

Northern Sunshine Coast Ferry Advisory Committee Meeting

Overview: Texada Island Community Hall, October 26, 2015

In Attendance:

Committee: Kim Barton-Bridges, Patrick Brabazon, Jane Cameron, Sandy McCormick, Karen Skadsheim, Doug Skinner, Ken White

BC Ferries: Mark Collins - VP Strategic Planning and Community Engagement, David Hendry- Strategic Planning Director, Captain Al de Koninck - Marine Superintendent, Jeff- 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: Operations Report

Definition: Capt de Koninck provided a summary of recent and near-future vessel and terminal developments related to Routes 7, 17 and 18 including traffic and on-time performance statistics. Specifically, he noted that the Queen of Burnaby should return from its duties relieving the Queen of Nanaimo during a refit before the end of November. As well, the North Island Princess replacement process is still ongoing, with no decisions yet to share with the FAC

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

B. Issue: Public presentation

Definition: Chuck Childress informed BC Ferries that a community meeting was held to discuss issues around the introduction of the Salish Orca to Route 17, and there was a general preference to see the Route 17 vessel make a Blubber Bay stop ‘in the morning on the way into Comox, and in the evening on the way back, daily’. They expect to have to make a pre-paid reservation to take advantage of these stops.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

C. Issue: Route 3-7 schedule connectivity

Definition: FAC members noted that when either Route 3 or 7 vessels are running late, it may be difficult to make a timely connection between them. They requested that BC Ferries make announcements on board a delayed vessel to identify passengers who may be trying to connect to the other route.

Al replied that Route 3 and 7 Masters already communicate with each other when they are not on schedule, particularly when Route 3 will be late arriving in Langdale and customers may be on board trying to connect with the last daily sailing from Earls Cove. In these instances, the Route 7 vessel will normally hold to wait for connecting customers, or even sail an extra round trip if demand is heavy.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

D. Issue: Minutes turnaround

Definition: Previous meeting summaries have taken five months to get to the FAC, but Darin explained that he works on the summaries of all 13 FACs after the meetings are done and will aim to get the drafts to the FAC as timely as possible.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: share draft meeting summaries with FAC.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
Get draft meeting summary to FAC	Darin	No later than three months from meeting

E. Issue: Salish Orca 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.

In a related note, a letter from Powell River Mayor Dave Formosa was read out loud, noting his desire to see full catering services/offering provided on the Salish Orca.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: share design layout drawings, particularly ones that can show what deck loading will look like.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
Check if vessel ‘general arrangement’ diagram is finalized and ready to share with FAC.	David	By December

F. Issue: Food service/wi-fi on Salish Orca

Definition: Ken White agrees that the food service offerings on the Salish Orca should be similar to what is currently offered on the Queen of Burnaby. To this, he included a prepared statement of: “It’s the consensus of the BC Ferries Northern Sunshine Coast Advisory Committee that there would be a food service that is comparable on the new ferry as current service offered on the Queen of Burnaby, and as well as wi-fi service.”

David reminded the FAC that part of a funding approval process undertaken by the Commissioner factored in results from a 2013/14 consultation process whereby Powell River and Texada residents clearly indicated that “Level 2” service (comparable to the Island Sky) was sufficient, and that fare increases required to increase food offerings was not acceptable. Ultimately though, BC Ferries awaits the crewing level decisions from Transport Canada, and that decision will dictate the number of crew members required on board...which in turn can drive the level of catering amenities BC Ferries can provide without adding costs. No catering decisions can be made until crewing levels are set.

With respect to wi-fi, the Salish Class vessels will be wired to provide internet connectivity, however there are both bandwidth access and connectivity issues that would need to be addressed prior to providing reliable wi-fi to customers.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

G. Issue: Triangle run analysis

Definition: Sandy summarized results from a survey that was conducted on Texada this past spring, whereby people indicated a 95% preference in seeing BC Ferries offer a ‘triangle run’ (as explained by Chuck earlier) built into the Route 17 schedule once the Salish Orca comes into service. They suggested that the fare for the ‘Texada-Comox’ legs should be approximately two-thirds the price of regular Route 17 fare and it is reasonable to make this fare prepaid. As well, 95% of respondents indicated they did not want to see any change in Route 18 service to make the triangle run happen.

