



San Juan County Council

Ferry Advisory Committee

Jim Corenman, San Juan, Chair
Larry Vandermay, Orcas, Vice Chair
John Whetten, Lopez
Dr. John Brantigan, Shaw

Rich Hughes, San Juan County Council
Deborah Hopkins Buchanan, Visitors
Pat McKay, Commercials, Secretary

Date: January 6, 2017

To: Lynne Griffith, Assistant Secretary, Washington State Ferries

CC: WSF Executive Committee, John Vezina, FAC

Subject: Response to San Juan Islands Task Force, FAC Discussion.

Lynne,

FAC and the citizens of San Juan County are very grateful for the time that you and your team spent in our islands last August. As a follow-up to those meetings, your staff sorted comments into three broad categories, and further into four topics where operational or policy changes could result in improvements for the spring season. The goals included a focus on quick "wins"—changes which could yield positive benefits within time and budget constraints.

We requested the opportunity to collaborate on changes, WSF instead organized an in-house "task force" to make recommendations. These were presented to us on Dec 5 via teleconference and via a "San Juan Islands Task Force / FAC Discussion" Powerpoint presentation on Dec 15 with a request for feedback. We responded but no apparent consideration has been given to our suggestions (emails attached). This contrasts sharply with the original design of the reservation system which was very much a collaborative effort between WSF, FAC and the Reservations Partnership.

There were four topics identified as priority issues in the Task Force document (pg. 5): Standby space, website/customer service experience, 30-minute arrival window and email alerts. We agree that these were the primary topics that are "fixable" to some degree. With respect to call-center/website issues, we agree that the short-term proposals outlined will help, and also agree that standby space is not an issue, but remained concerned with the no-show rate.

The two areas where FAC disagrees with the proposed recommendations are the hard 30-minute cutoff for the arrival window, and email alerts as they relate to adjusting that arrival window for late boats (promised as late as August, now considered impractical). We also remain very concerned about large commercial vehicles, which are both the lifeblood of our islands and also greatly disadvantaged in terms of missed sailings (tall space is fully reservable and no-shows are few).

We have submitted written comments via email on Dec 5 and Dec 22 (copies attached), which were acknowledged but not addressed in the FAC Discussion document (pg. 23, copy attached).

Our primary recommendation is simple: Honor reservations until the vessel begins loading. Specifically:

- Keep the public message the same: "Plan to arrive 30-90-minutes prior to the scheduled sailing time, and allow extra time during periods of heavy traffic (e.g. holidays and weekends, especially in summer)".
- Change a few words in the Terms and Conditions: (a) Arrivals after 30 min prior **may** be required to travel standby; (b) arrivals after loading begins **will** travel standby.
- Terminal Policy: Honor reservations until the boarding announcement (marking beginning of loading).

The advantages are that late boats are naturally accommodated, email alerts announcing a revised arrival window are no longer an issue, and everyone gets a little break when the traffic is unexpectedly heavy. And it gets rid of "ferries allows itself to be late but not the riders", which not the best message to be sending. This also solves most of the oversized commercial issue. It is a win-win, for both ferries and the riders.

Our discussions have traversed a wide range of reasons why ferries believes that the 30-minute hard cutoff is required. For example:

- 1) Terminal staff prefers a time-based cutoff.

This appears to be given the highest priority, but does not consider rider needs nor has there been any comment on the feasibility of other options.

- 2) On-time performance was improved for 2016 (pg. 25, 26).

Also a priority, and simply incorrect. Only 2016 data is presented, but comparison to 2015 shows that OTP was worse, not better, in 2016. The differences are arguably within normal variation but to the extent that

the 30-min hard cutoff was a factor, it made it worse not better. (See attached charts).

- 3) Dwell times are consistent with a 30-min arrival window (pg. 27).

Only 9 out of 21 sailings out of Anacortes are shown, while the remainder are mostly 20 or 25 minutes. So for half of the sailings, arrival must occur before the boat has even arrived at the dock to avoid the risk of missing the sailing. FAC believes this is unnecessary and is not perceived by the public as "reasonable".

- 4) In spring and fall 2015, vehicles (primarily Lopez) were left on the dock on multi-destination sailings, while space remained on the boat (pg. 28 and phone discussion).

This has been discussed many times. Multi-destination sailings are primarily an issue for spring and fall schedules, not summer which has the highest traffic. Bill Pike provided an excellent analysis of this in his June 3 letter (attached, and provided via email previously).

- 5) Operations and "safety" require knowing the vehicle load 30 minutes prior (phone discussion, 1/5/2016).

This cannot be a "safety" issue, because ferries has never counted cars at the 30-minute point in the past yet was able to operate safely. Whenever the count is made, vehicles continue to arrive and are loaded safely.

Operationally, a 30-minute reservations cutoff is irrelevant to sending the vehicle counts to the vessel. Counts have always been for whatever vehicles were in the lot at the time, and have never been "final" or accurate as vehicles continue arriving right up to sailing time. It is just a snapshot.

- 6) Visitor businesses prefer the simplicity of a 30-min arrival.

Agreed, and nothing we propose changes that: FAC recommends that the public message continue to be "Plan to arrive at least 30 minutes prior". That's pretty simple.

There is one very important thing to keep in mind throughout this discussion: Reservations have nothing to do with loading the vessel.

This seems absurd, but consider how the reservations system works at Anacortes: As vehicles arrive they are directed by the tag shack to one of about 16 holding lanes depending on destination, size, reservation status and any special requests (elevator etc.). So for Friday Harbor as an example, standard-sized reservation holders might be sent to lanes 1 & 2, talls to 3, standbys to 4 and elevator requests to 5. At that point they simply become vehicles parked in a lot, and reservation status no longer matters.

At loading time, the vessel staff might ask for elevators first, then 30 cars, then talls and then the rest of the cars—depending on the vessel configuration and mix of vehicle sizes. So the terminal sends lane 5, the first half of lanes 1 & 2, then lane 3, the rest of 1 & 2 and then 4. The vessel staff doesn't care which lane they come from, and neither terminal nor vessel staff care who had a reservation or not—at that point it is all irrelevant.

