



WSDOT Ferries Division Public Meeting
Southworth, Wash.
John Sedgwick Junior High School
Thursday, Oct. 16, 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
Penny Mabie, Meeting Facilitator*

Penny welcomed everyone and reviewed the agenda and the ground rules.

David welcomed everyone. He emphasized that the Ferries Division is working on cutting expenditures as well as looking at new sources of revenue. David said that he has reduced the number of staff and consultants, reorganized the vessel preservation and maintenance department, and is working on revising schedules to reduce the need for overtime. He said that the Ferries Division is making progress on the budget shortfall with these things but that it's not going to close the gap.

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)

Dan O'Neal, Commission Chairman

Dick Ford, Commissioner

Dan introduced Dick Ford, commissioner, and Reema Griffith, executive director. He explained that the commission is made up of seven commissioners that recommend policy to the legislature. He said they also set fares on the ferries. He said that the WSTC has been tasked with conducting a survey of ferry users and conducting the funding study. He pointed out that the numbers they are using are the same as the Joint Transportation Committee (JTC) and the Ferries Division. He said that their study assumes fare increases and ridership increases. WSTC will have recommendations for the legislature in the next few weeks.

Dick said there needs to be some sort of coalition of ferry users and the state to raise funds. He said that he doesn't see how the problem can be solved without the major portion of the money coming from the state. He said that the challenge is convincing the legislature that this is an important thing to fund since the majority of them do not live in ferry-served communities. The dollars will be competitive.

Dan mentioned that his observation is that the legislators in this area are doing an amazing job. People are driving less so there is less money coming from the gas tax and the Ferries Division is competing with roads projects for that money. He said that this legislative session is going to be very difficult.

Public Comments and Questions

1. Ferries are part of the state highway system and should be funded as such. *Ferries cost much more to operate than highways do.*
2. The loss of the MVET has taken a chunk out of the income in this state. It needs to be brought back. *We're looking at the MVET but it's a tough time to tax. We've spent a lot of money building the infrastructure in this state but the federal government's highway trust fund has dried up. The fares we pay today are actually less today than they were in 1960 (in today's dollars). For example, it cost \$17 (in today's dollars) to cross the Tacoma Narrows Bridge in 1941 and today it costs \$4. Ferry fares are similar.*

Presentation: Building Blocks for the Long Range Plan

Ray Deardorf, Planning Director



Southworth is expected to have a 60 percent vehicle traffic increase and a 50 percent walk-on increase. We need a way to manage that increased demand. Reservations, transit enhancements and pricing strategies have been identified as options to manage demand.

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. Where do you plan on staging the cars at Fauntleroy when you have all these people with reservations? *We would not need to build or provide more holding space because there would only be one boat worth of cars at the dock at a time.*
2. How will you make money on this? *This is a demand management strategy. We're doing this in Sidney and in Port Townsend. They love the system. There are a lot of systems in the world and they all have reservations or are looking at it.*
3. We're going to have 60 percent growth yet you are trying to avoid building more holding space and boats. The math doesn't work out. *If we are going to meet this need with just capital expansions, our gap is going to be much more than \$3.9 billion. With reservations you will not go to the terminal until just before your boat sails. It does not grow capacity but it defers the need for capacity building.*
4. Twenty-nine percent of your riders are commuters. This works for tourists but not for us. Don't hurt your bread and butter.
5. If I went to the legislature for money and showed them 60 percent growth and a deferred growth strategy, don't you think that they would want to see what we could do now, that's sustainable now? *Yes, but we don't have the capital revenue to make that happen and we need to manage the growth now.*



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.

Southworth / Vashon / Fauntleroy 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. Eventually, 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 sailings. Finally, on this route, the service changes would include splitting up the multi-route sailings. Level I would split the route out for Fauntleroy / Southworth and Fauntleroy / Vashon and add a small boat for Vashon / Southworth. This would increase capacity and offer direct routes. The Level II service additions would send the Southworth boat directly to Seattle and include two boats for a Southworth / Seattle route, one boat for Vashon / Fauntleroy and a small boat for Vashon / Southworth. Ray reminder attendees that these route services make everything more expensive.

