

# FAC ROUTE REPORTS - 2023

## **Bowen Island (route 8) – Tyler Davenport**

Route 8, is a 20 minute crossing providing a vital link between Horseshoe Bay in West Vancouver to Snug Cove on Bowen Island. The Island has roughly 4250 residents and not all essential services are available on Island. People access the ferry system daily for essential services such as medical appointments, high school, and employment. In this way the ferry acts as a commuter link.

The following is a summary of the primary issues facing the route.

- 1. Poor On-Time Performance:** Route 8 has been consistently experiencing severe issues with on-time performance, particularly in summer months. Service notices are issued almost daily with delays of 20 min to 1 hr, on a route with a scheduled turnaround of approximately 1hr. Frequently sailings are cancelled in order to bring the vessel back on schedule. This causes a significant impact to transportation for islanders. Islanders who choose to travel without their car to avoid capacity issues are unable to appropriately time their arrival at the terminal as the situation may change from the time they begin their journey to the time they arrive at the terminal. This combined with 10 minute ticket cutoffs often causes users to watch the previously scheduled vessel depart and forces them to wait over an hour for the next sailing. This causes a significant stress on families who have one or more providers traveling to Vancouver. The bus service on island is timed to correspond to the ferry arrival with no trips between sailings. The bus typically waits for the ferry to arrive if it is delayed slightly. With such extreme delays the bus service becomes unreliable. This reduces usage and hampers efforts to reduce car dependency.
- 2. Seasonal Traffic Surge and User Confusion:** Route 8 like all others sees a large increase in traffic during the summer months. This surge has increased much faster than population growth in the last few years. The visitors to the Island are often confused with how the system works at either terminal. This leads to inefficiencies and confusion. The high vehicle traffic leads to users needing to arrive 1 hr before their scheduled sailing to ensure a spot. This is an extreme opportunity cost for most users. The current creation of a Metro Vancouver Campground with 100 sites has caused concern with many islanders. A primary focus of that concern is how it would further affect the ferry service.
- 3. Inadequate Staging Infrastructure at Snug Cove Terminal:** Our Snug Cove terminal is hampered by an inadequate staging setup. BC Ferries does not own the staging area and has deemed it not their responsibility. The staging area runs right through the town center. During peak times drivers become irritated and confused leading to numerous safety concerns.
- 4. Inadequate Service:** Both businesses and residents are repeatedly making requests for priority loading. This is indicative of the service levels not meeting demand. Excluding late night sailings, the route is seeing very high utilisation. Attempts were made to shift traffic to underutilised sailings last summer using highly discounted fares, the effort was not effective.
- 5. Complications in Medically Assured Loading Protocol:** With terminal capacity issues the medically assured loading system is failing users. Traffic at horseshoe bay is often backed up above the booth. Unable to even access a booth to claim their spot people requiring medically assured loading are stuck in the queue. When the issue is raised with BC Ferries the claim is that staff in and above the terminal know how to handle medically assured loading. Anecdotes from residents indicate otherwise.
- 6. Deficiency in Service Definition within Coastal Ferries Services Contract:** The ferry service contract lacks explicit definition of the expected level of service from a modern transportation provider. The service contract

does define the number of trips per day, the on road staging, and the absence of terminal parking. These do not seem adequate for the level of demand seen by the route. A larger issue is that the capacity and expected level of service does not seem properly defined. Sailings cancelled are not counted as a failure of service as long as a 12 person water taxi is provided. Residents queuing over an hour to cross is not considered a failure of the system. A ferry service contract that properly defines a modern integrated passenger service might help steer the system in the correct direction.

**7. Communication, current conditions:** The issuing of service notices has improved somewhat this year. The accuracy of current conditions information remains to be a problem. It is rare that I hear about a single negative interaction with an individual at BC Ferries, however dissatisfaction with the service as a whole is the norm.

## **Brentwood Bay-Mill Bay (route 12) – Ian Cameron**

As usual, Route 12 was an outlier in almost every respect. It's the only Route that is not strictly necessary, given that there is another way to get from one side of Saanich Inlet to the other; it comes as close to breaking even as any minor route; from May to September it has overloads on more than 50% of the runs; it has the most popular crew member on any BCF route, and it has the fewest complaints of any route. (Hardeep and I will split the credit for that, and if you believe that, you might want to buy shares in the bridge that I'm planning to build across the Inlet.)

Kidding aside, the fact that people take this ferry by choice makes it very different from other routes: if they have to wait for two or three sailings it's by choice, and no-one complains, at least not in my experience. (Except when the Malahat is closed, and then there are some complaints, but still not a lot.)

