sense, because your cost over the years would come out. But at these rates, it's a little hard to understand why that can't be done.

Sort of second the point of the prior gentleman: The point of having a sinking fund. I think that's something that needs to definitely be in there. And, again, you know, you've locked in the interest rates through puts on Euro dollars or something else so that cost is fixed.

I think increasing these costs, by not having controls, led us to much higher fares. If you read the plan that is outlined, they seem to be in conflict. They say they want to increase the ridership, but yet you're driving the price up.

Simple economics tells you that, basically, that's not going to happen. You're going to end up spending a lot on a boat that's got infrequent service, and what you're going to have is the L.A. bus system, where, you know, something shows up and you just get on it, because, you know, you're going to wait forever for something that's never going to come. So, I mean, more-frequent service at a lower point that can get you to a case where, you know, the revenue is there to do some of these things.

That's my comments.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 5: I'm Doug Rauh. I've attended two of the prior meetings, Bremerton and Port Townsend, and our problem here is different. Port Townsend needs service, Bremerton wants someone else to pay for it, and they probably will not get their wish. Our problem is, if you cut everybody else, they're all coming here. Then WSDOT will want to widen the road, build a bridge, spend money, spend money, spend money.

And yet what we've been asking for for years is parity of service. Why not put one Mark 2 to Kingston, Bainbridge, and Bremerton. We each get one of the big boats. And then, when we start looking at passenger-only service, maybe, at that point, Bainbridge Island will consider it. But up until now, we've

gotten nothing about having passenger-only. And yet, according to Puget Sound Regional Council, we're not even on the list, when we look at your appendix. Yet we are the primary, the absolute best, spot to put passenger-only.

We're the very shortest run. You already have a built-in market. You have a very short commute to the terminal. That route time -- if you had three boats out there, passenger-only, you'd be looking at a 15-minute boat -- boat leaving approximately every 15 minutes. So no one would need a schedule. The buses would work better. The roads would work better.

But if you put bigger boats on or up the number of seats on the Mark 2s and remove the capacity of Bremerton, we will get even more people coming down 305 to get to the service. It's not the demand; it's the service. If you put the service here, they come here. When they come here, we have a problem.

So I fully endorse the reservation system, but there's still only 200 spots on the car deck, and that's where they're short. And people are very upset, but there are still just 200 spots.

Bremerton wanted a bridge to Bainbridge. Putting one single lane on the State highway will provide 2,000 cars per hour. 2,000 cars in one hour is 10 trips, 10 departures from down here. That's half a day. If they put two lanes across, in just a couple hours, all of the ferry-service capacity is used up, 100 percent, for the whole day. Where would we park them if we had it? What would they do? We have no place to put the vehicles.

You're going to tear -- Seattle is going to tear down the viaduct. That will be, like, a 10-year project by the time you do the tunnel, the viaduct. Their streets are going to be jammed. I can't imagine them asking you to bring more cars down there.

At some point, if you're going to break even, you're going to have to cut your capacity to get in line with the funds that are available. And I realize that it's the Washington State Transportation and Commission and the Legislature that sets your policy and not you or the operating system.

And before I quit, I'd like to thank the crew of the Washington State Ferries that I saw painting the windows in the snowstorm. I've heard of other terminals where people were berating the crews. And yet, at this route, all I've ever seen is excellent service compared to what I've seen in Bremerton.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 6: Hi. I'm Torin Larsen. I am a member of the Bainbridge Ferry Advisory Committee, and I've attended all the meetings related to this, and I've read the full plan. A couple things in the plan. I'd like to compare it to Snoqualmie Pass, as suggested earlier. I'd like to compare it to the package of Interstate 405 plus the bridges, both bridges.

You know, they claim that we live an unsustainable lifestyle. But if 405 and the bridges weren't there and they were proposing that for the first time, I think that people would be saying the same thing about living on the Eastside and the peripheral areas.

Certainly, those freeways get many times more funding per year than the Washington State Ferries does, if you compare it to the ridership, the drivership to those highways.

I'd like to say I do support Washington State Ferries and their stuff, and I think they've done a good job in reaching out to us and informing us of the plan. I don't agree with all the decisions they've made, but, overall, I support them and I want this to succeed.

I'm also disappointed that Washington State Ferries didn't have or come up with a Plan C, because the bill did say that you guys should address the highest-quality service --and that's a quote from Mr. Deardorf--and I don't believe Plan A addresses the highest-quality service. I believe Plan B is the worst-quality.

I think that Plan A is probably acceptable given the conditions right now, or is a reasonable low point to look towards. But a Plan C should really address the capacity -- the 40-percent capacity increase that they're expecting over the next 22 years. The Plan A does not address the capacity increase and does not address the highest-quality service possible. And I think that there should be an option with Plan A being the middle.

I'm also happy to say that, after the meeting tonight, anyone in the room here can drive to a little town in Eastern Washington. They're on the Idaho border, and it's called Little Creek. You drive on about six different highways to get there, and it's 361 miles from here. And you can drive all the way there, and the

only place you'll pay a toll is on the Washington State ferries. And yet they're all highways.

We pay more per capita on this side of the mountains for our highways; many -- a lot more. Especially when you compare the smaller counties in Eastern Washington. It is a system. Again, there's Snoqualmie Pass, too, and, operating on the capital side, Snoqualmie Pass is very expensive compared to the ridership -- or the drivership, I should say.

And I believe that, as a State highway, there needs to be more context provided around the ferry system as it functions as a highway compared to other areas. Bridges are more expensive. The passes are more expensive. Maybe Snoqualmie isn't the best comparison. Maybe Stevens is.

But I think that, if Washington State Ferries are to succeed, it has to get the point across that they are not the -- they are not as expensive as they're made out to be.

Lastly, I think that this proposal and the direction of the Legislature is unlike most highways in Eastern Washington in the way the users are treated with the highways in Eastern Washington. They're not asked to change their behavior. They're not directed by the Legislature to have State agencies try to change their behavior. Not even to incentivise them or virtually to punish them for trying to use the highways. That never happens in Eastern Washington, but it happens all over here all the time and, yet, we get less funding.

Thanks.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 7: David and Ray, welcome. Steve Bauer, County Commissioner. I want to thank you for being here. I want to thank you for -- I know this isn't necessarily a pleasant experience. And, Ray, I hope that that shoulder is not from a prior hearing.

