

**MEETING SUMMARY**  
**WSF PORT TOWNSEND / COUPEVILLE VRS PARTNERSHIP MEETING**  
**COTTON BUILDING, PORT TOWNSEND, WA**  
Thursday, December 15, 2011 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

*Note: This meeting summary represents notes from the Washington State Department of Transportation Ferries Division (WSF) Partnership Group Meeting, and is not a formal transcript or minutes. It is provided as a record for the staff, group members and public in attendance, and other interested parties.*

### **Welcome and Introductions**

WSF Deputy Chief of Operations George Capacci

George welcomed the group members, thanked them for coming and apologized that David Moseley would not be in attendance. The rest of the WSF team and group members introduced themselves.

### **Deposit Policies**

Heather Rogers, Berk & Associates

Heather went over the agenda, noting that there would be time for public comment at the end of the meeting.

Heather mentioned the Google Group that was set up online and asked that team members email her with any issues they are having with that system.

Heather then discussed deposit policies (see pages 2-4 of handout packet).

### **Questions & Comments**

1. (Kim Younger) This says that if you are a Premier account customer with a reservation and you don't show up you are charged the deposit amount. When you have the multi-ride card each ride costs less than the deposit amount, so what are you charged?  
*The plan is that you would be charged the deposit amount; you are correct that on some runs that amount would be slightly more than you would pay per ride using a multi-ride card. A trip will not be debited off your multi-ride card because the systems are separate.*
2. (Tim Caldwell) If you make a reservation, pay your deposit and then don't show up, can you put that deposit towards riding a different route?  
*No.*
3. (Ralph Young) Why aren't you charging a deposit that is equal to the amount of the reservation? Why not just have people pay it all up front and get rid of all the extra transactions at the tollbooth?  
*At first we may not have the ability to set multiple deposit amounts in the system, so it makes sense to just have the senior base fare be the deposit amount. Also, we want to avoid doing any refunds at the tollbooth as much as possible. So it's easier to add to a deposit than credit back money to people.*



*Correct. And people may not know at the time of their reservation how many passengers they will have in their car with them, so it's easier to use that base amount as a deposit and add the extras at the tollbooth.*

4. (Tom Thiersch) The description of a no-show is not just if you don't sail on the day of your reservation, but more specifically that you don't sail that route that day and/or you didn't call to change your reservation in time.  
*Correct.*  
When are the credit cards charged? The end of the business day?  
*We have not made that decision yet.*
5. (Jennifer Meyer) Is it possible to set the deposit as a percentage of the fare?  
*We want to use one amount that is the same for everybody at first, that is why we decided on the senior fare for the vehicle size. 24% of the customers that sail this route are seniors, so for about a quarter of the customers the full amount would be paid up front.*
6. (Tom Thiersch) So in the peak season the deposit would be higher; why not adjust the amount so it's the same no matter the season?  
*The difficulty there comes in with the ability to change or cancel a reservation; if you made a reservation in a peak time and changed it to a non-peak time we would have to refund the extra deposit amount if it is higher than the fare.*
7. (Jennifer Meyer) What if you make a reservation for a vehicle that's under 14' and then you come in something bigger?  
*You would have to call customer service and change your reservation because we would need to verify that there is enough room on the vessel for the larger vehicle. You could still put your deposit that you had already paid toward the fare.*
8. (Bob Clay) Do the commercial users know how long their trucks are generally? Do they know the length of the trucks they take every time?  
*Yes, they know that we charge by length and they know the lengths of their trucks.*
9. (Tom Thiersch) When you lose your deposit, are you taking a ride off our multi-ride cards?  
*No, we won't touch the multi-ride cards, we will charge the credit card that we have on file for your account.*
10. (Robert Hammett) You have to ride within the same day to not lose your deposit; is it up to the customer to tell the tollbooth that you had a reservation but you're late?  
*Yes, you would present your barcode so that we can record that you showed up.*
11. (Tim Caldwell) Will the revalue cards be sold in person on the boats in the future?  
*Those need to be ordered online so that we can setup an account that auto-renews your card.*  
It would be nice if they could be sold in person on the ferries or at the terminals.  
*We can look into that.*
12. (Michelle Sandoval) For those cards, I'm still thinking about the people that don't have credit cards. Will debit cards work or is there a prepaid option?  
*Debit cards work like credit, so that is an option. We do need a card on file for the revalue cards.*
13. (Robert Hammett) Can the email/text message system be hooked to the reservation system to let you know your reservation is about to expire?