There have been minor changes made to the ferry lane on Verdier: yellow strips show entrances to parking lots and driveways, so residents and pub patrons can get in and out.

As an addendum, from August 1 to 5<sup>th</sup> every sailing has seen overloads, often two or three sailings, and still no complaints. Would that all Routes were as painless as Route 12.

## **Campbell River-Quadra-Cortes (routes 23, 24) – Michael Lynch**

The highlight for the past year for the CRQC FAC was the introduction of two vessel service on Route 23, Campbell River to Quadra. It came about almost a year after expected, but nevertheless it has transformed the service. There were some initial teething problems with the machinery and the acceptance of various loading issues by the public, but the service is improving all the time and it is now well received by the residents of Quadra and Cortes Islands.

Our only "in-person"/Webex FAC meeting was held on February 3<sup>rd</sup> on Quadra and was poorly attended by the FAC members and the public. The Committee has since had a renewal of personnel and now consists of four members from each island and the chairman, who is currently from Quadra, for a total of nine members. The two Regional Councillors, Strathcona Regional District Areas B and C, are invited to the table for meetings, but are not considered to be full voting members.

We have held two "caucus" meetings via Zoom this spring, both fully attended and feel that we have a very good working group now. We anticipate our next public meeting to be held on Cortes Island late September.

## **Chemainus-Thetis-Penelakut (route 20) – Keith Rush**

### **Capacity and on time performance:**

The Kuper has not been able to meet the summer demand for many years. Now it can't meet the daily demand for most of the year. The on time performance on the route is one of the worst in the fleet. Multiple Marine

Superintendents (see below) have had varying success at finding solutions. The bottom line is we need a larger ship with longer hours to complete the 10 round trips daily.

#### **Replacement vessel for October to December 2023 MV Kuper refit:**

The Kuper will be out of service from approximately October 10<sup>th</sup> to December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023. The Kahloke will be the replacement vessel. The Kahloke has recently been downgraded from 150+ tons load capacity to 88 tons. The Kahloke has been a dismal failure as a replacement vessel for the last 2 refits in 2014 and 2018. It will be even worse this fall, with a maximum load of only 23 cars compared to Kupers 30. Given the weight restrictions, commercial traffic will be severely impacted. The Kahloke is totally unacceptable as a replacement ship to both Thetis and Penelakuts FAC. It is so unacceptable that the residents of Thetis and Penelakut need to be compensated for the lack of service that we will receive during the refit. The FAC has been lobbying BC Ferries for years to make the changes required at Thetis and Chemainus Terminals (see below) to accommodate a larger ship and in particular the Quinitsa.

#### **Inclusion of commercial vehicles on Dangerous Cargo runs:**

The FAC has been advocating for years for BC Ferries to do the required work to allow Commercial Vehicles on Dangerous Cargo runs. Over time having this as an option would significantly help with the capacity issues we are facing on a daily basis.

#### **Chemainus and Thetis terminal upgrades:**

Both Chemainus and Thetis terminals are at 'end of life' and require significant upgrades or total replacement. Currently, the eventual replacement vessel for the Kuper is the Island 47 class ferry. These ferries will not fit into Chemainus or Thetis terminals. Thetis is further compromised by the deeper draft of the 47 class ships and the cultural significant area that the current dock and trestle are situated on.

#### **Continuous changes of senior route personnel and access to those individuals:**

We have had 6 Marine Superintendents in the last 4 years, 2 of whom I have never met and 1 of those, I have never even spoken to. In our role as FAC Chair, it is vital that we develop a working relationship with these senior route personnel. To do this, we need direct access to these individuals via cell phone, email and office personnel.

### **Denman-Hornby (routes 21, 22) – Karen Ross**

**ROUTE 21 (Vancouver Island to Denman Island):** This summer, BCF has initiated a tandem service, deploying the 50-year-old, 21 AEQ\* Kahloke to run in tandem with the 45 AEQ\* cable ferry for eight hour shifts, 5 days a week.

Complaints continue regarding the Baynes Sound Connector (BSC) cable ferry. With lack of service capacity on the days that tandem service is not offered. (65% of the operating hours). However, the pilot project is partly successful, addressing both service & road parking safety issues during the 40 hours/wk. that increased capacity is in place.

If this tandem service is to continue as the YEAR-ROUND service solution on Route 21, ongoing mechanical issues with the BSC will need to be resolved, tandem service hours will need to be expanded to provide full service, a newer second vessel acquired, the old docks rebuilt, and double/triple the crew hired. BCF will need to justify a cost-benefit analysis (including social and environmental costs) of this option vs. the cost of decommissioning the BSC and deploying a fleet (and engineering) compatible vessel.

