



Meeting Summary #1  
Whidbey Ferry Advisory Committee Public Workshop  
Freeland Hall  
Freeland, Washington  
Tuesday, June 17, 2008: 6:30 – 9:00 p.m.

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*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**

*David Moseley, Assistant Secretary, Washington State Ferries*

David Moseley introduced himself and said that he appreciates all the feedback received from the public and that it is nice to put faces with names. He said Washington State Ferries (WSF) is here to hear from the public as mandated by the legislature.

David noted that WSF is at an important stage in creating the long-range plan and needs to hear from the public so that WSF can use that information to inform the planning process.

This being his fourth visit to Whidbey Island since joining WSF, David had the following to say:

- He's heard people ask if WSF could provide vouchers to customers who use the Clinton/Mukilteo route after a cancellation on the Port Townsend/Keystone route. He believes this is possible and the staff is working on making this a reality.
- He attended the Chamber luncheon and had the opportunity to hear from local businesses.
- He met with Captain David of the Navy. Captain David asked if WSF could make Port Townsend/Keystone route more convenient for Navy personnel. The captain asked for parking stalls for the Navy on both sides (we gave that to him), to provide standing vehicle reservation for Navy (we offered that), and to check with Zipcar (cars on subscription) to see if they would be interested in providing service to Port Townsend (we checked but they can't). The captain also asked if WSF could provide a passenger-only ferry and we unfortunately don't have funding to provide that. Passenger space is not a constraint on that route; we can take as many passengers as show up.

David introduced the WSF staff and consultants, Ray Deardorf, Marta Coursey, Tim Payne, Tom Ferguson. He also introduced Jill Satran from Governor Chris



Gregoire's office and Representative Norma Smith. David thanked attendees for taking the time to share their input.

## **Presentation**

*Ray Deardorf, Planning Director*

Ray 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. Ray directed the attendees to the nine strategies in their packets and to the nine boards around the room.

Ray 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.
- 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.

Ray 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 Comments and Questions

1. Are you going to hold any joint meetings between WSF, Freeland and Island Transit, to discuss a safe pedestrian walkway behind the terminal? Crossing 525 is dangerous. *Yes, we'll look at it.*
2. Representative Smith said that Paula Hammond was here recently to talk about the crossing at Clinton.
3. Jill said that she's been attending all the meetings with Senator Haugen's office about pedestrian issues in Clinton. She felt that they could bring this into the discussion as well.
4. Representative Smith said that she thinks that the "pause in traffic release" is part of that discussion.

David stated that we are recording the meeting so that he can follow up on action items. He then introduced Diane Adams to facilitate the meeting.

#### **Introduction of Meeting Format / 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 Freeland. 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).

The dot break-down was as follows:

1. Pricing	11
2. Reservations	19
3. Transit access enhancement	13
4. Non-motorized access enhancement	5
5. Enhanced user information	7
6. Technologies for improved fare collection	3
7. Non-single occupancy promotion	5
8. Traffic and dock space management	9
9. Parking and holding	5

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

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

### Public Comment and Questions

The first three questions were asked during Ray's presentation and he was able to provide brief answers. The remaining comments and questions were made during the small group work sessions.



1. Would the reservations phone system be centralized through Seattle or be run through individual terminals? It is a pain to go through Seattle. *The Port Townsend/Keystone reservations line goes through Seattle but it's not yet determined for future routes.*
2. Will the phone line have to be staffed or will it be an automated system? *It could be either depending on if the system knows the person (using a pin or other identification method).*
3. Will you be assessing Port Townsend/Keystone system and what works there? *We're looking at it continually to see what adjustments we can make.*
4. A digital reservations system is the most important benefit since it will help spread out demand for ferry use based on available supply. By making a reservation online more people will have greater certainty about whether they will make a particular sailing or not.
5. A reservations system will save time for the traveler by providing certainty about getting on the ferry.
6. There will need to be a strong education program to help travelers up the learning curve, including providing staff at terminals to educate people about Wave2Go, developing brochures and signage, and educating people how to make reservations online and by phone.
7. There are different types of travelers around which the system will need to be developed (commuters v. tourists v. occasional resident travelers). The system will also need to provide different options for how people can make reservations (i.e. in person, on line, by phone). The system should not rely on one method alone since using a computer and automated system is a challenge for some. Word of mouth has been a useful educational tool for some in Freeland.
8. The most benefit of the reservations system will be provided to those who drive on the ferry. Walk-ons will not be affected by the system.
9. There should be a fee associated with making a reservation; and that fee should not be reimbursed if the vehicle does not make the ferry as scheduled.
10. Some of the specific details that will need to be worked out include how to handle no shows, how to process last minute arrivals and changes, appropriate amount of time required prior to departure before reservation is forfeited, how to handle special circumstances such as bad traffic.
11. The reservations system will need to be flexible to meet the specific needs of each ferry community.
12. Will extra spots be kept open and available for vehicles who did not make a reservation or who do not yet know about the system?
13. Will there be a designated reservations line like the 5-1-1 number?
14. Is WSF looking at other systems as examples, like the one in Canada?
15. Will a reservation be required on every sailing for every route?



