

WASHINGTON STATE FERRY

PUBLIC HEARINGS - JANUARY 2009

Langley, Washington

Tuesday, January 6, 2009

6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

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PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 1: Thank you for the time to speak to you. I have a little different take on this whole situation. I think, somehow, we've been duped over the years into looking at the ferries as somewhat different than they really are. They're not an attraction; they're not a tourist attraction. They are part of our highway system. Everywhere I look, they are designated part of Washington state highways. They are essentially a mobile piece of highway.

So every vehicle that gets onto this ferry has already paid taxes to maintain that highway, through gases, fuel, registration, etcetera. Essentially, we've already paid for the privilege of driving on this highway. It's double taxation to charge us to get on there.

Passengers are a slightly different situation. They should be charged in proportion to any multimodal transportation in regard to the number of miles that they travel.

So the fact that you're even considering cutting service and trying to eliminate service on certain routes based on cost is fundamentally flawed. Again, if you are to take and assign a cost per mile per vehicle based on taxes collected and then you were to take the highways throughout all of Washington, you would find many, many routes that are undertraveled and don't pay for themselves.

Some of them have very high costs of maintenance, and they don't have the vehicle travel to justify their existence. So if you're going to treat everybody fairly, you need to look at closing every road or limiting its access during certain periods of time.

I think that the whole outlook on this is very, very flawed.

Lastly, the thing that I don't understand is: Probably, most of my trips to the mainland are within five to 10 miles. I don't need a vehicle. If you were to work in conjunction with Zipcar, Flexcar, whatever you call it now, and had vehicles at both sides, I'd be willing to bet that you could probably eliminate one vehicle ferry and replace it with a passenger ferry.

I would never take my car out of the driveway if I had the opportunity of reserving a Zipcar or Flexcar, whatever they want to call it, on the other side. It would be a great opportunity for me.

So I would sum this up in saying that I would ask you to really take a look at how you're looking at the ferries. I think it's grossly unfair that we are being taxed twice for traveling on the highways here in Washington state.

Thank you.

Anybody that feels the same way about this, I have petitions at the back that I'd be willing to give out to have people sign.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 2: Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the long-range plan. My name is Nancy Conard, and I'm the mayor of the town of Coupeville.

I reluctantly accept the economic realities that indicate a version of the proposed Plan B is likely to be approved by the Legislature, but I request one modification of Plan B. And my comments primarily have to do with the Keystone/Port Townsend run.

While service between Keystone and Port Townsend is likely to be reduced to one boat, it's imperative that we have a backup vessel. A second Island Home must be built in the short term. While perhaps not the ideal, the Island Home can be used on other runs. It would make it much easier to accept a reduction in service if we can ensure that the service that we have is extremely reliable, and that requires a second boat immediately.

I do strongly support several of the operational strategies that are proposed in the plan. Reservations. Our pilot reservation program on the Port Townsend/Keystone ferry this summer was a good start. I'm glad both Plan A and B call for a reservation system that allows flexibility for each route. I think this is a really important piece. The needs are different in each community, and there can't be one system that works for every route.

Demand management. Obviously, we cannot afford to continue to build for peak-hour use. Incentives for traveling at less-busy times, for smaller vehicles, and to encourage pedestrian/transit connections are all important targets, and I think the plan reflects that well.

Operational changes. Again, the needs are different in each community. We need to work together to be certain our local priorities are met. In our case, with one boat, we need to make sure that every boat is full. In addition to reservations and incentives, prioritized boarding should be considered, when

needed, to provide appropriate service to critical users.

When planning for individual routes, I'd ask that you please be certain to include the rest of the Department of Transportation, and also, the local RTPOs. While I don't support shifting any financial burden to local cities and counties, I do think it is possible to identify projects that may qualify for funding that's available to the local entities that may serve more global purposes.

We need to be certain that the highways, ferries, transit, and elected folks are all together on decisions that are being made in each community.

My final request is for predictability, and that probably should be directed to the Legislature. In the end, if we have to accept changes and reductions in service as a result of economic shortfalls, give us a plan and a funding mechanism that will endure. If we can plan with some certainty, we're better able to adjust to the changes.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 3: My name is Bob Clay. I'm a Council member from the town of Coupeville and also chairman of the board of Island Transit. Thank you for the opportunity to talk to you.

You gentlemen have all my respect. You have a tremendous job to do, and I don't have lots of answers, but I do have some comments and some feelings; some personal, some do reflect some of

my constituents.

One is: I'm concerned that sometimes, within the plan, the ferry system is described as a "marine highway." It's really not a marine highway. It's part of our entire highway system for the state of Washington and should be treated that way.

Some of Plan B is upsetting to me because it sounds like taking part of Interstate 5 -- it's a six-lane road, and, all of a sudden, deciding it's going to go to four lanes because we don't have money to operate the other two lanes, even though we have capacity that's going to be there in the future. So it might be some short-sightedness.

I don't have an answer for the revenue problem, and I don't know anybody in this room that does. We don't want to pay more taxes, but somehow -- somehow, this state has got to be able to fund a vital part of our infrastructure. Therefore, I say we should have a Plan C, and Plan C would actually take some of the best parts of Plan A and B, and here are some things in it.

