

BC Ferry Services Inc.

Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Meeting Details

Date February 4, 2014
Time 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM
Location BC Ferries Head Office – Suite 500-1321 Blanshard Street

Attendance

Public Interest Representatives

Pat Danforth, Board Member, BC Coalition of People with Disabilities
Susan Gallagher, Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians
Hugh Mitchell, Canadian Hard of Hearing Association
Scott Heron, Co-Chair, Spinal Cord Injury BC
Valerie Thoem, BC Coalition of People with Disabilities
Jane Sheaff, Seniors Serving Seniors
Ernie Stignant, Disability Resource Centre
Mary K. Kennedy, CNIB

BC Ferries Representatives

Karen Tindall, Director of Customer Care, Customer Care Department
Garnet Renning, Customer Service & Sales Representative
Stephen Nussbaum, Regional Manager, Swartz Bay
Steve Shardlow, Training Manager, Terminals
David Carroll, Director, Terminal Construction, Engineering
Captain Hardeep Grewal, Coastal Celebration
Darin Guenette, Manager, Public Affairs

Regrets

Peter Simpson, Director Operational Strategy, Fleet Operations
Jeff Joyce, Director, Operational Training, Fleet Operations and Training
Jeff Davidson, Director, Retail Services, Food and Retail Operations
Sheila O'Neill, Catering Representative, Central Coast
Captain Chris Frappell, Marine Superintendent, South and Central Coast
Bruce Paterson, Fleet Technical Director, Engineering
Barbara Schuster, Canadian National Institute for the Blind

Introductions

Co-Chairs Scott Heron and Karen Tindall welcomed the members of the committee.

Review of minutes – July 17, 2013

Matters Arising

Standing Items

Loading Practices

Stephen advised the committee that the decision of where the best place is to marshal passengers with disabilities during pre-boarding is an ongoing consideration at the terminals. Hugh suggested separated areas of refuge in waiting rooms with barriers to allow passengers with disabilities to load first. A discussion ensued on how BC Ferries can emulate what the airlines do in terms of pre-boarding passengers. It was suggested that adding wheelchair symbols to a section of chairs in waiting rooms would be an easy way to provide an identifiable pre-boarding seating area.

Stephen discussed recently reviewed customer feedback regarding loading practices. He identified a common concern expressed from passengers who are unable to exit their vehicles during sailing due to how they have been loaded. Stephen asked Karen if this was a trend that seems to be growing or staying about the same level. Karen advised that this seems to be a seasonal issue with less complaints received in the off-peak season. Stephen also noted that he was pleased to see a number of positive customer comments regarding wheelchair services and terminal staff assisting passengers. Scott asked if there is a way to tell if customer feedback is coming in from a frequent traveler or someone who does not travel often and Stephen agreed to look into this further.

ACTION: Stephen will look into whether BC Ferries can determine if customer feedback comes from a frequent ferry user who is familiar with the system or a newer user and report back to the committee at the next meeting.

Induction Loop Technology

Karen provided information from Bruce who has confirmed that Induction Loop technology is required on Norwegian Ferries. While the technology is in place, Bruce could not validate how effective customers feel it is. Hugh asked how we can get Induction Loop technology mandated here and how we can replicate what Norwegian Ferries are doing. Discussion ensued.

ACTION: Bruce will provide further updates at the next meeting.

Vessel Developments

Karen provided updates in the absence of Bruce Paterson who is conducting shipyard tours as part of the Vessel Replacement Program. Highlights from Bruce's observations include sliding doors employed on handicap washrooms, hydraulic elevators and signage. Discussion ensued.

Karen noted details of the Vessel Replacement Program – Intermediate Class Ferries, Mid-Life Upgrade Program for the Queen of Capilano and Queen of Cumberland and vessel upgrades for the M.V. Tachek and M.V. Kwuna.

Spirit Class – Mid-Life Upgrade

Karen provided updates from Bruce regarding the mid-life upgrade program for the Spirit Class vessels. The project will begin in September 2016 with the Spirit of Vancouver Island. Liquid Natural Gas is still under consideration. There will be an expanded gift shop on deck 5. It was asked during discussion on this topic whether or not change rooms will be added. Karen confirmed that they will. There was a

consensus that this will be a welcome addition as it will stop passengers from trying on clothing in the handicap washroom.