Group Discussion

Penny Mabie, Meeting Facilitator

Penny 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. Where do you put the people without reservations? *A lot needs to be worked out and we would do a lot of educational outreach. There would need to be a lane for standby traffic. Or standby traffic would need to be held somewhere else.*
2. I don't understand the value of doing reservations and pricing together. *You're right, you could just do reservations. But with just reservations, you still have the queue, it's just virtual instead of at the dock. We would implement some pricing strategies to move people onto the other sailings.*
1. This is a triangle route. When you're talking about Port Townsend or Bainbridge or Kingston, reservations would work great. But there are people going to two destinations. How does this work? *It could be set up the way it is now with the allocation system or we could vary the allocation based on the reservations reserved.*
2. Where would you stage the reservations so that standby could still have space? *Actually, we would want to reserve 90 percent of the boat to get maximum efficiency so the staging would only need to be as big as one boat.*
3. You're saying we need boats for these runs. If we have boats, I can see this working but I can't see it working now. When will it happen? *You're right, reservations will work better with boats specific to each destination.*
4. You have this working in two places already? What is working well and what problems have you come across? *The Sidney run has had reservations since 1970. The route runs once a day so it lends itself well to reservations. We used to have a lot of no-shows on that route until we required a deposit. In Port Townsend we've increased the amount of the boat reserved because it increases the efficiency of doing reservations. The community has been thrilled; they no longer have the uncertainty of sailing times and the queue back up.*
5. It seems to me that the people I know are working in Seattle because they have to. If you are raising pricing, poor people can't afford it. They can't afford to leave a deposit for a reservation.
6. I don't have a problem with the reservations concept but when you instituted the reader card, it took forever and it was way over budget. You're considering a complex piece of software. I'm totally confused right now with all the options. You need to simplify it and find good cheap software. I'm worried about the cost; it's probably going to cost you a boat-worth of money!



7. Would you have a special rate for vehicles with 50 percent or more occupancy? What about a two-person car? It's already 50 percent full with one person.
8. Heavier vehicles should cost more. I like the smaller car fee because it creates more room on the boat.
9. My impression is that ridership has gone down since 1997 and fares have gone up. Here we are talking about a 2.5 percent increase in fares and a 1.5 percent decline in ridership. *Actually, the chart shows an increase in ridership by 1.5 percent.*
10. The Southworth terminal is underutilized in parking and holding. I would like to see the boat go directly to Seattle so that I would never have to see Vashon again in my life.
11. Last time you were here you said that there was going to be no growth in vehicle traffic but every boat we have has been at the vehicle load limit. *Actually, in 2006 we projected substantial growth.*
12. How do vanpools and carpools work with reservations? *We think that it would not change and they would still have priority loading.*
13. You are rationing our service in Southworth. This is public transportation, but this sounds more like a shareholder meeting. It sounds like you want to go private and if people can afford it, they can get on. You're strangling us with fare raises.
14. Raise the rates on every route equally and don't worry about reservations. Don't do this "a little here, a little there" approach.
15. We only have a 70 - 30 split off of Southworth in the morning. Vashon doesn't pay as much as we do and gets three times the service.
16. On the route specific chart, are the packages more cost effective as you go across the page? *No, they are more expensive as you move across the page.*
17. What about privatizing WSF? The US Military has done it and efficiencies have increased. Maybe we've outgrown the usefulness of this way of doing things. *The system did go private and the state ended up buying it. If it's private, you're still going to have a problem funding it.*
18. No one would be in the ferry business if they wanted to make money.
19. I'd like to see more capacity for the area I represent right now but the challenge is that the system is not financially sustainable. You have to convince the majority of the legislature to fix the problem. Your ability to do that is a lot better if the WSF system makes some changes to efficiencies, and proves that they can do it, before there is more money. That means looking at these other strategies that don't necessarily make more money.
20. I don't think privatization would work for the state ferry system. If you privatize, the system would look at it in terms of what sailings are making money. We would have some massive blank times in the afternoons. The ferry would only run in the mornings and the evenings when we have the



- rush. But there are people that need it in the afternoon. There are people who need the low income fares. Privatization would double the fare.
21. What if WSF courts businesses, like Boeing, that are receiving benefits from ferries and asks them to give back to ferries? A lot of these businesses appreciate being stewards to their communities. *Many businesses already participate in the Commute Trip Reduction program because they are required to by law. I doubt businesses would support subsidizing the ferry system.*
 22. Even though my company subsidizes some of my travel, it's now slightly cheaper for me to go across the Narrows Bridge and park for free at the Tacoma Dome Station and take the Sounder Train to Seattle. You should get some federal money to coordinate with local transit agencies.
 23. I think most people here want to get to Seattle anyway so changing the route to Southworth / Seattle will increase ridership.
 24. I think that you will have increased ridership with Level I. *It will also increase operating costs to have a five boat system.*

David asked the attendees what they thought about naming rights for the boats.
[Generally positive responses]

Ray asked people what they thought about diverting the Southworth boat to Seattle.