One, continue the belt-tightening that you have been doing with staff and create or utilize all your efficiencies that you can find. You need to get and keep to a planned vessel-replacement program. You need to upgrade terminal facilities to attract walk-ons. In some cases, it's difficult for people to walk on. You've indicated overhead walkways as a good way to do it. If you think that's an answer, then you need to proceed with that.

You need to integrate terminal facilities, wherever possible, with other modes of transportation. It was started at Mukilteo, and I know there's a problem, because you can't move the terminal now, so you can't take advantage of the Sounder connection, but that needs to be rethought, I think.

We mentioned a reservation system. That's worked at the Keystone/Port Townsend run. I think we should ask for a half-fare deposit when you do that. That would eliminate the no-shows. That system seems to work.

You need to plan to keep at least one boat on all routes, with a backup. I am really concerned about the Port Townsend/Keystone run without a backup, should something happen.

And again, don't place the burden of ferry service on local entities. You have the expertise, you have the people to do it, and we don't have the money to be able to fund it.

Thank you very much.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 4: Hi. Thanks for the time to talk to you.

I agree very much with Ed Jenkins. Unlike Mayor Nancy, I do not accept the concept of cutting service. The Tim Eiman torpedoing of your previous funding mechanism is very old news. A lot of time has gone by, and the fundamental problem has not been corrected. The fundamental problem is that you don't treat the ferry system like part of the highway system. You treat it like an ugly stepchild. And it is part of the highway system.

Tens of thousands of people have made decisions on where to live, where to locate their businesses, and there was an implicit commitment that the ferry system would continue to provide adequate service. And to even have a Plan B is ridiculous. You would not consider shutting down asphalt highways to save money.

And remember back when this country went through rural electrification. The whole principle of rural electrification was: Everybody should have electricity. Telephone service followed. Everybody should have telephone service. They don't necessarily pay the whole freight for all those wires and poles. Everybody should have transportation service, and to think about cutting service is just absurd.

I think you need a fundamental change in philosophy. Now, I don't know whether that's the Legislature that needs that change or the ferry-system management or both. Paula Hammond is effectively, in business terms, the vice president of transportation. And what vice presidents do -- they don't manage. At least they shouldn't. They represent their departments to the rest of the government.

It's her responsibility to figure out how to get the Legislature to fund the ferry system just like it funds everything else: all out of the same pot. And if she can't figure out how to do that, we need somebody who can.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 5: Shay Gilliland. I'm up in Coupeville, so I mainly am concerned about Keystone, the Keystone

ferry. So my concern is -- I don't know if you're planning on coming to Coupeville or not. There's a lot of people that wanted to come to the meeting tonight that weren't able to get transportation. They don't have vehicles. They're retired. So I'm kind of speaking for them as well, and I hope you're considering coming to Coupeville.

The two big concerns I have is that -- this is kind of repeating what other people have said -- that this is a state and federal transportation issue, and the highway system -- the Washington State ferries, I think, are the second-largest ferry system in the U.S. and highest in the West. And so I think that you need to go to the Legislature and address this as an infrastructure issue.

The second thing is, in Plan B, it sounds like you're passing -- or want to pass this off to the county, which, the counties don't have the money to take on the whole system, and especially in the Keystone ferry system. In the summer, it's high tourism. I mean, it's mainly -- there's a lot of people working back and forth, but it's a high- tourism thing, and it seems like there should be some way to get the tourism folks, you know, at the legislative level, to help figure out the costs of this.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 6: My name is Richard Soto, and I do not have anything prepared. I apologize for that. But I welcome the opportunity to make a few comments.

My wife and I -- we're local business owners here on Whidbey

and also a member of the Freeland Chamber and involved in some other activities. There's so much to comment on, but I want to specifically address my concerns about economic development.

I think that, clearly, without a ferry system that operates consistently, that people can count on being there when they want to come across to one of our islands, people coming from the mainland to Whidbey Island -- I'm really concerned about the impact that it could have on our local economies.

So many of our businesses depend, in part, on people coming to Whidbey Island to spend money, to visit. And not just tourism. I'm also speaking about building contractors and computer repair people and all the rest of the specialties that we depend on from the other side.

And I really encourage your planners to look at, if, somehow, that you can attach a dollar value to the economic impact that a disruption of the ferry service would have.

I've worked in a number of other industries and lived in a lot of different places in the country and have been through ups and downs of economies. But I have to tell you, this is the first time that I really feel it in the gut, because you cut down the ferry system or access to it and things are going to stop real fast around here. And needless to say, people are hunkering down as it is, with the economic turndown that we're facing.

But I just really, really encourage you to please include within your planning some kind of a cost/benefit on the impact to

local businesses.

And please, along with that are people's jobs. We employ a number of people, and they're modestly salaried kind of positions. But you take those away, and there's just nothing for these folks.

So those are my comments. Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 7: Barbara Lindahl, Langley area.
I really didn't sign up for this. I thought I was signing in, but I had a few questions that I was going to ask while I had a chance. I just was writing it down as you were talking, Ray.

The quality of each terminal. Depending upon the county and their ability to pay or help, that would bother me, because I think it would be completely different from place to place to place to place. As we know, you have Southworth; we have Coupeville; we have well-funded areas and areas that are not so funded.

And then I was wondering: What happened to the capital fund, and why? So sometime I'd like to hear about that.