16. Can there be automated reservations for vanpools?
17. Is it possible not to require reservations during commuter hours?
18. Will it be possible to pre-pay for others?

## **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 reviewed discussion questions and pricing 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 Comments and Questions

1. Peak / off-peak period pricing will not benefit vanpools since employer / employee schedule is set and riders need to leave and return at set times every day.
2. One attendee noted that she cannot answer the question of whether one or more strategies will help her until she has more information about actual prices.
3. Congestion pricing will help balance supply and demand by reducing the length of the line.



4. The reservations system will work better than pricing, and Washington State Ferries will only be able to charge so much. Users should pay enough to cover the cost of the ferry system.
5. Pricing incentives should be provided to Zipcars or those driving carpools.
6. The fact is that some people will not be influenced by pricing options since they need their vehicle and may be tied to a particular schedule which deters them from traveling off-peak.
7. Pricing and reservations are complimentary, but a limit should be placed on peak pricing and a fee should be applied to reservations.
8. The senior discount is confusing.

### Additional Public Comment and Questions

#### Transit Access Enhancements

Diane noted that the group listed transit as one of the top three strategies. She asked the group to list some of the specific needs for this category.

1. Mukilteo terminal/third ferry
2. Pedestrian overpass (newspaper said there won't be one)
3. Riders need to make it to the train so they have to run. *Ray mentioned that Sound Transit will be changing the times so that people will be able to make it. The terminal in the Mukilteo paper was a modified version of the original plan. Doesn't mean that there won't ever be an overpass.*
4. Sound Transit and Washington State Ferries should split cost of a shuttle so that disabled people could make the train.
5. Good lighting for the winter for commuters.
6. Park and rides on Whidbey side. Coupeville needs a park and ride for vanpools.
7. Mukilteo closed down long-term parking. Isn't that a step backwards?
8. Need more long-term parking/parking garage.
9. Mukilteo terminal – questions about design.
10. Continue the conversation with transit providers to be more efficient.

#### Other Comments and Questions

1. You need to add 5-1-1 to your signs. It's something you can do now, before September. *Done.*
2. On the Port Townsend/Keystone reservations system, can you see the full day at a glance? *No, you need to input the specific sailing. We want to get there before we implement a system on other routes.*
3. These meetings are excellent but we all come with an interest in ferries, most of us are frequent users. The ferry system is intimidating to many. We need to remember those who are not frequent users and make it as user friendly as possible.



4. Please keep in mind that no one agency or system is going to solve the problem. You need to talk to each other and work together.
5. I think the ferry system works well but it needs some careful planning to continue into the future.

David closed the meeting by saying that it was a very helpful conversation. He thanked everyone for coming and said that a lot was accomplished. He said that WSF will report out what we heard at these nine public meetings so to give us your e-mail address so that we can keep in touch with you.

David adjourned the meeting.

Approximately 12 attendees. The public sign-in included:

Chet Ross	Curt Gordon
Paul & Trudy Miller	Aaron Lowin
Brad Robertson	Leanne Finlay
Karen Flink	Gena Bull
Denise Lorenz	Sandie Bright
Representative Norma Smith	

Washington State Ferries Staff  
David Moseley, Assistant Secretary  
Ray Deardorf, Planning Director  
Marta Coursey, Director of Communications  
Dan Ferguson, Operations  
Tim Payne, Consultant  
Diane Adams, Consultant  
Kristina Walker, Consultant

There were no written comments submitted at the meeting. The following comment was submitted via e-mail following the meeting.

Paul E. Miller  
[personal contact information omitted]

Greetings: My thoughts, briefly. I am willing to pay extra for a reserved boarding time, whether it be on a one time basis for a medical appointment or if it is on-going such as a commute to work. By choice, I live on an island and must sometimes go to the mainland for goods and services. By choice, others live on this island and choose to commute to work on the mainland. We both should pay the same for a reserved boarding time, and no reduced fare should be given to daily commuters just for the reason "they work", and chose to live on a island. I don't appreciate sitting in the ferry line on the hill at Mukilteo on a hot day and see the "workers" sail by me and get on the next ferry. Please don't give in to the



**Washington State  
Department of Transportation**



wailings of the commuters about ferry lines and fees when they, like I, made the choice to live on an island.