Mark noted that the Province sets service levels and the current service fees for Routes 17 and 18 are based on these levels. As a result, any potential changes in service levels to Routes 17/18 from a triangle run would need to be reviewed in relation to changes to the Coastal Ferry Services Contract, as well as potential cost implications.

In a related note, Mark said that the replacement of the North Island Princess is estimated to happen in 2019. BC Ferries will engage the FAC and residents as appropriate in the project timeline.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

H. Issue: Westview berthing conflicts

Definition: The FAC noted that customers are saying that, despite recent changes in Route 17 schedule timings, conflicts between the two vessels using Westview are still happening, thus affecting on-time performance.

Al replied that the Queen of Burnaby had been operating at a reduced speed because of ongoing problems with one of the shafts, but will recent repairs completed, the vessel will be operating at higher speeds and be able to maintain the schedule; this should eliminate conflicts. He suggested that when the Burnaby returns from relieving the Queen of Nanaimo, the performance will be monitored and conflicts with the North Island Princess will be highly unlikely.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

I. Issue: Student/youth discounts

Definition: Doug said that the recently implemented program to coordinate student/youth sports discounts on Route 17 and 7 is working well, but there are stories of some employees being unaware of the discounts. Jeff replied that all Westview employees are now fully comfortable with how to administer these discounts, so all should run smoothly.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

J. Issue: Promotions update

Definition: Mark explained that the goals of the 50% fare promotions are to both move traffic to lower utilized sailings and generate new/incremental traffic. Early signs of the passenger fare promotion seem to indicate that these goals are being met.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: share promotion findings.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
Send FAC summary of the results of the 50% fare promotions	Mark/Darin	By next FAC meeting

K. Issue: North Island Princess loading

Definition: Sandy said it has been noticed that ‘larger vehicles’ are being loaded in the three centre lanes, which can tend to overlap into outside lanes and set a condition of unused space in those lanes. She suggests that if a camera were to be installed ‘up the hill’ near Blubber Bay, vessel crew could see the number of oversize vehicles waiting and plan the load accordingly.

Jeff replied that installing a camera may or may not help, and there are other issues involved that would then need to be overcome. Al added that crews are currently developing a ‘standard operation procedures (SOP) type fact sheet’ that will allow them and community members to better understand loading rationale as well.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

L. Issue: Texada sign

Definition: Jeff noted that the batteries in the ‘electronic sign’ located near the gas station have been replaced and the sign is back in operation for those occasions (delays, cancellations) when it is required.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

M. Issue: Accessibility/safety issues

Definition: Karen shared that she has received letters from a customer who has had difficulty getting elevator access on vessels because of loading practices or non-functioning elevators. She also noted that there have been recent stories of crew approaching disabled customers prior to loading to enquire about their needs, and this is very promising.

Al confirmed that terminal employees tell the vessel of customers who have identified they have accessibility needs prior to loading, and crews then work to meet these needs on board. Regardless, both Jeff and Al need to learn of instances where ‘accessibility needs were not met’ as soon afterwards as possible, so all are encouraged to spread the word on this need for timely feedback.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

N. Issue: Walk-on statistics

Definition: The FAC wondered if passenger ridership is increasing and cost savings have been realized since the implementation of service level adjustments in 2014. BC Ferries replied that the savings targets have been met across the entire system of routes, and this was one of the reasons the Commissioner was able to set price caps of 1.9% for all of Performance Term 4. As well, both vehicle and passenger statistics have shown an increase of approximately 3-4% during the past year.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: none required.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
n/a		

O. 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, particularly as survey are useful for those who cannot attend FAC meetings. They also noted that with Route 17 receiving a new vessel soon, it may make good sense to at least add that route to the CST process.

The FAC said that surveys would likely help if the right questions are asked. Alternatively, they said increasing awareness for how customers can provide feedback to BC Ferries may also be useful.

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

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		