Reservations. I know it worked up in Coupeville, but I have taken the Canadian ferry several times, and it's chaos to get into those lines and, sometimes, with a reservation, you don't make it.

So all I can see is you have those -- you know, the lines overhead. It would be just very expensive to put "reservation line," this and this. And I think you'd end up with almost the same backup, especially on the terminal at Mukilteo and probably here and other places.

Overhead loading. I would hope, in the second plan, Plan B, that you would put it in. Overhead loading saves time. And especially on our run, where we need to go back and forth, back and forth, back and forth, it would be nice to load people and not slow the ferry down. And then you could have a slow ferry and not have to rush around.

17 vessels in Plan B. I think we've all brought that up. Where is the spare? No spares? That's a real problem in the summer, and I think we all know about that.

Better transportation. I think that's -- you're all working on better transportation, meeting and greeting -- or meeting with the ferries, meeting with the trains, meeting with this.

I wrote down "asphalt highways with tolls." I know everybody calls this a "marine highway," and I know the Transportation Department is also talking about tolls, so we're not the only ones who are thinking about getting hit.

I just had one other thing. I know we've talked about Sydney not being there, and that's probably perfectly okay, because I know, when we go to Canada, we go to Canada to go to Vancouver, and they've had lots of problems on that Sydney run, and it's not a money-maker.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 8: Good evening. I'm Larry Marty, a local business owner here on the island, and I would like to share the previous speaker's concerns, also, about the effect of

the ferry service and what it's doing to businesses on the island. When you pull up to the ticket booth on the other side, with your family and the grandkids in the car and shell out \$50 to go one way, it has a lot to do with whether you show up again.

I'd like to talk a little bit about the Black Ball Freight Line. I'm sure you folks are aware that they were the company that ferried vehicles and passengers on the current routes prior to the State taking over the system. I assume they felt they could do a better job. I'm still not convinced that they have.

They were able to make that profit because they did not install Wi-Fi. They did not install flat-screen TVs in the lounge. They did not install automatic ticket systems to the tune of millions of dollars, that will never ever work on the east side. Nor did they spend millions of dollars to buy the boats and to park a few more cars when what was needed is the planned terminal.

So consequently, they were able to make a profit because they kept the money in the bank until it was needed. They did not frivolously spend the money, which is what's been happening over the last few years.

I think maybe it's time to consider private enterprise again, if for no other reason than to see if, in fact, there is a profit to be made, because the State obviously can't make a profit or manage the ferry system too well.

Plan A. At 50-percent loss for passenger fares, that would

be great. But what do they do when they get there? Because we don't have that terminal being made over there now. So, consequently, they can't get on the train, which was supposed to have been a great plan, and I would have said, "Hey, you bet. Reduce to 50 percent." But that's not happening anymore.

So consequently, I think maybe a citizen's oversight committee, which would be representatives from each side of the water, might be a very good idea, because somebody is not managing our money well, and I think it's time that it's managed better.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 9: Good evening. Thank you so much. I'm Helen Price-Johnson. I'm the Island County Commissioner for District 1, and I really appreciate the opportunity to give some feedback on this long-range plan. Because the district that I represent encompasses two of your ferry landings, the future of this transportation system is of great importance to me and to the people I represent.

The two most critical transportation needs that I see for our community are reliability and accessibility. It's kind of ironic. I had prepared these remarks to bring to Port Townsend last night but, because of the iffy weather situation, I thought that I might not be able to get home, so I'm bringing these comments tonight.

And we're hearing a lot about Clinton, but it's the Port Townsend run that is most decimated by your Plan B, and I think that that's why I'm focusing on that.

The reliability of service is necessary for our residents, for our businesses, for our naval base, and for our visitors. And for this reason, whatever plan you adopt must include funding for two Island Home ferries. There has to be a backup for that run. The current passenger-only service, which is due, right now, to a lack of a substitute vessel, is disruptive to business; it's inadequate for our citizens; and it's really unacceptable for us to have that be part of a plan for the future.

Understand, I am a big fan of public transportation, and I believe that we should be increasing its availability regionally and nationally. And there is this great potential for passenger-only service around Puget Sound as we shift our culture away from being so dependent on the automobile. However, the Port Townsend and Keystone ferry landings do not lend themselves to this emphasis for a variety of reasons, but mainly because there's a lack of alternatives to adequately meet the needs of the people traveling on that run.

It's important to recognize, as has been brought up before, the unique demands of each ferry run, to meet the needs of that route and the citizens in each community. Just as the demands are different for the Narrows Bridge to the Deception Pass Bridge, which are also part of the system, the contrasts are huge between the different ferry routes.

The rural communities that I represent have limited tax revenues, and we're struggling right now to adequately support our

local transit system; where urban centers have much more alternatives to choose from. Our military commuters, our commercial users, and the tourists of this route are really automobile-dependent.

I understand the severe financial constraints that you're facing and, for this reason, efficiency and effectiveness should be your highest priority. The cancellations make this service unreliable.

And I understand you might be changing, but one of the signs said "reservations required," which is really a detriment. People turn away and don't choose to come to our island or to get off the island because of that.

It's unfortunate that the upheavals of the past have created distrust for potential passengers. And I've heard this described as possibly being a self-licking ice cream cone, where reduced service decreases ridership and cycles downward.

