

The WSF Vehicle Reservation System At-a-Glance

WHY RESERVATIONS?

At the direction of the State Legislature in 2009, Washington State Ferries embarked on the design of vehicle reservation system as the primary strategy to manage ferry demand. The strategy is designed to provide the following benefits:



For WSF Customers: A balanced degree of predictability, spontaneity, and flexibility



For Ferry Communities: Reduced negative impacts from queuing outside the terminal and congestion in residential neighborhoods, and continued access to local businesses



For WSF: A demand management system that allows improved asset use across the unique circumstances of its routes

PRE-DESIGN

WSF began the project with a pre-design study in 2010 in Kingston-Edmonds. The study helped describe an ideal reservation system that would be easy to use for all customers and helpful for demand management.

SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF PHASE I: PORT TOWNSEND-COUEVILLE

The Save a Spot vehicle reservation system on the Port Townsend-Coupeville route was successfully launched in the summer of 2012. The design and development of this first phase was guided by meaningful engagement with WSF staff, community members and customers. Over the course of 8 facilitated meetings with 19 key stakeholders, this partnership reached decisions on critical design questions to ensure successful implementation on this route.

“Reservations are a huge win for Port Townsend - ferry traffic can go downtown, eat, sightsee, and not fill the roadway with idling cars for hours”

Outcomes from Port Townsend-Coupeville:

- WSF customers like having a guaranteed spot on the boat
- WSF customers describe the Save a Spot website as easy to use and intuitive – nearly 85% of customers on the route reserve online
- WSF has improved customer communications for important travel updates
- The rate of no-shows has decreased from 39% to 14% year-over-year
- The number of overloaded sailings decreased by 18%, while ridership in the same period increased
- A core IT/ITS system that allows customers to make and change reservations online

SUCCESSFUL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT IN PHASE II: SAN JUAN ISLANDS

The second phase of the rollout uses a similar partnership in the San Juan Islands to gather input on feasibility, system design and policy decisions.

Through facilitated meetings beginning in October 2012 and continuing today, the group worked through initial misgivings about reservations to arrive at the design of a system that will work for their community. WSF terminal staff and internal business stakeholders are also key contributors to the design and development of a reservations system that works for everyone in the San Juan Islands.

Who is the San Juan Island Partnership?

- Representatives from each of the islands
- A mix of women and men
- Representatives from commercial and tourism industries
- Frequent riders and residents

Key Achievements with the San Juan Island Partnership:

- Assessed the local community situation, including the state of the terminals, local ridership patterns, information needs, and technology access.
- Developed Operating Principles for reservations specific to the San Juan Islands, including planning for service disruption scenarios.
- Established policies governing the reservation system.
- Developed a comprehensive communications plan to promote Save a Spot as a useful and important travel planning tool.

Phase II Investments in IT/ITS to Improve the Customer Experience:

- A mobile website to allow customers to easily make and change reservations
- Handheld scanners to allow reservation processing by Lot attendants
- Variable message signage on terminal approach routes
- Additional cameras for customer travel planning information
- Re-location of the Orcas Island terminal tollbooth to optimize processing

Implementation dates

The comprehensive communications plan is timed to support implementation of the San Juan Islands reservations system at the end of this year.



Beginning December 2, 2014, WSF begins to accept online reservations for customers traveling on the Anacortes/San Juan Islands route on January 5 or after.



Beginning January 5, 2015, WSF begins to redeem vehicle reservations on the Anacortes/San Juan Islands route.