

Meeting Details

Date: June 5, 2024
Time: 1:30 pm – 4:00 pm
Location: Microsoft Teams

Attendance

Public Interest Representatives

Marnie Essery, President, Access West Shore Society, Co-Chair of BC Ferries Accessibility Advisory Committee
Susan Simmons, Advisor for Special Olympics, Victoria
Matthew Ellies – Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada, BC
Captain David Willows, Chair of Saanich Peninsula Accessible Advisory Committee
Scott Heron, Peer Support Specialist, Spinal Cord Injury BC
Dr. Jie Zhang, Seniors Serving Seniors

BC Ferries Representatives

Karen Tindall, Director of Customer Care, Customer Care Department – Co-Chair
Bruce Paterson, Director, Naval Architecture, Fleet Technical
Captain Chris Frappell, Marine Superintendent, Shipbuilding
Rosa Marinelli, Director, Corporate Marketing & Customer Experience
Leslie Meyer, Regulatory and Policy Manager
Michael Wright, Senior Manager, Retail Services
Jayne Sutton, Senior Manager, Operational Training
Chris Coell, Training Manager, Catering

Guest

Jill Hawe, Senior Customer Relations Advisor, Customer Care

Regrets

Pat Danforth, Victoria Disability Resource Centre
Neil Belanger, Chief Executive Officer, BC Aboriginal Network on Disability Society (BCANDS)
Melanie Lucia, Vice President, Customer Experience
Jeff Davidson, Director, Retail Services, Food and Retail Operations
Steve Shardlow, Training Manager, Terminals
Rhonda Daye, Manager, Customer Relations

Introduction

Attendees introduced themselves to the meeting. No changes to the minutes of the last meeting (November 22, 2023).

Minutes approved.

Hugh Mitchell, Canadian Hard of Hearing Association, has resigned from the BC Ferries Accessibility Advisory Committee. His contribution to the development of induction technology was paramount. A thank you letter has been sent to him to recognize his service.

Marnie mentioned that the name of her committee has changed from Intermunicipal Advisory Committee on Disability Issues to Access West Shore Society.

Updates from Public Interest Representatives

Chair of Saanich Peninsula Accessible Advisory Committee - Captain David Willows

- David attended a recent workshop with Disability Alliance BC and noted that BC Ferries is well ahead of other organizations in terms of actioning change.
- An issue raised was accessible parking changes/removal as a result of new construction.
- Pending changes - BC Hydro is adding accessible EV charging parking spaces and Sidney waterfront is adding accessible washrooms.

Seniors Serving Seniors – Dr. Jie Zhang

- Jie mentioned that she has received positive feedback regarding the BC Seniors program that allows seniors to travel for free Monday through Thursday.

Peer Support Specialist, Spinal Cord Injury BC - Scott Heron

- Scott mentioned that Spinal Cord Injury BC has peer support groups with events scheduled regularly.
- The BC Ferries Sunset Dinner cruise on March 23 was a huge success. Twenty-four guests had a fantastic time. All BC Ferries staff working on the event were wonderful.
- Notable events over the next few months:
 - Kayaking events, June 1/September 21
 - Charity Challenge at Dallas Road, June 23
 - Learn to Camp Weekend, July 19 (2 nights)
 - Adaptive cycling, July 27

Advisor for Special Olympics, President of MS Centre of Vancouver Island, Coach of Spirit Orcas – Susan Simmons

- Susan mentioned that she has received positive feedback from the MS Community regarding BC Ferries service.
- The Spirit Orcas are requiring communication with vessels before their event to swim around Pender Island on June 14/15.

Action: BC Ferries operational teams were made aware of the event.

Vision Loss Rehabilitation Canada, BC, Matthew Ellies

- Matthew shared feedback from a member who travelled with BC Ferries and staff did not follow the proper protocol to assist a passenger who is visually impaired.
- There is no formal training for BC Ferries staff.

Action: BC Ferries Operational Training is in the process of rebuilding the Terminal Passenger Safety Management course and is soliciting feedback from the Committee. Matthew's feedback was acknowledged by Jayne, who was in attendance.

Access West Shore Society, Marnie Essery – President

- Marnie gave kudos to BC Ferries listening and actioning change. She travelled at the beginning of April and found all the staff extremely thoughtful.
- Car alarms seem to be becoming less of an issue. Marnie suggested pre-travel reminders, possibly included with the reservation confirmation email.
- Marnie asked if reservations were transferrable and Karen confirmed that no, they are not, but if an accessible space is required with or without a reservation, arriving at the terminal well ahead of the sailing is preferable. Advise the ticket agent of the requirements. There is a lane in the staging area for accessible loading with elevator access.
- Marnie suggested that it would be helpful to have signs directing customers to other accessible washrooms/elevators when they are out of service.
- May 26-June 1 was National AccessAbility Week – May 29, a wheelchair basketball event at Spencer School was very well received. June 1 was the launch of Recreation Adapted Devices Society's "Langford Gearbox", where equipment can be rented at an affordable cost with the goal of making adventure accessible both physically and financially.
- Adaptive Sport And Recreation | Radsociety.ca

Action: Pre-travel reminder emails have been updated to include the car alarms messaging. Karen and Rosa committed to look into the consistent use of temporary signage for out of order elevators and washrooms.