Thank you very much for this opportunity, and I hope you would focus on reliability and accessibility.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 10: My name is Bill O'Brien. Many of the items have been covered, but one of the things, hopefully, that the ferry system is looking into is: The new administration coming into power here on January 20th talked a lot about trying to rebuild our infrastructure. I think that our ferry system -- hopefully, we already have something in line that's back in Washington, D.C., or getting prepared to go back there, and,

possibly, we can -- those who first come to that trough can get the best drink, I guess.

Another item -- of course, it's always money. It always boils down to money, and I've been riding this ferry for a long time. I've had property over here since the '70s and ride quite frequently. And I notice, time after time, that the ramps at both ends are not used because -- it looks like, to me, that, possibly, people loading it don't want to put the chocks under the wheels and play with that.

If you just took two cars on each ramp, which, most of the time you could put three, so that would be eight cars per ferry. And just at \$5 and 10 trips, that's \$400. And seven days a week, it would be \$2800. And four weeks, it would be \$11,200. And that, over a 12-month period, comes to \$134,400.

Now, that's just using 10 trips a day. Now, I think there's considerably more than that. This is a very conservative figure. And I think a few things like that and not leaving the huge gaps in front of the elevator -- and I know that handicapped people deserve the right to be able to get on that elevator. However, if you're in a car in any of those lanes, between the cars, there's only 2 1/2 feet.

So they leave 30 feet in front of the elevator. Well, I mean, you can't get a wheelchair back to that point anyway, because you couldn't get it out of your car. So why do we leave 30 feet in front of the elevator? And there again, that's another

four or five cars per trip, right there, that you see time after time.

Thank you for your time.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 11: Dave Hoogerwerf. I live in Maxwelton, and I agree pretty much with everything that everyone said this evening, but I just want to hit a couple of highlights.

First of all, I think your plan is fundamentally flawed in the assumptions. That's a pretty broad statement. But, again, like the other people have said, this is a state highway, and people have made decisions based on the commitment that that state highway would be there.

My example that I like to use is: I don't go over and use the freeway between Spokane and Coeur d'Alene. I don't think I should pay for it. I don't go use the Tacoma Narrows Bridge. I don't think I should pay for it. When I-5, down in Centralia, last year, flooded and a lot of State funds were put down there to open it back up, I don't want to pay for that; I don't use it.

That's what everybody else in the state says about the Washington State ferry system. But just like those three examples I used, the ferry system is a state highway. That's one of the reasons governments were formed back many hundreds of years ago: to spread the cost of these things over many people.

When you talk about fare increases, you're talking about user fees. I'm sick and tired of hearing about user fees. User fees are tax increases unless there's a corresponding decrease in the

tax rate. There never is a decrease.

I know you're trying to get to 100-percent fare-box recovery. No one else does that in the state, other than the Washington State ferries.

Now I've got a couple of other just miscellaneous items. I'd like to understand what the head count for the Washington State Ferry system is over time. There's been no changes to service in the last 20 years. The number of ferries is the same. The number of runs is the same. Everything is the same. I would bet that the Washington State Ferry's head count has increased over time. Don't know that for a fact, so I'd like to see that information.

As far as capital and funding issues go: Whatever happened to that fundamental accounting principle called "depreciation"? The ferries have been here many, many years. They've been depreciated over their useful life. That money should have been put into an account and used to replace those ferries or do maintenance. That did not happen. Someone stole the money. I'm sure it was the Legislature or someone, but it's gone.

At one time, we had money for the new Mukilteo station. It was going to be great, just like Helen Price-Johnson said. It was going to be a multimodal station: bus, train. Great idea. It's gone because we didn't have the money for the maintenance for the ferries, so we stole the money for our multimodal station and moved it to make the ferries float again.

The two plans that we have -- it says the State is the

"principal funder." They admit that they're only going to fund 87 percent, so I don't see that as a principal funder.

I'm just going to kind of go through this quickly. Either be private or be public. None of this in-between stuff. You guys either do it, do it right, or, if a private can do it cheaper, let them do it.

The reservation system is only at 9 percent. People would change. Let's see. Last thing.

Public comment. I've been to many of these things. No one listens to public comment. This is just a forum, because it's legislated by the Legislature to have public forums. Nothing ever changes. The increases always go through. Nothing ever changes.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 12: Thank you very much. Good evening. My name is Robin Adams. I'm a management consultant. I work in Langley. And I'd first of all like to say this is a much better plan than the last one, because at least it recognizes that business as usual cannot continue. So please accept my compliments on that point.

I agree with a lot of what has been said and I won't repeat it, but I want to say something that hasn't been said about which the plan is curiously silent. That is the scandal of the cost structure of this ferry system. I want to point out to you that, in your document, the difference between the 22-boat plan and the 17-boat plan is \$1.5 billion. And if I divide that by five boats, that's \$300 million per boat.

Now, I don't know how many people in this room are familiar with shipbuilding or ships, but when you pay \$80-some million for an Island Home ferry, you've got to understand that it's about the same price for some of the biggest supercargo ships that are bringing all those containers of toys and plastic goods from China.

We have a staggeringly high cost of constructing vessels here because the Legislature has required that these be built in Washington state. And we get only one bid, at many percentage points higher than you know and your engineers know should happen.