**Sidebar: \*Actual vs. AEQ: Kahloke: 28/21; Quinitsa: 50/44; BSC: 52/45. If the actual capacity of the Kahloke and BSC are added, 28 plus 52, the experience this summer indicates that an 80-vehicle ferry is needed on Route #21, full-time, NOW.**

Here is a copy of a cartoon that a Denman resident published on Facebook, July/23:

We continue to lobby for replacement of the cable ferry, with a reliable, serviceable, self-propelled vessel on Route 21. The cable ferry is a failed experiment, with a track record of broken promises since it's installation:

- “The barge” cannot “double”. The vessel it replaced could do 2 runs/hour, and it was promised that service levels would be maintained.
- Denman Island population growth has gone from about 300 residents in 1983 to about 1200 residents now. The same capacity (approx. 50-car-vessel), has been on that route for 40 years!
- Similar significant population growth has been experienced on Hornby, the second island that shares the Cable Ferry service.
- Repairs and maintenance are done “after hours”. Emergency, after hours, service for residents is impeded. For instance, Feb. '22, local emergency services were notified that for 14 nights no ferry service would be available, affecting both Hornby and Denman peoples' access to health care.
- It can't operate in winds exceeding 39 mph (promised to operate in winds up to 55 mph as self-propelled ferries can)
- Operational costs were supposed to be reduced, offering a benefit to BCF's bottom line. Instead, breakdowns, Transport Canada staffing requirements, service interruptions, and maintenance costs plague the BSC. In the Baynes Sound Connector Report, Feb. 16 '23 (a.k.a. The Anderson Report) it states:
  - Maintenance costs for this vessel have been significantly higher than anticipated in the business case and are driven by a number of factors.....While targeted technical modifications have achieved some improvements, costs remain above business case estimates.
- The combined FAC and Action Discussion Group have been requesting the worksheets that provide background information for the “Anderson Report” on options for vessels service for Route 21. We do not understand why Option 2, to decommission the Baynes Sound Connector and replace it with an inter-operable, self-propelled vessel was not recommended. Why does B.C.F. continue to throw good money after bad?
- BCF ignores feedback and the “lived experience” for the people of Denman and Hornby Islands, the environmental and social costs of constant repairs, and its own Corporate vision for inter-operable vessels in the Minor Route fleet.

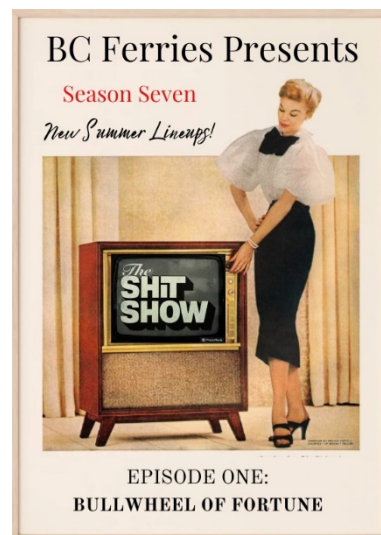
**ROUTE 22:** The 44 AEQ\* Quinitisa was deployed to the Hornby route (#22) in June and is scheduled to stay until Dec. '23. (It is then scheduled to return in April 2024, leaving 5 months of inadequate service by the 50-year-old, reduced capacity Kahloke)

Again, the seasonal deployment of the Quinitisa has been generally successful, although BCF management have precluded this ferry from shuttling (“doubling” of hourly service), so as not to overload parking on Denman Island roads. However, the extra deck space and weight carrying capacity, offered by the Quinitisa, is a significant improvement in mitigating unsafe traffic line-ups at both terminals it serves.

The FAC requested directional shuttling of the Quinitisa, to clear Gravelly Bay terminal and maintain a smooth flow of the supply chain traffic onto Hornby. This request was not implemented, and suppliers continue to report through-traffic delays and disruptions.

#### **MORE ISSUES PLAGUING OUR COMMUNITIES:**

1. BCF's proposed terminal expansion at Gravelly Bay, the departure terminal from Denman to Hornby. BCF has promised a new proposal, which hopefully addresses safety & service and offers an innovative approach to



working with the environment and preserving the rural character of the terminal and protecting our precious trees.

2. Vehicles speeding on the Islands, is an issue for both islands. Speeding to catch ferries is a big topic, and very important for the safety of residents, other motorists and wildlife, on both islands. Potential solutions: RCMP enforcement, reservations, more Island-equal allocations of the deck space on the shared ferry, a ticket system that secures the order of the line-up, direct service to Hornby, etc.