MR. DEARDORF: They were tough last night.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 7: You know, I want to thank you, David, because you've gone out of your way to really cooperate and work with our local group. And frankly, that's why I think the plan is really a surprise, because Plan A does not have any of that, and I want to take you off the rope, because my understanding is that this didn't come from the system but, in fact, came from the Governor's office and that it was a request that you complied with. But the result of it is that it's not a partnership.

And frankly, I think, on close scrutiny, it's really not a plan, at least where it comes to Plan B. What you're really talking about -- it was obviously done in a hurry. It doesn't hang together. There are a lot of problems in it.

What it really looks like is the State shuffling its problem off onto local governments. And there's a policy of the State: There will be no new taxes, no new fees. But that's exactly what this is. It's just shuffled onto the local governments. If the State, with all of its resources, can't solve this problem, how on

earth is Kitsap County going to do it?

It's very interesting. You take a look at these routes, and one document that apparently was provided to the legislative committee called for Kitsap County to put in place six to nine passenger ferries. It didn't say "Kitsap and King County," you know, both sides. It said "Kitsap County."

This is the county that, the last time I looked, had the second-highest tax rate in the region. Kitsap Transit already had one of the highest sales-tax rates in the region. The voters here twice have turned down funding for passenger-only ferries. How are you going to find a system that's that big to supplant or to replace what's happened with the State ferry system?

So I think we could go on about Plan B but, frankly, I hope that the Legislature doesn't spend a lot of time on Plan B. I think there's a bigger issue here, and I think that is, in transportation, we tend to break it into pieces, so we've got highways over here, we've got transit over here, in this case, we've got ferries over here, and we ask each of them to do their own plans, but we really don't talk about how they're going to work together.

But we've got overarching State policies: growth management, climate change, things like that, that we really can't deal with unless we talk about the system as an integrated whole.

So the plan talks about the importance of transit and getting people to the ferries. But other than the passage just mentioned,

there's really nothing about that. You know, I hope that the Legislature will step back and look at the entire system.

So if it did that, it might look at putting some of the money as part of this plan into transit so that we get it and make it convenient for people to get on the bus and we reduce the congestion on 305, we put more people on the ferries, we get more revenues from the ferries, and we accomplish other State policies, like global climate change and other things that are important to us.

Another example is, if you cut service in Bremerton and Southworth and people start driving down and around 16 and I-5 to get to Seattle, then that totally violates the other policies that the State says are important to it.

So we've got a problem here. The ferries are part of the economic and social fabric for this community. And so we have a problem. It's serious, it's urgent. It's not a crisis. But I, for one, hope that the Legislature will step back from this, look at this issue in the context of the broader policies we've got. And it may well be that the State chooses to put other investments in the ferry system, because it is better and it accomplishes the State policies in these other areas better than trying to follow the policies in Plan B.

Thanks for doing this.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 8: My name is Russ Alexander. I'm from Poulsbo. I was a commuter, rode the boats for about 30 years, and

I'm just going to address mainly what one previous speaker said was the obligation and the purpose of the transportation system and the ferries is to move people and freight. And that's basically it. And I'm just talking, basically, right here in the plans.

Plan A, at least you keep control of the system with the State. Plan B, you're talking about Kitsap Transit and various jurisdictions running little subsidiary systems.

Let's go back to the history a little bit. In 1951 -- and I was around at that time -- the Black Ball went down, the State took over. Now, the first area to get their very own system was Vashon Island. They found out that that didn't work at all. That went down in flames. But Bremerton was playing the same game, and I don't know how many millions of dollars have been spent fooling around with the split-ferry game. And it went down in flames.

It has never worked. And right now, Kingston is trying to play the same game, which goes along with Item Number 2 here, Plan 2. And they're looking for subsidies, just like all these situations are.

There's not a transportation system worldwide that has not been subsidized to keep decent fares. You can't run it privately and people afford it. So I endorse Plan 1, with reservations. But that's what we're looking at right here, are two plans. Plan 2 has been a failure from the start when you start talking about various jurisdictions and counties running their own little

subsidiary systems. It won't work. Let's get back to the basic premise of this whole thing, which is to move people -- and I call it freight, because I was in the freight racket -- to move freight in an expeditious, efficient manner. That's your primary purpose.

Then make your other situations fit that purpose. Don't look around for financing and then try to make the movement fit the financing. Go after the movement and then finance it. That's it.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 9: You know, when I was a kid, I rode on some of the boats in San Francisco Bay that came up here. This is a unique system, and it's unique to this area. We all know that, but we forget about that when we start talking about the financial difficulties and woes of the world. But I feel that the job -- that your job is to find that funding to make this thing keep working. I mean, it's absolutely -- well, how can I say it? You would miss this. I think, if your Plan B was enacted, the whole region would suffer. And you would miss this if we deconstructed, you know, this social obligation, this development and interconnectivity of the communities.

Once you start removing that, it's hard to get it back. You know, particularly now. We look at everything these days with a very corporate, very much a bottom-line sort of view of everything. But the world really doesn't work that way. There are things that are worth it.

And other speakers have spoken, you know, excellently about all of these things. But there's something that's lost if we put

a price tag on everything. And I think it's possible to look at the ferry system as being a necessity, just like Snoqualmie Pass is a necessity; you know, just like, you know, bridges all across the state are necessities.

But there's got to be a way of approaching this from a slightly different point of view. I feel that, basically, the State hasn't been able to really deal with the impact of I-695, you know. And I'm disappointed that there's not -- the look for the money first.

Certainly, as a rider, you know, I feel like I'm doing my part. I'm trying to run a business over here and, sometimes, I just have to take a vehicle. But try to look at the whole thing, the whole picture. Hopefully, the Legislature will.

If we can't take a vehicle on a boat, that means we're driving around, just another truck on the freeway, you know. And I don't think it does the community, the wider community, a good service to start deconstructing this system that we have.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 10: I'm Martha Burke. I chair the Bainbridge Ferry Advisory Committee. And we'll submit written comments, but I wanted to talk tonight a little bit about -- expand on what Torin had said earlier and talk about the question -- or the comment that we hear all the time: "There's no money." "There is no money," we hear from the Legislature. And so I took a look at the Governor's proposed project list, her budget, and

focused on the Alaska Way Viaduct.

