



WSDOT Ferries Division Public Meeting
Bremerton, Wash.
Bremerton Harborside
Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2008: 6:30 – 9 p.m.

Note: This meeting summary represents notes from the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Ferries Division 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.

Open House

Meeting attendees were given an opportunity to review the boards set up throughout the room. WSDOT Ferries Division staff were available to answer questions.

Introduction

*David Moseley, Assistant Secretary, WSDOT Ferries Division
Diane Adams, Meeting Facilitator*

Diane welcomed everyone and reviewed the agenda and the meeting ground rules.

David reviewed the four priorities for Ferries Division and the progress made to date.

1. *New boats.* David said that Ferries Division needs to build new boats. He said that we have the biggest ferry system in the United States and we do not have any back-up boats. He emphasized that this is not a sustainable way to operate. He said that Ferries Division is working on building these boats. Ferries has a contract with Todd Shipyards and is on track to begin construction by the end of 2009 for the 144-car boats. The bids are due to Ferries on Nov. 6, 2008 for (at least) two 64-car vessels and David hopes to contract before Thanksgiving.
2. *Maintain current boats.* The Ferries Division started a vessel preservation program. David said that he is aggressively trying to make sure that all the boats are safe. There is work being done in Eagle Harbor and other shipyards. Ferries is working with the Coast Guard on a new interior hull inspection program. The new protocol will make sure that all boats are safe and functioning well.
3. *Community Outreach.* The Ferries Division's goal is to increase the level of community outreach and to get to ferry communities more often to talk to people and hear their concerns. David said that a mentor of his has a saying that has served him well: There is no substitute for personal recognizance. He explained that to him, this means, that you have to see



- the people and the communities to understand them. He has spent a lot of time traveling to the ferry communities to carry out this approach.
4. *Long-range plan.* Ferries spent much of 2008 working with the Joint Transportation Commission (JTC) on the ferry financing study and the long-range plan. David emphasized that the Ferries Division is not sustainable today and that they need a plan to return to financial sustainability.

Presentation: System Challenges and Funding Problem

David Moseley, Assistant Secretary, Washington State Ferries

David explained that since the motor vehicle excise tax (MVET) went away, the Ferries Division lost 25 percent of the operating budget and 40 percent of the capital budget. What has happened since then is that the legislature has brought discretionary funds from other places to keep the ferry system going. This has been necessary even though the Ferries Division has reduced services and raised fares. David emphasized that this is why the system is not sustainable.

David described the \$3.9 billion gap in funding the existing baseline. He explained that on the capital side it's because the Ferries Division has an aging fleet and on the operations side it's because of the high costs fuel. The Ferries Division was raising 78 percent of the operating budget from the fare box. Now Ferries is only raising 70 percent because of fuel costs.

Presentation: Washington State Transportation Commission (WSTC)

Dan O'Neal, Commission Chairman

Bob Distler, Commissioner

Dan introduced Bob Distler, commissioner, and Reema Griffith, executive director. He explained that the WSTC is tasked with filling the The Ferries Division's funding gap. He explained that the money comes from the state, a little bit from the federal government and the majority from fares. He pointed out the three-legged stool in the presentation and the board. Dan emphasized that all the numbers assume a 2.5 percent increase in fare and an increase in ridership every year.

The WSTC has developed some suggestions for filling the funding gap. Dan pointed out that an MVET increase by 0.4 percent could cover the whole deficit if all that money was designated for the ferry system. He also said that a slight increase in sales or fuel tax would make a big difference. These options are not really feasible though since there is not enough money in the system to cover all of the transportation projects that the legislation has passed. The WSTC is looking at local sources of funds including fuel tax, a county MVET, or license



fees. He said that they have decided not to look at the parking tax, the impact fees and the employer tax. He said that the WSTC is looking for input and that they are not ready to make a recommendation to the legislation or the governor yet.

Bob added that in all of their work with Ferries and the Joint Transportation Commission (JTC), no one has found a “magic bullet” to fix the problem. He reiterated that these numbers are real and immediate. The numbers you see today are not to keep up with growth, they are to maintain service. He said that he feels that the local money is important. If we simply keep going as is, with 1.5 percent growth expected each year, the growth in traffic will be 40 percent.

