



Meeting #7
San Juan Islands Ferry Advisory Committee Public Workshop
Mullis Senior Center
Friday Harbor, Washington
Thursday, June 26, 2008: 2:30 – 5:00 p.m.

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

Introduction

Robert Degavre, San Juan FAC

David Moseley, Assistant Secretary, Washington State Ferries

Robert introduced Bob Distler, Washington State Transportation Commission (WSTC), and David Moseley.

David thanked everyone for coming to provide input as Washington State Ferries (WSF) develops its long-range plan. The current ferry system is not financially sustainable into the future. David said that that is why the work here today is so critical. There are a number of discussions and issues that will be put before the 2009 Legislature. The ferry financing studies are a joint effort between the Washington State Transportation Commission (WSTC), the Legislature's Joint Transportation Committee (JTC) and Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Ferries Division. David told attendees that the meeting tonight is a workshop format, which is different than the last meeting in April. The workshop allows everyone an opportunity to talk. He thanked them for the work that would be done that afternoon.

David said that he was in the San Juan Islands several times this spring and that many of today's attendees were at the FAC meeting in April. David reported out on several topics he had heard from the communities, including at the last FAC meeting, and what Washington State Ferries has done as a result.

- David said that the Kaleetan has been out of service because the Wenatchee has been in dry dock. The Sealth is on this run. The Kaleetan will be back to Eagle Harbor, so the Wenatchee is expected back on this run on July 4, 2008, which is earlier than expected.
- People asked for free parking in Anacortes for 4th of July weekend and Washington State Ferries has been able to provide it.



- As of Sunday, June 22, full-fare, single-ride tickets for all routes expire 90 days from the date of purchase. Previously they expired seven days from the date of purchase.
- The 30-minute lock-out has been removed. Riders can now charge multiple cars to the ticket system.

Bob Distler asked people to raise their hands according to their home island. He said that we need to move the meeting location around and that it shouldn't always be in Friday Harbor. Someone suggested having the meeting on the boat so that people from all islands may attend.

David Introduced Rob Berman.

Presentation

Rob Berman, Planning Consultant

Rob walked the attendees through an information packet. He stated that WSF has a specific legislative directive to be here tonight and to gather public input. He encouraged attendees to look at the details of the legislation on the boards and in their packets. The WSF will use the information from these FAC meetings and the Washington Transportation Commission surveys to a draft long-term plan, scheduled to be released in late November/early December.

The key concept in this process is adaptive management. The WSF wants to keep costs low and be as efficient as possible. There is an imbalance of supply and demand. This means that during specific times there are a lot more vehicles showing up to ride our ferries than we have space for. The resulting problems are congestion, underutilized ferries, unhappy people and people who don't use the system.

The bottom line is that WSF has to find a way to manage demand and increase efficiency. The planning team developed a long list of strategies to study. Rob directed the attendees to the nine strategies in their packets and to the nine boards around the room.

Rob gave an overview of the nine strategies.

- Pricing has been identified as one of the best ways to manage demand. Pricing strategies are peak pricing, mode-shift pricing (use other ways of getting on the ferry), off peak pricing, and simplification of the pricing structure. We're looking at this as a revenue neutral option.
- Reservations can also be effective for the system. This primarily applies to cars. There are examples listed here that you can look at online when you get home. A reservations system means reliability both for customers and



- WSF. It moves the queue from dock to online. We've heard from some of you that you can already see a difference in Port Townsend, that you don't see the lines anymore. Reservations are adaptable to the community (e.g., only require reservations on weekends or in the summer).
- Transit access enhancements refer to the connections with buses and trains on either side of the ferry.
 - Technologies for improved fare collection go hand in hand with the reservations system.
 - Non-motorized access enhancements would improve access for pedestrians and cyclists. Lots of ferry terminals have opportunities for this and most ferry runs have space for this.
 - Enhanced user information would allow riders to view routes online, plan multiple routes, and be able to see availability in real time.
 - Promotion of non-single occupancy vehicle options includes strategies to show people that you don't have to drive on the ferry. We could work with private enterprises like Zipcar. This might work best for heavy commuter routes.
 - Managing dock space could include using a metered exit queue. The philosophy here is if we could manage better, would not need as much infrastructure.
 - Parking and holding refers to space at the terminals and could extend reservations to parking.

Rob described the process for creating the long-range plan. The WSF will incorporate input from the nine FAC public workshops held in June, continue to study the best operational strategies, incorporate information from the Washington State Transportation Commission survey and then create the draft of the long-term plan by September.