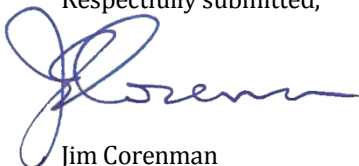
The multi-destination problems in 2015 occurred when terminal staff failed to follow WSF's own policy: Reservations were to be no longer honored once the first standby was loaded. Instead, staff would continue to load late-arriving reservation-holders right up to sailing time. FAC believes that if the original policy had simply been followed then most of the issues identified in 2015, which led to the hard 30-min cutoff, would have been non-existent.

But that was then, the "now" is that WSF is trying to respond to complaints created by the hard 30-min cutoff. For WSF to go back to the public with "no change", as recommended, is not going to be perceived by anyone as a "win". But it is actually worse than that: In addition to offering no relief from the hard 30min cutoff, the task force recommendations also rule out any possible sliding of the window for late boats (the email alert issue), and staffing cuts (and policy) will prohibit Anacortes from cutting anyone some slack next summer no matter what the circumstances. (It is no secret to riders that Anacortes didn't always enforce the 30min cutoff during the 2016 summer season).

The arrival window rose to a priority here because of public input during the outreach. We believe our recommendation is workable and practical, and urge WSF to give it serious consideration.

There is no "win" with the current proposals for ferries or for the public, and we would like to help change that.

Respectfully submitted,



Jim Corenman
Chair, San Juan County FAC
fac@sanjuanco.com



Jim Corenman <admin@siriuscyber.net>

Re: San Juan Island Task Force Discussion

1 message

Jim Corenman <jim@siriuscyber.net>

Mon, Dec 5, 2016 at 10:06 PM

To: "John Vezina (WSF)" <VezinaJ@wsdot.wa.gov>

Cc: Rick Hughes <rickh@sanjuanco.com>, "Rodero, Hadley" <RoderoH@wsdot.wa.gov>, "Churchwell, Brian" <ChurchB@wsdot.wa.gov>, FAC <fac@siriuscyber.net>

John,

Thanks for the phone conversation last Friday. I'm summarizing our conversation here to share with FAC, and also including some comments on the 30-minute rule beyond what I mentioned on the phone. I have included the Nov 16 summary that Hadley had provided as a reference. Please feel free to add anything that I missed.

The four items that the your task force has focused on are the following, in the priority order that you expressed on the phone:

- 1) 30 minute arrival window: frustration, plus commercials.
- 2) Alerts, particularly email alerts on late or broken boats
- 3) Call center/website issues
- 4) The 10% standby space allocation.

We discussed those in reverse order:

4) Standby space: WSF cited a lack of data, I agreed. We also discussed the effect of no-shows, and the likelihood that the no-show issue could not be effectively addressed until a new fare system was implemented (e.g. charge the ticket when making a reservation).

3) WSF is making improvements to the website capacity per Microsoft recommendations, and Stephanie continues to improve the call center. I think we agree that website performance and call center demands are related: Website failures increase the callcenter volume. I also recommended streamlining the website where possible, e.g. dump the "captcha" in favor of Google's "I am not a robot" check-box, and don't repeat that once qualified. The mobile site continues to need improvement.

2) Email alerts are an ongoing effort. The concerns here are notices re: broken boats, and the need to communicate a new departure time if a boat is late-- which relates to the 30-min arrival window. We discussed that a late arrival did not necessarily translate into a late departure, making alerts problematic for reservations planning.

1) We agreed that the highest-priority topic continues to be the reservations arrival window, and we agree that consistency is key. You reported that the task force determined that handling of the arrival window has not always been consistent (e.g. "walking the line" close to the 30-min point). This is something that FAC and the partnership group has expressed concern about since nearly the beginning.

You asked what would be a "win" for us. My response was that a "win" would be any decision that FAC felt that they had participated in. Specifically, knowing what the problem was that was to be solved, knowing what the constraints were, and being able to offer input in the context of that information. Absent that our suggestions are based only on our own observations and may not be the same as if we had all of the info.

Expanding on that: We still do not know what problem WSF was attempting to solve with the change to the current 30-min rule. We've heard half a dozen different explanations, this continues to be a mystery to us. But we do agree that consistency is critical, folks get confused and unhappy when they make a boat one day and then miss it the next under exactly the same circumstances.

Last year the policy was laid out in Brian's detailed chart of Oct 2 2015 (also attached, see last section on the last page): "Reservation holders are asked to arrive at the back of the line approaching the terminal 30-90 minutes prior to the sailing {recommended, not mandatory}; Customers arriving less than 30 minutes may forfeit their reservation [again not mandatory]; Customers arriving after the 1st standby vehicle is loaded for the 1st destination will have their guaranteed space forfeited and be placed in the back of the standby lane [mandatory]."

What WSF actually did however was often different: Late arrivals with reservations were often boarded ahead of standbys for another destination, or even the same destination in some cases.

We believe that consistently following the previous policy would have resolved most of whatever the problem was. And we would agree that determining when the "1st standby vehicle is loaded for the 1st destination" would be hard for the ticket agents to determine, absent some communication from the loading staff to the booths-- IF that is what the problem was. And if that was the problem then there are many ways to solve that.

The 30 minute rule is problematic for all of the reasons that you have heard from FAC and the public. We do not believe that any clock-based policy is going to be practical in an environment where boats are often 10-20 minutes late (see e.g. summer).

We continue to believe that an event-based rule is the best option. The 2015 policy was one such, with the potential problem of the "1st standby for the 1st destination": That can be hard to determine and communicate.

One event that is completely obvious is the boarding announcement by terminal staff. This is heard throughout the terminal and our observation is that this generally corresponds to rolling the first vehicles. And it is always within 30 mins of actual sailing time, typically 15-20 min. Make this the cutoff for reservation arrivals.