*Part of the system will include email alerts to let you know about reservation issues.*

## **Software Demonstration – Make a Reservation**

Brian Churchwell, WSF IT Department

Brian took the group through a demonstration of the reservation software (see screenshot handout packet).

### **Questions & Comments**

1. (Robert Hammett) Will I be able to make a whole week's worth of reservations in one transaction?  
*Good question. The first phase will focus on the general customer; we will focus on the ability to make repeating reservations later on.*  
Can you make it do the round trip in the same transaction so you don't have to repeat everything to make your return reservation?  
*We will definitely take that into consideration.*
2. (Tom Thiersch) I would like to see question mark links that you can click on for more information in a lot of those boxes. For instance, in the vehicle length box you should be able to click on a question mark and have a list of every car model and its length in case you don't know yours.  
*That involves a lot of work, but we can look into it. It may not be something we have right away.*
3. (Tim Caldwell) There is potential that if you show up with the wrong size vehicle that there will be an issue at the tollbooth.  
*Yes, the penalty for not reserving the correct amount of space is that you will not be guaranteed a spot on that sailing. You would put your deposit toward your fare and go into standby.*
4. (Bob Clay) How will this screen update? It would have to be instantaneous. What if my computer has been on the page for awhile? Would I need to hit refresh?  
*There will be some sort of time limit to complete your reservation, similar to the Ticketmaster system.*
5. (Michelle Sandoval) Where it says "Drive Up" it should say "Drive Up Available" or "Number of Drive Up Spots Available". It's confusing.
6. (Robert Hammett) If Premier people already have an account set up, will the vehicle size information already be filled in for you?  
*Yes, but you may have different configurations like a trailer or a roof rack, so we will have the options to add those.*
7. (Tim Caldwell) What if you are not a commuter, say you only ride once or twice a month, could you setup an account?  
*Yes, you can save your account information as a General customer.*
8. (Robert Hammett) For people that don't have computers, will there be kiosks at the terminals or on the boats with the ability to make reservations?  
*Not initially; maybe at a later date.*
9. (Tom Thiersch) It may be helpful to show people how much more they will be expected to pay at the tollbooth, over the deposit amount.

*We are having that discussion internally; we are not sure if we will do that as it would vary by customer (senior/disabled, additional passengers) and we would have to ask additional information of customers to show this.*

10. (Tim Caldwell) Will you have outreach on board the ferries to walk people through this process?  
*Yes, we plan on it. Would it be better to do it before the new system starts or after?*  
Either.
11. (Tim Caldwell) Will one barcode be able to be scanned for your whole week's worth of reservations?  
*Yes, and you can reprint it if you need to.*
12. (Michelle Sandoval) Will you be able to read the barcode from a smart phone?  
*We will check on that.*
13. (Kim Younger) We can't print up a barcode from our phones.  
*You would be able to use the reservation number.*
14. (Tom Thiersch) The current system is very slow; this appears to be much faster, is that correct?  
*Yes.*

## **Change & Cancellation Policies**

Heather Rogers, Berk & Associates

Heather went over the proposed change and cancellation policies for Phase 1 (see pages 5 - 8 of the handout packet).

## **Questions & Comments**

1. (Jennifer Meyer) If someone has a reservation for the last sailing of the day and they miss it, then they lose their deposit as well?  
*Yes.*
2. (Tom Thiersch) So you have a reservation but you show up late, you're in the back of the line. You will get my money and I won't get on if the boats are full through the rest of the day, is that fair?  
*We envision that if you show up late you would make it onto the next couple of boats. You would be at the back of the standby line, not the back of the street line. We still need to discuss and finalize this policy and will bring this topic back to the Partnership Group.*
3. (Jennifer Meyer) What is considered late? How many minutes do you have to arrive before your reserved sailing? Are you considered late at 29 minutes prior to the sailing?  
*We are working on the answer to that now. We're trying to assess how long it takes to process each vehicle to find that window of time that we need you to be there by.*
4. (Kim Younger) We will be able to cancel or change our reservations online 24 hours a day, correct?  
*Yes.*
5. (Robert Hammett) You can't change or cancel within 2 hours of your reserved sailing; what if you don't know for sure by that time?  
*Our terminal staff needs to know how many reservations there are so they can plan the space and communicate to the drive-up customers. If you show up late*

*your deposit would still be good to go toward the next boat and you would be in standby.*

My guys come over to visit and may have to stay to go to work, so they may have to cancel and lose money.