#### **SUMMARY:**

Issues dealing with two islands sharing the same ferry are complicated and require innovative thinking. Collectively, we continue to appeal to BCF, the Commissioner, the Ministry of Transportation, and the public to supportively insist that BCF provide safe, reliable, effective, affordable, year-round service to the ferry-dependent communities of both Denman and Hornby Islands.

### **Gabriola (route 19) – Steve Earle**

Although Gabriolans generally like their new Island Class vessels and the two-ship service, 2022-23 has been a challenging year for Route 19, mostly because of issues with service reliability. The honeymoon period for the new vessels and schedule appears to be over in the minds of many Gabriolans, and there are now frequent complaints about them being too small for the route, and not sufficiently reliable.

The key factors for service reliability are:

Crewing shortages. This primarily affects the Gabriola-based vessel because of the limited pool of qualified staff on Gabriola versus Nanaimo. We seem to have at least a few crew-related sailing cancellations every week, in some cases just for a single round-trip, but in others for an entire morning or afternoon.

Mechanical issues. Although the vessels are still “new”, they do have breakdowns, and because the systems are all digitally controlled the fixes can be complicated. The FAC has been told that even minor repairs have to be done, or at least supervised, by staff from Damen, the vessel builder.

Weather. Delays with major infrastructure renewal on Route 19 means that the 2<sup>nd</sup> ship has to be tied up at the public dock in Nanaimo Harbour when it isn't in service. The tie-up situation requires a sideways approach, and this can be challenging in high winds. On June 13<sup>th</sup> of this year almost an entire day of service was cancelled because the wind was forecast to strengthen, and the captain decided that it wasn't safe to leave the tie-up process until later in the day when the conditions might be worse. This incident resulted in 3 to 4 hour waits for passengers travelling from Nanaimo to Gabriola in the afternoon and evening, and that was exacerbated by the fact that the other vessel was short-staffed (so sailing with a reduced passenger capacity). Some foot passengers (including school students) had to be turned away. When asked by the FAC why some of the crew that weren't doing anything because their vessel was tied up could not have been deployed, the BCF response was that it just “did not happen” – presumably because nobody thought of it. The FAC is concerned that this shows a lack of initiative or engagement on the part of staff. The FAC is also concerned that BCF hasn't made sufficient efforts to secure an alternative tie-up position for high-wind situations like that described above.

Capacity is a particular issue in the late afternoons, especially in summer when there are many visitors to Gabriola. Capacity problems are exacerbated by crew meal breaks because one of them is at noon, near to the peak of travel from Gabriola to Nanaimo, and the other is in the early evening, during the peak of travel from Nanaimo to Gabriola. Apart from that, it is becoming increasingly clear that a single ferry in service after 5:05 pm does not have the capacity to carry summer levels of passengers and vehicles coming to Gabriola. On summer weekends (especially Thursday, Friday and Saturday) some of the busiest sailings and longest vehicle

line ups are after 5 pm, which is when ferry capacity is reduced to a single vessel. The following is from a member of the FAC, dated July 27<sup>th</sup>: “I spent a two-hour evening wait this week listening to frustrated passengers making angry and accusatory speeches in the lot (I'm not kidding, over a dozen people listening and standing around) about the evening single ferry and associated problems. For privacy reasons, and because I had my daughter with me, I kept my mouth shut. The rumour engine around this issue is gathering fuel. There is a limited window of opportunity to head off what seems to be becoming a major community issue. Angry people do unpredictable things...” The FAC would like BC Ferries to consider changes to the schedule to reflect the fact that passenger demand remains high precisely when ferry capacity is reduced.

The Island 47s do not fit perfectly in the existing docks on either end of the route. The key problem is with the ramp angle at very low and very high tides, and this means that some long loads, including commercial vehicles and travel trailers, are not able to load or unload. There are posted messages about this problem. The commercial users and most Gabriolans appear to have this figured out, but few visitors are aware.

Planned renewal of the terminal infrastructure in both Nanaimo and on Gabriola was delayed because of COVID and because of issues related to consultation with the Snuneymuxw First Nation. The completion date has now been pushed back to 2028. This delay means that the long-load issue will be with us for at least another 5 years, and that backups onto unsuitable and dangerous roadways, both on Gabriola and in Nanaimo, will continue, and will continue to get worse with traffic growth.

There is one Dangerous Cargo sailing each week on Route 19, leaving Nanaimo on a Wednesday morning and returning in the late afternoon. All gasoline and propane transporters are restricted to these times. The capacity on these sailings is lower now than it was with the Quinsam and there has been one recent incident when a fuel truck for two marinas and a float plane fueller were denied. This capacity problem may be exacerbated by high fuel demands in the summer. The FAC would like to work with BC Ferries to solve this problem.

