

Southern Gulf Islands Ferry Advisory Committee Meeting

Overview: Mary Winspear Centre - Sidney, October 23, 2015

In Attendance:

Committee: Dave Dryer, Michele Buchignani, Mary Greenwood, Eva Hage, Brian Hollingshead, Aleah Johnson, Jill Justice, David Maude, Roy Moore, Conny Nordin, Mike Sywulich, Harold Swierenga (Salt Spring Island FAC)

BC Ferries: Mark Collins - VP Strategic Planning and Community Engagement, David Hendry- Strategic Planning Director, Captain Lewis MacKay- Marine Superintendent, Monique Turgeon- Terminal Operations Superintendent, 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: Commercial fare freeze

Definition: BC Ferries intends to extend the freeze on commercial fares for the next fiscal year, but was unable to provide the exact amount that would be added to other fare categories in order to remain revenue neutral.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: determine and forward required increase to non-commercial fares that would allow a freeze to commercial fares.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
Confirm 'specific fare increase required' to allow a Route 5/5a commercial fare freeze in FY17	Darin	COMPLETED

B. Issue: SGI scheduling project update

Definition: David Hendry noted that they received a great deal of feedback during summer open houses about the preliminary draft schedule options for Route 5/5a and 9 once the Salish Class vessels enter service in 2017. Therefore, BC Ferries has the following plan to continue this project:

- incorporate feedback into changes for the next draft schedules,
- include new draft schedules as part of a survey process due out in November,

- meet with the External Working Group in early 2016; and
- conduct a final survey, to seek preferred schedule option, in Spring 2016.

There was further discussion around the goals and format of the next survey, with BCF noting the intent is to gather results ‘by island’. FAC members expressed concerns that new sailing options may not provide sufficient capacity for all customers to use a specific, desired sailing.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

C. Issue: Salish Class update

Definition: Mark noted 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		

D. Issue: Route 4-5/5-5 inter-island fare analysis

Definition: BC Ferries had previously been asked to consider creating an inter-island fare for customers travelling between any of the five South Gulf Islands, particularly when connecting through Swartz Bay.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: Determine conclusively if an inter-island fare will be created.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
Decide if inter-island fare possible, and at what rate	David H.	By January 2016

E. Issue: Throughfare processes

Definition: Monique noted that a working committee has been formed and is meeting soon to analyse all aspects of ways to improve/streamline the process by which customers transfer between various routes (1, 4, 5, 5a) at Swartz Bay. She noted that BC Ferries intends to find ways to improve the experience, and this includes finding short-term changes where possible. The goal for BC Ferries is to make this throughfare as viable and attractive as using Route 9 or inter-island sailings, and to find a way to recognize that a customer is ‘in the system’ at the time of check-in for the first sailing. Further discussion happened with respect to problems that may arise with different sailings/routes interacting.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

F. Issue: Island Sky deployment

Definition: Noting that the Island Sky had appeared in some version of schedule options during the SGI Scheduling Project, the FAC asked if this vessel was being redeployed to the S.Gulf Islands. BC Ferries replied that although they have discretion to move any vessel in order to optimize fleet deployment, the Island Sky remains a possibility to be redeployed, however, no decisions have been made at this time. As well, any future scheduling options are built assuming the Queen of Cumberland remains in the service area.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

G. Issue: Saturna short-link concept

Definition: BC Ferries reps met recently with some Mayne and Saturna Islanders to ‘walkabout’ the areas on each island that would be required for infrastructure supporting any short-link connection between the two islands in the future. From that analysis, BC Ferries recommends that both communities need to be the impetus for the Province to analyse or further study the feasibility of such arrangement. If the Province chose to proceed with any further analysis, BC Ferries would provide any operational support or

experience that may be requested. Further discussion occurred around possible link options and approximate costs required to operate a short-link ferry.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

H. Issue: Queen of Cumberland MLU

Definition: BC Ferries will be conducting a Mid-Life Upgrade for the Queen of Cumberland over an approximate five-month period from the third week of November to mid-April 2016. Because of this longer than normal refit period, BC Ferries needed to develop a relief plan that would address capacity shortages that would arise if the Bowen Queen was the relief vessel ‘with no other measures taken’. Therefore, a plan has been made to see the Skeena Queen and Bowen Queen share service on both Routes 4 and 5, duties, with the Skeena Queen essentially servicing Route 5 during morning and late afternoon peak demand periods.

Some concerns have already been raised from Salt Spring Island customers, as the Route 4 schedule will be altered in order to provide sufficient capacity throughout the day.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

I. Issue: Printed schedule distribution

Definition: There are still problems and inconsistencies with customers obtaining/finding printed schedules for the S.Gulf Island routes on board vessels and at terminals. Suggestions to BC Ferries include using some of the currently available rack space or moving material that seems to be available in over-abundance.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: find better schedule distribution solutions.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
Marketing and Operations to work on solution to getting schedules available when required.	Lewis/Darin	By end 2015

J. Issue: Route 9 Wednesday reductions

Definition: BC Ferries confirmed that the plan originally made in 2014 to remove service on Route 9 for nine consecutive Wednesdays in early 2016 will proceed as planned, as this was required to meet cost savings targets set during the Province’s Service Level Adjustment process.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

K. Issue: Route 9 passenger reservation analysis

Definition: There has been an ongoing pilot, extended through Spring 2016, allowing foot passengers travelling from Tsawwassen Terminal on Route 9 to make a no-fee reservation. BC Ferries confirmed that there is no way to reserve travel in the direction to Tsawwassen, as the challenges around this are being analysed for solutions.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: explore methods to allow foot passenger reservations from the S.Gulf Islands to Tsawwassen.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
Work with terminal and vessel operations teams to come up to explore a pilot for Route 9 foot reservations from the islands.	David H.	For Fiscal Year 2017

L. Issue: Size up the Savings results

Definition: BC Ferries confirmed that the most recent ‘overlength’ discount promotion seemed to show at least neutral net income, while successfully moving traffic from high demand sailings on Route 2 to lower demand sailings on Route 30 and 1.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

M. Issue: Mayne Queen coffee

Definition: FAC members have previously told BC Ferries that the coffee vending machine on the Mayne Queen has not been working properly or at all. The vendor is aware of these issues and has been on board frequently to troubleshoot and improve the machine.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

N. Issue: Meeting summary notes

Definition: Darin acknowledged that the summary notes from the most recent FAC meeting were not sent to the FAC for approximately five months, limiting the effectiveness of all to remember and act on issues as required. He added that members from various FACs take notes and distribute to members soon after the meetings, which does help.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: shorten time to produce summary notes.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
Draft and forward meeting summaries to FAC	Darin	Before end Dec

O. Issue: Operations Report

Definition: Capt MacKay provided a summary of recent and near-future vessel and terminal developments related to Route 5/5a/9/9a, including traffic and on-time performance statistics. Of note, the Queen of Nanaimo is undergoing a refit and is due back on Route 9 around November 21. He added there are no near term plans for work on the Mayne Queen.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution:

Inform and engage the FAC when ‘MLU refit and relief vessel plans’ are being made.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
Forward ‘MLU/relief plan’ to FAC	Capt MacKay	August - done

P. 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.

Mark pointed out that although Routes 5 and 9 are included, most of the Minor routes are not part of the CST, but 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.

Some discussion around the CST process followed, and that there may indeed be some value in seeing questions more relevant to Minor route issues, and that BC Ferries should be aware of exactly which sailings survey respondents are using.

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

Q. 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		

R. 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		