*If you flat out cancel you would lose the deposit if it is 24 hours in advance or less.*

Ok I will tell them not to make reservations.

6. (Kim Younger) So if my reservation is for 6:30 a.m., I would have to call at 4:30 in the morning; will there be staff there?

*Yes, we will be staffed at 4:00 a.m. Correction: WSF currently does not have a phone agent available until 7:00am. We are reviewing staffing needed to support the vehicle reservation system.*

7. (Tom Thiersch) Your rationale for restricting the number of changes to one in a 2-24 hour period prior to the sailing is to minimize the workload for your staff. If the changes are done online there is no staff involved.

*It's not just to minimize the workload of the staff, but for our certainty as to who's coming; we don't want a bunch of last minute changes. A number of other ferry systems have found that this one free change policy is an effective policy.*

I think we should be able to change it as much as we want as long as it's online.

8. (Robert Hammett) When will the booth people have access to the printout of reservations?

*Currently it is 90 minutes prior. The new system will be electronic, and agents and dock supervisors will have access to that information.*

9. (Tim Caldwell) Looking at this list of other ferry system policies, it appears that WSF is being very accommodating in comparison.

10. (Tim Caldwell) Concerning all the credit card fees that will accrue with all of these transactions, who is picking up the tab on that?  
*WSF.*

### **Establish Next Meeting Date**

Heather Rogers of Berk & Associates

Heather suggested the following meeting dates as options: January 24, 25 or 26.

The group agreed that the 25<sup>th</sup> or 26<sup>th</sup> would be the best dates.

Heather mentioned that the materials from this meeting will be posted on the Google Group.

### **General Comments**

1. (Kim Younger) I appreciate the chance to participate in this group. My concern is the 30 minutes in advance arrival time. I understand it but see it as challenging from a commuter standpoint. I would ask that the people at the tollbooth cut us some slack on that.
2. (Tim Caldwell) I'm pleased with the progress so far; I'm looking forward to this.
3. (Ralph Young) I'm concerned that the credit card transaction fees will lead to a rate increase. Also, I would like to see the deposit equal the ticket cost to reduce transactions at the tollbooths.

4. (Bob Clay) I'm impressed with the progress; I know we will be taken care of. I believe that Leonard said that electronic reader boards will be up in time for this rollout?  
*The electronic reader boards will be at the tollbooths themselves; that contract goes on ad January 30 and we should be under construction by March.*
5. (Tom Thiersch) The 30 minute advance arrival time; I hope you will encourage your booth workers to be flexible with that. Will the booth workers be able to make your reservations for you down the line?  
*Our current thinking is no. There is a union issue with that as well as the additional time it would take to process vehicles through the tollbooth.*
6. (Jennifer Meyer) Will you make sure that the Navy vehicles still get priority loading?  
*Yes, they are part of the vanpool program; that will not change. We will discuss how vanpools will work with the reservation system at a future meeting.*  
The concern is that our headquarters is in Bremerton and we have commanders at the Air Station on Whidbey; sometimes there is short notice to travel in between and the reservation system doesn't work for us so we have started parking a car on each side in case we can't drive on. Can we maintain priority?  
*We will come back to this issue.*
7. (David Sullivan) It would be nice to be able to make reservations on the boat. Other than that this process has addressed all of my concerns.
8. (Robert Hammett) I think I've asked enough questions tonight.

### Public Comments

No public comments.

### Conclusion

George thanked everyone for coming. Meeting was adjourned.

### Group Members

Present	Name of Group Member
X	Timothy Caldwell
X	Bob Clay
	Nancy Conard
X	Robert Hammett
	Ian Jefferds
	Helen Price Johnson
	Ellin Larimer
	Lisa Lynes
	Brian Martin
X	Jennifer Meyer
	Josh Peters
X	Michelle Sandoval
	Diane Schostak
	Rick Sepler

X	David Sullivan
X	Tom Thiersch
	David Timmons
	Patricia Willesoft
X	Kim Younger
X	Ralph Young

**Project Team**

- George Capacci, WSF Deputy Chief of Operations
- Marta Coursey, WSF Director of Communications
- Brian Churchwell, WSF IT Department
- Leonard Smith, WSF Operations Manager
- Dan Ferguson, WSF Operations Manager
- Mike Mellin, WSF IT Project Manager
- Heather Rogers, Berk & Associates
- Rachel Waitt, WSF Terminal Engineering

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