

Southern Sunshine Coast Ferry Advisory Committee Meeting

Overview: Roberts Creek Hall, October 27, 2015

In Attendance:

Committee: Barry Cavens, David Dick, Jef Keighley, Jakob Knaus, Diana Mumford, Mike Shanks, Ed Steeves, Kim Barton-Bridges (N.Sunshine Coast FAC), Joyce Clegg and Rick Gayton (Gambier Keats-FAC)

BC Ferries: Mark Collins- VP Strategic Planning and Community Engagement, David Hendry-Strategic Planning Director, Captain Al de Koninck - Marine Superintendent, Chris Morris- 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 for May 2016.

Issues Summary and Resolution Plan

A. Issue: Operations Report

Definition: Capt de Koninck provided a summary of recent and near-future vessel and terminal developments related to Route 3, including traffic and on-time performance statistics. Specifically, he noted that the next Queen of Surrey refit is planned from February 15 to April 17 2016, with the Queen of Coquitlam will be the relief vessel.

As part of the Langdale Berth 1 upgrade project, it is likely the berth will need to be closed, with two options for closure: a four to six week closure in late 2016 and again in early 2017, or a three-month closure in early 2017. To this, BC Ferries is seeking various vessel options during the closure/s that would enable maintaining the regular schedule as much as possible.

As well, Al noted that he and the vessel crew are working on a ‘fact sheet’ to better spread understanding of loading, unloading, and other procedures. Look for this sheet posted on vessels. Finally, he noted that the ‘small, operationally focussed’ meetings work well to address operational issues between these FAC meetings.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
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n/a		
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B. Issue: Motorcycle loading

Definition: BC Ferries pointed out that the policies with respect to how motorcycles are loaded are found on bcferries.com, under FAQ, but in general, they are loaded ahead of vehicles if they arrive prior to general loading. Otherwise, they are held back and could end up overloading. There are concerns with ‘adding extra motorcycles’ at the end, in whatever small spaces remain, as this may risk both hitting vehicles and delaying departures. Other discussion happened around general loading procedures.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

C. Issue: SCR D community needs survey plan

Definition: The FAC had previously suggested there would be strong value in learning specific community needs for ferry services through a survey process, particularly as the Province needs to understand those needs to better tailor service levels.

Mark added that the role of the Strategic Planning & Community Engagement section is to better tie BC Ferries’ planning to community needs, and that they are currently reviewing all plans to identify this ‘fit’. BC Ferries can always approach the Province with ideas the increase or change service levels if the cost to do so is neutral or lower as well. Finally, this team is looking at ‘total transportation experiences’ as a more integrated inter-modal picture, and meetings having already begun with BC Transit and TransLink to explore better cooperation/communications.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

D. Issue: Sechelt Nation involvement on FAC

Definition: Some basic discussion happened about how to encourage the Sechelt Nation to be more active in FAC discussions.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: consider reaching out again to Sechelt Nation.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
Send Barry copy of letter sent to Sechelt Nation at start of FAC term	Darin	COMPLETED

E. Issue: Langdale Master Plan

Definition: BC Ferries is still progressing with the business case and design processed for the redevelopment of Langdale Terminal. The FAC reiterated that they would like to ensure that the most appropriate advance planning is done to ensure the terminal meets expected customer needs for the next 40 years.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

F. Issue: PT4 Fare Cap decision process

Definition: The Commissioner has confirmed that a price cap of 1.9% per year for the four years of PT4 beginning April 1, 2016 has been set.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

G. Issue: Fare Flexibility & Digital Experience Initiative

Definition: BC Ferries is making significant IT investments in order to allow a fully (or close) reservable system that will include dynamic pricing options. The current 50% promotions in place will serve as good trials to learn how flexible customers may be with traveling on lower utilized sailings.

Jef expressed concerns that peak sailing rates will need to be increased from current levels in order to cover discounted rates. BC Ferries replied that the goal is not to increase the ‘rack rate’ fares, and that extra caution will be taken when determining discounted rates for Minor routes.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

H. Issue: Commuter survey

Definition: The FAC has previously recommended that commuters are surveyed to better understand their needs and sensitivities to fares/on-time performance. Then ideas can be derived to better meet those needs.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

I. Issue: Student/youth sports discounts

Definition: The FAC has noted that the ‘student’ and ‘youth sport’ discount for Route 3 travel is being used and appreciated. The Regional District has suggested that youth arts/culture travel also be included in the discounts. BC Ferries reminded all that this discount was only established to mirror current school event/social program discounts that the Province has in place for minor routes, and thus including other groups may not be in the spirit of this program. The FAC is awaiting a formal request/suggestion from the SCRD.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

J. Issue: Sunday schedule analysis

Definition: Jakob suggested that Route 3 should never have experienced service reductions because other Major routes were left untouched in 2014. As well, now that overall utilization has exceeded the 55% mark used as criteria for removal of sailings, the Sunday sailings should be reinstated in the off-peak period. He added that because delays and overloads on Sundays are significant, he formally asks BC Ferries to reinstate all sailings.

