



WSDOT Ferries Division Public Meeting
Bainbridge, Wash.
Bainbridge Commons
Thursday, Oct. 2, 2008: 6:30 – 9 p.m.

Note: This meeting summary represents notes from the Washington State Department (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. 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. Martha Burke, Bainbridge FAC Chair, welcomed everyone and introduced FAC member Torin Larsen.

David welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming. He said that he appreciated Kevin Dayton being at the meeting as a representative for WSDOT.

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

1. *New boats.* David said that the 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 the 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 the Ferries Division on Nov. 6, 2008 for (at least) two 64-car vessels and David hopes to contract before Thanksgiving.
2. *Maintain current boats.* Ferries 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 recognition. 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 Ferries 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, WSDOT Ferries Division

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. Ferries was raising 78 percent of the operating budget from the fare box. Now the Ferries Division is only raising 70 percent because of fuel costs.

Presentation: Washington State Transportation Commission (WSTC)

Elmira Forner, Commissioner

Bob Distler, Commissioner

Dick Ford, Commissioner

Elmira presented the WSTC information. She said that the commission conducted a survey to identify the current ferry customers. The WSTC will be turning all the information over to the Ferries Division for their use. The second thing WSTC is working on is an analysis of the long-term funding strategies. Elmira stressed the immensity of the problem and said that this is not the first time the legislature has had to transfer money to the ferry system.

Bob presented details from the survey. He explained that the survey results reflect input from focus groups as well as the survey itself. He said that the WSTC is working closely with the Ferries Division and the JTC to ensure that the baseline numbers used in the analysis are the same. Bob said that the WSTC is looking at several sources of funding including local and state taxes. This may



include a local ferry district but it may include something else entirely. Bob emphasized that the gap in funding is big and real. No one has discovered the magic bullet relative to closing the funding gap.

Public Comments and Questions

1. GM has just lost about 60 percent sales. They're going to start building smaller cars. You're going to have more space on the deck very soon. *There are a number of variables like this. It will make a difference but not a \$3.9 billion difference.*
2. Are you assuming that operating costs are going to come from fares and concessions? *No, currently WSF is recovering about 70 percent of its operating budget. We're not looking at the fare box as the goal but the as the result of these other strategies that WSF is going to talk about.*
3. Has anything been discussed in regard to a mass transit approach to the ferry system. For mass transit, 70 percent fare box recovery is great. Could you look at it as a hybrid? *If you get into the transit argument, people are going to say that it should be paid for locally (Metro is paid by King County taxes).*
4. Aren't you talking about that with the local ferry district? *The ferry system is a system that the whole state uses. We need to put a balance on the taxes. It shouldn't only be funded by local taxes.*
5. If the third leg of the stool is local taxes, what type of taxes are we talking about? *That hasn't been decided but we're looking at a regional solution, not a route by route solution.*
6. Don't forget that there is no cost for right-of-way traffic for boats. And why do we have a transportation commission anyway?

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 the Ferries Division 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 the Ferries Division has mixed and matched these strategies to make a specific package for the Bainbridge / 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 the Ferries Division 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.

Public Comments and Questions

1. How would it work on Bainbridge Island? There is a greater demand for the 5:30 p.m. sailing than there is capacity. *You have that problem now. This way, you can make a reservation and know which boat you will get on. You could hold most of the boat for commuters but the system would accommodate additional riders on a "first come, first served" basis.*
2. It looks like you're talking about taxing businesses to support the Ferries Division and then holding the customers on one side with reservations and hurting the businesses again. *The system could release portions of the sailings that are not used by commuters and fill those up with tourists.*

David added that we are working out the details. He said that most ferry systems in the world have a reservations system. He asked for the attendees to let the Ferries Division know which ideas they have missed and the Ferries Division will go back and refine them before we draft the long-range plan.

Transit Enhancements:

Michael talked about the reasons that the Ferries Division 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.

Pricing:

Research shows that pricing strategies affect demand. Michael said that the Ferries Division 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 the Ferries Division would most likely mix and match elements of each pricing strategy to develop a package. He said that the Ferries Division 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. If the Ferries Division can't manage the demand, they would need to increase service. Michael suggested that these things would be implemented if we are not able to change demand with the strategies. However, our analysis does not show added service on the Bainbridge / Seattle route. Bainbridge has the three largest boats and land constraints on both sides. He introduced Ray Deardorf to explain the package in more detail.