The other question is end-of-line versus booth: The former puts the onus on ferries for booth staffing, the latter makes it the traveler's problem-- with no way to know about, nor remedy, a long line. I think a satisfactory solution has to have some sort of end-of-line guarantee, which means on busy days-- and especially if the booths wind up being understaffed-- someone is going to need to walk the line. When that has happened in the past the feedback we've gotten has always been positive, it is a big PR "win" for ferries.

Here is my suggestion, based on lots of discussion amongst FAC members and based on our our observations of what the problems have been. This is subject to revision after discussion with FAC, but I think it is close:

- 1) Reservation holders are asked to arrive at the back of the line approaching the terminal 30-90 minutes prior to the sailing [consider recommending 45-90 min for summer season];
 - 2) Customers arriving less than 30 minutes MAY forfeit their reservation;
 - 3) Customers arriving after vehicle loading has begun* WILL have their guaranteed space forfeited and be placed in the back of the standby lane.
- (*) Where "Loading" is defined as the boarding announcement in Anacortes, and rolling vehicles in the islands.

I hope this is helpful.
Respectfully submitted,

Jim Corenman
Chair, San Juan County FAC
360-378-5156
fac@sanjuanco.com

2 attachments

 **FAC Update_SJI Task Force_November 16_hr.pdf**
325K

 **SJI Reservation Program Policy Review and Recommendations.pdf**
436K



Jim Corenman <admin@siriuscyber.net>

SJI Task Force Recommendations

1 message

Vezina, John <VezinaJ@wsdot.wa.gov>

Thu, Dec 15, 2016 at 3:02 PM

To: Deborah Hopkins <deborah@visitsanjuans.com>, Jim Corenman <fac@sanjuanco.com>, John Brantigan <jbrantigan@rockisland.com>, John Whetten <johnandcarol@rockisland.com>, Larry Vandermay <dutch@pacifier.com>, Patricia McKay <icp@rockisland.com>, Rick Hughes <rickh@sanjuanco.com>
Cc: "Rodero, Hadley" <RoderoH@wsdot.wa.gov>, "Churchwell, Brian" <ChurchB@wsdot.wa.gov>

San Juan Island FAC members,

Good afternoon.

Attached, please find recommendations made to Lynne and some members of the WSF Executive Team, regarding the priority issues our internal task force has been reviewing since Lynne's visit up there in August. The Task Force, made up of people working on the route and policy staff here, met with them yesterday to update execs on work-to-date and to go over these recommendations. **No decisions have been made and Lynne was clear she wanted to hear the FAC's thoughts before making any of the recommendations final.**

On tomorrow's call (starting at noon), Hadley and Brian will go through the attached presentation, explaining how the task force came to these suggestions and asking for your initial input and advice. We'd then like to schedule a follow up discussion the first week of January, to get your final feedback on the recommendations. The Task Force meets with Lynne and the execs again on January 10, to get their final concurrence, so we'd like your input well before then.

For tomorrow, the dial in is: [888-354-0094](tel:888-354-0094); Passcode - 785835#. Hadley, Brian, and I look forward to talking with you.

Best,

John

John B. Vezina

Government Relations Liaison

Washington State Ferries

Work – [206.515.3411](tel:206.515.3411)

Cell – 206.473.9945

3 attachments



SJITaskForce_FACUpdate_121616.pdf
874K



SJITF Shifting the 30.pdf
58K



SJI Task Force_FACUpdate_121616.docx
78K



Jim Corenman <admin@siriuscyber.net>

RE: SJI Task Force Recommendations

1 message

Jim Corenman <jim@siriuscyber.net>

Thu, Dec 22, 2016 at 2:12 PM

To: "John Vezina (WSF)" <VezinaJ@wsdot.wa.gov>

Cc: "Rodero, Hadley" <RoderoH@wsdot.wa.gov>, "Churchwell, Brian" <ChurchB@wsdot.wa.gov>, FAC <fac@siriuscyber.net>

John,

I am happy to chat on the 5th, and am sure some of the other members can be available. I am confused by the goal for the meeting, however. Our thoughts and recommendations haven't changed, and are probably best summarized by my email of Dec 5.

I'll add a brief summary of our comments on the update document here, and can discuss in more detail. We're in general agreement on the standby and customer-experience issues, our concern continues to be the arrival window, and email alerts as they relate to that.

The arrival window rose to a priority here because of public input during the outreach. We identified that as an issue previously, and have tried to explain WHY we believe there is frustration. You may disagree, but that doesn't change the frustration.

We have also made some suggestions which we believe are consistent with Anacortes and island terminal operations, and have not heard why those can't work or won't help.

For WSF to go back to the public with "no change", as your task force has recommended, is not going to be perceived as a "win". But it is actually worse than that: In addition to no change for the hard 30-min cutoff, the task force also rules out any possible shifting of the window for late boats, and staffing cuts (if not policy) will prohibit Anacortes from allowing anyone some slack next summer no matter what the circumstances. (It is not a secret to riders that Anacortes often didn't enforce the 30-min cutoff).

Where is the "win"? Not here. We would like to help try to change that, but are feeling completely stymied.

We appreciate the effort that went into the data presented in the update. We don't however agree that the data supports the conclusions that were drawn.

Briefly: The 84% "on-time" number leaves 16% with forfeit reservations, but lumping all but 2% into a large "10-29" category provides no guidance. (That's also a heck of a lot of potentially-annoyed folks).

The real issue is that reservations don't load the vessel. What reservations do is load the staging lot. The vessel is then loaded from the lot-- two separate operations. The "counts" are simply how many vehicles happen to be there at loading time, irrespective of reservation status. Neither lot nor vessel staff care what's reserved or not, only which lanes go first. They also don't care if all the vehicles are there-- latecomers have been accommodated, space available, since forever and will hopefully continue to be.

So the assumption that OTP and dwell time are indicators of reservation performance is incorrect. Since vessels are loaded from vehicles already staged in the lots, OTP and dwell time should be independent of arrival windows, and are: OTP did not get better for summer 2016 as stated, it was actually worse. A small amount, and arguably just normal variation, but there is no support that a hard cutoff helped OTP.