This doesn't change. Nobody says anything about this. Our political leadership is a disgrace. They will cut off service rather than deal with the restrictive practices and the protectionism that causes this unreasonable cost escalation. And we, as the public, are being asked to make these sacrifices because our leaders will not buck the vested interests that cause the cost structure that you have to deal with.

The plan says nothing about this, and it's high time it did.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 13: Good evening, gentlemen. Thank you for the opportunity. We've met before. I've been to several of these meetings and, although I do appreciate all of your hard work and the consultants that you brought in to give you all of the numbers that you've based these decisions and plans off of, I must agree that I saw these plans six months ago, at least, and, at that time, you said you were going to take these around for

public input and that your plans would then take those inputs and change and adapt to address some of those concerns.

Unfortunately, I don't see any of those changes in this document. These plans, as outlined, are unbelievably vague. I mean, they are -- there's no detailed plans. There's no timelines. There's no -- this is not the way you would run any kind of project.

Larry Marty brought up the Black Ball company that used to run the private ferry. The Steilacoom ferry that we have borrowed -- commandeered from the Point Defiance run is also either a private or a semi-private boat.

MR. MOSELEY: Pierce County.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 13: Was that a Pierce County? Okay. So I don't see the counties taking over any of these runs.

A couple of other things here. None of your ridership numbers are broken down by runs. I don't see any -- looking through here, you're saying that your ridership base has changed. Being Joe Commuter -- and you're telling me that only one-third of the traffic on at least the Clinton/Mukilteo run that I'm riding is commuter traffic. I don't believe that to be so. It's just unfathomable to me that that's the count.

A couple of other things here. As far as the aging fleet -- now, how you've based your deterioration of the fleet and when they need to be replaced is due to vehicles traveled on those vessels and not actual runs. And so what I've heard in the past

is that we want to reduce the amount of traffic on those vessels in order to sustain programs.

However, I've also been told that these boats are not going into dry dock as scheduled, because we don't have the money to do that. I think that we could spend a lot more money on repairing. I have an old truck that I can keep going for many, many years with the right investments. Anyway, my two cents.

Thanks.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 14: Thanks for the opportunity to speak. My name is Jim Adsley and I live at 3280 Saratoga Road. I've lived on Whidbey Island since 1995 and traveled here for a couple years prior to that, so I've ridden the ferries quite a bit.

I also was a fire chief down in the SeaTac communities, all the communities surrounding SeaTac, for about 20 years, and I've testified before the Legislature and various committees, quite often, about transportation issues: 509 that's never been completed and so on and so forth, and all the major impacts.

The fact of the matter is that Category C funding has never been adequate. Remember, we had a \$3 billion or \$5 billion shortfall or whatever. There's never been enough funds there to maintain the concrete that's out there.

And so it is getting a little bit old. As someone mentioned earlier here, about the impacts of the initiative that cut back some of the taxes, and we thought we went to \$30 car license fees,

and the Legislature creatively threw tonnage back in the picture. And so now, we're essentially paying back about the same amount that we were before that curtailment. So there's quite a bit of money out there.

And I wanted to talk about one other instance -- and I don't know how many more of these there are, but I have a news article on the front page of the Sunday "Times," August 2007, talking about state earmarks. And one of those earmarks was a special \$10 million gift to a big developer in the Tukwila area, to build -- or facilitate a new roadway that he'd like to use to facilitate a new 500-acre development similar to Southcenter in size; slightly bigger, actually. Just what we need: to destroy another 500 acres of prime farmland for something like that, and contribute transportation funds to that tune to one of the wealthiest families in the county of King.

So I would recommend, in terms of funding, that maybe you ask the Legislature to curtail some of these earmarks and put some of those monies -- I don't believe that road has been built yet. Maybe you can get that 10 million bucks back.

About the same time that was given, I understand that the Legislature had approved buying some new ferries up here, and I guess we couldn't get the contracts right, so we never got those ordered.

But in other words, I think what we need to do is see the State maybe do a little better job of prioritizing where the

public dollars are going. And like someone else said, we all pay the same amount of taxes. We don't use roads in Enumclaw or Spokane, as someone else mentioned, but yet we pay for them. And I think it's appropriate that people pay for the roads here.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 15: Good evening. My name is Bruce Enter. You've never seen me before. I'm a native Washingtonian. My wife and I moved here about five years ago because we believe that this is one of the best places in the world to live, and we want to see it maintained that way.

Although we haven't heard anything tonight -- I don't know you or you. I do know your ferry workers, and the people on your ferries, let us say -- I mean, I have never ever seen a better workforce than what you have on there, and I just want to say that you've got some great people there, and they really deserve all the help they can get. I don't know that about the executives.

Second of all, you know, we have public/private cooperation on a lot of projects around the country. In the Northwest, too, we have Safeco Field, we have Qwest Field. Those are partnerships. We have naming rights.

Have you ever considered revenue streams where you have naming rights, temporary naming rights, to ferries, for example? Okay? I mean, they bring in a lot of money. I mean, look at the revenue streams. I know you have some Lufthansa ads on there, on the doors. I think that's great. You could put ads on the

countertops.

TSA. Our TSA. I mean, I fly all the time. I don't really like TSA, but -- you know, the Transportation Security people. But at Sea-Tac, they have a test thing where all the bins now are paid for by private industry and they have their ads on the bottom.