Public Comment and Questions

1. What strategies do you have for mapping the nine strategies to the different routes? *That's adaptive management and that's why we're here tonight.*
2. You list the benefits of the strategies. Why don't you have primary downsides on the slides? *We'd like to hear from you what those would be for your route.*
3. Have you completed the study that indicates which strategies work best? *Pricing and reservations have high value and studies have shown that both strategies are effective. Each local community has been telling us what is beneficial, that's what we're doing today.*
4. These strategies manage efficiency and are not addressing the capital investment of the boat replacement issue. *They are operational and if they work, they will affect ongoing costs. A lot of communities need to expand*



holding areas and dock space, if people have a reservation, we don't need as big of holding areas. The number of boats needing replacement would be diminished if ridership is moved throughout the off-peak periods.

5. When these ideas originally came up, the general feeling was that the idea of time-shifting wasn't relevant to San Juan routes and now it looks like it's back on the table. *You're right, these are not all applicable to every community. We are exploring all these options and we need to hear back from the community.*

Format of the Meeting / Ideas for Strategy Development

Diane Adams, Public Outreach Consultant

Diane said that David and his staff were at the meeting to listen and to get input from the public. Diane encouraged people to fill in a comment form at the meeting and take one home to friends and family. Diane introduced the four parts of the meeting; dot exercise, a small group discussion on reservations, a small group discussion on pricing, and then a session to capture additional comments.

Diane explained the dot exercise and asked participants to think about which strategies are most beneficial to them as a WSF user. She asked them to place the dots on display boards representing each of the nine strategies according to their individual priority (one or more on any of the boards).

1. What if we have a strategy that is not here? *We'll talk about them during the small group sessions.*

The dot break-down was as follows:

1. Pricing	7
2. Reservations	50
3. Transit Access Enhancement	39
4. Non-motorized Access Enhancement	3
5. Enhanced User Information	16
6. Technologies for Improved Fare Collection	6
7. Non-Single Occupancy promotion	12
8. Traffic and Dock Space Management	12
9. Parking and Holding	29

Workshop #1: Reservations

Ray Deardorf, Planning Director

Ray spoke in detail about a potential reservations system. A reservations system needs to be flexible and WSF would have the flexibility to vary how spots are



reserved (some months in advance, some weeks in advance, some days in advance, some hours in advance) and how many spots will remain unreserved (first come, first served). The system needs to be convenient for the customer – available online, phone or walk-up. Customers need to be able to view the wait list online in real time. In addition, riders need to have access to the terminal and know where to go. The system could use transponders, license plate recognition, etc. The system could be adjusted daily to accommodate current situations, have the ability to book reservations for multiple reservations. Ray stated that one of the benefits of the system is that it could be linked to demand pricing.

Diane reviewed the ground rules for the meeting before groups started their small group discussions.

1. start/end on time
2. listen with respect
3. stay on topic
4. contribute
5. be concise

Diane presented the three workshop questions and attendees broke into small groups to discuss:

- Do you see a reservations system helping you? If so, how?
- If not, what concerns do you have about a reservations system?
- If WSF implements a reservations system on your route, what specific things should be part of it?

Public Comment and Questions

1. A reservations system gives you the ability to plan and know when you are sailing so you can relax while you're waiting. You have predictability of a return trip and there is no wasted time. Visitors know they can get where they are going and it will help with Island traffic on big weekends.
2. A reservations system would work eastbound in the morning and westbound in the afternoons. You should charge westbound, not eastbound.
3. It would eliminate or lessen parking issues.
4. A reservations system would work during peak seasons or weekends. It needs a trial period.
5. The system should limit commercial space.
6. I would pay more for reservations.
7. What about last minute trips? There is a lack of flexibility in this system.
8. What happens with no shows?



9. What happens with cancelled runs / boat issues? It does not work to roll over to another boat on this route
10. There are concerns with the terminal designs and having the availability of lanes for different purposes (particularly on Lopez).
11. What about computer security?
12. It needs to be a simple system, convenient for the user.
13. I like the idea of a graduated system – being able to reserve some 30 days in advance, some 15 days, some 7 days, and some 24 hours.
14. Staging/holding area is not big enough on San Juan Island.
15. The system needs to have seasonal flexibility.
16. You could use a reservations system to set up HOVs.
17. You should pay for reservations (additional fees would hurt the low income and large families).
18. You will need fare collection on both ends
19. Passengers should put some money down (or whole fare) and there should be a penalty for cancellations.
20. There should be a 24-hour cancellation allowed without penalty.
21. Five percent needs to be open for emergencies but doctor appointments and surgeries would still make reservations.
22. You need to be able to pay and print at home
23. You need to have other payment options besides credit cards.
24. It needs to maintain appropriate access for all groups. There need to be multiple access modes including phone access, a kiosk or at the terminal (terminal staff need access to system).
25. WSF should use transponders to make the terminal access quick and easy.