Same with the OTP chart (pg. 26) for summer 2016 with the heading of insufficient dwell time: Sure, there are some issues on some days for some sailings, and always have been-- happy to discuss further. But if you pull up the same chart for 2015, 2016 actually looks worse-- not better.

The chart on pg. 27 shows specific Anacortes dwell times for 2016. Again, if you do the 2015/2016 comparison, actual dwell times are a little longer for 2016, not shorter. Only a few tenths of a minute in most cases, and possibly due to an increase in traffic, hard to tell. But again there is no evidence that the hard 30-min cutoff helped Anacortes turn the boats any faster.

A reminder: Multi-destination sailings are primarily a spring/fall issue, while summer schedule-- when traffic is highest-- has few. To the extent that "leaving vehicles on the beach" during spring/fall is still a concern, we believe that Bill Pike's letter of June 2 on that topic addresses that effectively.

There is one other thing that drives customer expectations with respect to reservations: Every other transit system that we know of makes allowances for running late. Certainly airlines do: They don't give away your seat at 40 minutes prior, or even 20. And if they are late then you can be late also, and enjoy an extra cup of coffee. Ferries seems to be unique in requiring customers to be on time even when it is not.

We continue to believe that our suggestions will not impact Anacortes operations, will eliminate the late-boat issue, will eliminate any need to shift a window, and will eliminate most of the large-commercials issue (Pat McKay estimates 80%). It doesn't require that WSF change its message, it would still be "arrive 39-90 minutes prior to sailing and please allow extra time for heavy traffic". The only thing you need to do is change "will" to "may" in the Terms, and establish a strict policy at the terminals that when loading begins, the tag shack starts sending everyone to the standby lanes. It is not difficult, and all makes sense.

We have lots more detail and are happy to discuss further. My concern is that we've put a lot of time and effort into this and don't seem to be going anywhere. We do not understand the reluctance to get everyone around the same table, and we do not understand how excluding FAC and public input from the discussion helps arrive at a better decision.

Happy holidays,
Jim

Jim Corenman
Chair, San Juan County FAC
360-378-5156

----- Original Message -----

From: "Vezina, John" <VezinaJ@wsdot.wa.gov>
To: Jim Corenman <jim@siriuscyber.net>
CC: "Rodero, Hadley" <RoderoH@wsdot.wa.gov>, "Churchwell, Brian" <ChurchB@wsdot.wa.gov>, FAC <fac@siriuscyber.net>
Subject: RE: SJI Task Force Recommendations
Date: Thu, 22 Dec 2016 00:13:19 +0000

Jim,

Thank you for checking with people and getting back to me so quickly.

Looking at Hadley, Brian, and my calendars, Thursday the 5th looks best. How about 9.30-10.30am? Our conference number is: 360.709.8067; Passcode: 1085101.

I know Brian mentioned including the task force members in the call, but we'd like to do the call on the fifth with just the three of us and the FAC, leaving open the possibility of another call with the task force members before final recommendations are given to Lynne and other members of the executive team. We'd appreciate hearing your thoughts on the task forces' recommendations and any proposals you have, before involving the entire task force in another conversation. I hope that's okay.

Thanks,

John

John B. Vezina
Government Relations Liaison
Washington State Ferries
Work - 206.515.3411
Cell - 206.473.9945

-----Original Message-----

From: Jim Corenman [mailto:jim@siriuscyber.net]
Sent: Wednesday, December 21, 2016 1:18 PM
To: Vezina, John <VezinaJ@wsdot.wa.gov>
Cc: Rodero, Hadley <RoderoH@wsdot.wa.gov>; Churchwell, Brian <ChurchB@wsdot.wa.gov>; FAC

<fac@siriuscyber.net>

Subject: Re: SJI Task Force Recommendations

John,

Regarding a follow-up meeting during the first of January: Our best availability would be Tuesday Jan 3 or Thursday Jan 5. Everyone is available in person except John Whetten who can call in, and John Brantigan who will be unavailable.

When we spoke you mentioned that task force members could be included, this would certainly be appropriate and appreciated.

Time and location are flexible (with consideration for ferry schedules), please let us know what works best.

Thanks, Jim

----- Original Message -----

From: "Vezina, John" <VezinaJ@wsdot.wa.gov>

To: Deborah Hopkins <deborah@visitsanjuans.com>, Jim Corenman <fac@sanjuanico.com>, John Brantigan <jbrantigan@rockisland.com>, John Whetten <johnandcarol@rockisland.com>, Larry Vandermay <dutch@pacifier.com>, Patricia McKay <icp@rockisland.com>, Rick Hughes <rickh@sanjuanico.com>

CC: "Rodero, Hadley" <RoderoH@wsdot.wa.gov>, "Churchwell, Brian" <ChurchB@wsdot.wa.gov>

Subject: SJI Task Force Recommendations

Date: Thu, 15 Dec 2016 23:02:21 +0000

San Juan Island FAC members,

Good afternoon.

Attached, please find recommendations made to Lynne and some members of the WSF Executive Team, regarding the priority issues our internal task force has been reviewing since Lynne's visit up there in August. The Task Force, made up of people working on the route and policy staff here, met with them yesterday to update execs on work-to-date and to go over these recommendations. No decisions have been made and Lynne was clear she wanted to hear the FAC's thoughts before making any of the recommendations final.

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For tomorrow, the dial in is: [888-354-0094](tel:888-354-0094); Passcode - 785835#. Hadley, Brian, and I look forward to talking with you.