So in the next biennium, '09/'11, there's 449 -- \$449 million that are going to be devoted to the Alaskan Way Viaduct. That's not even an interesting point. The interesting point is that, in this biennium right now, '07/'09, there is \$181 million being spent.

Now, they just decided what they were going to spend -- what they're going to build: a tunnel. They talked about that two years ago. So for two years, they've kind of putzed around, as far as I can tell, and they spent \$181 million.

Now, that could buy us, even at the rates that we're finding with Todd Shipyards, well over three boats. So when they tell us there is no money, we should take a look at that. There really is money, but it's just not being spent on us.

So that's my comment for the record tonight. Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 11: I'm Linda Berry-Maris, and I'm a member of the Poulsbo City Council. Ferries function both as an extension of the highway system and as transit. It's a crucial connection across multiple counties throughout the Puget Sound region. And yet, because they look different than either transit or our highways, we essentially misplan by not funding it as either one. We're talking about a system that connects 23 million people a year. How can we really abdicate our responsibility for all of the people and all of those connections?

Our highways are funded at 100 percent by taxes. And yet, on

Plan B, what the proposal is is that we would cut the funding from the ferries and cut service back so much that we would only subsidize the ferries at 3 percent and would expect the ferries to cover 97 percent of their own costs.

Essentially, Plan B abdicates the State responsibility for funding ferries and effectively shifts those costs onto all the ferry-dependent communities, with the primary cuts to service being to Kitsap County. Essentially, our State is abdicating their responsibility to fund ferries by passing the responsibility primarily to Kitsap County.

With three boats, with three areas of Kitsap County being cut, having major cuts, what is it going to do to our county? Bremerton is going to see a drastic decrease in their economic viability. They already, since the loss of their passenger ferry, have seen a huge economic downturn.

Kingston is going to lose their night service. Those people that normally count on being able to get home on the Kingston run are going to take their cars on the boat and will be driving around the Bainbridge route. Southworth is also going to lose ferries. So all that population shift and all that demand and all that travel is going to shift to our north end.

And we have a Growth Management Act that says we're supposed to keep growth within the existing cities. We have the Puget Sound Regional Council Vision 2040 that was adopted last year that says Bremerton is our metropolitan area and that most population

growth should happen in the Bremerton and Silverdale area.

Yet, we are cutting the lifeline for all that development by saying we're cutting all those ferries in central and south Kitsap, and the only ferry service that we're keeping is Bainbridge Island. And that means all that traffic is coming down 305, and all that pressure is going to the north end -- which we do not have the infrastructure. We are not supposed to be the area that absorbs that growth in the north end of Kitsap County.

Alternate B is completely unacceptable to Kitsap County. Short-term finances shouldn't drive a long-term funding situation. We are -- this ferry system was the victim, really, of 695 coincidence.

When we lost the MVET taxes, we lost the funding for ferries. And now, by coincidence, we're supposed to solve this funding problem this year, and we have the worst economic crisis in 40 years. And instead of saying, "Oh, what are we going to do about" -- if we try to solve this long-term problem in today's economic crisis, we are going to essentially kill the ferry system and kill most of our ferry-dependent communities and create great challenges in Kitsap County, because our county cannot fund this without really destroying how it works today.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 12: My name is Bruce Hedderly-Smith. I live on Bainbridge Island. I'm going to make this kind of personal, because I've got a little bit of history with these

things. And first of all, I want to ask: How many of you were on the 5:30 boat tonight, coming back from Seattle? Okay. How many of you ride it every goddamn day? All right.

I ride it every day. I've been riding it since I got back from the Air Force, since 1974, every day. I was the first student who went to Lakeside School on the ferry system, starting in 1957. I've ridden the boats since 1952.

So I ask a few questions. One, you're looking at funding for bigger car ferries, but you want to promote the passenger ferries. Where are the passenger ferries? There was a McNichols up on Whidbey Island. They could build passenger ferries. What happened to them?

The revenue plans don't take into consideration or encourage passenger-only ferries. They encourage the larger boats. And I agree with the individual who said we ought to look at other areas to build these ferries, other than the state of Washington.

Take a field trip. Ride the Canadian ferry system in British Columbia. It's going to open your eyes.

Plan B is totally unacceptable. And the reason being is just simply it's just logistically a nightmare. If you're in Seattle in the evening and you need to go to Bremerton and they cut your service, where are you going to go? You're going to go to the Narrows Bridge if you have your car in town. Or, if you have to plan that, you're going to drive all the way to Bainbridge, you're going to take up a parking spot in the Diamond lot or somewhere,

and it's going to be a mess.

And I think that you have to consider, if you're going to reduce ferry-system service, I think you ought to stop service on 520 as well.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 13: I'm Rachel Wade-Brown, and I am a regular ferry rider on three different runs: the Kingston, the Bainbridge, and the Port Townsend/Keystone ferry. I have a series of comments and questions that are not necessarily connected, and I'm just going to work through them one at a time.

My first one is, I don't understand fare collections currently, nor do I understand it in the long-range plan. For example, the Port Townsend/Keystone ferry, which runs pretty much across the Puget Sound for the same period of time that the Kingston boat does, costs less to drive on, even though that boat carries primarily drive-on passengers, who are mostly tourists.

My understanding is that night service is considered anything after 6:30 p.m., and, if we cut night service to the Kingston boat, that I won't be able to get home on many nights. I would therefore be forced to drive during my regular nights on the Kingston service so that I can come home using the Bainbridge service. So it would increase the number of times that I drive across on the ferry.

Fare recovery for other State highways is currently at zero percent, except for capital projects, like bridges. And I don't

understand why 87 percent is not enough for our State highways, including Highway 20, Highway 104, and more.

From reading the long-range plan, I see that reservations will require additional space and additional employees, which means additional costs, and I'm not exactly sure how that will help the ferry system.

My understanding is also that the Kingston run loses money if it is less than 35-percent full, which means that the run, in general, makes money, and that money leaves the Kingston run, the Bainbridge, and the Mukilteo runs to pay for other ferry services. And how does that fit into the fare-collection plan?

A restatement. Cutting service to Kingston and Bremerton will increase Bainbridge Island traffic. That's auto traffic on the roads, and that's auto traffic on the ferries, and it also requires additional construction to serve parking needs. It also will affect the transit requirements by Kitsap Transit.

