

**Gabriola Island Ferry Advisory Committee Meeting**

**Overview: GAC Hall, Gabriola Island, May 11, 2015**

**In Attendance:**

Committee: Steve Earle, John Hodgkins, Heather Nicholas, Jim Ramsay, Jim Wilson-Storey

BC Ferries: Corrine Storey- VP Customer Services, David Hendry- Strategic Planning Director, Captain Lewis MacKay- Marine Superintendent, Jeff West- Terminal Operations Superintendent, John MacDonald- Terminal Operations Regional Manager, Darin Guenette-Public Affairs Manager

**Meeting Highlights:**

The objective of the meeting was to: discuss previous issues and explore options for addressing issues brought to the FAC from the community.

The next meeting is planned to be a WebEx session in October/November of 2015.

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Issues Summary and Resolution Plan

**A. Issue: Chair Selection**

**Definition:** John Hodgkins will perform the Chair role this term again.

**BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution:** none required.

**Action Plan:**

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

**B. Issue: Terms of Reference review**

**Definition:** This being the first meeting of a new, four-year FAC term, the general TOR was discussed. The FAC suggested that ‘local governments’ be added to the representation section. John noted that the ‘local Operations task group has been set up to discuss short-term, informal issues between FAC meetings, and they like how it has been working.

**BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution:** none required.

**Action Plan:**

Action	Responsible	Date

n/a		
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**C. Issue:**      **‘BCF 101’ review**

**Definition:** BC Ferries has developed a document (nicknamed ‘BCF 101’) to provide high-level information about key aspects of coastal ferry service, including sections on: BC Ferries, the Coastal Ferry Services Contract, the BC Ferry Commission, fares and FACs. The main intent of BCF 101 is to bring all FAC members to a common baseline of understanding, to better facilitate issue discussions during meetings.

**BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution:** none required.

**Action Plan:**

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

**D. Issue:**      **Recent schedule change feedback**

**Definition:** Once the Province implemented service level reductions in February 2014, a new Route 19 schedule was implemented. After the community experienced difficulties around mid-day delays and overloads throughout the summer, BC Ferries and the FAC explored new schedule options. Through community surveys during the fall, BC Ferries was able to select a new schedule, and it was implemented April 1.

John noted statistics around customer travel (seniors, students, etc), on-time performance, crossing times, and he also shared various customer comments received on the FAC website since this new schedule began. These comments fell into three basic categories; disappointment in losing the 5:30 am sailing, identifying the ‘evening gap’ as a problem, and that the new ‘gap free’ daytime service is reliable and good. As well, are notably still many different users affected by the latest schedule.

Finally, the FAC suggested that the School District be consulted before any future schedule changes may be considered.

**BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution:** none required.

**Action Plan:**

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

**E. Issue:**      **Operational update**

**Definition:** Captain MacKay noted that traffic levels have remained approximately ‘flat’ in the past year, but on-time performance has improved back to the level it was prior to the service reductions implemented in April 2014.

The next Quinsam refit is planned for Fall of 2017, and a Descanso Bay dock replacement in 2019. Vessel crew are working on a new unloading procedure (first three vehicles in each lane, starting with the centre). As well, after some discussion on sailing cut-off times, BC Ferries confirmed that walk-on passengers will be loaded up to five minutes prior to sailing time and vehicles have until three minutes prior to sailing time.

On a related note, the FAC asked if the cost savings that were expected to be realized from those 2014 service reductions. David Hendry explained that, because BC Ferries issues bonds, they are subject to securities regulations and currently in a post-fiscal year blackout period for disclosure of financial information; with results available in June. BC Ferries’ Board of Directors has requested an analysis of the impact of the service level adjustments made in 2014, including an assessment of whether net savings were realized through these, and the company is working on reports that will fulfill this request. Preliminary analysis indicates that the net savings targeted are being realized at a system-wide level, but there are variations across routes affected.

Additionally, utilization has increased on impacted routes and it appears the estimated traffic/revenue loss from the SLA is less than predicted. BC Ferries will not commit to whether the savings analysis will be made available on a route by route basis and it needs to be recognized that there are other variables impacting this analysis and it is difficult to isolate changes specific to the service level adjustments. The important point is that the net savings are applied system wide and benefit all routes in a cross subsidized fare system.

As for Major routes, BC Ferries conducted extensive analysis on a variety of options for reducing service to achieve the \$4.9 million in net savings, but found that estimated revenue losses exceeded cost savings in all cases. It was pointed out that the Major routes have already had up to eight per cent service reductions between 2008 and 2014 as well.

These reductions came from service that was being provided above CFSC requirements prior to 2012 as well as the recent flexibility in the CFSC (400 round-trips) to further reduce service. As a result of this, it becomes harder to find Major route service reductions without impacting revenue which, in turn, would put further pressure on fares in a cross subsidized system.