BC Ferries reminded the FAC that the other Major routes (1, 2, and 30) had service removed on two separate occasions since 2008, and that Route 3 is serviced above the basic contract level. BC Ferries did reinstate sailings during the spring/fall shoulder

periods already, and these will be maintained in future schedules. Off-peak demand on Sundays will be met with the current service provided, but may still be option to remove sailings ‘on another day’ in order to add them back on Sundays; BC Ferries is happy to explore these options.

BC Ferries clarified that the Service Level Adjustment process established new minimum service levels across several routes, and the Province has indicated that they are satisfied with these new levels. The savings realized across all reductions have now been incorporated into the 1.9% annual price of PT4.

If communities wish to support sailing additions with a cost neutral business concept, BC Ferries will be open to this analysis. The FAC was pleased to know that BC Ferries could consider some ‘business case option’ for reinstating Sunday sailings. Alternatively, a community can approach the Province if they wish to suggest an increase to the minimum service levels.

BC Ferries will not provide specific route-by-route cost and revenue analysis of the service reductions, as overall system savings were achieved and the SLA process has been completed.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

K. Issue: Horseshoe Bay signage

Definition: The FAC had previously shared concerns from customers around ambiguous destination naming on signage at/near Horseshoe Bay. Chris noted that a sign project is currently underway to assess how destinations are marked and ensure consistent and clear messaging. This will result in a move to ‘destination focused messaging’ (vs terminal messaging), which will align with Ministry of Transportation signage; total implementation period will be 12-18 months.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

L. Issue: Fare equity

Definition: Jakob noted a concern he had raised several times in the past, where he believes that Route 3 fares are not equitable with other routes if one were to consider length of sailings or time on board.

BC Ferries reiterated that there are no plans to alter fare rates on individual routes, as recalculating rates across all route would be required to remain ‘revenue neutral’, and this exercise would be fraught with problems. Future initiatives (FFDEI) will provide new fare options, and this must be the focus looking forward.

As well, fares were never based on length/time of travel, so there is no value in comparing across routes with this measure. The historical setting of fares was ingrained in the system when BC Ferries assumed management of operations in 2003, and it is too complex to analyse if/how to reset them all.

In a related manner, Jakob suggested that if the decline in commercial traffic is equal to the amount of traffic barging to the Sunshine Coast, there may be a good opportunity to charge commercial traffic at Langdale. BC Ferries reiterated previous findings that there is no evidence of ‘commercial traffic leakage’ happening on Route 3.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date

M. Issue: Fixed link

Definition: The Province has recently announced they will conduct a study to consider the feasibility of some sort of fixed link option between Metro Vancouver and the Sunshine Coast. The FAC noted that part of the community perception is that BC Ferries’ decreasing services and increasing fares have provided the incentive to carry out this study.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

N. Issue: Vehicle fare promotion

Definition: Darin notified the FAC that BC Ferries would be offering a 50% discount on vehicle fares from November 16 to December 19, following the pattern used in the recent passenger fare promotion (Mon to Thurs and Saturday, select sailings eligible).

The goal of the promotion is to shift traffic from busy sailings to lower demand sailings and to encourage ‘incremental (new) traffic’.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

O. Issue: Salish Class update

Definition: Mark notes that the Salish Class vessels currently under construction are ‘on schedule and budget’. They are being built with a dual-fuel capability, with the intent to operate on LNG full-time, and the fueling process will mirror what currently happens (fuel brought in by truck, fuelling happens during silent hours). He added that they will be wired for wi-fi, but that there are challenges to overcome around access to sufficient bandwidth and connectivity. Finally, Coast Salish themed artwork is planned for both external and internal surfaces, with an announcement pending due in November from the First Peoples’ Cultural Council on the selection of artists to developed this artwork.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

P. Issue: Cable ferry update

Definition: Mark provided a summary of the status of the cable ferry due to enter service on the Denman Island-Buckley Bay route soon. At present, Vancouver Shipyards (SeaSpan) still owns the vessel and is conducting trials, and therefore BC Ferries is very limited in what they can communicate about the ferry. In general, there is much misinformation in the community; however the vessel is meeting all technical requirements so far, including:

- speed targets using one engine
- Load capacity (weight)
- Cables are not rusting/deteriorating/too heavy and performing as planned.
- Fuel consumption is as projected or lower.
- Vessel is meeting current schedule requirements.
- Overall project is on budget.

Once BC Ferries takes official ownership, more detailed information and plans (crewing levels, trial, in-service dates, etc.) will be communicated.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

Q. Issue: Customer Satisfaction Survey

Definition: Mark pointed out that some concerns have been raised by Minor route FAC members that the information gathered through the Customer Satisfaction Tracking (CST) survey process may be used to make decisions that affects routes not included in the survey.

He also noted that most of the Minor routes are not part of the CST, and that they have direct avenues for suggestions, feedback, and consultation with BC Ferries management. Having said this, he sought FAC thoughts on the survey and whether they feel being surveyed in some way in the future is important.

The FAC said that ‘value for money’ replies need to be considered the most when evaluating results, and that more ‘route relevant’ questions could be added. As well, it was suggested that surveyors conduct questionnaires on busier, commuter sailings.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: Include FAC input with other FACs and consider if any future survey process makes sense for Minor routes.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
Analyze FAC input on future survey considerations	Mark	As applicable