

Southern Gulf Island Ferry Advisory Committee Meeting

Overview: Mary Winspear Centre – October 28, 2014

In Attendance:

Committee: Dave Dryer, Brian Hollingshead (Chair), Jill Justice, David Maude, Roy Moore, Conny Nordin, Oksana Richards, Mike Sywulich, Harold Swierenga (SSI FAC Chair)

BC Ferries: Corrine Storey- VP Customer Services, David Hendry- Strategic Planning Director, Captain Lewis MacKay- Marine Superintendent, Steve Nussbaum - Regional Manager, Terminal Operations, 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 as a face-to-face meeting during the week of either May 4 or May 11, 2015.

Issues Summary and Resolution Plan

A. Issue: Mayne Queen/Cumberland swap analysis

Definition: Lewis explained that BC Ferries had been looking at whether the Queen of Cumberland and Mayne Queen could ‘swap routes’ mid-morning in the fall/winter/spring schedule. However, there would be a berth conflict at Swartz Bay around 9 am between these two vessels and the Skeena Queen, and solving this conflict would require substantial rewriting of the Route 5 and 5a schedules. Therefore, this mid-morning swap is not a realistic option.

There was a further discussion around the fact that previous ideas of load-sharing (allocation), splitting port visits between Mayne and Pender Islands on certain days of the week, and adopting the summer schedule ‘year-round’ were all dismissed for various reasons at the FAC level.

The FAC requested that the ‘scheduling sub-committee’ BC Ferries has previously said they would form should now come together to address this long-standing community issue, as well as other schedule problems. BC Ferries reminded all that the introduction of the Queen of Nanaimo replacement on Route 9 will provide a good opportunity to explore new Route 5/5a schedule options, and the plan is to begin this schedule-building process in the spring of 2015. Corrine noted that any SGI-scheduling group efforts may distract the efforts of the Route 5/5a analysis.

The FAC still urged BC Ferries to consider forming a scheduling sub-committee to further analyse Route 5, as waiting for Route 9 solutions and implementation of the ICFs would be delaying any possible progress.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution: Finalize all alternate service details asap.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
Consider setting up schedule sub-committee	Darin	Prior to spring meeting

B. Issue: Inter-island through fare

Definition: FAC had previously asked BC Ferries to consider implementing a through fare for travel between Salt Spring and the Southern Gulf Islands, as the required travel through Swartz Bay is expensive. This issue was raised again at this meeting, as no progress had been made yet.

The FAC feels this throughfare concept is similar to the established ‘Route 9 throughfare’, and noted there is a community of interest (school, hospital, hospice, shopping, trades...) between Salt Spring and the other Southern Gulf Islands to see lower fares for inter-island travel.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution:
Consider establishing a SGI-SSI through fare.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
Get estimate for through fare rates (SGI-SSI)	David	asap

C. Issue: Printed schedule distribution

Definition: The FAC (and David specifically) has previously shared feedback on the lack of schedule availability on certain vessels/terminals and noted that the Queen of Nanaimo has very good availability. Customers note having difficulties getting schedules when there are no racks; specifically on the Cumberland, Mayne Queen and at Village Bay terminal.

As well, customers have noted dissatisfaction with being limited to one schedule, and how critically valuable these schedules are.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution:

Clarify communications with SGI terminals/vessels regarding clear and broad schedule display and distribution.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
Confirm wide and available schedule distribution	Steve	When able

D. Issue: Coffee quality

Definition: FAC members are hearing that the coffee quality on the Bowen Queen is notably better than the Mayne Queen. With long sailing times, the suggestion is that BC Ferries consider installing a similar coffee machine on the Mayne Queen.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution:

Work at getting a similar coffee machine installed on the Mayne Queen as is on the Bowen Queen.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
Aim to get new coffee machine on Mayne Queen	Corrine	When able

E. Issue: Island Sky/Queen of Cumberland analysis

Definition: Previous requests had come from the FAC to include swapping the two vessels as part of the ‘sub-committee’ analysis, and they would still expect to see detailed explanation of the decision to reject this swap.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution:

BCF will keep this in mind for possible inclusion in future schedule analysis.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
No action required		

F. Issue: Route 9 schedule changes

Definition: FAC members noted they have heard mostly positive remarks about the planned Route 9 schedule changes, except for the effect to businesses on Galiano Island. The biggest positive was the reduction of nine Wednesdays in lieu of making weekend changes, which would have provided negative changes for access to/from all islands.

To this, the FAC asked BC Ferries to consider some form of post-implementation review of these changes sometime in 2015, after all changes have been in effect. As well, BC Ferries was asked if a ‘revenue loss estimate’ as a result of schedule reductions will be

produced and shared with the FAC. David Hendry noted that cost savings can be tracked across the sailing network, but revenue changes are not easy to track on an individual route basis, as there are many factors affecting traffic and consumer behaviours.

Ultimately, the FAC asked that any analysis that can be made on Route 9 changes (Wednesday reductions) be attempted and shared when possible.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution:

Aim to share analysis on how schedule changes affect costs/revenue.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
No action required at this time		

G. Issue: Size-up-the-size savings

Definition: FAC asked for a summary of how the Size-up-the-Savings promotion did this summer. David Hendry noted that there was a notable shift in over-length traffic to Route 30 during the periods covered by the promotion; with a 13% increase in Route 30 over-length volume and a 2% decrease in Route 2 over-length volume and no change on Route 1.

Overall, BC Ferries essentially broke even, but it did show that it is possible to shift traffic away from Route 2 and to underutilized sailing when desired. BC Ferries did not conduct on board surveys during the promotion.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution:

Nothing further required on this issue.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
No action required		

H. Issue: Change in seniors' discount

Definition: FAC asked if an analysis around traffic/revenue loss has been done since the seniors' discount has been reduced from 100% to 50%. David Hendry replied that there has been a 13% decrease in seniors' traffic in the April to end-September period as compared to 2103. However, there was no way to measure whether seniors may have shifted travel patterns outside of the discount period (Monday-Thursday).

Also, although the actual decrease of vehicle traffic associated with this passenger drop is not known, BC Ferries may be able to consider some ratio of 'seniors to vehicles' and use this to estimate revenue loss from vehicle traffic.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution:

Continue to analyse seniors travel traffic data.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
No action required		

I. Issue: Operations presentation

Definition: Lewis provided a brief summary of operational information (traffic stats, on-time performance, etc) and near future terminal or vessel changes planned.

Steve Nussbaum noted new, pre-recorded announcements for foot passenger has been improving efficiency of boarding. Corrine noted that BC Ferries still had concerns towards putting clocks in the terminal buildings, as they may become inaccurate and create problems for customers, however, the FAC suggested accuracy is not an issue with modern clocks and that BC Ferries still consider this request. As well, Lewis informed the group that the reason the passenger walkway at Tsawwassen for Queen of Nanaimo boarding may be lowered only 10 minutes prior to sailing time is because crew are required to store the vessel some sailings, and the walkway needs to stay up until they are available. No near-term vessel refits planned.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution:

Work at avoiding uncomfortable waits for foot passengers.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
Work on minimizing time outside in rainy weather for foot passengers	Steve	When able

J. Issue: FAC reappointment process

Definition: BC Ferries FAC terms mirror the municipal election cycle, so a new FAC will be formed to be in place for January 2015, with a four-year term.

BC Ferries Commitment to Resolution:

BCF will rebuild FACs through a nomination/volunteer process during the remainder of 2014.

Action Plan:

Action	Responsible	Date
Send FAC members new nomination info	Darin	Nov/Dec