



WSDOT Ferries Division Public Meeting  
Mukilteo, Wash.  
City Council Chambers  
Tuesday, Oct. 14, 2008: 6 – 8:30 p.m.

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*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. Ferries Division staff were available to answer questions.

### **Introduction**

*David Moseley, Assistant Secretary, WSDOT Ferries Division*

*Mayor Joe Marine, Mukilteo*

*Diane Adams, Meeting Facilitator*

Joe Marine, Mayor of Mukilteo, thanked everyone for coming and said that this is a topic that is important to Mukilteo and a topic that is near and dear to his heart.

Diane welcomed everyone and reviewed the agenda and ground rules.

David thanked everyone for coming. He introduced the Ferries Division staff present: Ray Deardorf, Planning Director; Marta Coursey, Director of Communications; Nicole McIntosh, Design Engineering Manager; and Dan Ferguson, Operations.

David reviewed some Mukilteo-specific issues:

1. *Buzz Inn negotiations.* David said that negotiations on the purchase of the Buzz Inn property are almost complete and that they will bring the building down immediately after the agreement is signed. The construction of the new holding area will begin in early spring 2009. David said that the Ferries Division has the resources for this project and that it will double the size of the current holding area. He hopes that ferry users will begin to see fewer times when cars are backed up.
2. *Connection improvements.* David said that the Ferries Division is connecting the sidewalk on Park Avenue to the Sound Transit improvements and including ramps, making it easier to get from the ferry to the Sounder train.
3. *Mukilteo terminal improvements.* David said that the Ferries Division has submitted a \$145 million request to the legislature for the improvements to



- the Mukilteo terminal. The work would not happen all at once. The request includes \$9 million for this biennium.
4. *Clinton road repair.* David said that the Ferries Division is working to fix the slide in the road by putting up Department of Ecology blocks and backfilling with rock. These are interim improvements to stabilize the hillside and the Ferries Division is working with Island County on a long-term solution.

### **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.

### Public Comments and Questions

1. You said that the biggest need is new vessels. Which vessels will be replaced and do they only benefit the Seattle routes? *Five boats are funded. Two of those are for the Port Townsend / Keystone route and one 144-car boat is slated for Mukilteo.*
2. Is that \$3.9 billion gap broken out by run (for boat replacement)? *No, it is broken out by retiring an aging fleet. The plan replaces these boats in kind (no size increase).*
3. If you are going to base increased fares on underutilized services, it seems like the dollars should be based on the specific route. *The vessel replacement program is in the later part of the 22-year plan. We can't predict those numbers that far out and we are planning ahead for vessel replacement.*
4. How did we get here? Most businesses have a replacement vehicle program that they are always putting money in so there isn't a gap. *It was the loss of the MVET that required us to borrow from our capital funds to continue to operate.*
5. Where did the funding for LCD screens on the boats come from? *They are part of a required Homeland Security grant.*



6. There is an LCD sign in Clinton that says “Lot is Full” but it is clear by looking that the lot is full. *People often request more information and more signage. I’m not sure about that one specifically but I would guess that it was requested.*
7. Is there money in the baseline case for Wave2Go improvements or the ticket print out improvements that you’ve talked about? *If it’s an expansion of an existing program, we have it in the funding request.*

### **Presentation: Washington State Transportation Commission (WSTC)**

*Bob Distler, Commissioner*

*Elmira Forner, Commissioner*

Elmira introduced the commission and explained their role in the Ferries Division long-range plan process. She said that commissioners are responsible for looking at all transportation in the state and emphasized that the Ferries Division is part of the state-wide system. However, she said, there are more state representatives in non-ferry areas so a state-wide tax will be tough to pass.

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 with the Ferries Division and JTC closely so that the numbers are the same. One option for funding is the three-legged stool option. The Ferries Division is typically funded from the first two legs of the stool: state funding and fares. Bob said that the WSTC is considering the possibility of a local tax – local ferry district (all routes) to raise money. He said that the WSTC also wants to return to a MVET-type tax for the state tax. A regional tax could not go exclusively to ferries. Local roads and transit agencies are all going through the same funding issues. Bob emphasized that the gap in funding is big and real. No one has discovered the magic bullet.