I don't understand how carpools and vanpools will be affected by the reservation system, and think that they should have priority loading no matter what, whether you have a reservation system or not.

Currently, West Sound commuters often pay for their bus fare on the Kitsap Transit, a ferry fare, and a bus fare on the Snohomish or King County side or Pierce County side. We pay approximately -- if we're walk-on passengers, about \$180 a month for such passes. If you're just transiting from, say, Pierce

County to King County on the bus or Sound Transit, you're paying half that or less. So we need to think about fares that encourage the commuters to continue their regular commutes.

If the viaduct-replacement bored tunnel could possibly be something for the incoming president's federal financial package to stimulate the economy, why can we not include building ferries in such a project?

For the proposed goals that were listed as reasons for the evaluation of ferries, the new plans include delivering the highest-quality service at the lowest possible cost. It seems that the current plans are focusing on the lowest possible cost and not on the highest-quality service. And, in the past, we've seen that focusing on low cost actually puts riders and the State in danger of an accident, which was evident in the poor maintenance of the boats over on the Port Townsend/Keystone run; and that, if we continue to emphasize lowest possible cost, we might be in danger of not just having something like a viaduct collapse, but a ferry sinking.

And those are my comments. Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 14: It appears that the ferry system is assuming that technology will not change in the next 22 years. There may be a problem that anybody that thinks that it is going to change would be too visionary. But the only system in view is ever-larger ferries that look just like the ones they have.

Now, the technology for the ferries we have is probably close to 100 years old, because the ferries are 50 years old, and some are 80 years old. So the technology that we're looking at is probably 100 years old.

The navigation systems that are in them are not state of the art. There are many things about the ferry system that is not looking into the next 22 years. Existing technology could produce a wake-free Bremerton-to-Seattle crossing in less than 20 minutes. A fleet of small 50-car ferries operating on a 10-minute turnaround could carry 300 cars per hour.

The ferries would operate on a demand schedule and would consume about the same fuel as the cars would use for the same trip. The fleet could be designed to burn hydrogen to eliminate all pollution.

The system could function as a floating conveyor belt equivalent to a bridge. All elements would be automated to reduce labor costs. The system could expand to offer many direct connections around Puget Sound and Kitsap County would blossom.

We should not accept small thinkers. While projecting a three-and-a-half-billion-dollar deficit, the loss of growth in Kitsap County must be added to that deficit. What funds are committed to defining the system that may not produce a deficit? For three and a half billion dollars, there are many outfits that would just jump at the chance to design a complete ferry system for Puget Sound--and sell the whole fleet--and you could do it for

a fraction of what the State is talking about.

I would urge the Legislature to take another look. And you're under the constraints of what they asked you, but they may not be competent to ask the right questions.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 15: Good evening. There was a survey about the 5:30 boat. Just another survey. How many people walk on versus drive? How about drive? Thank you.

You guys are in two businesses, two fundamentally different businesses. You're in the commuter business and you're in the highway-extension business. You inherited the Black Ball fleet. It was before my time but not far. I think there's been a sense of, I don't know, entitlement. But just because it has always been that way, it shouldn't always continue that way.

You need to think out of the box, because it looks like you're kind of throwing things over to Kitsap County and they'll build walk-on boats, and maybe not. But you don't care; you're gone.

But, you know, there's a Bay Area Rapid Transit, the TriMet in Portland; three counties, two states. You know, there's Kitsap County Transit, Pierce County Transit, Snohomish County Transit, King County Metro, light commuter rail, Sounder rail. We all live and work in Puget Sound. We all own houses, we're all in the tax base.

You've got to get out of the box. Get out of ferry people business. A regional transit authority that moves people on the

buses, on the boats, on the trains. You can buy dirigibles, I don't care.

You guys, get in the highway-extension business. You build boats, you capitalize it. No more of this argument about them or us and folks who are paying tolls. You know, you're moving buses and you're moving cars.

You know, highways don't have people walking on them. You know, so you can say your ferry is an extension of the highway, because there are no people walking on 520 across the bridge. They're moving cars. So that's really what you should be doing. Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO 16: I'm Becky Erickson, and I want to thank you both for coming here tonight and doing what appears to be a rather thankless job, and just wanted to say that up front. And, Martha, perhaps you're right. There's money. I would encourage anybody that wants to be informed to go out to the Web site of the Office of Financial Management and look at the numbers. And it's pretty staggering and pretty shocking.

The capital budget for the Washington State Ferries is \$268 million for the year -- the next biennium budget. Of that \$268 million, 120 million is dedicated to terminal improvements. It's not boats; it's terminals.

The budget is listed -- the operating budget is \$426 million, of which 310 million of it is our fares. It's 71- percent supported by fares. I don't know any other transportation system,

State-sponsored transportation system, that has that level of public support, rider support. The buses don't, Sound Transit doesn't. Lord, Sound Transit doesn't.

And so I see this as, basically, a tax on Kitsap County. I see an agenda that the State has determined that they're in a rough time financially. They're not willing to do the hard work to reorganize the ferry system.

If any other -- if a private-sector business was this broken, it would be ripped apart and reorganized. It wouldn't go with its hand out to its customers, saying, "Gee whiz, we want more." It doesn't work that way.

And so Plan B is not acceptable. No. I would suggest we stick with Plan A for a hiatus, for a period of two years. And then, what we need to do is go back into the Washington State Ferry and look at the numbers and figure out what the heck we're spending the money on. I mean, this is a study of lack of governance. It's a study of lack of management. It needs to be revamped. It needs to be looked at. It needs to be fixed.

I would suggest, by what I have read, that it should not be part of the Washington State Department of Transportation. It needs to be separated out and managed separately. It needs a separate, unique governance.

Initially, in this two-year hiatus, the first thing that needs to be done is -- we have two problems here facing us. One, we have an operating shortfall. It's nominal. It's not very big.

The real problem that we keep hearing, over and over, is a lack of capital; a lack of capital.

Well, what are we spending the capital on? How can you determine what capital you're going to spend if you don't have a clear vision of what you want the system to be 15 years from now? We keep talking about: "Oh, we need larger ferries," or "We need big car ferries." And yet, every growth-management policy within the State is pushing people to transit, passengers, moving people.