The \$4.9 million of net savings still needs to be achieved by BC Ferries in Performance Term-4 to achieve the 1.9% annual price cap but BC Ferries will find these net savings through measures not related to service level reductions. It is important to also recognize that the BC Ferries Commissioner has further tasked BCF to continue the analysis related to longer term and larger measure initiatives related to the Major routes in order to identify large savings (\$100M) in our capital program.

BC Ferries conducted extensive analysis on a variety of options for reducing service, but found that revenue losses greater than targeted sailings was forecast in all cases. It was pointed out that the Major routes have already had eight per cent service reductions between 2008 and 2014 as well. Therefore, the \$4.9 million of savings has now been factored into Performance Term-4 calculations, and BC Ferries will indeed find these savings elsewhere.

**BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution:** none required.

**Action Plan:**

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

**F. Issue: Fares – pilot reduction scheme**

**Definition:** The FAC presented a proposal to BC Ferries, asking for a 25% fare reduction on sailings after 9 pm. They suggested the Province be engaged to consider supporting this fare discount pilot. BC Ferries noted they will take a look at this proposal (detailed presentation given to BC Ferries) in order to see what may or may not be possible.

**BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution:** assess fare reduction pilot proposal.

**Action Plan:**

Action	Responsible	Date
Meet with Jim Wilson-Storey once fare reduction proposal has been reviewed.	BC Ferries	When able

**G. Issue: Nanaimo Harbour terminal**

**Definition 1: Kiosk.** The FAC proposed a concept of an info kiosk at the Nanaimo Harbour terminal and asked BC Ferries to consider whether something like this may be possible.

**BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution:** consider a kiosk concept at Nanaimo Harbour terminal.

**Action Plan:**

Action	Responsible	Date
Meet with Jim Wilson-Storey to discuss ideas for an info kiosk	Terminal reps	When able

**Definition 2: wi-fi.** The FAC asked if a wi-fi hotspot could be coordinated by BC Ferries if a third party (ie. Shaw) provided the equipment at Nanaimo Harbour. BC Ferries has ongoing discussions with service providers to explore what may or may not

be possible for wi-fi at various terminals, however there are known ‘IT-related concerns’ at this point.

**BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution:** none required.

**Action Plan:**

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

**H. Issue Gabriola terminal**

**Definition 1: Upgrade.** BC Ferries has an upgrade planned for Descanso Bay terminal during the fiscal year of 2018/19. This work will include installing a new ramp and marine structures. As with other recent terminal upgrades, BC Ferries will engage the FAC/community to share plans and seek input. If a temporary dock closure is required, BC Ferries will work with the community in developing any alternate plans. The FAC suggested that consideration be given to expanding the holding compound.

**BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution:** none required.

**Action Plan:**

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

**Definition 2: short-term parking.** The FAC wanted to explore options for changes to parking and bus drop-off areas, and suggested that analysis be done to improve traffic flow and safety. To this, they shared a design concept that split crew parking areas and allowed for closer bus access in the afternoons. The FAC ultimately asked if BC Ferries would be interested discussing safety issues near the terminal with the Ministry, as well as considering changing the position of some parking spots.

**BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution:** Coordinate a working group discussion, involving Terminal Operations, the FAC, School District, and other relevant reps.

**Action Plan:**

Action	Responsible	Date
Plan a working group meeting to analyse options around parking/bus drop-off area.	Jeff	When able

**I. Issue Descanso Bay emergency wharf**

**Definition:** The FAC recalled discussion from 2014 around whether the emergency wharf at Descanso Bay may be accessible for future water taxi service and they sought clarity on BC Ferries’ position on this possibility.

BC Ferries expressed significant concerns about seeing a water taxi operate during regular ferry operating hours, as ferry wash from the Quinsam could make safe operations for a water taxi. As well, there is very limited space between the wharf and nearby rocks.

However, if a water taxi were to operate outside of regular ferry service hours, BC Ferries has no objections...as long as the Quinsam dock remains clear. They noted that no ‘salting’ happens on the road leading to the ramp in the early morning winter hours. Also, any additional non-ferry parking would put a strain on current availability of spaces for BC Ferries customers. Finally, there may be liability issues with access from roadways to the emergency wharf and crossing BC Ferries right-of-way.

The FAC noted they would provide further info to BC Ferries if this water taxi idea is explored further.

**BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution:** none required.

**Action Plan:**

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

**J. Issue      Improving community engagement**

**Definition:** The FAC has been thinking of ideas for how more effective engagement between BC Ferries and the community can happen. They noted that diverse stakeholder representation on the FAC, like has formed for this term, will help.

**BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution:** none required.

**Action Plan:**

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

**K. Issue:      Operations Report**

**Definition:** Lewis provided a summary of recent and near-future vessel and terminal developments related to Route 19, including traffic and on-time performance statistics.

**BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution:** none required.

**Action Plan:**

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		