Bainbridge / Seattle Package

Ray Deardorf, Planning Director

Ray said that now that we have the strategies, we have to meld them together into a package that works for this route. The first step is to add reservations and transit enhancements. There may be more people who want a sailing than reservations are available. At that point, the Ferries Division would add pricing strategies to help shift people to other routes. He emphasized that there are no changes to service in the first column that has the \$3.9 billion funding gap. As we begin to add strategies and increase service levels, the gap increases.

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. You have no control over transit. How are you going to provide transit?
We will identify the needs and work with our partners. The new local money that could come out of the WSTC recommendations would help in this area because we know local transit also does not have much money and would help the system as a whole.



2. I don't think that that the WSTC was thinking about spending that local money to provide more bus service. *Our job is to look at the strategies. Funding is still in question.*
3. One of the solutions from the statewide MVET type tax is to divide it between ferries and transportation. We [the WSTC] know this is a need.
4. If I was a county commissioner, why wouldn't I build an office building on this side, tax it and entice drivers to stay on this side instead of funding the ferries? These kind of decisions could actually cause ferry service to decrease. *There is a right hand side to this chart with less service. If we can't fill the funding gap, we may have to provide less service.*
5. These were described as revenue-neutral in June. Are they still revenue-neutral? *Yes. Two are disincentives for riders that make money for WSF and three are incentives which save riders money. WSF doesn't make money but we shift demand to accommodate more riders.*
6. If you are shifting demand on the Bainbridge Island route, then aren't you saying "raise fares on Bainbridge / Seattle and reduce fares on other routes?" *Reservations will play a key role on this route. If reservations are full, people may choose a different route – especially those people that live further back in the county and may have a choice.*
7. The point is not necessarily shifting the demand to other routes, the point is to reduce the demand in the peak times and move some people to other times.
8. If you work full time, don't you have to be at work during the day? Most people don't have the flexibility. *The surveys are showing that there is still some capacity to shift. Some people can shift times or shift to walk-on. We want to incentivize them to do that.*
9. But it's not just the people that can shift who are going to be charged extra. Those of us who can't shift will be hurt. *The first strategies don't include pricing. If we can shift demand without the pricing strategies, then we don't need to do that. We will use the incentives first and work our way through the choices as needed.*
10. If you do have a reservation system, I guarantee you that the 4:40 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. would be filled with commuters. But the majority of riders on this route are occasional users. You're going to hurt them. *If an occasional user has a reservation, they can do something else for two hours instead of sit in line. They may still have to wait those two hours, it's a question of what they are doing during that time. We would also have flexibility in structuring so we could leave 50 percent of the boat open to accommodate spontaneous travelers. Part of ramping up into these strategies is to learn about each route. We will ask "Who is buying those tickets and how fast?"*



11. Have you looked at “tiering” the arrival times for reservations so that it costs more the later you show up. *We want to limit the time ahead of the sailing so that we don’t have a lot of holding.*
12. Have you looked at redirecting one of the Kingston boats to Seattle during peak times?
13. When Edmonds was down, there were so many people on this route, people started walking on. If you shrink the size of the boat here, people will start to walk on.
14. How does the governor feel about the funding situation? *She’s really concerned about it. She was responsible for asking the WSTC to do the study. Her concern is funding the system. [Jill Satron]*
15. Will she support a package that will close that gap? *She is waiting for the recommendations from the WSTC. She doesn’t want to put the burden on the users with higher fares. She’s talked about local options. She’s asked the commission to take a look at the full range of options. [Jill Satron]*
16. Kitsap County is an economic vessel to the other side. The jobs over here go down, the usership goes up. What about a gaming tax? It happens in other states. How can we benefit from the tourist traffic?
17. There is not a lot of parking at Colman so many gamblers drive on the boat. They would gamble on the boat.
18. The new Tim Eyman traffic congestion initiative money would go to King County. The money goes to congestion from the general fund. If that passes, using the general fund will be off the table for a while.
19. The backdrop of all of this is that given what has happened to gas usage, we don’t have enough money to fund the transportation projects that we promised. Local roads are not in good shape.
20. Tim Eyman may have your silver bullet. The ferries are congested, right?
21. What other examples have you looked at? *The long-range planning team has looked at many examples including Turkey, Isle of Wight in Wales, BC Ferries. We will continue to learn from other systems and tailor to our specific needs.*
22. Have you looked at Staten Island, New York? Yes.
23. Are you going to tax where people live or where they work?
24. Is the governor waiting for the WSTC? What kind of funding will the WSTC recommend? *We are going to have a series of 4-5 scenarios. We will not recommend just one of them. We’ll give them a range of mixing and matching different elements.*
25. Are you giving up on the small group discussion? *Since there are only a handful of people here, this is the group discussion.*
26. I suggest that you run a boat from Kingston to Seattle, and an extra boat from Bremerton to Seattle. You would reduce traffic on SR 305 by 25 percent. I avoid 305 because it’s a parking lot.