At the March 2023 Gabriola FAC meeting with BC Ferries, the FAC requested a special meeting with BC Ferries to discuss safety concerns regarding pedestrian, cyclist, and disabled access to the terminal and adjacent roadways. The Gabriola FAC is concerned that waiting until terminal redevelopment of 2028 (or later) to address these concerns is inadequate. The FAC is still requesting a special meeting with BC Ferries to address outstanding safety concerns as identified by BC ferries in their TDP.

Although BCF is making an effort to improve communications with both the FAC and the community there are still considerable challenges in this area; responsiveness to concerns continues to be slow and cumbersome. The app designed to speed up notifications has been trialed by a number of FAC members, and has been found to be unreliable. The app in particular is a disappointment as the FAC (among others) has been requesting an SMS-based solution for years. Such technology is readily accessible, affordable, and already in use by many levels of government and private organizations. SMS solutions are more reliable (especially on islands with less than ideal internet and cell coverage) and user-friendly and it is difficult to understand why BCF chose to develop their own app while continuing to promise text notifications as a “future improvement”.

## **Gambier-Keats (route 13) - Joe Wright**

Route 13 is a passenger only service. It does connect directly with Route 3, Horseshoe Bay-Langdale, and many of the challenges relate to coordinating Route 3 schedules with Route 13 schedules. Given significant local traffic from permanent residents of the islands, we see challenges with overloads coming to and from Route 3 from week-enders and visitors, from the Victoria Day weekend in the spring through Thanksgiving weekend. This report is similar to the one from 2022.

Our biggest issues from Route 13 relate to the difficulty in the summer season, especially, to be able to make reservations for vehicle travel on Route 3. It is nearly impossible to do this in a reasonable time frame. And the second issue, again worse in the summer season is the on-time performance for Route 3 which is very poor. This causes missed connections to Route 13 and results in wait times at Langdale.

Other issues are focused around the very complex scheduling challenge of meeting arriving and departing Route 3 passengers for two different islands. Early in the Covid pandemic we essentially isolated the two islands, having round trips to each one separately as distinct from some of the earlier runs which were “milk runs” including passengers from both islands. This has worked well and given the second challenge – significant population increases on both Gambier and Keats – has helped with overload issues. The Stormaway has some ability to add extra runs for major overload runs subject to other schedule commitments, but there is not a lot of flexibility. We have managed to fine-tune the Route 13 schedule on a seasonal basis to adjust to the realities of connections to Route 3, both arriving and departing.

Passenger luggage on peak runs, particularly in summer continues to be a challenge, but mostly it has been managed by the Stormaway crew, with occasional requirements for luggage to wait for a less busy trip. The largest challenge is for weekend runs connecting to Route 3 with passengers using large four-wheeled wagons which take up considerable space.

We continue to fuss about the relatively high cost of fares on Route 13. It is an issue that goes back to the startup of the Stormaway service when it replaced BC Ferries operated vessels. It is an issue we would like to bring to the BC Ferries Services Board.

In summary, Route 13 issues relate to large and sustained passenger traffic due to population increases, scheduling to coordinate Route 13 with schooling and with Route 3 as well as two islands, high fares, and periodic large amounts of passenger luggage in restricted space. Difficulties in making reservations for Route 3 travel in the summer are frustrating, and Route 3 on time performance is of great concern.

## **North & Central Coast (routes 10, 11, 26, 28) – Evan Putterill**

The North & Central Coast Ferry Advisory Committee provides advice for four routes in a geographical area consisting of the northern half of the coast of British Columbia including the following Routes:

- Route 10 runs from Port Hardy to Prince Rupert servicing ferry dependent communities enroute.
- Route 11 connects the ferry dependent communities on Haida Gwaii to the highway networks at Prince Rupert (and Port Hardy, via Route 10).
- Route 28/28a servicing ferry dependent communities on the central coast and connecting them to the highway networks at Bella Coola and Port Hardy.
- Route 26 connecting the community of Sandspit with other ferry dependent communities on Haida Gwaii.

This short report is not exhaustive and focuses only on major overarching issues.

Each route is unique; however, there are some issues that are shared between routes:

- **Poor communication:** service notices can be slow to go up and are not always accurate or clear; current conditions portions of the website are not particularly useful for these routes; information screens at terminals are often incorrect; a lack of cell service and/or intermittent public wifi at unmanned terminals makes it difficult to get information; and terminal staff are often unaware of what the plan is in non-normal situations.

