

MEETING SUMMARY #3
SOUTHWORTH FERRY ADVISORY COMMITTEE PUBLIC MEETING
SOUTH COLBY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, SOUTHWORTH, WA
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26, 2008 – 6:30 – 8:30 P.M.

Note: This meeting summary represents notes from the Ferry Advisory Committee 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.

Action items and responses

- Examine whether the 70/30 Vashon/Southworth split should be adjusted
Ferries Division Operations Department is examining ridership, sales statistics and Ferries will work with FAC Executive Council to possibly have a joint Southworth/Vashon communities meeting on this issue.
- Implement system that will better facilitate customers' choice to wait or drive around (approximately how many slots will be available on the next boat?)
Operations Department will talk to Information Technology Department to determine ballpark figure to implement such a system. It will then be determined whether to request funding in next biennium's budget or find other alternatives.
- Re-examine how level of service (LOS) is measured
Planning Department is looking at different ways to measure LOS as part of the Ferry Financing Legislation work.

Introduction/ New Assistant Secretary, WSDOT Ferries Division

Southworth FAC Member Rich Barringer, Assistant Secretary David Moseley

Rich Barringer, Ferry Advisory Committee Member (standing in for FAC chair Marjorie Rees), welcomed everyone. Rich stated that this was a chance for the public to meet the new Assistant Secretary of the Ferries Division. David thanked everyone for coming.

David said moving forward involves restoring public trust and confidence in the system. He said this was their opportunity to provide input, and we were primarily there to listen and establish a partnership and a dialogue with the FAC, ferry riders, and local elected officials. This is only his 18th day on the job, but he has clear priorities, including:

- 1) Build six new vessels on time and on budget. The Governor signed new boat legislation yesterday, and we will open bids tomorrow to begin this process.
- 2) Maintain the boats we have. We have to get through an intense period of maintenance required by the U.S. Coast Guard over the next year or so with the least disruption to customers. We have little flexibility with so few boats.
- 3) Work on the 2007 ferry financing legislation to look at a long-term sustainable future for the ferry system. This work is in progress and in partnership with the Transportation Commission and the Joint Transportation Committee (JTC). David recognized Rep. Seaquist (in attendance). The 2009 legislative session is really critical for the future of the ferry system.
- 4) Getting to know people in ferry-served communities, FACs, local elected officials, and customers. Earlier today David also met with Commissioners Angel and Bower.

David said the way he approaches his work is like most managers: focus on the basics. At Ferries, this means ensuring that our boats are well-maintained and can provide reliable service. Establishing a culture like this provides a good basis to deal with the surprises that come up. David provided his e-mail address and phone number to the group.

Public Questions and Comments¹

1. We're not customers, we're owners of the system. We'd be happy with a big boat from Southworth to downtown Seattle that leaves at 8:00 a.m. and comes back at 5:30 p.m. What is the process for us to get that? Right now you're encouraging people to drive around.
2. We have to recover to return to the level of service we were accustomed to five years ago. You hope you can get us back to basic service. I accept that, but don't believe it. *We acknowledge that the schedule is not what it used to be. The Legislature funded 6 new boats. Those will provide improvements and add capacity.*
3. We lost four boats; that's only 2 new boats.
4. Most people walk on for this run; we don't need an auto ferry. The *Snohomish* and *Chinook* would be perfect for a Southworth to downtown Seattle run. We don't need new boats.
The Legislature has made it clear that the charge of the state ferry system is for boats to carry vehicles and passengers. We are not authorized to provide passenger-only (PO) service.
5. I understand, but the Legislature and the Governor might entertain the idea if you say you've been out talking to people and this is what you've heard. Your surveys are distributed on runs that do not have high ridership; you are not polling commuters. Most PO routes have had to compete against auto ferries. Hundreds of people have given up on this run. We are asking you to think outside the box. Ferry workers see inefficiencies; you should ask them.
6. You said you are not interested in a PO route from Southworth to downtown Seattle. *Being interested in it is different than being authorized to do it. We are not authorized to operate PO service.*
7. So our best way for our voices to be heard is to communicate with our representatives in Olympia? Who makes these decisions?
*Sen. Kilmer introduced himself and explained the history of the discussions about PO service. In 2005 the decision was made to have the state sell the *Snohomish* and *Chinook* and task local governments to run PO service. We want to help our constituents. Given the situation with the *Chinook* not selling on eBay, is it worth it to sell it? PO service is a money loser – you can't have fares high enough, and it requires a large subsidy. Some say that about ferry service altogether. Ferries are marine highways, but this does not apply to PO ferries.*
8. We are frustrated with the inconsistency of service, boats breaking down, the length of time it takes to get from point A to point B. If we can't have direct PO service to downtown Seattle, we would accept having a car ferry for a direct run. A way to get people out of their vehicles is for the ferry to take a certain amount of cars and a lot of passengers. When the West Seattle dock was down, there was a direct ferry to downtown Seattle, so we know it can be done. The Tacoma Narrows Bridge was a good idea – it helped traffic a lot. But get people out of their cars. *Good to Go!* was a successful campaign – you should focus something like that on a direct route between Southworth and downtown Seattle, emphasizing that people don't have to drive. With gas prices so high, people would be willing to pay a higher fare for a direct run.
9. Rep. Seaquist said the legislators have a conference call every Friday morning with Ferries and have asked if it is possible to put another PO ferry in service. How do we solve the problems? We need money. We agree that we need a lot more total capacity. The boats are aging and there are too few of them. The study this summer will look at all the routes and determine the total requirements. We need 18 new ferries.
10. Are the new ferries required to be built in Washington?
Yes.