### Public Comments and Questions

1. Nothing has been said about shaving money off of the existing system. Are you evaluating changes in crew and staff levels? Car companies, airlines, and railroads have all made cuts. We need to make cuts. Where can we make some changes? *You’re right. We have a responsibility to look at both expenditures and revenue. One of the challenges that we face is that 80 percent of our expenditures are in the fleet (operating the terminals, vessels). We can’t change these because the staffing requirements are mandated by the Coast Guard. If there is one staff person missing, we don’t sail. (This is all in Cedar River Report). Our other expenditures are 15 percent maintenance and preservation (terminals, vessels) and five percent administration (administration is only about \$20 million). We have reduced the number of FTEs and consultants, and we*



- have been cutting costs on maintenance and preservation. We took the recommendations from the state auditor to the union bargaining session but we lost on most issues.*
2. Would the local sources be a new ferry district or taking taxes from existing jurisdictions? *We're looking at a local transportation district for a new tax, not taking money out of existing taxes. For example, a statewide tax that would go to local projects including local roads, local transit, or local ferries. The money would stay in the area.*
  3. I was discouraged by the discussion in the state senate about this audit because when the auditor suggested cutting early and late boats (which often run empty) Senator Haugen said "no way." If we can't discuss no-brainers like that, how can we talk about the big stuff?
  4. Who controls the schedule? The union or WSF? *WSF controls the ferry schedule under the constraints of the bargaining agreement.*

### **Presentation: Building Blocks for the Long Range Plan**

*Ray Deardorf, Planning Director*

Ray gave an overview of the strategies that the Ferries Division has identified as the most effective for dealing with traffic increases. Mukilteo vehicle traffic will increase by 20 percent and the passenger travel will increase by 80 percent. The most effective strategies for managing that demand are reservations for vehicles, transit enhancements and pricing.

#### Reservations:

Ray 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. Ray 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)

#### Public Comments and Questions

1. So you're saying that, for a price, I can make a reservation twice a day? It sounds like a lot of extra time for me. *We could break up reservations into frequent users and tourists, and reserve part of the boat just for*



- commuters. Commuters could make a reservation for two weeks at a time in advance.*
2. *Successes have been on tourist routes but we have 60 percent commuter traffic. We can design the system for commuters and tailor it to each route. The Isle of Wight in Britain and the Istanbul ferry system are both commuter systems and have reservations. We would tailor each system to the specific needs of the route.*
  3. *We only have one way into the ferry terminal and one way out of the ferry terminal. If you cancel a sailing, how would that not cause a catastrophe with traffic? When service is restored, people would be taken in the order of their reservations. We may need to make some physical changes to the terminals before a reservations system is implemented.*
  4. *How are you going to divide the reservations vs. non-reservations on the road? Things would need to change before we implement the reservations system.*
  5. *Where is the pilot program going to be implemented? Some other route is preferable. What are the considerations? One consideration would be a desire from the community. Another is implementability and the Mukilteo / Clinton route's tight schedule might make it difficult for this route.*
  6. *The plan is getting presented in November, right? Will we get a chance to review it? Yes, there will be public hearings in December. The plan is just a plan. We would go through a public process before implementing anything.*

#### Transit Enhancements:

Ray 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. Ray 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



Ray 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.

### **Mukilteo / Clinton Package**

*Ray Deardorf, Planning Director*

This route has a level of service (LOS) standard of one hour wait (on an average weekday in May) and we are projected to reach this standard in 2020. Ray said that he knows that the baseline system is already congested. Since Mukilteo will have growth in foot passengers, the Ferries Division would need to add overhead passenger loading just to operate on the schedule they are now. Ray said that he will add reservations and transit enhancements first before implementing pricing strategies to encourage people to travel at off-peak times. If that isn't enough to spread out the demand, the Ferries Division will add service improvements. Service improvements for Mukilteo / Clinton would include a larger summer boat for Level I and an additional summer boat for Level II.

### **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. By taking away the Buzz Inn space, we're losing 40 parking spaces. If your goal is to reduce the number of people driving on the ferry, you need more parking. You are forcing people to drive.
2. You cannot build bigger boats. I've been at the ferry when they didn't fill the boat all the way because they were behind schedule. What is the point of staying on schedule if you can't fill the boats? *Overhead loading would help a lot.*
3. The intersection where the ferries are off loaded and on loaded causes the delay. There is a delay when the terminal agents have to stop loading to let pedestrians pass by, either to catch the Sounder or just pedestrians coming from the park.
4. Additional boats or larger boats create a lot of problems in Mukilteo with traffic.
5. The timing has to limit the size of the boats to keep on schedule.
6. If the pricing strategies encourage walk-ons, doesn't that have a negative effect on revenue? *If you have growth that you can't serve, you need to*