Workshop #2: Pricing

Ray Deardorf, Planning Director

Ray Deardorf introduced the pricing options including peak-pricing, mode-shift pricing, off-peak pricing and pricing simplification.

Ray said that WSF has the flexibility to target pricing by route according to demand (time of day, time of year) and integrate the system with frequent user policies. The legislation is asking WSF to simplify fares (for example: several routes would share the same fare) and WSF is required to keep a senior discount.

Pricing can help manage vehicle deck space. Ray said that one of the options is to encourage people to drive smaller cars by charging more for large vehicles or



instituting a small car rate. Currently, cars between one foot and 20' pay the same price.

Diane introduced the workshop, questions and options. Facilitators led the groups through the following questions:

- Of the four pricing options discussed, would any of them change your ferry usage behavior, i.e. walk on, smaller car, carpool, bus?
- If not a pricing strategy, what other strategy would make it appealing for you to change your ferry usage behavior?

Options:

1. peak-pricing
2. mode-shift pricing
3. off-peak discounts
4. price simplification

Public Comment and Question

1. You should charge by the foot, it would allow you to manage deck space.
2. There should be a small car fee. A small car doesn't carry enough – large vehicles help islanders maximize their trips. There should not be a small car fee because people buy vehicles to meet their needs and not because of a pricing incentive.
3. Peak/off-peak pricing would change my travel behavior.
4. Peak pricing is unrealistic on this route because there are so many hours between runs.
5. I don't like peak pricing but it is effective.
6. You need a park and ride and better transit options on both sides (including reliable taxi service) and on all islands.
7. The parking fee needs to be cheaper or free. Currently, it costs the same amount as taking your car on the ferry.
8. There should be a vanpool or carpool incentive.
9. We have to maintain the frequent user fare / pass and discount coupons.
10. I would like to see smaller, more frequent boats.
11. Evaluate peaks and directionality carefully.
12. If there was a checked luggage system it would promote walk-ons.
13. It would be helpful to have real time info on load, the max per vessel.
14. WSF should make the terminals available for private users.
15. Kayaks and bikes should not be allowed on the car deck.
16. There is already a disincentive of long lines; we don't need a pricing disincentive.
17. The cost of fuel hits oversized vehicles because they have to travel at peak times.



- 18. Don't punish commercial vehicles because it hurts us eventually with the pricing for goods.
- 19. The only boat with space is the 2:20 a.m. boat and they are already trying to get commercial trucks on that route
- 20. Thank you for the free parking on July 4th – please monitor the results.
- 21. If we are going to increase tourism we need to accommodate tourists.

Additional Public Comments and Questions

- 1. A by-the-foot pricing strategy affects commercial traffic and has negative impacts on the community
- 2. Thank you for the free parking over the Fourth.
- 3. Thank you, David, for being here.
- 4. There will be a Transportation Summit on September 17, 2008 for all transportation. Contact the local EDC for more information. The Washington Transportation Commission will be there as well and will have their local WTC meeting on September 18, 2008.
- 5. WSF could use the reservations system for a ride share program as well.
- 6. Regarding Vashon POF, not one has done a safety drill on the vessels. When will this happen?

David thanked everyone for coming. He encouraged people to contact him directly and provided his e-mail address and phone number. He thanked people for their time and adjourned the meeting.

Washington State Ferries will try to hold the next San Juan Island public FAC meeting on the inter-island ferry on September 17, 2008 to coincide with the economic development meeting.

There were approximately 27 attendees. The public sign-in included:

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| Grant Bailey | John Whitten |
| Terry Sanders | Steve Van Luven |
| Curt Van Hying | Nancy Wight |
| Patricia McKay | Ralph Hahn |
| Bill Watson | Deborah Hopkins |
| Sharon Kivisto | Jack Cory |
| Marilyn Akin | Rich Peterson |
| Mike Akin | Pete Rose |
| Liz Illg | Jim Hooper |
| Marilyn Olson | Debbie Pigman |
| Steve Mason | Dan Zaehring |
| GA Jonasson | Howie Rosenfeld |
| Lovel Pratt | Gordy Petersen |
| Robert Degavre | |



**Washington State
Department of Transportation**



Washington State Ferries Staff
David Moseley, Assistant Secretary
Ray Deardorf, Planning Director
Marta Coursey, Director of Communications
Susan Hueter-Harris, Customer Information Manager
Dan Ferguson, Operations
Rob Berman, Consultant
Tim Payne, Consultant
Diane Adams, Consultant
Kristina Walker, Consultant

There were no written comments.