¹ Public participants are named if they identified themselves clearly or were already known by WSDOT staff. Those not named did not clearly identify themselves and were not identifiable by WSDOT staff.

11. The weekend schedule is a disgrace. It has declined over the years. People can't afford to drive around, they can only take the ferry. You either rush or wait until 11 p.m. You need to do something about that.
12. Vashon has priority over everybody. Our area is growing like crazy. I have to wait 40 minutes for the 6:30 boat. We need our own direct service.
13. South Kitsap is growing, but the ferry system says growth is stagnant. They limit the number of cars that go on the boat. Customers know this, and know when to drive around. If there was no limit, there would be so many cars. I'm not promoting car use, but the ferry system's statistics differ drastically from reality.
14. Count the U-turns.
15. When the Fauntleroy/Vashon/Southworth route was down to two boats, two employees told me Southworth residents have options to drive around. There is no public transportation from Bremerton to Port Orchard. My car is in Southworth. You have to get walk-on passengers from Fauntleroy to Southworth. Vashon can park their cars and walk on, too. They don't have to park close to the dock. They can park on California Avenue.
16. Buses are failing to connect Southworth riders. You can't delay the boat just because Vashon Islanders have to get to work.
17. The ferry system is biased toward Vashon. There is no direct ferry from Southworth to Fauntleroy during the commute. Crossing time is 19 minutes direct, but 45 minutes if the boat stops at Vashon. That more than doubles your commuting trip. Your numbers are wrong.
18. Steve Rodrigues said he has tried to arrange a meeting with David, the Governor, and the Secretary of Transportation. Only one of the Steel Electrics needed U.S. Coast Guard recertification. The other three don't need recertification until 2010. We need to revisit the Governor's decision on the Steel Electrics. With today's technology you could have them back in service in 3 months. The Kalakala's hull is the same vintage as the Steel Electrics.
19. I was at the Bainbridge public meeting Monday night and there is a lot more animosity tonight, and fewer ferry personnel. There are democratic legislators here. Listen to the point Steve Rodrigues is making and I made Monday night. Southworth is under-served. Better service has to be provided here.
20. What is happening with PO service? Is King County taking over in June? Will they use the same boats for another year? In the schedule we've seen, King County plans do not include Southworth. I've commuted on a PO boat for 12 years. How can I get from Port Orchard to downtown in under 2 hours? I don't need food service or wireless. How do I not spend \$40 a day on gas and parking? I want basic, reliable service.
The proceeds from the sale of the PO ferries will go to King County. This year, we will continue operating PO service and they will pay us. This year the schedule will stay the same. In July 2009 King County will take over PO service. At some point they plan to operate more, smaller boats with more efficient fuel use.

Facilitator Melanie Coon introduced herself and emphasized the importance of public comments – they will be shared with the FAC chairs, riders and other groups, and posted on the Web site. Melanie introduced Doug Schlieff, South Regional Operations Manager, to talk about operational issues.

Operational Issues

South Regional Operations Manager Doug Schlieff

Doug Schlieff introduced himself as the South Regional Operations Manager. Doug said their department deals with terminal operations and security, and they plan for traffic volumes.