Best,

John

John B. Vezina
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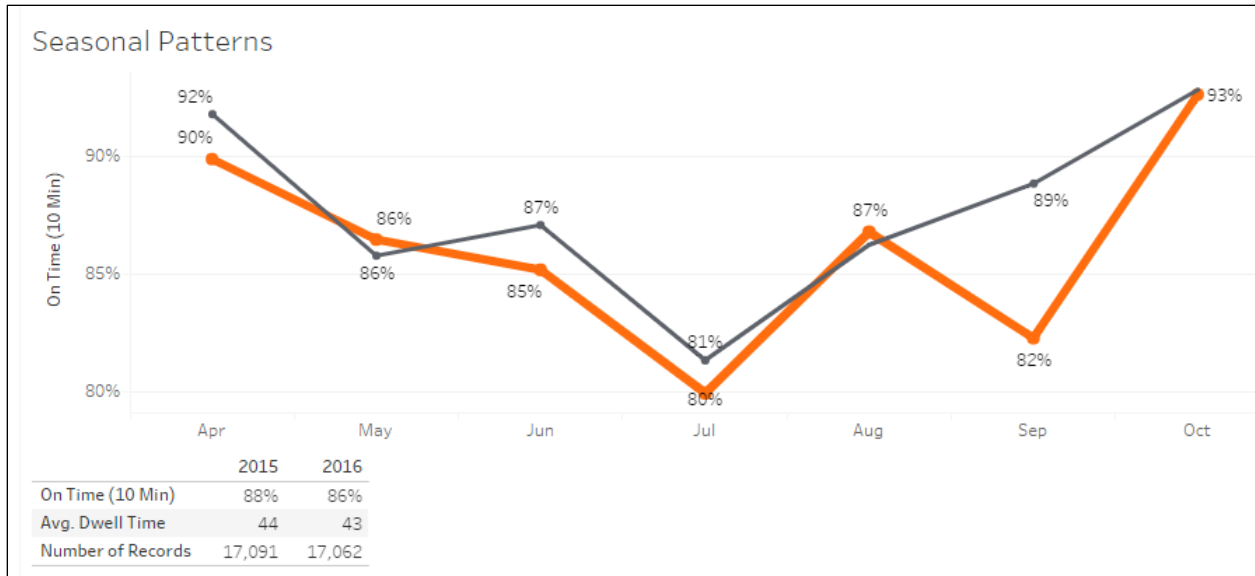
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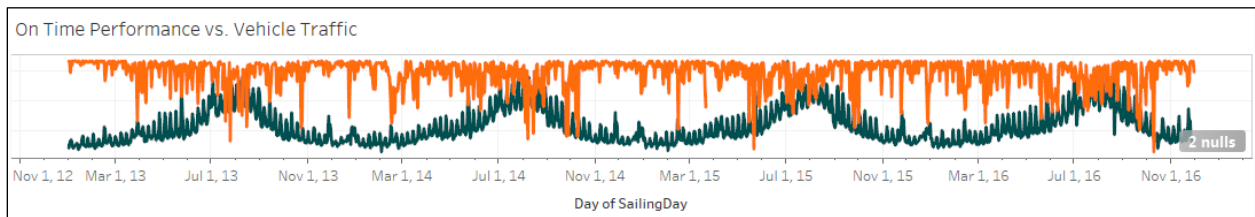
An analysis of On-Time Performance (ref: Discussion pgs. 25-28):

On pgs. 25 of the discussion document it was asserted that "OTP has improved with the implementation of the 30-minute arrival policy".

Here are OTP averages, by month, for summer 2016 (orange) versus and 2015 (black): Overall, OTP dropped by 2% for summer 2016 compared to summer 2015. There were a couple of months (May, August) where 2016 was marginally better, but the other months were down significantly. We don't believe that OTP is related to reservations arrival policy, but to the extent that it is then the 2016 policy change made it worse, not better.



Here is a variation of the chart on pg. 25, showing 2013-2016 traffic (black) vs. OTP. Boats get late when traffic gets heavy, there is nothing new about that—and nothing related to reservations. There is also no advantage to vehicles arriving at the booth earlier, the vessels cannot start loading any earlier during peak traffic periods.



This chart (pg. 26) was presented to show that there are areas of the schedule with insufficient dwell time to manage the demand. We disagree that this has anything to do with dwell at Anacortes (or anywhere), the worst congestion (and increasing lateness) occurs mid-day/mid-week when there are conflicts between the mainland and interisland boats at the island terminals. Only this 2016 chart is shown in the document:

By Time of Day - 2016		2016																							
Weekday of..	Gran..	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	0			
Grand Total		88%	98%	98%	99%	92%	88%	84%	77%	83%	80%	84%	91%	88%	88%	74%	84%	86%	84%	91%	91%	92%	96%		
Monday		91%	100%	100%	97%	91%	84%	82%	80%	89%	84%	81%	89%	89%	96%	80%	93%	88%	98%	100%	100%	100%			
Tuesday		91%	100%	100%	99%	91%	80%	75%	78%	86%	85%	81%	99%	97%	91%	97%	100%	96%	88%	100%	93%	93%			
Wednesday		84%	93%	93%	99%	89%	88%	81%	64%	75%	63%	79%	91%	86%	71%	71%	93%	94%	90%	93%	90%	86%			
Thursday		77%	93%	93%	99%	90%	76%	69%	41%	59%	56%	66%	82%	70%	81%	67%	77%	79%	80%	76%	88%	93%			
Friday		88%	100%	100%	99%	89%	93%	90%	84%	82%	80%	90%	87%	94%	94%	69%	88%	85%	81%	70%	83%	90%	96%		
Saturday		95%	100%	100%	100%	98%	96%	95%	91%	93%	95%	95%	93%	97%	93%	89%	91%	94%	95%	100%	85%	89%			
Sunday		88%	100%	100%	100%	97%	100%	94%	100%	98%	94%	98%	93%	86%	89%	46%	49%	63%	57%	100%	98%	96%			

An analysis of On-Time Performance (ref: Discussion pgs. 25-28):

The source of this data is the WSF OPT data made available to FAC for schedule reviews. Detailed OTP data is invaluable for understanding schedule conflicts, which is what this illustrates.