- *When the Fauntleroy dock was down a survey said that 96 percent of people enjoyed the Seattle destination better.*
- *Personally, I would love it.*
- *There are people who want to go to Boeing. Surveys should say it.*
- *Why does it have to be either / or? Couldn't some boats go to Fauntleroy and some to Seattle?*
- *When Fauntleroy was down, walk-ons went up.*
- *I've always been a fan of a Southworth / Seattle route.*

Ray asked if people would take their cars downtown if the route went to Seattle.
[Most people said no]

25. Tourists are not going to have the same knowledge of the system that regular commuters will. They won't know to get a reservation.
26. You need to increase transit, too.
27. Have you considered passenger fares going eastbound (so people pay both ways)? *We're looking into many options.*
28. I am opposed to increasing fares seasonally. As a commuter, I don't have a seasonal change.
29. Why isn't there advertising on the ferry? *There is but it's a business we're trying to build.*



30. "Hold buses until boat arrives" should be "Hold boats until buses arrive."
WSF closes the doors on people running down the ramp.
31. A lot of the runs from Fauntleroy to Vashon to Southworth are 30 minutes from Vashon to Southworth. As the evening progress, that time grows until you have 45 minutes sitting on Vashon on the 11:40 p.m. sailing. *I thought we had taken care of that. I will take a look at that.*
32. With the Port Townsend / Keystone reservations, have you noticed a change in the ridership? *Yes, but that may be due to the serious reduction in capacity.*
33. Are people avoiding peak times? *We are able to send a rider alert every day to let people know what runs are full.*
34. Is there somewhere I can find the specific capacity of specific routes? *We post quarterly statistics but we can get you more detail if you'd like.*
35. Have you looked at consolidating and cancelling the non-peak runs? *Yes, but sometimes it is necessary to get people home on a particular sailing. We are looking at slowing down the boats to save fuel and we are looking at spreading out the schedules. But it's already tight on this route so if you slow one boat down it's difficult.*
36. Can we load one lane of Southworth traffic on the 3:05 p.m. boat? *We will look into it.*
37. We were told at the beginning of the summer that the passenger-only boat would slow down in Elliott Bay for the summer but it's still slowing down. Why? *They are building bridge pontoons at Todd Shipyard and they requested that we slow down. I don't know how long it will last.*
38. We basically pay a toll to use the ferry. What about tolls on some of the other roads so they start feeling the pain too? *We [WSTC] did a tolling study to see where tolls could be placed. The 520 bridge will undoubtedly be tolled.*
39. Can you put tolls on existing roads? *No, tolls are for new roads only.*
40. But you're increasing our tolls, we are a toll system. If this system cannot sustain itself, you need to limit the amount you squeeze the consumer. *A lot of states are looking at other ways of generating funds, like vehicle mile tolls, or charging truckers by the mile. We've done a study here to see how people would react. People are driving less.*
41. Everyone loves their cars. We all use these roads and we're going to have to pay for them.

David thanked everyone for coming. He said that he hears the public's concerns and that he doesn't want to implement something that doesn't work for the riders. He said that we have a lot of challenges but that he's thrilled to be working on them. He knows that the legislature is going to have some tough decisions this year. He encouraged attendees to contact him directly.



Approximately 15 attendees. The public sign-in included:

Rex Nelson	Robin K.R. Binns	Stephanie J. Grose
Rich Barringer	Derek Kilmer	Bud Konopaski
Jane Bedinger	Teresa Berntsen	Judy Konopaski
Lloyd Gorman	Ed Friedrich	Greg Beardsley
Carl Coyle	Glen Beckman	Nick Kosin

Ferries Division Staff:

David Moseley, Assistant Secretary
Ray Deardorf, Planning Director
Marta Coursey, Director of Communications
Doug Schlieff, Operations
Penny Mabie, Consultant
Kristina Walker, Consultant
Blair Scanlan, Cedar River Group

Washington State Transportation Commission:

Dan O'Neal, Commission Chairman
Dick Ford, 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. 20, 2008

Some thoughts on the Fauntleroy/Vashon/Southworth, Fauntleroy/Southworth, and proposed Southworth/Seattle routes.

