

**MEETING SUMMARY**  
**WSF PORT TOWNSEND / COUPEVILLE VRS PARTNERSHIP MEETING**  
**COTTON BUILDING, PORT TOWNSEND, WA**  
Wednesday, January 25, 2012 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**

WSDOT Assistant Secretary David Moseley  
Heather Rogers, Berk & Associates

David welcomed the group members, thanked them for coming and gave a brief update on the Legislative session.

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

**Project Status Update**

WSF Deputy Chief of Operations George Capacci

George gave a brief overview of the progress WSF is making on the Vehicle Reservation project.

**Questions & Comments**

1. (David King) Are you building on existing software?  
*We have our own ticketing system and we are attaching the reservation system to that. There is nothing available off-the-shelf that meets our needs. We will be replacing the existing reservation system we use on this route with a much more functional system.*
2. (Christina Pivarnik) Will we be able to make reservations using the WSF/WSDOT app on our smartphones?  
*That is something we plan on having as an enhancement in the future.*
3. (Ian Jefferds) I assumed that that would be a part of the system, is that farfetched?  
*It's not farfetched; our first priority is to get the system up and running and working with our phone system. Then in the future we could look at enhancements like apps for smartphones.*
4. (David King) You need to have a mobile version of the website; you can do that fairly easily.  
*That is part of the plan.*
5. (Bob Clay) So the first thing we will see is the phone thing [referring to an interactive voice response telephone system]?  
*No, the first ways that you will be able to use the new system will be through the website or our customer service people over the phone. The next would be an automated phone system.*
6. (Tom Thiersch) So when we start the new system there will be a month when the two systems overlap; how will you handle that challenge? I suggest that a few weeks prior to requiring deposits you put an alert on the existing screen letting people know.  
*That's a great suggestion. We are discussing how we will alert our customers; we will talk about the implementation plan during our April meeting.*

## Percent of Vessels Available for Reservations

Heather Rogers, Berk & Associates

Heather discussed August 2011 data and proposed allocations by account type (see pages 2-6 of handout packet).

### Questions & Comments

1. (Jennifer Meyer) Our boats are supposed to fit 64 cars, does that vary?  
*The Kwa-di-tabil vessels accommodate 64 twenty foot long spots. If the vehicles are smaller then we can get more on; if there are more big trucks then we can fit less.*
2. (Michelle Sandoval) Do commercial users tend to be large trucks?  
*On this route only about 50% of the commercial vehicles are tall; the rest are smaller vehicles.*
3. (David King) When will space be released to the general user?  
*We are thinking 48 hours in advance of the sailing commercial and other set aside space will be released to general users.*
4. (Tom Thiersch) You shouldn't assume that all commercial users need tall space if 50% of them are small vehicles.  
*That's a good point. The system will not reserve tall space for you if you don't need it.*
5. (David Sullivan) You need to make sure people know they are considered "tall" when they are long if there is so little tall space left for standby.
6. (Bob Clay) Are the Whidbey Island emergency vehicles considered over height?  
*Yes.*
7. (Michelle Sandoval) So there are only two tall spaces available for drive-ups per sailing, but others may be released?  
*Correct.*
8. (David King) How far in advance of the sailing can you make a reservation?  
*6 months in advance for off-peak sailings; 30 days for peak sailings. And then up to two hours in advance of the sailing.*  
If an RV doesn't have a reservation, he will be able to get on the next boat because there will always be two tall spaces left for standby users?  
*Correct, as long as there are no other standby tall vehicles in line before him.*
9. (Ian Jefferds) I think the allocation numbers look about right. It makes it easy for passengers to know ahead of time. I think it will enhance ridership because people will appreciate being able to make a reservation.  
*We hope so as well.*
10. (Helen Price Johnson) It will be a painful transition because people think of the ferries as moving bridges rather than a plane or a train.
11. (Kim Younger) If you attempt to make a peak reservation and nothing is available, the system should tell the user to check back periodically because it's possible that space may be released for them.
12. (Michelle Sandoval) We don't like it when you say the boat is "full" because there will always be standby space and it's misleading.  
*The system will show the # of drive-up spaces available for each sailing.*
13. (Ian Jefferds) It should say that the reserved spots are taken but there are 13 spots available for drive-ups.
14. (David King) If the system says there is no standby space that would be because people are already in the lot waiting?  
*Correction: On the website, the drive-up spaces available will be a static # and will not account for drive-up vehicles already at the terminal waiting. (a customer would have to*