Updates from BC Ferries

Bruce Paterson – Director, Naval Architecture, Fleet Technical

- Bruce presented a Vessel Update for the committee:
Island Class Ferry Program - 4 vessels slated for delivery in mid-2026, again from Damen Shipyards, with the ability to operate fully on electric battery power. Two vessels will be operating on Route 23 (Quadra Island/Campbell River) and two on Route 19 (Gabriola/Nanaimo). Full Electric operation of the four minor terminals requires berth upgrades and the addition of four charging towers over the next few years. Passenger amenities are identical to our current Island Class ferries and the hull form will be refined and streamlined to lower energy consumption.

New Major Vessel Program – 6+ vessels to replace the “Queen” class by 2029/2031. The contract is to be awarded by late fall 2024. The basic design phase has been completed and the business case will be presented to the Board on June 25 and then to the BC Ferries Commissioner.

- Ships will be double ended and interoperable on all major routes including Langdale with an emphasis on environmental performance.
- Passenger services will be scalable by route with 6 accessible washrooms and 3 passenger decks. Adult change tables will be installed on the main deck. (Deck 5).
- There will be the addition of a paid lounge with service on Deck 7 (sun deck), initially offered on the Swartz Bay/Tsawwassen route. A pet area is planned to be situated on Deck 5 which will also house the foot passenger entrance and the muster station.
- Auto-docking, auto transit will be possible (not autonomous)
- Compliance with CSA B615 standards are being followed even though some are don't translate to the marine environment well.

Design issues were discussed and Bruce has asked for input. There is only one elevator to the Deck 7 which is a customer service issue. It is still to be determined, but the shipyard may be asked to add a chair lift to the design.

The foot passenger loading area location on Deck 5 is also still to be determined.

Vessel Upgrades –

- Quarter-Life Coastal Class
- Baynes Sound Connector
- Three Quarter Life – Queen of Capilano (Horseshoe Bay- Bowen Island)
 - Elevator upgrade
 - Electronic Signage
 - Increased passenger capacity to 600.

There are plans to add a second accessible washroom to alternate vessels, Queen of Cumberland, Malaspina Sky and Queen of Capilano.

Marnie commented that communicating with the vessels regarding the groups travelling for summer camps on Bowen Island for the visually impaired can be a challenge. Karen will ensure communication is handled.

Rosa Marinelli – Director, Corporate Marketing & Customer Experience

- After a comprehensive audit of washroom signage on board, a new braille sign was created for all vessels, 10 x 13 cm, to be placed on the latch side of the washroom doors. Braille Canada has been consulted regarding a second option, due to safety equipment or limited space preventing placement.
- There are 14 vessels still requiring installation which will be complete by March 2025. Thank you to Matthew Ellies for your support.

- **Vessels completed to date (May 2024)**

Baynes Sound Connector
Coastal Celebration
Island Gwawis
Island Kwigwis
Island K'ulut'a
Island Nagalis
Kahloke
Kwuna
Malaspina Sky
Northern Adventure
Northern Expedition
Northern Sea Wolf
PuneLuxutth (Kuper)
Quadra Queen II
Queen of Cumberland
Queen of Surrey
Quinsam
Quinitsa
Salish Heron
Salish Eagle
Salish Orca
Skeena Queen
Spirit of Vancouver Island
Tachek

- We are currently in the process of assessing our 49 terminals. Approximately 26% of our terminals already have braille washrooms signs. We are looking at strategies for integrating new braille signage while continuing to consult with Braille Canada.
- We cannot place signage directly on porta potties. Signage will be placed along fencing in terminals that only have a porta potty.

Action: Rosa is currently looking into mechanisms for our accessible washrooms doors to ensure we don't have issues with equipment that does not indicate vacancy or lock.

Terminal maps for accessible washrooms should be in place by summer

Update: BC Ferries announced the replacement of the buffet space on the two Spirit Class vessels with a prepaid lounge, called the Seascape Lounge, expected to open in May 2025.

Jayne Sutton/Chris Coell - Training Update

- No training update at this time.
- Marnie brought up the importance of keeping training up to date for those staff who facilitate accommodation of those with accessibility needs. There are so many needs that are difficult to identify, neuro-divergence is becoming more common.
- Susan suggested the addition of a free quiet space for these customers would be greatly appreciated.
- Jayne mentioned we don't have specific training in these areas and Chris mentioned with so many new hires part of the challenge is "training the trainers".
- Karen mentioned BC Ferries has adapted Call Centre position testing to be oral if the candidate requests oral testing, instead of just written.

Action: Jayne will connect with Susan Simmons for ideas. David Willows suggested Victoria Airport Authority as a resource.

Other Business: Karen Tindall – Director, Customer Care

- Karen invited the committee members to the "BC Ferries Charting the Course" workshop next Wednesday, June 13, from 10 am – 12 pm. There will be some accessibility components to the workshop.
- Karen asked for feedback regarding expectation when there is no alternate transportation available during a service disruption. For example, there is only one accessible water taxi on the west coast of British Columbia. We had an extended dock closure that impacted the Shearwater community and that one water taxi wasn't available for service. The consensus was "you can only do what you can do". If there are critical specialist appointments, help the customers find a way.
- Customers don't tend to reach out and contact BC Ferries which adds to the issue. It was suggested that communication be added to the website to give instructions to customers "in the event of....."
- Karen mentioned we do work closely with BC Ambulance and many island communities already have emergency planning in place.
- Jie suggested communicating to different groups, Dr's offices, hospitals, etc., explore some possible flexibility.

Meeting Adjourned: 3:47 pm

Next Meeting Date:

Wednesday, February 26, 2025 1:30 pm – 4:00 pm via Microsoft Teams