- 27. You say that you can only get one boat at a time into the channel. What about a timing schedule? If you load the boats 10 minutes apart and have them wait in the water, you have one boat in the channel, but then you've got those people on the boat.
- 28. The legislature in 2007 asked WSTC to do the survey but outside consultants to do the long-range plan. Now they're doing both. It seems like we're putting more onto the WSTC than the legislation asked. *We [the WSTC] did a survey of existing users and we are making recommendations to the legislature on the funding strategies. We are not writing the long-range plan.*
- 29. Would the public get to vote on the \$4 million package? *We will be releasing the draft plan on Nov. 14. There will be eight hearings in December to give you another opportunity to provide comments.*
- 30. WSTC is coming up with the recommendation but we need the leadership of the governor or it's not going to happen.
- 31. What about this problem of the maintenance yard here on Bainbridge Island? *The legislative-appropriated funds are for the existing sheds. We have the building permits and we have a bid announcement for late October. I understand the issues and I have promised the City of Bainbridge that we will have discussions about the haul out.*
- 32. Will the Eagle Harbor facility be the same as it was when it was new or will you be adding to it? *It will be essentially the same footprint but with a better design inside. They will be strengthening the dock, making the inside better for operations. [Joy will send project description.]*

David thanked everyone for coming. He thanked everyone for their ideas and especially the new thoughts on reservations. He emphasized that this is a tough problem but that he loves working on this challenge and that it continues to energize him and his staff.

Approximately 15 attendees. The public sign-in included:

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|----------------|----------------|------------------|
| Jill Satron | Sheila Leewes | William Gilbert |
| Kelly Dickson | Ty Anderson | Teresa Berntsen |
| Sharron Cross | Jessie Hay | Jason Wright |
| Tad Sooter | Douglas A Ranh | Merrill Robinson |
| Fred Scheffler | Torin Larsen | Martha Burke |

- Ferries Division Staff:
- David Moseley, Assistant Secretary
 - Ray Deardorf, Planning Director
 - Marta Coursey, Director of Communications
 - Joy Goldenberg, Communications Manager
 - Steve Rodgers, Operations



Michael Hodgins, Consultant
Diane Adams, Consultant
Kristina Walker, Consultant
Blair Scanlan, Cedar River Group
Kevin Dayton, WSDOT

Washington State Transportation Commission:
Dick Ford, Commissioner
Elmira Forner, Commissioner
Bob Distler, Commissioner
Paul Parker, Senior Policy Analyst

The following comments were submitted at the meeting. Names have been omitted.

Received at meeting, Oct. 2, 2008

The survey undertaken is the state transportation committee included bicycles / bicycling as a mode option but this data is not reflected in the presentation graph. Why was this not included?

Average bicycle count for Sea – BI is 90 per commute trip.

Received at meeting, Oct. 2, 2008

1. Why, when I renew my bike pass – it isn't renewed for a year from the date the current one expires?
2. Can you put clocks (synchronized to the boats) on the docks so those who load on the auto dock know when the 2 minute cut off is (I have seen gates close early!!).

The following comments were received following the meeting.

Received via mail, Oct. 20, 2008

Extra boats on Kingston / Edmonds and Bremerton / Seattle reduce 305 traffic at commute hours by 25%. Extra boats 10 minutes after peak hours so we have two boats to fill in 20 minutes & do not have more than one boat in Bainbridge Island Channel.

Why do we now need a transportation commission? Third leg of stool has no way of passing.



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]