*look at the web cam to get a sense of how many standbys are already waiting at the terminal).*

15. (Tom Thiersch) The WAC defines priority loading, that's why you can't go to 100% reserved. If you went to the maximum allowable under the WAC would that be 90%? *I believe the wac language is 95%; I can check on that. Emergency vehicles will always be able to get on the boats. Correction: the WAC does not specify a maximum percent of the vessel WSF can reserve. If we reserved 100% of the boat, we would risk reservation holders being bumped from their sailing by emergency vehicles, and we're not going to do that.*
16. (Ian Jefferds) Does a medical pass qualify you for priority loading? *It's complicated. If you are going to an appointment you would need to make your outgoing trip reservation. If you are returning from the hospital and you can document that it would be detrimental to your health to wait and you either can't make a reservation or you missed your reservation, we would give you priority loading.*

### **Arrival Times**

Heather Rogers, Berk & Associates

Heather discussed proposed arrival times and the associated business rules (see pages 7-8 of handout packet).

### **Questions & Comments**

1. (Christina Pivarnik) How many motorcycles can go on in advance before filling up spaces? *We can't be sure, but about 6.  
Not 12-15?  
Not on these boats, there's not a lot of dead space.*
2. (Ian Jefferds) Two booths will be operating to allow for people to make their reservation time? *Correct.  
If people that show up early and you are able to get them on an earlier sailing, will the system update to show that more space is available on the sailing that they were originally reserved for?  
Yes, the system would automatically adjust for the next sailing.*
3. (Christina Pivarnik) So all the computers are working in real time. There will be instant updates to the website as it happens at the booth? *We will be locking down reservations two hours prior to the sailing, so it wouldn't help people trying to make a last minute reservation.*
4. (Helen Price Johnson) There will be two lines at the terminal, one for people with reservations and one for standby folks? *Once we have the standby space filled on the dock we will stop the standby lane from entering and let people with reservations pass.*

Heather showed the group a poster illustrating how the Port Townsend terminal would be staged for reservations during a busy day.

5. (Ian Jefferds) If I drove up with no reservation, would the booth guy look up and see that the drive-up lane wasn't full yet and let me go into standby? Could he guarantee that I would get on? *We can never guarantee that because emergency vehicles could show up for the sailing, but most likely yes. The booth people do a great job judging space.*