- **Lack of openness with public:** There is a reluctance for BC Ferries to be open and honest with the public when things go wrong. There needs to be a policy of 100% openness and transparency if ongoing or recurring issues are to be rectified.
- **No vessel redundancy:** the degree of ferry dependence on the North/Central Coast is very high and there have been a number of cases in the recent past where there have been major mechanical issues that have taken vessels out of service with no other vessels in reserve; when failures do happen BC Ferries has been slow to implement alternative transportation and get tug and barge service into place; in addition the handling of the needs of stranded passengers, many of whom are low income and traveling on medical trips, is slow and insufficient. There is a high degree of risk that significant social and economic damage will be caused to communities if ANY of the three vessels goes out of service for an extended period at any time of the year.
- **Staffing Model:** over the past several decades the major shift in staffing on the North/Central coast routes; in previous decades these crews lived mainly in the North, while now most tend to live in urban areas in the south and BC Ferries fly them north. This has no bearing whatsoever on how well these crews perform their duties; however, it does incur significant ongoing costs, creates risks associated with chartered crew flights being delayed or cancelled; and sometimes creates a disconnect between locals and crews. On Route 26, for example, it results in poor coverage in the case of a staff member being sick and needing a shift covered, as the replacement may have to be flown in. BC Ferries should invest in hiring, training, and retaining locals directly into full time permanent positions and BC Ferries should create incentives for employees to relocate to the North/Central coast; this may require investment in housing for these workers (within communities) by BCFS and/or Government.
- **Connectivity:** connectivity between the North & Central coast routes is poor and more action should be taken to optimize connectivity. It is understood that this is a complicated task given the restraints on the system.

**Routes 10 & 11** are somewhat integrated as they share terminals and the two large northern vessels (the Northern Adventure and Northern Expedition). Some issues on these routes are:

- **Service Levels:** Insufficient frequency and/or deck space to accommodate the demand of ferry dependent communities they serve in such a way that promotes livability and economic growth. Unfortunately, apart from extending the shoulder season, these vessels are running at the highest frequencies that they can. BCFS should begin planning for an additional vessel to allow for a future increase in service on these routes; it could also serve the purpose of creating fleet reserve for the north in case of a prolonged issue with a vessel.
- **Poor vessel interior design:** the Northern Adventure and Northern Expedition do not have enough sleeping accommodation for over night sailings resulting in passengers frequently sleeping on floors in areas with bright lights, further it is common on overnight sailings to see many seniors and First Nations elders sleeping on floors, often when on medical trips. BCFS should investigate installing sleeping pods; and/or comfortable lay flat seating.
- **Waitlists:** although there have been improvements in this regard there is still problems with optimising the waitlist process for cars (and cabins) on these routes to provide passengers with more certainty. The NCCFAC looks forward to receiving additional information and having more discussions on this at our fall meeting as BCFS has committed to providing more detailed information.

**Route 11 Cancellation Process:** route 11 sailings are 6 days a week in the summer and 3-4 in the winter and there are no alternatives for those traveling with cars and very few for foot passengers. As such canceling



sailings creates a situation where passengers, many who are on medical travel, are stranded with no way home. As such, sailings on route 11 should not be cancelled and instead they should be postponed and combined to the furthest degree possible. In addition, **BC Ferries needs to be more diligent in accommodating stranded passengers**: this may include immediately chartering flights, booking hotel blocks, and allowing stranded customers onto the vessel it is docked.

**Route 26 Frequency:** ridership on this route has increased significantly over the past two years and is much busier than pre-covid; morning and mid day overloads and multiple sailing waits are very common. Luckily there is room for adding additional sailings on this route within the existing shifts on the vessel (so with only minor staffing cost inputs, if any). Requests to increase service levels for the summer of 2023 were partially accommodated; however, the increase was only very minor. The NCCFAC has requested more information from BCFS on this topic and are waiting patiently; we look forward to more serious discussions about increasing sailings within already crewed periods for 2024.

**Route 28, Shearwater dock:** the ferry dock at Shearwater has been out of service since January 27 due to structural issues. The interim service being provided to that community is very inconvenient, is impacting the local economy, and users have identified safety concerns. **The failure of this critical infrastructure resulted from a lack of preventative maintenance and lack of inspections of the infrastructure**; the NCCFAC has been assured that these failings have been corrected but have not been provided any details in that regard. The posted service notice states “Due to berth availability at the terminal, the Northern Sea Wolf will be unable to dock at Shearwater until further notice.” This statement is a prime example of public communication from BC Ferries obscuring accountability. The NCCFAC has not been provided an update on this issue since our spring FAC meeting.