Dan added that the numbers that they are working with are the same as the numbers that the Ferries Division and the JTC are working with.

Presentation: Building Blocks for the Long Range Plan

Michael Hodgins, Consultant

Michael directed everyone to the packet and reiterated the gap in funding and the challenges that Ferries faces. He described the ferry financing legislation and explained that it directs the Ferries Division to look at strategies to meet demand. The planning team received preliminary feedback on the 90 strategies at the June public meetings and has identified three that are the most effective and that we want to share with you tonight. These are reservations for vehicles, transit enhancements and pricing. Michael said that Ferries has mixed and matched these strategies to make a specific package for the Bremerton / Seattle route.

Reservations:

Michael reviewed the reservations system and reminded attendees that the reservations system has been very successful on the Port Townsend / Keystone route. He said that Ferries will build on that experience and tailor it to each route. Michael said that he knows there were a lot of concerns about reservations in June and the Ferries Division has worked on answering those questions for the public. A few key pieces that would make the system successful are:

- Users would pay something in advance to avoid no-shows
- Space would vary by route and time of day
- Vehicles would need to arrive 10 to 15 minutes ahead of time
- Reservations could be made up to 30 minutes ahead of sailing
- Majority of boat would be reserved (small number of spaces set aside for emergencies)

Michael reviewed the frequently asked questions.



Transit Enhancements:

Michael talked about the reasons that Ferries is considering transit enhancements as a part of their long-range plan. He said that the survey showed that lack of transit was a frequently cited factor that prevented people from walking on the ferry. Studies have shown that if you want to get people out of their cars, transit needs to be available on both sides of the route.

The three categories within transit enhancements are transit needs, facility needs and non-motorized facilities. Ferries will explore these ideas and work with the other agencies that are needed to implement them.

Pricing:

Research shows that pricing strategies affect demand. Michael said that Ferries has looked at its pricing structure and evaluated tools to find the incentives and disincentives within pricing. These strategies would get phased in over time and would only be used if demand warrants:

- Congestion pricing
- Frequent user policy
- Small car incentive
- Off-peak discount
- Passenger discount

Michael explained that Ferries would most likely mix and match elements of each pricing strategy to develop a package. He said that Ferries wants to maximize the demand shift, achieve revenue neutrality, and minimize the overall cost impact on frequent users.

The last building block is the ferry service changes. Michael suggested that these things would be implemented if we are not able to change demand with the strategies. He told people that the table shows Level I and II by route. He introduced Ray Deardorf to explain the package in more detail.

Bremerton / Seattle Package

Ray Deardorf, Planning Director

Ray described the details of the route specific chart. Ray talked about the base outlook and reiterated the gap in funding. He said that the second section (blue) looks at adding strategies and the third section (yellow) adds more boats and more sailings to the strategies. For this route, Level I is additional sailings and Level II would be adding a third boat. He asked the attendees to think about the different options and how they might affect their communities and their travel behaviors.



Group Discussion

Diane Adams, Meeting Facilitator

Diane presented the workshop questions and led a group discussion:

- What impact would a package like this have on you and your community?
- Other ideas/concerns?

Public Comments and Questions

1. What happens now with reservations? *When you make a reservation, you get a number that you bring to the terminal. System improvements would have to take place. WSF could use transponders, for example.*
2. As a commuter, can you make a lot of reservations at a time? Can you have a standing reservation and then cancel when you don't need it? *Yes, you could cancel up to 30 minutes in advance.*
3. Do you mean "go online" when you say "call-in" to make a reservation? *Yes, but we want to make it available to people without computers as well.*
4. If you buy a multi-trip ticket, how do you know you're getting your money's worth on that trip? *The discount would have to be added on the back especially if you vary the times you use it. You could be credited back the discount and earn credits as you go.*
5. Would it be possible to set up an account that you would subtract as you go? *Yes.*
6. There will be a regional smart card within 8-9 months.
7. Do you have models for other commuter vehicle based systems that are similar to this? *People have identified the Isle of Wight in Great Britain as the most similar system.*
8. Lots of people are watching what we're going to do. These things – combining a commuter discount, the frequent user discount and peak pricing is breaking ground.
9. How would peak pricing incentivize people if they are getting the discount anyway? *Twenty percent would be taken off of the peak price, not the original so people are still paying more if they travel at the same time. If we can incent people to move to an empty boat, we've shifted the demand which is one of our goals. The fare structure stays the same.*
10. Cancellations on standing rides is what kills us at Kitsap Transit so I'm glad you'll charge a cancellation fee.
11. We need stronger service options, we don't need to add large vessels. We could use small vessels with more runs.
12. Once you get a reservations system in place, at one point, don't you save money on terminals? *Yes, you save money on future terminals.*