After attending the public meeting at John Sedgwick Junior High School on 16 October I understand that there is a significant shortage of funding for WSF and you are looking hard at reservations as a way to spread service w/o increasing capacity. That may or may not work, what I would like to address most is the Strategies & More Service (Level II) proposal that you have on your Route-Level Summaries for Fauntleroy/Vashon/Southworth and Seattle. These issues may have been considered by WSF in your planning but they were not adequately presented at the meeting and I see no information on your web sight addressing them.

As I understand it the Level II proposal for Fauntleroy/Vashon/Southworth



is: 5 boats; 2 for Fauntleroy/Vashon, 2 for Southworth/Seattle, and 1 for Vashon/Southworth. I think this is a good start that (possibly in addition to your reservation ideas, but maybe with one less boat) would benefit riders the most and not cost that much more.

1. No mention is made on what size vessels are proposed for each of these routes and if consideration was given that rider ship on the Fauntleroy/Vashon route may actually decrease as Vashon riders might go over to Southworth so they can transfer to the direct Southworth/Seattle sailings. Also what is the expected Southworth/Seattle rider ship - passengers vs. drivers? I would suspect that passenger only riders would increase as the current drive on passengers no longer need to drive to Seattle from Fauntleroy.

2. Vashon fares: to save money remove ticket takers/checkers on the Island. If someone has paid to get on the island, they have already paid to get off in any direction. Of course this will be offset some by requiring a ticket taker for passenger fares from Southworth to Vashon, but their is already someone their.

3. Transfers at Vashon between Fauntleroy/Southworth: a fare structure as in item 2 would promote an easy, relatively quick transfer, not to mention the elimination of the mixed loading - by forcing everyone to get off one vessel to get on another. No additional fare or check would be required as it would be the same as a Vashon Island round trip fare. However, this would most likely garner complaints from the non-driving passengers who have gotten used to the pay oneway only fare scheme as this would require them to pay both ways (Fauntleroy to Southworth and back Southworth to Fauntleroy), unless maybe the passenger only fare could be made attractively low for commuters.

4. Transfer at Southworth with Vashon; would require departing one vessel and paying to get on the other. With the one way fare as it is now; Vashon to Southworth to Seattle passengers would not have to pay, however they would pay twice to return unless some new Vashon/Seattle transfer ticket were implemented.

My observation is that with a Southworth/Seattle route there would be increased passengers and fewer vehicles because; a) it is most of the rider's final destination and b) I would also anticipate new passenger rider ship in short order for destinations other than Seattle, as there are far more mass transit connections out of Seattle than the couple of buses occasionally servicing Fauntleroy so not as many vehicles and vanpools



would be needed. Additionally there is ample of unused parking at the Southworth terminal for park & ride options.

How much more would it really cost for more convenient service for the majority of the riders (commuters)? Nowhere is it mentioned this option would eliminate the need for a POV from Vashon to Seattle, saving somebody - you or King county the cost of that passenger only service. How much would be saved by eliminating the mixed loading and vessel maneuvering involved with Vashon in the middle of a Fauntleroy/Vashon/Southworth run. Are 5 boats really needed for this proposal? Or would the Fauntleroy/Vashon rider ship shift enough to Southworth/Seattle to only require 1 boat for Fauntleroy/Vashon (a short & quick run), thereby making this a 4 boat proposal?

I commute 5 days a week from Southworth to Fauntleroy and on to work in Seattle, I also occasionally fly out of SEATAC and the connection with the ST 560 bus between Fauntleroy/SEATAC allows me to walk on at Southworth and get to the airport. However, most of the events in Seattle I forgo as being too inconvenient to get to from Fauntleroy as a walk on passenger or too expensive to drive.

One additional comment is on the mass transit connections. Many times it is the bus to the ferry connection that is the problem. An example is the 116 Metro bus that meets ferry commuters at the terminal in the AM to take them to downtown Seattle - nice. The problem is the return trip to the ferry terminal; traffic, Seahawk/Mariner games & events, make the buses unpredictable and frequently late. It doesn't take many times of watching the ferry you should have been able to catch, with time left over, sail away because the bus you are on is 20 minutes or more late, to give up on that mass transit idea and opt for something more predictable.

Thank you,

████████████████████

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 pass, 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]