Security is an ongoing issue for the ferry system. Washington State Patrol (WSP) has their own division called VATS (vessel and terminal security) with their own plan and budget, and we work closely with them to achieve the security goals seamlessly. VATS does vehicle screening at the dock. The ferry system does not oversee VATS but we work closely with them.

Another important issue for the Ferries Division is vessel maintenance. On the Web page (www.wsdot.wa.gov/ferries/service) you can find a chart that shows the maintenance, drydock and inspection needs for each vessel through September. You can also find a document showing the service impacts resulting from the maintenance and inspection schedule – there are none anticipated on this route through September; however, there are notable impacts in the San Juan Islands.

Public Questions and Comments

1. Why do you still have that plastic canvas tent downtown? It blows around and seems like a safety issue.
The Pier 50 tent was meant to be a temporary structure. We didn't know if we would continue PO service, so no improvements were made. We don't know King County's plans. We are focused on preservation and maintenance, not capital investments.
2. Why did you install expensive turnstiles after you knew you were going to get out of the PO business? That is not spending money wisely. You have a tent that is falling apart but you spend money on turnstiles.
The turnstiles will likely be moved. We have just had our first clean audit after 21 years.
3. Rich Barringer asked where the Southworth and Vashon allocations come from. It is a 70/30 split (70 Vashon, 30 Southworth). What does it take to change it?
There is no quick answer. There has been no revenue stream since 1999. We need capital investment to get vessel capacity to accommodate both routes.
4. Vashon should pay more because they get better service.
5. You should offer a survey that allows us to say what works for us instead of giving us multiple choices. You're not getting a true read. We saw boxes to deposit surveys in but didn't receive surveys.
The survey is random and not everyone will receive a survey. The total number is about 7,000. The Transportation Commission is conducting the survey from legislative direction, to gain knowledge of options. I believe there are a couple weeks left of the survey.
6. What is the 70/30 split based on? It's arbitrary – you could change it tonight.
We will examine the loading ratio and see if there is other more current analysis.
7. The survey is based on ticket sales. It's cheaper to buy a ticket to Vashon. The surveys are slanted toward Vashon.
8. Southworth gets more people on the boats than Vashon, with vanpools and motorcycles, because the space is not available for cars.
9. Why can't we have a temporary ferry for a Southworth to downtown Seattle run? We want to prove we can - we would publicize it to get ridership. I guarantee 90% of Port Orchard would do it. Kitsap County is your biggest customer.
We want to provide you with better service and new boats. We don't enjoy dividing service between communities. We need more than just those 6 new boats to provide you a boat from Southworth to downtown Seattle. There are not a lot of funds available. We need to focus our energy on finding a sustainable funding source.

Overview of Ferry Financing Legislation

Planning Director Ray Deardorf

Ray said that our goal is to find sustainable funding, and our path to that is the work we're doing to re-do the long range plan (LRP). He referred to two documents in the packets that were handed out – the presentation and initial forecasting efforts. This is a fast track effort involving a lot of players (Transportation Commission, JTC, WSDOT Ferries Division). We are building upon the 2006 study and direction from the 2007 legislation to deliver the revised LRP in January 2009. The Transportation Commission is conducting customer surveys and the JTC is concentrating on preservation and administrative costs and reviewing the current work. Ray introduced Commissioners Dan O'Neal and Dick Ford.

We are looking at system sizing, the future fleet and terminal improvements. Our timeline is to first look at level of service (LOS) standards and ridership. In June we will be looking at operations and pricing (that's where we would talk about reservations, peak period pricing, off-peak discounts, etc). Over the summer we would draft the LRP and in October, we would come out with a revised plan for review and public comment. We would finalize the plan by the end of the year and deliver it to the Legislature in January 2009.

The LRP will outline options for a stable funding source and address balancing and/or adding capacity, managing demand, and operating efficiently. The first building block is LOS standards. It is like a measuring stick – how do you know when you're congested enough to add service? There are standards adopted by the Transportation Commission. It involves the number of vessels missed during a typical afternoon commute in May. There is a one-boat wait standard for most terminals, but there is a two-boat wait standard for Bainbridge and Mukilteo.

We are proposing a different approach to how we view LOS. When the LOS standard is triggered, we are proposing to employ different strategies to manage demand, such as reservations, peak pricing, etc. After that we would look at adding capacity. We want your feedback on this concept, then we will evaluate how we approach this. We are also looking at ridership data to see when standards would be triggered.