David said that he heard some very clear questions in the June meetings about the reservations system. He said that we've tried to come up with some things to



resolve and answer the questions. He asked the group if the information that WSF has brought forward is on the right track.

13. Reservations work great.
14. I support the concept. It may not have as much impact on this community and for Bremerton specifically. Unless you shift other vehicles to this route, we don't have a lot of overflow. It makes a lot of sense on other routes that have horrendous traffic.
15. You don't have to do everything at every terminal, correct? *Correct.*
16. I've never waited to get on a ferry in Bremerton.
17. The Seattle side has more of an access problem. Getting to the holding area is the problem in Seattle because the Bainbridge people are in the way.
18. Kitsap Transit meets all the ferries but only to the certain point. I like the idea of serious joint planning. The buses from Silverdale will increase ridership on the boats.
19. I'm a daily walk-on commuter. I think I'm in the minority here. I want more options in schedule and a better commute (faster, cleaner, quieter boat). It looks like this plan is just for vehicles. What do you have for me? *We're going to lower the walk-on fees. Where you would be helped is in Level I or Level II.*
20. Is it possible to get to Level I or II? It sounds expensive. *That's a tough question. We can't answer that but Level I would not add any boats so is not that expensive. There are strategies in the blue column with transit access enhancements for walk-on passengers.*
21. If you want more walk-ons, you need to make it a more pleasurable experience for those people.
22. It's very interesting that you prefer the passenger over the vehicle. What do you see as the possibility of passenger-only ferries and cooperating with them? *We're very aware of the group that is working towards this. It's complimentary to our system, not competitive. It is not our function but we see it has very important.*
23. The legislation set fare box recovery goals a few years ago. Were those goals met? *The goal was 80 percent and we got to 78.5 percent before the fuel costs went up.*
24. Is part of the package looking at the more realistic view on the goal? *We'll stick with the goal the legislature has given us which is 80 percent recovery.*
25. If I understand correctly, all of the strategies will lead to a fare box recovery but we're not talking about that at the forefront anymore. When the system got up to 78 percent recovery, Bremerton was still in the 50 percent range. You can't look at it from a fare box recovery perspective alone. It's one of a number of things that WSF is looking at.



- 26. It's good we're planning services together in an organized way and funding big issues with shared funding efforts. Regionally and sub-regionally, we need to align with all transit. I don't know what it means but I think it's time to start talking about these things publicly.
- 27. I'm a proponent of regional funding with property tax. It's the only way to make it fair. Sales tax is not fair and we can't wait for the state.
- 28. Public transportation access makes a difference.
- 29. I work in public schools. I am worried about people saying additional property tax should go to the ferry system because it's the only source of funding for public education. Look at something else.
- 30. There's a missing column. If you can't meet your budget, what routes get cut first? Have you talked about that? *That's a good question. We have just started exploring that possibility.*
- 31. No matter what choices, you need to focus on the right technology. Technologies offer flexibility with future and existing service, operational efficiencies and cost reductions.

David wrapped up the meeting. He said that he recognized that we have presented a lot of information in a very short time. He said that he hopes that the meeting has sparked people's interest to learn a little bit more about the long-range plan. He invited attendees to go to the the Ferries Division Web site and the WSTC Web site for more information. He encouraged people to share their thoughts through comment forms or on the Web site.

David explained that after the September / October meetings, Ferries will have a month to take the information gathered and to draft the long-range plan. He said that a draft would be available to the public in mid-November. David thanked everyone for coming.