There's a real dichotomy here. We need to analyze, we need to have a true strategic vision for the system. Solve the initial operations problem in the next two years. Come with a new strategic vision about what the Washington State Ferries needs to be and who needs to run it.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 17: Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak with you this evening. My name is Dr. Linda Paralez. I'm a member of the Kingston Ferry Advisory Committee, I'm a member of the Kitsap County Planning Commission, and a business owner. I've lived in Kitsap County for 15 years, and I enjoy very much the lifestyle in Kitsap County and, as such, am very dependent on the ferries.

I am humbled by all the comments before me, and so I will not try to repeat any of the things I've agreed with except to say that, as a business owner, if I were to go to my banker with this business plan, I would be very embarrassed.

Neither Plan A or Plan B are acceptable, because neither are sustainable. So that's probably not an indictment of you as much as it is of our Governor, because neither are supportable, neither are sustainable, neither would pass the laugh test of anybody. Neither would pass the laugh test of any customer.

There is no marketing element in any plan. There is no revenue enhancement in any of these plans. There is no effort to model what that tipping point was that happened when we raised those fares so dramatically and lost those 10 million riders before and made sure that those riders that used to go across the pond to their jobs no longer could do that anymore so that, now, something like a \$90,000-a-year income is required to be a commuter, to go across the pond.

So something has to happen to tell us: What do we do to get back to the days when riding the ferry was an easy thing to do when you made \$40,000 a year in Kitsap County?

So that modeling wasn't in the plan. Fare increases are not the answer for the future. And I really applaud a gentleman who gets up here who is obviously a couple of decades older than me and encourages you to look to future technology for the answer. That made my heart sing, and I hope it made your heart sing too.

And I really encourage our commissioner, who tells you to pay attention to the Growth Management Act, because those are laws that we try to live by at the Planning Commission. And if we're not doing that, we're not paying attention to the boundaries that

drive what makes a good plan.

So this is not a good plan. It doesn't have the boundaries in it, the future technology, a good banker's eye. It doesn't have a new marketing plan, and it doesn't align with the Growth Management Act. So please take that message to our Governor, who is supposed to be a good leader.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 18: Thank you. Let's focus on creating Plan C: Citizens' Common Sense. One, first make a commitment to fund the system after all efforts for efficiencies have been implemented.

This biannual scramble for funding has got to stop. Do the mountain passes have to scramble to get snowplows to keep the mountain passes clear in each budget cycle? Is 520 looking at closing down two lanes to reduce its highway cost and create cost savings? Stop treating the marine highway and mass-transit system as an oddity of WSDOT. Put funding in the budget.

Two. Look for cuts in the system. Washington State Ferry's overhead should be immediately cut before the Legislature even thinks about reaching into our wallets again. The system has not changed drastically the number of crews servicing boats in over 30 years. And this was told to me by crew members.

What has changed drastically is the amount of Washington State Ferry's administration. It is now five times what it was then. So at a minimum, we should be asking for a 25- percent

reduction in Washington State Ferry's headquarters. Use the money saved to build a more flexible fleet for ferries.

Regrettably, the Legislature sent you, Washington State Ferries, on a path to having to find its own money to float the system. Thus, 80-percent fare increases in six years and the rush to figure out how to raise more money.

You guys looked to becoming landlords, collecting rents from franchises like Starbucks, McDonald's, Tully's, sell advertisement, get more money out of the users. The Legislature should take on the responsibility to restore funding, or else maybe they need to wear T-shirts for McDonald's when they go to the legislative session. Get some advertising money out of them.

Three. Build boats, not terminals. Stop the nonsense of the expensive terminal expansions and improvements. Terminals should be nothing more than glorified bus stops, shelter, and spaces to pass through on the way to your destination.

We don't want high-end shops, hotels, restaurants, coffee-shop franchises at the terminals. We want people to go to our towns to visit and shop and buy from our mom-and-pop, locally owned stores. Build boats, not terminals. The old terminals were built like bomb shelters. They were built to last, and they're lasting.

Four. Have contracts for the lifecycle of the vessels. All new vessels should have build/maintain bidding contracts. Now that we don't have the steel electricians' need for hand-crafted

parts and woodshop repairs, downsize the maintenance shed. Better yet, get rid of it and contract out the maintenance. You're doing it now at Todd Shipyard, at Dakota, etcetera.

How is it that WSDOT spends 21 million a year maintaining 946 buildings, and WSF is going to spend 22 million in one year for one maintenance yard? And why is the maintenance yard budgeted for each year for \$90 million? That money could build boats. If there is something outrageous about this sort of spending, is there room for cutting expenses?

Five. Change the law requiring ferries to be built in Washington only. The last boats were built for 220,000 per vehicle space. The recent bid came in -- our last bid came in at 1.5 million per vehicle space. That's seven times the cost. We have to get rid of this "build only in Washington." If we did that, we'd be up for opportunities for getting some of that Obama money.

Finally, increase the WSF portion of the gas tax from a half cent to 1.5.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 19: A very large number of excellent points have been raised. I don't see the point, really, of reiterating them at any length. But to sum up, I strongly agree, and I can see no reason not to form a better measure of control of capital costs. In looking through the whole draft plan, it's rather difficult sometimes to see what something is

expected to cost when you look at all portions of the cost of capital and operating.

The long-range plan, I think, does not adequately address seasonality. We have boats that are designed to take the worst sea states we have. We have facilities designed to take the worst sea states we have. They are also loaded with fuel based on worst-condition refueling opportunities. And yet, the majority of the worst traffic we see is during summer when you can put a barge across several of the crossings without appreciable risk.

In the past, that was done. Perhaps more than half of traffic used to cross once on the railway and used to cross on barges. Not something you'd want to do out of Port Townsend in winter with a car, but most of the tourists who come through here are not coming through at that time.

Let's see. In terms of technology, as has been mentioned, there are other technologies to be looked at. We're borrowing from the Nantucket run right now, with the Island Home design. They've already been waiting around with that craft, working there for 10 or 12 years; basically, captured aircraft. Very fast. Again, not something that you'd want to be running in the middle of winter on some runs. But, again, it's not where our traffic is.

And the last thing I'd like to mention, which is against all of our best interests, or perceived best interests, including my own, is that, if we look back to when these ferries were taken

over 50-something years ago, they were taken over with the intention to largely eliminate them.