6. (Bob Clay) The goal of the reservation system is to eliminate backups on the streets of our communities. The timing has to be right; we want to make sure this will keep people off the road and the shoulder.  
*That is where the highway advisory radio and standby information on the website come in. Our customer service people can look at the traffic cams and update the variable message signs to alert customers as well.*
7. (Michelle Sandoval) Did you keep track last summer to see what the line was like?  
*The line got back to the restaurant on two occasions; we got the second vessel so we didn't see the backup that there has been in the past.*
8. (David Sullivan) You should have a link on your website to show people what they can do while they wait; it would be a great marketing opportunity for our communities.
9. (Tom Thiersch) It's confusing when you talk about the 15 minute arrival time. Is that prior to the scheduled sailing or the actual sailing? This route runs late all the time.  
*It will be 15 minutes prior to the scheduled sailing, because that is a fixed number and that helps us guarantee that if you are through the booth 15 minutes prior to the sailing you will get on the boat.*
10. (Ellin Larimer) If you arrive 20 minutes prior to your reserved sailing but there is a line, what do you do if you can't get through the line in time?  
*Hopefully there won't be a line, but if there is we will have signage telling the standby people to queue on the shoulder so that folks with a reservation can pass them.*
11. (Helen Price Johnson) How quickly can you process cars?  
*With two tollbooths we can process 64 cars in 22 minutes and we think we can improve on that time once the new system is in place. What takes up some of that time now is the discussion at the booth with people who don't have reservations wondering if they can get on.*  
What will you do with the people who don't have a reservation but go to the booth anyway?  
*They will be turned around and sent back to the line. The staff will have some sort of informational handout to give to people to help explain the system.*
12. (Tom Thiersch) Will one booth be for reservations and the other for standby?  
*We will have changeable signs that give us that ability.*  
On page 8 of the handout the second to last bullet says that if you're late for your reservation you have to go to the back of the line. What if there is room on the boat?  
*We are thinking about a busy summer day, but of course if there is plenty of room you will be allowed on.*
13. (Ian Jefferds) Will you have kiosks in the holding area where people can make a reservation for their return trip?  
*That is a possibility in the future but it won't be part of Phase 1. We have also talked about putting a kiosk at the Visitor Center so we have a place to send people who show up without a reservation on a busy day.*
14. (David King) If you are late for your reservation but they are still boarding reserved customers and not standby, wouldn't they just put you in before the standby people?  
*Yes, but only if they are not yet boarding standby.*  
What about putting a kiosk onboard the vessels for making reservations?  
*One concern is internet connectivity aboard the vessels, but we can look at that.*
15. (Helen Price Johnson) I agree that a kiosk onboard makes sense.
16. (Michelle Sandoval) You're doing all of this work; what if this route gets cut?  
*The situation is that we have to plan as if this route will be here forever, but we also have to recognize the fact that changes may come.*  
How will the decision process be made in terms of routes at risk?

*We will face that issue at the end of the Legislative session if nothing gets passed to give us new revenue. We're not ready to go there yet but we may have a different issue in April or May.*

We still hope to get a later sailing. If we get a revenue package from the Legislature it would help during the summer peak times to have a boat later at night.

*We need to continue that conversation with the FACs.*

I don't want to get to the point where you are printing the schedule and it's too late.

*We go to print on the summer schedule in April and we should know more by then.*

17. (Ian Jefferds) If we're covering 70% of the operating costs with our fares, what would the ticket prices have to be to cover the costs?

*That's a fair question; we can figure that out for you.*

18. (Kim Younger) What if the boat is delayed? Will people know when to show up?

*We will have many ways to message to our customers about late sailings so that we don't have people showing up too early when boats are delayed.*

On this route the boats get behind often because they are taking a circuitous route to avoid rough water.

19. (Tom Thiersch) The printed ticket with the barcode should include the arrival window printed on it to let people know when they should arrive.

*That's a great idea.*

### **Establish Next Meeting Date**

Heather Rogers of Berk & Associates

Heather suggested the following meeting dates as options: March 6, 7, 8, 13, 14, or 15.

None of the dates worked for every single group member; Heather said she would check the availability of the venue as well as WSF staff and get back to the group.

The group agreed to meet from 4:30-6:30 for future meetings to allow those from the Coupeville side to catch the 6:45 sailing home.

### **Public Comments**

No public comments.

### **Conclusion**

David thanked everyone for coming. Meeting was adjourned.

### **Group Members**

| Present | Name of Group Member |
|---------|----------------------|
|         | Timothy Caldwell     |
| X       | Bob Clay             |
|         | Nancy Conard         |
|         | Robert Hammett       |
| X       | Ian Jefferds         |
| X       | Helen Price Johnson  |
| X       | David King           |

|   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| X | Ellin Larimer      |
|   | Lisa Lynes         |
|   | Brian Martin       |
| X | Jennifer Meyer     |
|   | Josh Peters        |
| X | Christina Pivarnik |
| 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**

- David Moseley, WSDOT Assistant Secretary
- George Capacci, WSF Deputy Chief of Operations
- Brian Churchwell, WSF IT Department
- Leonard Smith, WSF Operations Manager
- Heather Rogers, Berk & Associates
- Rachel Waitt, WSF Terminal Engineering