Public Questions and Comments

1. Rep. Seaquist doesn't think we're measuring LOS right.
2. How do you measure how many boats people are waiting through? How do you capture numbers of those who drive around? Is the wait at Fauntleroy for a Vashon or Southworth boat?
The wait at Fauntleroy is based on the next boat for your destination. We do a time stamp when you get in the queue. We can't capture those who see the line and then drive around.
3. Can we get a survey to fill out tonight?
The surveys are being distributed on the boats on a random basis.
4. How many people in this room have filled out a survey? (Three raised their hands.)
5. How many cars can get on a ferry? Can you have something saying how many more cars can get on so we can decide whether or not to drive around? It's frustrating to be right by the exit and not get on.
6. About a year ago I took the 2:00 boat from Fauntleroy and we sat in the water for 40 minutes waiting for another boat to get out of the slip so we could get in. I was told that is normal. At nighttime on the weekends you expect a 40 minute crossing time, but it seems the later it gets, the slower the boats go. They sit at Vashon for 20 minutes and one car gets on. Vashon seems to be the destination rather than Southworth. Why not wait at Southworth?
We went through the schedule not too many years ago to cut those back by 5 minutes.
7. Why does the 6:05 a.m. sailing from Southworth stop at Vashon to pick up one vanpool when it is listed as a direct boat to Fauntleroy? You should have people that ride the boats who can tell you these things – "secret sailors" like secret shoppers.
If the 6:05 a.m. sailing did not stop at Vashon, it would have to wait at Fauntleroy for another boat to clear.
8. You say you're going to manage demand. What does that mean? Are you trying to price people out? What does that have to do with LOS?
By lowering demand you reduce the queue/delay. That's not the only strategy we're looking at. We're also looking at off-peak discounts.
9. You're using monetary demand, not consumer demand. You're a public service - if healthcare tried that there'd be riots in the streets.
10. Parking lots used by ferry commuters used to be jammed to capacity. Now they are only half as full. There are people that have left and have the potential to come back.
11. How can you look at revenue and LOS? You need to get on the boats, ride regularly, and talk to staff. People should pay a higher fare for a longer route – for example, when the

Snohomish ran from Port Townsend to Seattle it was an hour and a half ride at the same rate. This is inefficient – it should be more like private industries.

12. You should have advertising on the boats. Other public transportation uses it.
We are starting to do this.
13. You have a complex fare structure. Simpler would be better. When do we revisit the 70/30 split?
14. Rich Barringer said because the allotment during the commute is 70/30, Southworth should get something during the non-commute times.

Ray moved on to discussing ridership as the second critical building block toward the revised LRP. Ridership has dropped over the last few years. We are looking at local and regional population and employment forecasts. Findings so far include:

- The overall rate of growth is 1.3% per year, or a 37% increase by 2030.
- Vehicle ridership will grow slower than overall ridership
- Passenger ridership will grow faster than overall ridership
- Routes grow at different rates
 - Southworth has the potential to grow at twice the rate of the rest of the system

Public Questions and Comments

1. I like seeing the plan, but I feel like you're basing your forecasts on incorrect data. I think there will be 60% growth by 2015, not 2030.
We are aware how the growth distributes over time, and our forecasts say that most growth will occur before 2020.
2. Rich Barringer asked if we will still have the 70/30 split in 2030?
Neither Vashon nor Southworth can grow that much with the capacity of the Fauntleroy dock.
3. Rich Barringer asked the group how many would like to have a PO ferry instead of a car ferry downtown. Most of the audience raised their hands.
4. "They never ask the right questions."
5. A LOS based on ferry waits makes no sense. For 10 of 18 boats you wait over an hour to get on the next boat. It's a 2½ hour wait, so we drive around.
6. What's with the love affair with Fauntleroy? West Seattle doesn't want it there, and more people work in downtown Seattle.
About two years ago we proposed a car ferry from Southworth to downtown Seattle, and the comments we got from this community and from Kitsap County were lukewarm about it. They wanted us to try other things first, like giving a local PO system a chance. Seattle was very cold to the idea of a car ferry from Southworth to downtown.
7. We're wasting our breath talking about PO ferries. What can we do to get a car ferry downtown? What can we do to change the 70/30 split?
We have to look at what service is going to be available in the near term and reallocate resources. For example, you would lose two trips on the triangle route to make one trip to Seattle. The 70/30 split is based on historic traffic patterns and doesn't accommodate growth unless we increase capacity on the route. There will be a little breathing room once the 144-car ferries are built. That will provide 7% more overall system capacity.
8. How can we affect it if we don't agree with you?
We will look at the scheduler to see if the 70/30 split should be adjusted.
9. There is no way to know whether the split should be adjusted because you've historically cut it off.
You're partially right. If we lifted the limits, Southworth would fill the boats more. If we limited Southworth more, Vashon would fill the boats more.
10. If you limited Southworth more, Vashon would not fill the boats more. There are more people in Southworth than on Vashon.
11. I understand the huge need for funding, but is anyone looking at non-cost measures? We're facing severe service disruptions here. Is there anything we can do without cost to even things out?