Every time someone has come and taken a hard look at the money alone, which I agree should not be the only consideration, but when it is looked at that way, route after route comes out as more feasible to bridge than to run a ferry.

And as long as we keep pretending that isn't the case, and as long as we keep burying the actual cost of what we want to do in, as I said, rather Byzantine accounting methods, we are going to have a problem where one half of the state complains about the other half of the state's funding and we'll go back and forth about Spokane's roads versus our ferries, and the net result might be that we might get bad ferries and bad roads.

Again, most other points I wished to raise have already been raised several times and probably better than I could, so thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 20: Hi. My name is Jan Hannuksela, and I live on Bainbridge Island. And I just wanted to say, first of all, that -- as many people have said before, the context here is important. We have built our lives around the use of the ferry for work, for personal time. We depend on them just as other people depend on other State highways.

In light of that, I support Plan A over Plan B, because that preserves what we have now. And in my life, I depend on the ferry both for work and personal reasons.

I also agreed with something the gentleman said much earlier. I think we need a third option that's actually more expansive than what Plan A is. Plan A is the bare minimum.

I think the third option should look at additional runs, additional ferries. Right now, it's tough to have to wait 50 minutes, an hour sometimes, in between boats, so it would be nice to perhaps have a passenger ferry in between.

Also, strategically, Plan A is the bare minimum which I support. As you said, they're bookends. Usually, you end up somewhere in the middle. I would rather see something pushing the envelope on the other side a little bit, too, to give, really, much more of a broader range to the Legislature to think about.

Another point. I'm pretty uncomfortable with a reservation system. Like the first gentleman who spoke -- I'm in a carpool, actually. I have to go to the city also. Because of that, it's hard to judge traffic. It's hard to be positive which ferry we're going to be on.

It's also hard if you go to the airport to pick somebody up. Their plane could be late. Their baggage could take a while. You could miss the ferry you had the reservation on. So it's really hard to judge, a lot of times, which ferry you're actually going to make.

And speaking of carpools, I actually have a suggestion for that, too, to decrease the number of cars. I wish you guys would allow two people to be a ferry carpool. That's what the rest of

the State transportation system has as a carpool, is two people.

It's hard for those of us who go to oddball places to find a lot of people. Two is much more doable. It would still decrease the number of cars on the ferry. You might need an extra carpool lane, but I think you could switch over and have one more lane be a carpool lane. So I would strongly encourage you to think about that.

And lastly, I just wanted to say I love riding the ferries. I love commuting by ferry. I love sitting there and looking out on the water. I'd rather do that than be sitting in traffic in the city.

Thank you very much.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 21: Thank you very much for coming here and listening to us. I think it's fundamentally a good system and I enjoy using it. I would say that you have Plan A, which is barely acceptable, and Plan B, which is very unacceptable.

I think there should be one system under the Washington State State Department of Transportation for ferry service. I don't think you should carve this up into a lot of independent private organizations, as they will cherry-pick some of your routes, and then the entire system will be in jeopardy of ending its existence.

I think that -- again, I am 100 percent against a reservation system. We all own this ferry system, and it should not be basing

use on the ability of somebody to pay a little extra money to have a reservation on a publicly owned system. So I'm completely against that, as I say.

I think, again, other people have made the statement that, if you change service on one route, it has a ripple effect on the other routes, whether through traffic or whether it be the ridership changes or the ridership by walk-on or car ferries. So one has to treat this as an integrated system, not as individual routes.

We need to establish an integrated transportation system. And if it costs, probably, per person, on Bainbridge, about 5- or \$6,000 per person, in Kingston, a person commuting every day -- granted, at previous gasoline prices, it probably costs in the area of \$7,000. That's after-tax dollars.

So whatever the income-tax bracket of the individual is, you can compute what it would cost. It's a very, very substantial amount of money that comes out of the person's paycheck. If people are willing to spend that much money to drive -- and that's just driving to Bainbridge, for driving to Bainbridge -- parking, paying that expensive fee of \$10 a day and then walking on the ferry -- I'm not asking them -- putting in that dollar value, the cost of actually getting on that ferry.

So with that in mind, you could charge a fair amount of money putting in an integrated transportation system, like a bus or whatever that may be, provided you give people safe, secure park &

ride types of situations. Then you would be increasing the ferry walk-on passengers and not having to go for the expensive car-type of a ferry system.

And a final comment here. I very much appreciate the work of some of our city and State employees who have been here and made comments, especially the last speaker, Commissioner Hannuksela. I would say that our real-estate taxes, our value of our property is predicated on this ferry system. If you took away the ferry system, this is not going to be a vacation paradise at San Juan Island. If you took it away completely, our real-estate values would go down. The State revenues from the real-estate taxes would go down.

We are, in effect, supporting the ferry system in the fact that our real-estate values are quite high on Bainbridge Island because we have transportation to and from our jobs. So with that in mind, the State has to take that into account and fund the system. Because we're really paying for it. If you chopped our real-estate taxes in half because the property values dropped in half because you took the ferry system away, the State would lose money.

Again, I thank you very much for coming here without a bulletproof vest.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 22: I'm Jamie McCann. I live on Bainbridge, and a salute to everybody that did a lot more homework than I did tonight before coming here. I think some people have

clearly proved that the mind does exist within the State of Washington to keep this ferry system operating in a distributive way, like it is now. At the same time, it's used to create -- to obtain the green-type initiatives that keep from loading 305 and other parts of Bainbridge and distribute people moving.

Okay, you guys, I think, were given a really thankless task of coming here and doing the Legislature's work. They are not doing the hard work of taking the money they have and -- when you pick up a stick, you pick up both ends. So before you start funding other things, like viaducts and things like that, they ought to be taking care of the existing systems, which they've committed to do.

Did anybody ride the subway system in New York City? Brooklyn is across the East River from New York City. I think that, if the subway, Metro, or whatever their transit system is, said, "Well, you folks in Brooklyn, buy a boat, because we're cutting your line," Mayor Bloomberg -- Brooklyn wouldn't take no for an answer.

Now, we're a lot nicer in Kitsap County, but I think it's incumbent on us to get to our legislators and elected reps and tell them, "We don't want to be New Yorkers, but we can be if we have to and you start taking away from us." Okay?