Approximately 17 attendees. The public sign-in included:

Joan Dingfield	Rex K. Nelson	Barbara Spencer
Rachel Brant	Mary Bowen	Paul Genaux
Cheri Williams	John Loy	Dick Hayes
Daryn Swisher	Michael Garvais	Adam Brockus
Teresa Berntsen	Nove Meyers	
Ed Friedrich		

Ferries Division Staff:
 David Moseley, Assistant Secretary
 Ray Deardorf, Planning Director
 Marta Coursey, Director of Communications
 Joy Goldenberg, Communications Manager
 Shawn Devine, Communications



Doug Schleif, Operations
Leonard Smith, Operations
Michael Hodgins, Consultant
Diane Adams, Consultant
Kristina Walker, Consultant
Blair Scanlan, Cedar River Group

Washington State Transportation Commission:
Dan O'Neal, Commission Chairman
Bob Distler, Commissioner
Reema Griffith, Executive Director

No comments were submitted at the meeting.

The following comments were received following the meeting. Names have been omitted.

Received via e-mail, Oct. 17, 2008

1. Three wheeled vehicles are the only ones which must pay peak season surcharge even if they buy a 20-ride pass. It is ludicrous that a trike or sidecar rig is treated as an oversized vehicle and subjected to peak season surcharges IN ADDITION TO the oversize vehicle surcharge they already have to pay.
2. Three wheeled vehicles do not have the re-value card option available to them.
3. Southworth needs a 7:15 A.M. boat from Southworth to Fauntleroy. It's ridiculous that there is an hour and fifteen minute gap in service during the peak of commuter traffic.
4. Good-to-go & Wave-to-go need to be combined.
5. Ferry passages purchased should never expire. The money they were purchased with does not expire. When a service has been paid for, it should be delivered, even if it is a year or two after purchase. Taking money and refusing to deliver is theft, plain and simple. Many commuters use more than one mode, and have to retain multiple passes. It is very difficult to use all of them when I have to keep a car pas, trike/sidecar pass, motorcycle pass and walk on pass.
6. Bicycles should not be charged more than pedestrians.



Washington state needs to encourage alternative transportation methods, and a bicycle is one of the most environmentally friendly modes of transportation.

Received via e-mail, Oct. 14, 2008

Power the Washington State Ferries Utilizing Grid Electricity. The Washington State Ferry System can save money, stabilize the cost of energy, and eliminate most if not all carbon emissions.

Current Facts:

1. The propeller shafts on the Washington State Ferries are powered via electrical motors.
2. Energy is stored aboard the Ferries in liquid form as diesel fuel. A diesel generator converts the energy in the diesel fuel to the electrical power required to run the motors delivering power to the propellers.
3. Diesel fuel must be transferred to the storage tanks on the ferries via hose connections giving rise to the potential for fuel spills.
4. Diesel fuel is currently being delivered via fuel trucks. The trucks burn diesel and add to carbon emissions.
5. The current system is inefficient, harmful to the environment, and unnecessary.

Technical Feasibility:

1. Lithium Ion Batteries are currently available such that a bank of them can store enough energy to operate a ferry for an entire day.
2. The durability of Lithium Ion batteries has been proven.
3. A seagoing vessel can be designed to carry the weight of the batteries.
4. Adaptation to existing ferry design would be cost effective. Essentially the on board diesel generator and diesel storage tanks would be replaced with battery storage capacity.
5. The diesel fuel lines used to fill the on board diesel storage tanks would be replaced with a high capacity shore-power electrical connection.



6. The ferry is a perfect application for electrical power because of the defined time under power and the time spent “pushing the dock” that can be used for recharging the batteries.

Benefits:

1. Cost savings of \$1,443,064 annually for a boat like the WSF MV Tillikum. This is based upon \$4 per gallon diesel and an electricity rate of \$.10 per kwh.
2. Alternate funding is available for “green projects.” An example of available funds is 10 million in grant money from Google for ideas that improve the world.
3. Electricity is generated locally while diesel is imported.
4. The diesel fuel delivery costs, along with the risk of (and actual) environmental pollution is eliminated.
5. No longer will the diesel generators have to be maintained with oil changes, daily service, and engine overhauls.
6. No future carbon tax.

[report accompanied comment – available upon request]