We're willing to reexamine the two-boat schedule. We need to include Vashon, Southworth and Fauntleroy in the discussions. There are no plans to do that yet, but Richard brought it up before the meeting.

Facilitator Melanie Coon noted that we were out of time for the formal portion of the meeting, but staff would be available afterward. Joy pointed out the written comment form.

Approximately 60 attendees. Public sign-in included:

Mimi & Steve Dole	Greg Beardsley	Mike Hamilton
Derek Kilmer	Matthew Nelson	Sid Lee
Debbie Burge	Jane & Miles Bedinger	Greg Haro
Tom Luce	Ed Friedrich	Karen Williamson
Keith H. Johnson	C. Rivington	Shawn Dirks
Karen Carlson	Eric Olson	Gary Dawson
Kevin Kleinsmith	Kim Huyber	Loretta Mehs
Suzanne Kleinsmith	Holly Wielkoszewski	Teresa Morrison
Kimberly Studerus	Carl Coyle	Bill Conner
Kathi Bacon	Rex Nelson	Julie & Steven Nardi
Amanda Lund	Steve Rodrigues	Morrell L.
Becky McKee	Glen Beckman	Sheldon Levin
Rich Barringer	George McKee	Nancy Levin
Marjorie Rees	Blair Scanlan	Jodi Morey
Jeanie Bailor	Nick Kosin	Dan Ferguson
Bob Herman	Larry Seaquist	
Melanie Stockwell	Hannah Johnson	

WSDOT Ferries Division Staff

David Moseley, Assistant Secretary
Traci Brewer-Rogstad, Deputy Director/Chief of Staff
Ray Deardorf, Director of Planning
Doug Schlieff, South Regional Operations Manager
Joy Goldenberg, Communications Manager
Laura Johnson, Communications Consultant
Melanie Coon, Communications Manager

Public participants

Rich Barringer, Southworth FAC Member

Written comments submitted (transcribed)

Written comments received by April 30 will be added to this document.

- Matthew Nelson
 - I thought it was good content, and WSF staff was very patient with the intensity of feedback received.
 - Using any current data to evaluate the 70/30 split will reflect the 70/30 since you cannot evaluate who did not take the route.
- Anonymous
 - The system has capacity, it just doesn't allocate the capacity at the right times. Why 4 boats covering Bremerton & Bainbridge with super ships when there are 80 car boats covering twice the runs from Southworth? Bainbridge could handle 1 super and 1 small with then 1 super coming to Southworth to Downtown then back onto the normal run. Do the same at night and you increase capacity nearly 80% and decrease demand for Fauntleroy terminal.
- Karen Carlson
 - Ask your crews for information on how to save \$\$
 - More efficient

- Look at routes with fresh look
 - Ridership proves more routes are needed
 - Need sustainable long term funding source
 - Loading ratios – no solution?
 - Look at 70/30 – adjust
 - Equity between Vashon, Southworth
1. Ride the ferries – you would see more if you ride them often
 2. Ferry crews & staff could also provide ideas on how to improve service, cut costs & fix schedules, maintenance
 3. Passenger only run Southworth to Downtown Seattle – Snohomish/Chinook to Downtown from Southworth
 4. Conduct surveys on commute runs (early morning rush hour – ask commuters if would pay both ways for direct SW to DWN Seattle) They have only been on lower ridership runs (example mid day, late morning)
 5. Survey/reach out to those that drive around – Hwy 16. Place reader/billboard for people to call in to survey would they take ferry & pay if reliable safe boat to Seattle Downtown