As I was sitting here -- I've been in a small development of about 20 homes. We're on a water system. I started thinking, the things that we do with our water system, clearly, somebody hasn't

thought about. We have limited funds, but we collect enough each month to salt away money, so we do the equivalent of heavy maintenance. We'd have enough to get started and then go and reassess ourselves.

Okay, so one, we're putting money away right now for the future. I don't think that's happening right now, it sounds like. Two, we're going to fund ourselves what we need. We're going to take our resources and make our large system whole before we start doing other things that we want to do around the neighborhood.

And number two, none of my neighbors would let me put a reservation in for 6:30 for water, okay? Because they might not be able to take a shower in order to go down and jam 305, okay?

And number three, if we start running out of water, okay, the community next to us, on their own well, sure is not going to let me run a pipe into their well and take water from them. So I don't see how Olympia thinks that they can take Kitsap County's resources to fulfill their responsibilities.

Thank you very much and, again, call your legislators, the Governor's office, and make them stand up for what they obligated to do in the early '50s.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 23: Thanks for coming, gentlemen. I didn't prepare any comments, and I'd like to express my support for a majority of the comments that have been submitted tonight. Specifically, it's not appropriate for the Department of Transportation to attempt to dismantle our communities, our

cross-Sound community, by cutting service.

And I ask if you've done the full analysis of the impact of rechanneling traffic into downtown Seattle when people can no longer take their ferries over to Kingston and the other kind of impacts that will reverberate across the counties.

One thing I guess I would add to things that have been said tonight. It's also bothered me about the system here. It gets to the user-fee thing. Why is the ferry system expected to run, 100-percent, on user fees while aspects of public transportation, the roads across the state, are not expected to have any user fees, with very few exceptions? And what I have to add to that point, that many people have made and that has bothered me for a long period of time, is essentially, that it's not fair to do that to the people on Bainbridge Island, or elsewhere, who rely on the ferries.

I am a bicycle commuter. I've lived in Kitsap County for 14 years. For those years, I've either worked on the island or ridden my bike to work in King County. I drive my car maybe 5,000 miles a year, but I happily pay my taxes, knowing that they support all kinds of services, including roads across the state.

I'm subsidizing the use of roads across the state, and yet I'm receiving no benefit at all from other taxpayers supporting this critical link in our transportation system. So I think my comment is essentially that the Department of Transportation needs to look at the cost of transportation across the state as a whole,

across the highway system, and to extract funding, whatever way is possible, including toll booths.

And there's a lot of states in the nation that do that and have. I grew up in Massachusetts. Tollbooths were part of our life. We crossed our tollbooths every time we got on the road. Nobody really cares. They're all still there. You got another tollbooth when you crossed the border into New York. Big deal. You drop a buck-25. Nobody cares. The system works. The roads are maintained.

So I think we should be imposing user fees across the entire transportation system as a way of raising money.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 24: I'm Gordon Black. I live on Bainbridge Island. Like the previous speaker, I'm also a bicycle commuter. Bicyclists are the largest single growth area on the ferries for the last three years. We have grown about tenfold, and how much money has the ferry system been spending to accommodate these extra bicycles? Well, let me tell you how much they collected in 2007.

By the figures provided by the ferry system itself, they've collected \$400,000 from bicyclists for the extra fees that they charge for taking a bicycle on the ferry. And as far as I can tell, they've probably spent the equivalent of \$3 buying some line to attach to the side of the ferries.

But I'm not here to primarily criticize the ferry system and their lack of vision in addressing bicyclists. What I want to say

is that I'm very disappointed in their lack of vision overall. Neither Plan A nor Plan B really represents a very bold vision for the future.

I have followed events in Seattle regarding the new 520 Bridge and also the viaduct. And, in each of those cases, there was several years of expensive studies and four to six options put for the viaduct over the years and up to eight options put into the replacement of the 520 span.

We get two options, one of which has to be instantly dismissed, and I think you know which one that is. Plan A, however, really doesn't generate a whole lot of enthusiasm from me, partly because, although the analysis that went into developing the study was actually quite good--I got quite encouraged--the end result is that many of the strategies that were examined were dismissed out of hand. And I'm talking about, partly, the pricing strategies.

But, also, the plan did not look at some of the internal cost savings that the system might achieve: management overhead in Seattle, the maintenance yard, and, in particular, the design office. It may not have escaped anyone's attention, but the ferry system hasn't built a new ferry in 10 years, but we still have a fully staffed naval- architecture office.

So I think that, in order for us here in Kitsap County to feel good about our long-range plan, the ferry system must demonstrate that it is looking comprehensively at its own internal

financing structures. Then go, with a very strong determination, to the Legislature and ask it to do its part with taxing.

And then, lastly, when it can demonstrate that all those avenues have been explored thoroughly, it can come to us, the users, and say, "See, we really have done our homework, and we still need some more money." If, at that point, we think that you've done your homework thoroughly, we might be more willing to reach into our wallets. But as it now stands, I don't think so.

Thank you very much.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 25: Hello. I'm Barry Peters, on the Bainbridge City Council. David, I want to thank you for coming to our community tonight. And I also want to thank you for coming to our Council last year. And before I talk about the long-range plan, I'd just like to mention my appreciation for your listening to our concern about a local issue, and that is an acre or two in the maintenance yard. For a long time, it has been promised to Bainbridge for some waterfront facilities, so I hope you'll keep that in mind.

But turning to tonight's topic of the long-range plan, what concerns me is how Plan B is not right not only for our community and our Kitsap County, but also for the region and the state. So I have a concern about two things about the long-range plan. One is something it says, and then something it doesn't say.

What it says is that "if the Legislature feels that we're really short of money, here's Plan B: Make Kitsap pay." They

turn it into a local problem, and what that says is: "Let's face it. The ferry system is a local solution for a local problem in Kitsap. So if all else fails, let's tax Kitsap and turn it into something that helps a ferry-dependent community to survive."

That's just not the case, because, what's missing from the report is more information about how economically important the ferry system is to this Puget Sound region. And that's the story that we should be telling. Certainly, the Legislature ought to be hearing that story, about how many ways this ferry system brings together, economically, this region on both sides of the water.

I mean, tonight, I'll be going across on the ferry because my mother-in-law has a hospital appointment tomorrow and I'm taking her to it. So how many medical-center facilities on the Seattle side and in King County are dependent on a great many people who come to those facilities because of a readily available ferry system? How many shops are dependent on the ferry system that the people visit from both sides?