There's all types of innovative ways that you could create revenue streams to help offset some of these revenues that you seem to have lost over the years that I think could help offset some of the costs we have.

Second of all, we're not a bunch of rich fat cats living up here because we have tons of money. We are regular working people up here, trying to earn a living. We have a very aging population. You have aging boats; we have aging population, okay? And the seniors -- whatever you do, please keep considering a student discount, a senior discount, a frequent-passenger discount, or whatever you want to call it, because we're dependent on that to get to medical, to get to our parents, for our parents to come and see us, for our kids to come and see us, and we just hate to see our quality of life deteriorate because we can't have proper transportation.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 16: Hi. I'm Kimberly Tiller. I own a business in Langley, and I live on the island. I've lived here for about 20 years now. And I'm very concerned about the

fact -- well, a couple of different things.

One point is, as has been mentioned a number of times, that this is part of the highway system, that, whereas we're being assessed user fees or a special assessment--you could call it a special tax assessment--to use this part of the system, it's not done equally for special-access systems like this.

520, I-90 -- those bridges don't get the assessments. The winter passes. All of these passes that go between the east and west. People aren't assessed to use those passes, which cost a tremendous amount of money to keep cleared every winter. So it seems like it's unfair.

I'm also concerned about any decrease made to the summer tourism trade due to the fact that there are fewer runs or they're more expensive. Every time you reduce the number of runs or increase the fees, there's a direct impact on the number of tourists that come to our island, which directly affects the bottom line of my business, which then, in response, I collect fewer tax dollars for the State and fewer tax dollars for my local government.

The other concern is the reservation system. I used that this summer when I wanted to go to a kayak symposium in Port Townsend. I thought I had plenty of time to make a reservation, but every single run was full, except the ones very, very late in the evening, at which time I'd miss the event.

I didn't go. Well, I did. I actually went across as a foot

passenger and walked far more than I should have to get to the event. But that event was very, very poorly attended, and I don't want to see that happen to events that are here on this island.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 17: Thank you for this opportunity to give feedback. However, I'm skeptical it will make any difference. That's a concern of mine.

First of all, I think that Island County is being penalized unfairly. I'm not a business person, but I am concerned about the businesses on the island. They're all hurting. With a cut in ferry service, some of them are bound to fold, just absolutely fold.

Public transportation. You're saying we can get off the ferry -- most of us -- well, I know a lot of my fiends do. When we go to the other side, we make several trips to different stores to get everything done in one day -- we might go to Costco, we might go to Lynwood, we might go to the doctor's office -- to save on gas and make one whole trip. So having a bus system won't work.

Making reservations. I think, with the amount of people working from here, going over to Everett, it is unacceptable. And things come up. You know, your family calls; they want you to come over. You don't have time to make reservations. Does that mean you're not going to be able to go, because you haven't made a reservation?

I also agree with everyone here that says we're being singled out for unfair treatment. We pay taxes on the roads throughout the state, and we do not expect to have a double tax, now our ferry service reduced, and then paying more money to use the ferry. It should be every resident of Washington.

We bring in revenue, and we bring in tourism, and that tourism goes through the state of Washington. So being singled out is totally wrong.

And I would also ask: What happened to the money? Where was the planning for these ferries to go out of service and to be repaired and bought new? Where is that money? And who is responsible for the loss of that money? And I hold you guys responsible. I want you to go back and ask the State: "Where is the money?"

And what can be cut besides our ferry service? Some of these other things that the gentleman talked about are outrageous. These pork barrel -- somebody's agenda: new faucet, new this, new that. We are people that are living and paying taxes. We need our jobs here. We need our stores. We need reliable transportation on the ferries.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 18: I'm Mark Gmerek and I live in Clinton. And I want to first thank you all for putting up with my two little fairies. We've been making a racket in the back here.

Just a couple things I want to address. I think there could

be more done in the way of parking structures, particularly in Mukilteo. We have friends who come to visit, and because of a lack of parking--they live anywhere in the Puget Sound area--they're forced to drive on the ferry, and that costs them a fair amount of money, and there's just dwindling parking there. It isn't just the people who use it for commuting.

And then just the notion -- I want to talk a little bit about the notion of a reservation system. I think, for certain instances, that would be great. You know, you need to get somebody to the airport, or you're going to the airport, and you have something very -- you know, with a very specific schedule. But most other times, I think it's wholly impractical.

Myself -- you know, I do different errands. I work on the other side. I typically walk on the ferry, but sometimes I drive. And on those days, I really don't know how much time I'm going to need; you know, what ferry I'll need to take to come home. So to force somebody into a certain time on a reservation, I think, is really impractical.

And then, lastly, I think more could be done to accommodate bicycles, I think, both on the infrastructure, for buses that handle the bicycles, in getting bicycles on and off ferries. The notion of loaner bicycles or some sort of bicycles -- you know, I could envision friends wanting to come -- we live seven miles from the ferry. If there were a way to lease a bicycle, they could ride out to our house.

So those are my comments, and thank you for your service.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 19: Good evening, gentlemen. My name is Mike Lauver. I'm the owner of Whidbey Sea-Tac Shuttle, and I think you've gotten an earful tonight, so I won't continue to sling arrows at you. I promise to be gentle, right?