Below is the same chart, same format and same data source for 2015 (first year of reservations). While there are similar areas of congestion this prior year, they got significantly worse (not better) in 2016 compared to 2015. We believe this is due to factors other than reservations, but to the extent that the hard 30-min cutoff is related, it made things worse not better.

By Time of Day - 2015		2015																				
Weekday of..	Gran..	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	0
Grand Total	89%	99%	97%	97%	91%	88%	88%	83%	82%	85%	84%	90%	84%	88%	73%	89%	88%	84%	94%	95%	96%	93%
Monday	92%	100%	100%	98%	82%	84%	92%	87%	86%	93%	95%	94%	88%	100%	73%	91%	90%	88%	100%	100%	100%	
Tuesday	87%	93%	93%	95%	88%	84%	76%	67%	73%	82%	79%	94%	89%	75%	86%	95%	93%	88%	100%	100%	100%	
Wednesday	88%	100%	93%	96%	88%	80%	83%	74%	73%	77%	71%	90%	84%	80%	81%	96%	96%	98%	93%	98%	100%	
Thursday	86%	100%	100%	95%	94%	86%	82%	71%	77%	80%	76%	91%	84%	88%	70%	89%	85%	77%	90%	93%	89%	
Friday	88%	100%	100%	97%	93%	91%	93%	88%	84%	83%	85%	88%	87%	96%	66%	87%	83%	72%	77%	85%	93%	93%
Saturday	91%	100%	93%	98%	95%	91%	93%	91%	89%	83%	85%	83%	89%	89%	87%	94%	88%	98%	100%	95%	89%	
Sunday	89%	100%	100%	99%	97%	100%	96%	100%	91%	94%	98%	90%	69%	86%	50%	73%	80%	69%	100%	97%	100%	

Here is the same chart for 2014, not much different than 2015:

By Time of Day - 2014		2014																				
Weekday of..	Gran..	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	0
Grand Total	87%	98%	99%	97%	92%	95%	87%	85%	83%	82%	81%	89%	88%	87%	81%	78%	76%	84%	90%	87%	90%	71%
Monday	90%	93%	100%	98%	93%	94%	88%	88%	88%	90%	83%	96%	90%	94%	79%	76%	83%	86%	93%	85%	96%	
Tuesday	89%	93%	100%	94%	94%	95%	83%	78%	76%	82%	78%	92%	91%	89%	96%	89%	86%	93%	100%	85%	96%	
Wednesday	87%	100%	100%	98%	88%	96%	90%	83%	74%	78%	79%	87%	97%	86%	90%	79%	77%	86%	86%	85%	89%	
Thursday	82%	100%	100%	94%	74%	83%	72%	71%	74%	76%	76%	82%	84%	82%	75%	74%	71%	83%	81%	88%	93%	
Friday	89%	100%	93%	96%	98%	98%	90%	94%	93%	82%	86%	91%	97%	98%	76%	73%	72%	81%	93%	95%	85%	71%
Saturday	90%	100%	100%	99%	98%	100%	92%	89%	90%	80%	79%	90%	84%	85%	81%	91%	83%	98%	85%	88%	93%	
Sunday	84%	100%	100%	99%	99%	95%	94%	93%	88%	88%	88%	84%	74%	75%	67%	60%	62%	64%	93%	81%	79%	

MEMORANDUM

To: Jim Corenman, Chair, San Juan FAC

From: Bill Pike

Date: June 3, 2016

Subj. "Vehicles Left On The Beach" at Anacortes

Jim –

Ever since the issue of "vehicles left on the beach" surfaced last year, I have been at a loss to explain how such a problem could exist in the first place, let alone continue to occur on numerous occasions throughout the summer and fall sailing seasons. I have always been reluctant to blame the problem on the advent of the Vehicle Reservation System but as the VRS and the incidents of vehicles being left behind began at roughly the same time, it is only logical to conclude that there may be a connection between the two. Clearly WSF believes this to be the case.

When Kristina Arsenault told the FAC at the April meeting that WSF had implemented the 30 minute cut-off rule in order to address the issue of ferries departing Anacortes with empty deck space while cars were being left behind at the terminal, I decided that it was time to delve deeper into the issue in an effort to gain a clearer understanding of what was actually happening. Fortunately, the issue only arises on sailings that are relatively full so the opportunities to witness it first hand have been somewhat limited for the past two months. That situation seemed likely to change over Memorial Day weekend, however, and I made it a point to monitor the loading of each ferry departing Anacortes last Friday and Saturday in the hope of observing at least one case of vessels departing with empty deck space and leaving "vehicles on the beach."

I didn't have to wait very long.

On Friday morning, May 27th, the 10:35 departure to Lopez, Shaw and Orcas left Anacortes with four empty spaces clearly visible on the aft end of the car deck while at least six or seven cars remained parked in the Lopez stand-by lane. There were no vehicles remaining in any of the Shaw and Orcas lanes. Almost immediately I began to appreciate what had happened and how the VRS, while not being the cause of the problem, was clearly a factor, at least to the extent that the ferry did not depart with a full load. In simple terms, the VRS has been so successful in reducing the number of stand-by vehicles (what we used to refer to as over-load vehicles) that it is not uncommon for boats to depart with all of their reservation vehicles and all of the stand-by vehicles and still have some empty deck space left over. When this occurs on multi-destination sailings where the crew has been unable to maintain a lane for late-boarding, first-destination cars, there is no choice but to leave first-destination stand-by vehicles behind

(“on the beach”) even if this means that the boat will leave with empty space on the car deck.

To better illustrate this situation and to identify what has changed in the last 18 months, allow me to offer two scenarios; one, which takes place in 2014 before the advent of the VRS and one, which takes place in 2015 when the VRS was fully operational. In both examples, the ferry is a Super class vessel with a planned capacity of 139 cars and the boat is scheduled to sail from Anacortes to Lopez and then on to Friday Harbor.