There's a two-way traffic here, and I just think that the story that needs to be heard by the legislators from Seattle, from King County, from the Eastside, is that the ferry system is important to this regional economy and to the State's economy.

So many people have pointed out that the taxes that we're contributing to the economic activities generated by all the ferry system supports our state, supports our region.

So we need to talk about everything from medical facilities

to jobs and this commuting both ways to employment facilities, such as the kind that I was able to get to by ferry for many years before I retired. So that's the part that I see missing from the report: a story about how important this is to the region. It's not just about so-called ferry-dependent communities.

Thanks.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 26: I'm Matthew Voorsanger. I live on Bainbridge Island. I'd like to just echo what other people have said and just want to add: Today, one of my employees was two and a half hours late. There was an accident with a fire on I-5, and she was coming down to work to the medical center, in Swedish.

And my solution for her was -- I said, "Why don't you think about moving to Bainbridge? Because, living downtown, you can walk onto the ferry, and you could make it up to the medical center with no concerns about car accidents or a traffic jam on I-5."

You have got to take a broader picture. And you look at the region, and you think about a million new people moving into this region, would you rather have them clog the freeways, or would you rather have them come to an environment like this, where you actually use the boats as a mass-transit option? If you cut service, that's going to disappear.

It seems to me that the economic vitality of the region is not helped by cutting back ferry service. It doesn't matter to

me. I'm a physician. I can get a boat if I want. But if you think about the region and think about growth, it should happen in Kitsap as well as in Seattle, and it's going to be beneficial to have more service, not less. Not Plan A, not Plan B but, you know, more frequent service, more availability, more people moving.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 27: Hi. My name is T.J. Hall. I'm a resident of Bainbridge. Thank you for listening to us tonight. First of all, I apologize if some of the things I say are repeating what someone stated earlier. I just arrived on the ferry, actually. So hopefully, there's some marginal value in what I have to say.

You know, I'm a little disheartened that, you know, our government, as a whole, is encouraging our citizens to act in a more financially responsible way, and yet our governments, both federal and State, are such poor role models of this.

So one of my views may be a little bit of a minority view compared to some of the points I've heard, which I think are very helpful. I'm firmly in favor of, you know, rather than us trying to fight for what I think is a shrinking pool of funds and borrowing from future generations, I think that this does need to be funded in a way that is self-sustaining as an example that other elements of our public transportation systems can follow.

That being said, I don't think that raising funds as a first

measure is the right answer. It doesn't force -- there is no forcing function on the Washington State Ferries to try to be more clever or more resourceful in trying to find efficiencies.

One example is -- and, again, this flies in the face of some of the other points that I heard here, but there are a lot of midday runs that are largely unpopulated on the ferry. Every once in a while, I'll take an 11:30 or a 12:30 boat for some unusual reason, and there's virtually nobody on those runs. And yet they, you know, continue to have those runs.

There's kind of, like, a sense of entitlement that we should have a ferry running every 45 to 50 minutes all throughout the day. And it seems very inefficient to have those runs going when there are no cars on those runs.

I understand that there are challenges to having ferry employees that would have to maybe work maybe a few hours in the morning and then go home and then come back during the peak hours. There are challenges that would have to be worked through. But I think these are very trying economic times, and I think we will find ways that are maybe a little bit less comfortable but find ways to squeeze money in the system like that.

It doesn't necessarily mean that we cut Bremerton or we cut Kingston. You know, removing night service altogether from this route isn't the right answer. But I think spreading out some of the runs that would be less frequent is a possible answer.

I do want to applaud Washington State Ferries for taking

actions, like trying to find advertising revenue. I think those were creative. It's probably marginal dollars, but helpful.

A few others things the ferries can do in that regard. You know, for instance, the upper solarium deck of the ferry being converted to be luxury suites where you charge users some extra fee to go up there into a quiet area with Internet access, plush seats, and whatever. So there are other things that you can do to try to be more efficient.

The last thing I'll say is, I firmly second and third, you know, positions that I've heard that -- while I realize there's a difference between the operating expenditures and capital expenditures, I think sinking more money into our terminals isn't the right answer.

Thank you for hearing me out.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 28: John Torshak. Thank you very much for coming tonight, and I really do appreciate the services provided by the ferry system, and the employees are very courteous, generally. They deal with a lot of situations, but they do a very good job.

The conundrum that I think we're kind of getting is, we're supporting very large vessels for periods of time where there's a massive amount of underutilization, and so I think the scenario of providing smaller vessels offers you an operating efficiency. And Doug alluded to this. Smaller vessels, more frequency, you start dropping out of time schedules and all sorts of things on

high-density runs. By running smaller boats, you also have long-term smaller capital facilities and plans that you have to do. You're introducing less boats or less people in cars into various communities at times.

And I think the real big decision, going forward, is really the size of the boats. And people will change, the technologies will change. The hulls are these things that last this long, long time, and that's the decision that I think is going to make a huge difference.

And I really think there's a way out of this by rethinking whether these large boats, resulting in cutting runs and schedules as a result of the huge expense of operating them, is really the wise way to try to provide services to all these various communities.

The one other thing I'd like to consider is the cost that people incur when you have a centralized system. For example, I'm sure there are scenarios where you look at the Bainbridge run as a major highway in Kitsap but, if a lot of those people are traveling to Kingston or to Bremerton or Silverdale or other places, there are huge costs within the travel time and fuel and everything else that's happening. So I think you really have to consider the origin and destination of where people are traveling.

And again, when you come back to the small boats, you're able to operate a decentralized system that runs more directly.

So those are my comments.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 29: Thanks very much, and I'm sorry to make you hear from me twice, but I thought Ms. Erickson said something that reminded me of something specific I thought about Bainbridge, about the plan. There is 33 million, I think -- it's either that or 24, devoted to transit enhancements on Bainbridge Island. They include a direct walkway from the overhead loading to the transit center, better right turns for the buses, and improvements on Winslow Way.

I just want to say I don't think those are worth \$24 million. I think that you guys should buy an extra boat for Bremerton or a half-boat for Bremerton, and that would do more for Bainbridge, if you have to resort to Plan B, than those transit improvements would.

Thank you.

(The public comment portion of the hearing  
concluded at 8:31 p.m.)