I just do want to raise a couple of points here for your consideration. One is private inclusion. And in your expanded document--which isn't 90 pages. I've got about 400 pages of it over there in my binder--it's pretty much specifically excluded. And I think that the through-put -- it would see through-put and a concentration of people on the boats if you can move them through on one vehicle and keep them going, and that's what I do.

People, I think, have a resistance to taking one bus to the ferry landing, getting off the bus, walk onto the ferry, walk off the ferry, get on another one. So I think some sort of private inclusion needs to be addressed.

Boat construction in Washington. You certainly heard about that. I have talked to those that are the powers that be in the Legislature on that issue, and they say it's a saving-jobs thing. Well, they're killing businesses by saving a few jobs. We need to get these boats built. We need to get them built at a reasonable price, and we need to get the Legislature on track to reality here.

Fuel reduction. Great thing. The easiest, simplest way that I can see that you can reduce fuel consumption is to have a longer

transit time, which means a quicker turnaround time. The easiest way to do a quicker turnaround time is to get your foot passengers loaded.

Now, if you can build overhead, that's wonderful. If you can't, you need to operationally make a few changes, and that is to get the foot passengers on either first or last, but not first and last and hold up the boats.

And I suggest that you get them on last, because you get your cars on, and then all your foot passengers are staged. You get them on, you close the gate, the boat is gone. Likewise, in unloading: Get the cars off, then the foot passengers.

I can't tell you how many times we wait at the front of the boat. All the foot passengers go off, they're ready to signal cars to go off, and here come the last three people, running down the stairs, and now they wander on down the ramp at a leisurely pace, holding up the whole boat.

Real quick. Statewide transportation planning. We're building bridges. We're discussing a viaduct, 520 Bridge, Tacoma Narrows Bridge; all these monies, all these different options. The ferries has to be thrown in there. We've got to be realistic where we're spending our monies.

Foot-passenger ferries. I think it's a redundancy. You're going to end up actually costing the people more, duplicating service. And the IBU has got a stranglehold on the ferry system. And your \$7 million naval architect department that can't cost out

a ferry has to be talked to.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 20: Good evening. My name is Mark Sayk. Thank you for your time, guys. This is the first time I've ever done one of these. But, as a commuter from 1976 to 1984, on the weekends and summers and whenever possible to be here on this beautiful island, to a permanent resident in '84, and a commuter since that date on a daily basis, sometimes twice, sometimes three times -- my business is in Mukilteo -- I support both sides of this water economically.

This whole system -- and the reason I moved here was because I had the availability of transportation to come and go. Yes, if I had to wait in line, that was my fault for my bad timing or too many people, but I could wait in that line and I knew I was going to get on a ferryboat.

Now you're telling me that some guy from California or wherever can make a reservation and I'm not going to get on that ferryboat; and that is not right. We live here. These are our homes. We've made that -- you people have made that capability for us by that ferry system. And, by God, the first time that you went to somebody on Mercer Island and said, "Hey, the bridge is closed. You don't get to leave," what would happen?

I'm done. Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 21: Good evening, and I appreciate the opportunity to speak before you. I'm Kenneth Wolf, of

Coupeville. I can be considered an angry voter. Just the simple thought of Keystone ferry makes my blood boil, okay?

In the past, we've had a nice ferry system at Keystone. Then, all of a sudden, (snaps fingers), just like that, it went away, and there was no backup plan. The planning wasn't there. What I see for Plan A is a great vision for the largest United States ferry system. I commend you for this vision and in carrying it further.

Unfortunately, Plan B, going from 28 vessels in a sustained system that you have with Plan A -- going from 28 vessels down to 17 doesn't sound very logical. Especially when you take a look at your numbers for ridership. And I'll point out one specifically.

When you take a look at the Port Keystone ferry, your numbers for vehicles -- a 76 jump for vehicles, a 114-percent jump in passengers, for an overall 96-percent jump over the next 20 years. And we're going to do this with one ferry? I don't understand, okay? And there's no backup to this Keystone ferry either, okay? So that's what I wanted to mention.

And as far as the local, okay, I really cannot see Island County laying out all of their kayaks on the shoreline with a sign that says, "Rent me now. Reservations are required." Unless, of course, you want to take the largest U.S. ferry service and turn it into the world's largest ferry service by including all the number of kayaks.

Thank you very much.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 22: I'm Dean Enell. I've been on South Whidbey since 1990, and I've commuted on the ferries for many years: 16, 17 years or so. And I think you're doing a great job for the most part. You know, you've run a very reliable system. You certainly keep a schedule.

But I'm going to read three changes that I had in mind. I think I submitted these via letter two or three years ago and I haven't seen them occur, so I'm sure they must have just gotten buried somewhere and you're going to make the change immediately.

But one is the car size. You know, you have a 20-foot rule on cars, so anything 20 foot and under pays one rate. Well, the difference of my 14-foot-6-inch Prius versus a 20-foot Dodge Ram, we would get about -- well, I figured it out. I did the math here, and I think we were at 180 Priuses and about 130 Dodge Rams on a boat. So that's a difference of 50 cars all paying the same price. So it looked to me like you're missing out on a lot of revenue there.

I don't think it's too complicated to put in something at the tollbooth that measures the length of the car. I mean, you know, we've got computers and the Internet and all this stuff now, that that can't be that tough.