## Northern Sunshine Coast (routes 7, 17, 18) – Kim Barton-Bridges

### Salt Spring Island (routes 4, 6, 9) - Harold Swierenga

Salt Spring Island has had its share of the delayed and cancelled sailings which have affected the entire system. With all three ferries serving the Island home-ported here, the impact is immediate.

In the longer run the picture is much brighter. Plans are in place to overhaul the route 6 terminals at both Vesuvius and Crofton in time for the arrival of the dual Island Class Ferries later this decade. Plans call for adequate off-street lineup parking at both terminals.

On route 4 the Skeena is running on a ten round-trip schedule ( as opposed to the regular eight ) during the summer months. The longer term plan is to have the Quinsam now serving on route 6 provide peak season back up service on route 4 when it is replaced on route 6 by the Island Class pair.

Routes 4 and 6 have not seen the scale of overloads and multi-sailing waits experienced during the last few years. The ten daily trips on route 4 and the more efficient Quinsam on route 6 have had a positive impact.

Lots more to do though. The thirty year campaign to upgrade the Fulford Harbour terminal and the road approaches to it is still a major issue to both ferry users and Fulford residents.

And as the population of the Island increases and travel patterns change we keep wondering how to plan for future ferry service.

## Southern Gulf Islands (routes 5, 9) – Mary Greenwood, David Maude

### Route 5/5a

The capacity increase afforded by deploying the Salish Raven and Queen of Cumberland has worked for this peak season as of August 4. The Queen of Cumberland, however, does need to deploy at least one ramp some

days. FAC was assured that the ramps would not be necessary. Off-Peak season 23/24 should be fine with the capacity of these two vessels, but Shoulder and Peak 2024 may be a challenge, as the islands are busier than they ever have been. (pandemic, air travel uncertainty, proximity to major centres, open borders, inflation)

There continue to be loading problems at all terminals.

Generally, the terminal and deck crew are much improved dealing with mobility challenged people. It is quite sad then, that there is still work to be done with BCF staff on this issue, especially with the BC Accessibility Act 2022, now being a fact.

SGL FAC asked repeatedly for the traditional “Fire Risk” messaging this season and it became a convoluted process. To the FAC and the stakeholder members of the public we work with, it seemed like we were not believed when we said, we don’t hear the announcements. We are in a Stage 5 drought, the islands are tinder dry, we all have go bags ready. Messaging on the Ferries was not happening. Every message that emphasizes the need to monitor fire risk and conserve water is both appreciated and necessary.

### **Route 9/9a**

This popular route has become oversubscribed. Families cannot make travel plans unless they book weeks in advance. I would recommend revisiting the schedule and vessels that operate on the route.

There needs to be a clear and firm directive given and adhered to on vehicle traffic exiting before bikes and passengers. Simply because vehicles are faster and the jam ups at on the roads from the ferry are dangerous. Slower moving people and bikes get a little start on hilly, windy roads and people in vehicles who are unfamiliar with the roads the pose a hazard. This is a perennial issue but needs to be settled.

The ferry ridership is frustrated by the website, the app, and the corporation’s dependence on a second party social media distributor. The process for standby and waitlist is not clear to the general public. BCF needs to make its in-house IT systems robust, flexible and responsive.

In closing, the “new normal” has arrived. Demographics have shifted- there is a different “vibe” on the SGL now. People can and do make reservations and travel plans on the fly. They depend on the BC Ferry Corporation as the only way to get home. Let’s work to make that a simple reality.

## **Southern Sunshine Coast (route 3) – Diana Mumford**

The continuing frustrations of our residents with late (only 73.6% on-time) or overloaded (31.3%) ferries and poor facility amenities at terminals is evidenced in the recently released BC Ferries Annual Report to the Commissioner. Customer Satisfaction across all the routes has dropped, but route 3 scores the worst in almost all categories.

FAC members provided details of many of those issues in a recent FAC/BCF meeting, issues which have been raised with BC Ferries and documented since **2001**. At the beginning of the meeting with BC Ferries we provided the statement that “the priority issue for SSCFAC is increased capacity and reliability for our large and growing community, and this issue has been long standing.” FAC members continued on to highlight issues that could be solved in the shorter term. The issues included:

- **Sailing Availability**

The busy season for travel on route 3 is not just the peak, but from Spring Break to Thanksgiving. Last year, BC Ferries promised to provide supplementary service for spring and fall, but that was rescinded. Unlike the rest of the week in peak season, Tuesdays and Wednesdays did not receive any extra summer sailings. The limitation of Tuesdays and Wednesdays sailings is causing issues as those are the ones that residents try to use for travel to medical appointments etc in the city. Now Tuesday and Wednesday travel has more

overloads and lack of on-time sailings so timely arrival to necessary appointments for residents is negatively impacted.