- spread it out to fill out the system. You wouldn't be getting that revenue at all if we didn't encourage walk-ons.*
7. We've been waiting for 50 years to get something on this route. Who raised the level of service standards (LOS) for this route to a two boat wait? *Island County requested it at the turn of the decade because they are subject to concurrency and they were concerned that the one boat wait would trigger concurrency. A two boat wait in Mukilteo is equal to one boat wait on other routes.*
  8. We don't have the holding capacity that other routes have.
  9. If I understand correctly, everything on the chart to the right of the baseline costs money but the strategies (reservations, pricing) end up saving money in the long run by leveling demand. *Yes, there are some long-term cost savings.*
  10. I'm pleased to see WSF work to spread out the demand and utilize the system through additional transit links but I would like to know how the conversation would be facilitated with local transit. *After the plan is finalized we will work closely with the transit agencies. Local agency review teams already include a lot of the people and some things are already happening. Schedule adjustments have been made to meet the Sounder train. We can't always meet every one but we are working with them to make it work.*
  11. Would shifting commuter times require WSF to work with local employers (like Boeing) to shift schedules? *We hadn't thought about that. Thank you for the suggestion.*
  12. I'm not opposed to reservations (it will take traffic off of the street) but I'd like to suggest that you start with weekend reservations. That would alleviate the fear of daily commuters that are worried about having to make reservations every day.
  13. Don't hurt the commuters with reservations. They won't be able to get on the boats because they're in that 10 percent standby line and all the tourists have reservations.
  14. The long lines are not just on weekends, they are Wednesday through Saturday.
  15. You have a \$350 million shortfall every year. Either the whole state pays or the user pays for it.
  16. Things still need to be worked out with reservations. There is a greenhouse gas concern with people queuing for too long. The strategies need to be put together and done at the same time and refined over time.
  17. When I first heard about reservations, I was skeptical but I think that Mukilteo could get some benefit from the system. People who have a reservation can get out of their car and shop and eat dinner here. The ferry is a detriment to Mukilteo, it would be great to get some benefit.



18. I commute by ferry and bus to Boeing every day. My wife is a teacher and doesn't have that option.
19. We've finished phase one of Lighthouse Park in Mukilteo. There are four phases and eventually we will be getting rid of commuter parking. It's not our responsibility to provide parking on the Mukilteo side.
20. The problem is taking up waterfront access and views with parking spaces but if we take those spaces away, people park on the city streets.
21. Mukilteo is working on the park and ride lot up the hill.
22. I'm glad that WSF is looking at transit and parking solutions.
23. There is the satellite lot here and possible funding sources may make it free. There is also the possibility of a parking garage in Mukilteo.
24. The Sound Transit 2 package on the ballot in November includes half of the costs of a parking garage for Mukilteo.
25. We need to delay the need for capital expenditures. If we can move that 10 percent of people who have the ability to move, it will delay the need for large holding areas for several years. We need to make better use of the space we have.
26. System-wide you need to look at reservations to help people shift but we are already at a two boat delay. How much longer can you wait? We need bigger holding areas. *The legislature froze capital funding. WSF will reinstitute the capital campaign but the problem isn't going away.*
27. What are we doing in the immediate future? Is Buzz Inn going down going to make things better or worse? It may make a difference in the long-term but not now. *We have done some things to make construction impacts minimal. Construction traffic cannot arrive during the peak ferry times. We are working on installing a pedestrian light for safety.*
28. How long will construction last? *Demolition will begin in the next few weeks and last a couple of weeks. The holding area construction will begin in April or May of next year.*
29. Who is in charge of construction? *Nicole will give you detailed information offline.*
30. Have you studied the 144-boats to see how long it will take to load them? *No, but we know that with the increase in walk-on traffic, overhead loading will be needed to keep on schedule.*
31. The soils don't support the terminal where it is currently located. We need to move the terminal to a supportive spot where we don't have the intersection traffic and add overhead loading. We're just band-aiding right now.
32. There is a bus issue at the ferry intersection. Community Transit has outgrown the terminal and only two, maybe three, buses fit. If there are additional buses, they have to block the ferry loading.



Elmira said that in addition to this work, the commission is also responsible for the long-term transportation plan. She said that they are looking at all transportation across the state for the next twenty years and that she is very encouraged by the conversation here tonight. She said that no one system can solve the transportation problems and things need to be integrated to be efficient.

David thanked everyone for coming and thanked them for the great discussion. He said that he has a lot of work to do in a short time to finalize the long-range plan. David said that the Ferries Division will compile the information received from this and other public meetings (in March and June). He said that they will prepare a draft long-range plan by mid-November and be back out in communities in December for public hearings on the draft long-range plan. It will be finalized for the 2009 legislative session which starts in January. He said that the challenges are big but that he is thrilled to be involved in the challenge and doing this work because the system is important.

Approximately 17 attendees. The public sign-in included:

Marko Liias	Joe Marine	Sam Brodland
Richard Emery	Karol Kingery	Ivan Solkey
Scott St. Clair	Rebecca Cann	Pamela Sipe
Jennifer Gregenon	Charles Packer	Mike Schierbeek
Pat Kessler	Don Van Winkle	Kevin Stoltz
Emily Vanderwielen	Teresa Berntsen	

Ferries Division Staff:

David Moseley, Assistant Secretary  
Ray Deardorf, Planning Director  
Marta Coursey, Director of Communications  
Nicole McIntosh, Design Engineering Manager  
Dan Ferguson, Operations  
Diane Adams, Consultant  
Kristina Walker, Consultant  
Blair Scanlan, Cedar River Group

Washington State Transportation Commission:

Elmira Forner, Commissioner  
Bob Distler, Commissioner



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]