Lummi Island
Ferry Advisory Committee

DRAFT PROPOSAL to COUNTY COUNCIL
October 7, 2014

Amendment of Fare Structure Ordinance on Lummi Island Ferry for
Multi-ride tickets w/quantity discount for Vehicle/Driver and Passenger/Pedestian

LIFAC, after long, careful, detailed study, recommends a modification of these multi-ride round-trip ticket fares to:
1. Passengers/Pedestrians, 25-ride RT ticket for $81 (about 50% discount).
2. $163 for a 25-ride RT ticket for vehicle & driver (approx. 50% discount).
3. $78 for a 10-ride RT ticket for vehicle & driver (approx. 60% discount).

- These modifications affect about 107,000 trips in the two highest-profile user categories.
- These modifications reflect a $7,000 surplus over the 55% target requirement for the Ferry Fund budget. (Presently, the fund has about $1.7 million.)

Discussion Points:
- The recommendations come from a thorough study and scalable model compiled by LIFAC members Chuck Antholt (professional economist) and Cris Colburn (transportation professional with WTA). The results are based on multiple cost projections, using Whatcom County budget and projection numbers and Public Works fiscal information.
- The proposal is fiscally responsible at least through 2015.
- Benefits of the modification:
  - Significant relief in a modest increment for core customers of the County’s ferry transportation.
  - This could, for example, save a commuter family more than $1,000 a year, yet sustain the County model for fiscal responsibility.
- The recommendation meets all criteria set forth in County mandates. It sustains the $1.5 million Ferry Fund, and meets the 55% target for overall ferry operations costs.
- The core question driving this recommendation: Will the modifications still capture 55% of ferry operations costs? The answer clearly is yes, with room to spare.

- This recommendation was supported by a meeting with Public Works administration and finance personnel, who thoroughly explained the Ferry Fund, and other budget and fiscal practices.

- LIFAC also considered modifications to cash fares. But, through the model we found those changes would not support the budget requirements. Instead, giving a discount to multi-ride users – a best practice in transportation – will be more productive.

- Finally, the months of work on this recommendation stems from concerns about the $3 surcharge imposed three years ago. That action came from a PW concern over a diminished Ferry Fund. The surcharge was perceived widely by County Council member and Lummi Island residents as a temporary measure.

  We believe fiscal responsibility does not support a blanket removal of the surcharge. However, the Ferry Fund has been replenished, and it's time to provide an alternative – some relief and possible incentives to core ridership.

NOTES:

Request from Samya Lutz, Lummi Island resident:

Could be added as a letter M in WCC 10.34.020 Interpretation of Rate Schedule -. Parents or guardians of Beach School students riding the ferry for the sole purpose of accompanying non-island resident students to school shall have free pedestrian passage on the ferry.

Do we want to go forward with this again, as voted on previously, or revisit? What happened to the school district’s pledge for involvement? Sounds like we’re back to square one.

My amendment: A parent or guardian....

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Request from Wynne Lee, Lummi Island resident:

I request that no request for reduced fares be put forward by LIFAC until the financials *totally* justify it. I am concerned that if fares are brought up to Council, and they see how easily LI has made OVER 55% (6 of last 9 years), they are just as likely to raise the % that fares must recover to 57 or even 58% and leave fares as is. Upping fare recovery the same % to Guemes (70%, I think) level has been
something that several/many on the council, not just PW or the Exec, have thought a good idea for a long while.
What if?

Current cash fares remain the same.

But Quantity Discounts Changed:

For walk-ons from 71% to 50%,

For Car W/driver from 79% to 60% for ten, and

For 25 from 72% to 50%.

Note surplus ~$7,000.
Recommendations to consider from LIFAC to County Council

1 Although this is NOT recommended by the County Finance person (Shauna?) at the present time, a REDUCTION IN FARE for the Whatcom Chief must be carefully researched and a consensus reached by the LIFAC in a timely way — hopefully by the end of 2014.

2 A recommendation is needed for the County Council to consider a change in the Accounting/Bookkeeping System used for the Lummi Island Ferry. It may be agreeable to LIFAC members to suggest using the Skagit Co. Ferry Bookkeeping System so a consensus could be reached.

3 Changes to the County Road Fund needs Council Approval. This involves the Motor Vehicle Road Fund and where the automatic deposit goes into the Revenue for the Ferry. (I'm not sure if I have this right - ?, but hope you know what I'm referring to here.)

4 A very quick decision is needed in regards to the County contracts for DryDock/Passenger Ferry service. If at all possible a ferry that includes vehicles as well as passengers would be much appreciated for the 2015 DryDock period. This is being considered but can only happen if a clear message is given to the County Council. One question for clarification
   "Is the contract for a 2 year period of time?" Since a suitable ferry is already being "looked" at for next year we just hope it is not too late to accomplish this change.

I took this information for your consideration from the Special Meeting called on 9/10/14, and held at the Lummi Island Library chaired by Chuck Anholt.

I hope it is helpful to LIFAC in their decision making.

Janet Lutz-Smith

Oct. 7, 2014
Thanks to the extraordinary efforts of Jim Dickenson and others we have a very good view of the current population of used ferries of size and function similar to the Whatcom Chief. Many of us have now viewed the Hiyu. The Hiyu does not fulfill my vision of a replacement for the Whatcom Chief. It is suffering from inactivity and inattention, which can probably be taken care of without going to drydock. Moreover, this vessel has extra features that we don't need, such as crew bunk space and public toilets, and is without some ADA features that will be required, such as wheel-chair access to an enclosed area. The Whatcom Chief's design is suitable for a seven to ten minute trip. The Hiyu's design is suitable for much longer trips. So, from that aspect, a "No" vote for the Hiyu.

After reading the letter from L. Paul Zankich (thanks to Chuck Antholt for getting it), I have more reason than ever not to consider the Hiyu. Furthermore, Mr. Zankich's letter provides good reason to slow down our search for an existing replacement ferry.

The Technical Subcommittee's scope of work should include a search for successful ferry designs that might meet the proposed requirements that the Long Range Planning Subcommittee is working on. This would include exploration of Mr. Zankick's proposal regarding the resizing of the Chief. Ferry designs are probably the property of the ferry owner, but that does not preclude the possibility of their willingness to sell them.

All of this work comes to naught if the Whatcom County Commission and Administration are not prepared to act quickly when the time comes to make decisions regarding design, construction and financing. So let's get a new or reconstructed ferry designed now, after the LRPS gets its work done. And when the construction decision is made (or forced upon us), Whatcom County can proceed quickly. Design phases can take a long time, and design time costs lots of money! Using an existing design as a basis for a new design is a great way to save money; using it "as is" is an even greater way.

In addition, any other Commission or Administration procedures which can be set up in advance to "grease the procurement wheels" should be explored. How about exploring grant opportunities and other possible funding sources beyond bond financing, about what public hearings are necessary, about what inter-governmental approvals are needed, about future internal personnel assignments, etc.

My thoughts for now.

Stu Clark
10/7/2014