Scenario #1 (2014)

We all remember how the Anacortes terminal operated in the pre-VRS era. On heavy travel days there could easily be more than 500 cars lined up in the various lanes, separated only by height and destination. The agent in the tag shack would record the number of vehicles in each lane and, as the total count began to approach the vessel capacity, he or she would begin to place those ominous over-load tags under the windshield wipers of the cars that might not make it on board the next ferry. Just prior to boarding, the agent would provide the appropriate counts of “entitled” vehicles for each destination based on the order of check-in and the vehicles would be loaded according to those numbers. On board the ferry, the crew would try to isolate one lane exclusively for Lopez traffic so that vehicles destined to Lopez could be accommodated throughout the boarding process. As it became obvious that the boat could accommodate more than its planned capacity, additional cars would be loaded to both Lopez and Friday Harbor, based on the over-load tag numbers and assuming that the isolated Lopez lane was still being maintained on the ferry. If the mixture of vehicles had made it impossible for the crew to maintain the isolated lane, the Lopez boardings would be closed and the remaining space would be filled with Friday Harbor over-loads. There would be vehicles to both destinations left on the beach but the ferry would always sail with a full load.

Scenario #2 (2015)

With the advent of vehicle reservations three notable changes have taken place which impact the boarding process. First, and most importantly, the number of cars waiting to board each ferry has been substantially reduced to the point where there is seldom more than one boatload of vehicles waiting to board a ferry. Secondly, in addition to the planned capacity number for each class of ferry, there is now a reserved vehicle number as well, which represents the maximum number of reserved spaces that can be offered on each boat. In the case of the Super class ferry in this scenario, that number is 126. Lastly, vehicles are now split into three groups and assigned different lanes by the tag shack agent; reserved cars, reserved tall vehicles and stand-by vehicles of all heights. The terms “entitled” and “over-load” are gradually disappearing from the terminal vocabulary. Just prior to boarding, the tag shack agent still provides the appropriate vehicle counts for each destination but now the cars are loaded based on their reserved or stand-by status, not exclusively by their order of check-in. Ideally, at boarding time, the total number of vehicles in the reserved lanes to both destinations will equal the reserved vehicle number for the boat but late arriving reserved vehicles and no-shows almost

always mean that the number of reserved vehicles boarding the ferry will be less than the maximum. (This creates a separate issue involving the reservations cut-off time, which I will discuss later.) In this scenario, however, let's assume that we have 42 reserved cars destined for Lopez and 84 headed to Friday Harbor for our maximum of 126 reservations. We also have 15 cars in the Lopez stand-by line and another 10 trying to get to Friday Harbor. With a planned vessel capacity of 139 there are 13 spaces left for stand-bys. Those spaces are filled to each destination based on the order of check-in and, in this example, we will assume that we will take the first 7 from the Lopez line and the first 6 from the Friday Harbor line, leaving 8 and 4 vehicles in the respective stand-by lanes. After all 139 vehicles have been loaded the ferry crew reports that it still has space for 8 additional cars. If the isolated Lopez lane has been maintained, the 8 spaces are filled with a mixture of Lopez and Friday Harbor vehicles, still based on the order of check-in. If, however, the crew has not been able to maintain the isolated lane, additional Lopez traffic cannot be accepted and all 8 remaining spaces are given to Friday Harbor stand-bys. In our example, however, there are only 4 Friday Harbor stand-by vehicles in line so, once those cars are boarded, the ferry departs with 4 empty spaces and 8 Lopez cars left behind.

I believe that these two scenarios illustrate why the "vehicles left on the beach" issue is continuing to occur, why it became so obvious with the advent of the VRS and how the entire issue was largely masked by the sheer volume of over-load cars to all destinations in the days before reservations. In simple terms, the loss of the isolated, first destination lane on the ferry and the lack of sufficient second destination stand-by vehicles is leaving empty space on the car deck and first-destination vehicles on the beach.

Obviously, this issue only occurs on multi-destination sailings and only has a negative impact for vehicles destined for the first point in the ferry's itinerary. At Anacortes, this clearly creates a more significant issue for vehicles headed to Lopez or Shaw than it does for those going to Orcas or Friday Harbor. In the case of Shaw, however, I would submit that there are few if any stand-by vehicles on most sailings because nearly all Shaw traffic is made up of residents (or their guests) who realize that a reservation guarantees them a space on a boat that is normally filled to capacity with Orcas vehicles.

In the case of Lopez vehicles, as long as there continue to be instances where the ferry crew is unable to maintain the isolated lane on the boat, there will undoubtedly continue to be instances of Lopez stand-by vehicles being left on the beach at Anacortes while the boat sails with empty spaces on the car deck. In all fairness, however, I think it's important to point out that when the ferries are sailing in the opposite direction, it is the Lopez vehicles that are given access to any additional deck space at the expense of cars boarding in Friday Harbor or Orcas. As we all know, eastbound sailings to Anacortes with multiple points of origin are loaded at each island in accordance with pre-established allotments. On a typical Friday Harbor-Lopez-Anacortes sailing with an Olympic class boat, Friday Harbor might be limited to only 107 Anacortes vehicles in order to provide the requisite 34 spaces for Lopez. If the crew has managed to load the boat efficiently, however, there may be room for as many as 10 additional cars once the 34 vehicle allotment is on board and all ten of those spaces will be given to Lopez vehicles,

assuming that there are at least 10 additional vehicles waiting to board. While the loading of multi-stop ferries can seem to favor one island over another, the fact is that the advantage is reversed when the ferry is sailing in the opposite direction so the drawbacks and the benefits are pretty evenly spread out among all the islands.

Perhaps the most important point that this examination has revealed is that instances of ferries departing with empty space while vehicles are left on the beach can only occur when four specific circumstances are met simultaneously:

- A. The ferry must be operating on a multi-destination route.
- B. The total number of vehicles, reserved and stand-by, to all destinations must exceed the planned capacity of the ferry.
- C. The ferry must be loaded in such a manner as to prevent the crew from maintaining an isolated lane for first-destination vehicles throughout the loading process.
- D. There must be fewer second destination stand-by vehicles than there are available spaces on the car deck once the ferry has been loaded to its planned capacity.