The second thing is idling cars. You have a sign on the boat that says, "Please do not idle your cars. It's unsafe." Well, I think it's kind of unsafe that people are idling their cars within the lot, and the poor ferry workers have to sit there and breathe

that stuff all day. So all I ask for there is just a sign telling people not to idle their cars when they're sitting in the lot. You do have such a sign over in Kingston.

And the last one is: It seems like your business plan, if you can call it that, is to move cars across the water, because you get a pretty good revenue -- what, \$8 per trip on the Clinton ferry on a car. But your mission actually should be to move people across the water.

So you should get off this business plan of moving cars and try to make it more accommodating to move people across there, because that's the service that you are really trying to provide for Washington State.

So to do that, as one guy suggested, you have to make it easier for bicycles. You have to put some work into adequate bus systems on either side. And you're not going to be able to keep building these big boats and moving all these cars across the water.

You guys should probably be leading the mess we have in the Puget Sound with the transportation. You know, you could be one of the agencies that's really addressing that problem and try and get off the "one guy in his one car" mode and get onto something else.

So thank you very much. And by and large, you do a good job.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 23: Hi. My name is Mitch Stroker. I live in Field. I'm retired. Lived on the island for 12 years,

but my experiences with the ferries go back to the Black Ball ferry line in World War II, when I rode the Klickitat.

What I have to say has nothing to do with you gentlemen. I don't know you. It's a question of the institution that you represent.

To get this hall tonight, you paid \$500, I believe. That's not a lot of money, but it's unconscionable. You could have gone up the road, 525, to Freeland and got a free venue with plenty of places to park cars. Think differently.

And finally, I would say, whatever you do, let the guide be that the ferry is 525, Highway 525. You can't get from Highway 525 in Mukilteo to Highway 525 in Clinton without taking the ferry. It's part of the highway system.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 24: My name is Bob Walders. I live here in the colony. I would just like to emphasize that, as you look at your capital program, to please look to have shovel-ready projects for the incoming administration. As we look at the size of your capital-improvement project, quote, "building new boats," and the incoming administration's economic-recovery program, I would really hope we have shovel-ready, quote, "boats that need to be built now," and could take advantage of that -- of the incoming administration's economic-recovery plan.

That seems to be your number-one crisis, is capital recovery. And if you can take advantage of that with ready-to-go designs for

boats--and I don't care where they're built, but I want them built effectively and fast-- that would really help your long-term needs and certainly could help us in your plan, whether it's A or B.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 25: I've just got one point. My name is Dave Hoogerwerf, again, from Maxwellton. One point I didn't get to make, and that is basic economics, the elasticity of demand. I'm sure you gentlemen are familiar with that. The rates went from 79-percent increase to 114- percent increase, or numbers about that, in the last few years.

In your plan, you say ridership has gone down 14 percent. What does that tell you the next time you make a fare increase? You're going the wrong direction.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 26: Ed Jenkins again. Last point I didn't get to make. We've talked a lot about the Mukilteo terminal. And whether it's a new terminal or revised, the one thing that I find to be critical, that nobody has addressed yet, is earthquake-worthiness.

Clinton is earthquake standards now. If there was a major earthquake, it's almost certain that Deception Pass Bridge would be severely damaged or go down. Mukilteo could be unusable. That would render this island totally stranded.

Whatever you do -- I don't care if you make one other improvement to Mukilteo, it must be earthquake-improved immediately. You would not allow any bridge or roadway on the

mainland to exist that was dangerous in an earthquake.

Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 27: My name is Jerry Valade, an eight-year resident of Whidbey Island.

The thing that surprised me about this draft is that it really doesn't address the function of the ferries, and it's the economy of Washington State. Sure, it provides transportation, but the purpose for that, the function, is the economy, just like 405 is, or Highway 5. You don't cut them off, because that's the center of your economy, to the State.

And so we don't seem to talk about the ferry system as part of the economy. For example, there's nowhere in here where you say, "Here's how Plan A affects the economy of Whidbey Island," or "Here's how Plan B affects the economy of Whidbey Island," because that's what it's there for.

If you take away the ferry system, there is no economy on Whidbey Island, and how does that help the state? It's backward planning.

And this whole idea of costs -- that's all that's in here. I don't see investment. What if you thought about the ferry system as an investment? What would be the best way to invest in a ferry system for Whidbey Island? What would we do with it? What would it look like? How would we change it so that we'd actually improve the economy on Whidbey Island? Instead, it's all costs.

It's the wrong way of looking at the problem. It's not

productive. And if you keep focusing on costs, you'll eventually go out of business. That's the only -- any business that does that goes out of business. You've got to invest. You have to think about where that investment should go and where do you get the most back for it. I don't see any of that kind of thinking in this report. Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER NO. 28: My name is Patricia Francisco. I live up in Freeland. And one of the things that the State needs to consider in purchasing or building new ferries is sustainability. And if you continue to use gas or diesel as your main source of fuel, then the price to run them is going to go up.

I believe the Port Townsend/Keystone ferries were some kind of electric engine, and it should be considered for future use. There needs to be a way to incorporate a sustainable ferry that will last into the future.

(The public comment portion of the meeting
concluded at 7:36 p.m.)