Terminal Developments

David Carroll provided a Power Point presentation on 3 terminal projects with accessibility improvements underway. Hand outs were provided as well. David presented the Westview trestle/berth rebuild, Skidegate terminal building entrance and Swartz Bay/Tsawwassen Way Finding signage.

The new trestle at Westview will have a 1.8 metre walkway separated from the roadway by concrete barriers with a railing. The new waiting room will have barrier free access.

The new Skidegate terminal entrance meets Barrier Free Guidelines. Stairs have been eliminated, handrails are to code and concrete ramps in both directions do not have grades exceeding 8%. The door is not automatic at this time, and David suggested we could see if a push button can be added in the future.

David advised that the Way Finding Signage project was completed at Swartz Bay. Tsawwassen is the next major terminal to undergo the project and installation is scheduled for April. After viewing examples of new signage proposed for Tsawwassen, Mary asked whether there would be yellow paint on the outdoor barriers passengers walk through when boarding or unloading on foot from the vehicle deck. She recommended this based on feedback from people she has worked with at Swartz Bay who said the yellow paint used there adds contrast and helps lead passengers who are visually impaired in the right direction. A discussion ensued about the possibility of using reflectors or tactile markers on the outdoor passenger walkways at Tsawwassen.

David also brought a tactile women's washroom sign including Braille as an example and handed it around for the committee to see.

Karen advised that she will provide updates from the ACE project about screens at terminals with a presentation at the next meeting. She will also include any updates concerning accessibility within the ACE project.

David advised he will provide a presentation about the Langdale Master Plan at the next meeting.

ACTION:

Training

Steve Shardlow presented updates in the continued implementation of the SEA program across the fleet to the committee. He advised that this is the first year Catering will use the program and it is expected to be fully implemented fleetwide by 2016. Steve discussed Customer Service Enhancement training and the goal of this program to have employees look at situations from the customer's perspective to improve overall customer service. Ernie asked how much of this training included information about passengers with disabilities and Steve confirmed that every section of training touches on accessibility. Steve asked that the link to the training website be included in the minutes for committee members to review. BC Ferries SEA homepage can be found here: <http://learning.bcferrries.com/>.

Other Business

Karen and Scott provided copies of Terms of Reference (TOR) for review and discussion. They requested that members validate the groups they are representing and make sure they appear correctly in the TOR. Ernie said the next meeting will probably be his last and he will be bringing new members to replace him. Valerie will confirm what group she is representing by next meeting. It was suggested that the TOR be updated to include only the names of the member organizations and not the person representing each organization, as this can change. Karen and Scott agreed that this would result in fewer changes to the TOR and was a good idea. Scott asked if there were any groups committee members could think of that were not represented in the committee. Karen mentioned the Arthritis Society and Mary suggested including someone who works with an organization dealing with service animals. Mary will see if she can find someone to participate and Karen and Scott will request representation from other organizations that are identified that are currently not represented.

Scott asked if members would prefer to keep the current meeting schedule of twice per year, or if they would prefer to have one scheduled meeting per year and other meetings added as needed. Pat recommended the committee keep the current meeting frequency of twice per year to avoid losing focus. Hugh also agreed that meeting every 6 months works well because customer and committee member input needs to be provided frequently enough to exact change. The consensus was to keep the current meeting frequency.

Pat Danforth provided copies of two emails and asked the committee to review and comment on their content. The first email from the Canadian Marine Advisory Council (CMAC) expressed concerns regarding the manner in which special needs passengers are dealt with on domestic passenger vessels in Canada. The CMAC are asking for input and support from special needs organizations. Concerns identified in the email include evacuation equipment, elevators, crew training and the need for self-identification. Karen explained to the committee that BC Ferries implemented a process at the ticket booth for those that self-identify and there is information on our website. Accessibility and safety brochures are available onboard and at the terminals. However, we are aware that self-identification is a challenge and we have very few customers that self-identify at the ticket booth or through the Customer Service Centre in advance of travel. If customers do not self-declare, staff will not be aware that there are customers onboard that require special assistance in the event of an emergency. Karen expressed that BC Ferries would be happy to receive some recommendations on how we could improve – as long as they do not infringe on our customer's privacy. Discussion ensued.

The second email presented to the committee by Pat advised that the Code of Practice: Ferry Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities (Ferry Code) is being updated. The Canadian Transportation Agency is soliciting comments as part of its update to the Ferry Code. Discussion ensued.

ACTION: Karen will update the TOR and send out to committee members.

Next Meeting

July 23, 2014