- School groups and teams, due to their limited size of under 10 are not recognized by BCF as qualifying for group rates and support. A presentation by a school drag race team indicated that obtaining space to travel with the tow truck and drag vehicle was difficult in the drag race season in the summer.

- **On-time performance**

On-time performance for route 3 is just 73.6%. It is common that one route will impact the performance and arrival/unloading/loading issues of the multiple routes using Horseshoe Bay. There is no opportunity for route 3 to 'catch-up', by the end of the day sailings are behind schedule.



- **Sailing Schedule**

FAC members have been advocating since November 2001 for 'commuter' sailings at 6:20 am and 5:30 pm. In 2017 a community survey indicated very strong support for these two times. BC Ferries acknowledged the community need and put in those times for year round. However, BC Ferries is removing those vital sailings, explaining that their decision is due to a "lack of crew". This summer, neither Tuesday or Wednesdays have the commuter ferry at 5:30. Not only does this affect commuters, but it impacts travel for Gambier/Keats passenger ferry, whose residents struggle to make medical appointments in the city and complete the trip on the same day.

- **Basic health and safety needs at Horseshoe Bay**

Ferry users may be 'parked' above the toll booth for hours before being processed for the inside terminal lot, even though the terminal area for route 3 sits empty. Above the toll booth there is no water, no shade and no services for humans or pets, just four Jiffy Johns that are located at the top of a long hill with a significant incline and lengthy distance. Compounding the issue, people do not feel confident leaving their vehicles as the lines are moved with no warning. People waiting above the toll booth often have to use the roadside to deal with young children that "need to go pee" (see photo). BC Ferries has repeatedly claimed that the property above the toll booth is under MoTI jurisdiction. In doing their due diligence, FAC members contacted and were recently informed by a MoTI employee that it is under the jurisdiction of BC Ferries!



- **Accessibility**

Accessibility is challenging for ferry users with mobility issues at terminals when boarding and disembarking, and when trying to access passenger decks for washroom etc when aboard ship. As a result Ferry users are to their vehicles. Oftentimes they cannot maneuver walkers and wheelchairs to elevators due to parked vehicles blocking access. Walk-on passengers who travel by public transit or private vehicles also face significant challenges when negotiating their way through the terminal to loading area and onto ferry. The distance is lengthy and have inclines impede those with mobility issues. FAC members suggested that BCF consider implementing a passenger trolley with the baggage cart to move people, or to provide motorized scooters that do not require staff resources. FAC members were advised that this is the purview of their Accessibility Committee. The FAC Chair noted that the committee meets only twice a year, and their minutes have not been posted since June 2018.

- **Communication**

Passenger related communication is a perennial issue which has seen little improvement. From the poor placement of webcams at the terminals, to posting the inaccurate wait-times (as a result of vehicles held for lengthy periods outside the toll booths), and Service Notices that are inaccurate and/or not timely, ferry users continue to struggle to accurately access the availability and actual sailing times for their ferry travel. FAC members have suggested more cameras and better placement at Horseshoe Bay and Langdale to more

accurately communicate traffic loads. As well, BC Ferries should indicate the sailings that are not able to be reserved. The lack of information for these sailings leads people planning weeks in advance to believe that there are no reservations or space on any sailings and deters them from travel. The information that these sailings are 100% available is only available in a 12 hour period on the current conditions page. There needs to be a distinction between 'reservations sold out' and 'sailing not reservable'.

- **Student Traveler Policy Alignment**

FAC members asked that Route 3 traveler policy be aligned student traveler policy with the policy on other routes. They requested that students 18 and under, who are traveling for sporting or educational reasons, ride free on HSB-Langdale route to align with same BC Ferries policy used for 12 other routes. **This has been an ask from FAC since inaugural meeting of September 2001.**

- **Langdale Redevelopment Funding**

In 2017 there was a Federal Government announcement of \$17 million through the Provincial-Territorial Infrastructure Component – National and Regional Projects towards the completion of the final phases of the Langdale terminal re-development. Both the MP at the time and the CEO of BC Ferries were in attendance at the announcement. The improvements were intended to assist with on-time performance and accessibility. The re-development process continued until January 2020 and then it came to a halt, yet extensive planning information remains on BC Ferries website. There have been no explanations from BC Ferries, and no plans when this redevelopment will be put into action. It is not on the current 12 year capital plan. FAC members questioned what happened to the \$17 million from the Federal Government?

## Tri-Islands (route 25) – Melissa Fletcher