If any one of these four requirements doesn't exist, the ferry will not depart with empty space while leaving vehicles on the beach.

With all of this information and against a background that has included the 30-minute cut-off rule for the past 2½ months, I think it's appropriate to ask a few fairly important questions...

1. Does the issue of ferries departing Anacortes with empty space on the car deck while vehicles are being left behind still exist? Yes. For as long as the ferry crews continue to load the boats in excess of their planned capacities, it will always be possible for the four requirements identified above to be met.
2. Is the Vehicles Reservation System the reason that ferries are departing with empty space on the car deck while vehicles are being left behind? Not directly. The VRS has clearly changed the travel habits of drivers and vehicles at Anacortes, Friday Harbor and Orcas. As a result, it is now common for stand-by vehicles to number fewer than 20 to each destination on many sailings whereas there could be upwards of 100 or more during the pre-VRS era. It is this "shortage" of stand-by vehicles combined with the loss of an isolated first-destination lane on the ferry that creates the empty space on the car deck and prevents the first destination stand-by cars from being accommodated. The loss of an isolated first-destination lane on the ferry is nothing new. What is new is the lack of second-destination stand-by vehicles to fill up the boat when first-destination stand-by vehicles can't be accommodated.
3. Has the 30 minute cut-off rule eliminated instances of ferries departing with empty space on the car deck while vehicles are being left behind and, if not, is it likely to do so

in the near future? No and No. The issue of the ferries departing with empty space and leaving vehicles behind is related entirely to the vessel loading procedures and the availability of second-destination stand-by vehicles to fill up the boat on those occasions when an isolated lane cannot be maintained for first destination vehicles. The issue of a cut-off time is still germane on multi-destination sailings in order to preclude late arriving first destination reserved vehicles from being denied boarding due to blocked access by second destination vehicles but the 30 minute cut-off rule does not address the issues that are responsible for the “vehicles left on the beach” situation so it has not and will not eliminate the problem.

4. Can the 30 minute cut-of rule be modified to eliminate instances of ferries departing with empty space on the car deck while vehicles are being left behind? I don't see how. The 30 minute cut-off rule doesn't address the basic issues that have created the problem. The rule simply moves vehicles from the back of the reserved lane to the back of the stand-by lane. At boarding time, the same number of cars will still be lined up trying to get to their respective destinations. There will just be more in the stand-by lane and fewer in the reserved lane. The only thing that the 30 minute rule does is improve the chances for front-of-the-line stand-by vehicles to be accommodated at the expense of reservation holders.

There is still a case to be made for some sort of a cut-off rule but it only applies to multi-destination sailings. On single destination sailings there is really no need for a cut-off because the loading of the ferry doesn't require the separation of the vehicles. On single destination sailings common sense dictates that all of the reserved vehicles get loaded regardless of when they arrive at the terminal. When all the reserved cars are on board, any remaining space is filled by vehicles from the stand-by line. If last minute reserved vehicles can be accommodated, they are added as space permits. In the case of multi-destination sailings, however, late arriving first destination reserved vehicles may not be able to be accommodated if the second destination cars have already been loaded. In these cases, I would think that a simple footnote in the published schedule would be sufficient. It could be worded like this: “ * Multi-destination sailing. Vehicle reservations not redeemed at the terminal toll booths at least 5 minutes prior to the start of vessel loading may not be honored.”

Looking forward, the Summer, 2016 schedule offers a total of 32 daily reservable sailings from Anacortes, Orcas and Friday Harbor (excluding Sidney services). If you assume that there will continue to be few if any stand-by vehicles to Shaw, the Anacortes-Shaw-Orcas sailings can essentially be regarded as single-destination sailings with the Orcas stand-bys filling the remaining car deck space after the Shaw and Orcas reserved vehicles have been accommodated. That being the case, there are only two daily sailings (a third on Friday nights) that legitimately meet the definition of a multi-destination sailing; the 12:35 p.m. Anacortes-Lopez-Orcas trip and the 9:00 p.m. Anacortes-Lopez-Shaw-Orcas trip. The other 30 sailings are either single destination or have loads that are dictated by allotments. That means that there are only two occasions out of 32 sailings where the issue of “vehicles left on the beach” could possibly occur.

Given the fact that the 30 minute cut-off rule was created and implemented to address this specific issue, given the fact that the rule hasn't resolved the issue and isn't likely to do so, given the fact that the issue is likely to arise in no more than 7% of all reservable sailings this summer and given the fact that the 30 minute cut-off is certain to produce a constant stream of negative customer reaction from late arriving reservation holders on all 32 of the reservable daily summer sailings, I submit that there is no longer any justifiable reason to maintain the 30 minute cut-off rule.

I would urge that the 30 minute cut-of rule be suspended, that a modified rule affecting only genuine, multi-destination sailings be implemented in its place and that WSF concentrate its efforts on vessel loading procedures on multi-destination sailings, particularly as they relate to the maintenance of an isolated lane on the boats for first-destination vehicles if the Ferry Service is truly interested in resolving the issue of "vehicles left on the beach" once and for all.

I strongly encourage the San Juan FAC to consider the information and material contained in this memo and to join me in supporting this course of action.

Many thanks.

Bill

WILLIAM H. PIKE
21397 EGRET PLACE
MOUNT VERNON, WA 98274

February 19, 2016

Kristina Arsenault
Director, Community Services and Planning
WSDOT Ferries Division
2901 3rd Avenue, Suite 500
Seattle, WA 98121-3014

Dear Kristina,

I am not certain that you are necessarily the right person to receive this letter but, as you chaired the last meeting of the SJI/VRS Community Partnership back in October, I regard you as my most appropriate liaison with the senior management of Washington State Ferries.

I am writing to express my concern and, quite frankly, my profound disappointment about the apparent change in the WSF policy regarding the treatment of reservation holders who arrive at the departure terminal less than 30 minutes before departure time. As it is currently presented in the WSF Terms and Conditions which accompany all new vehicle reservations, the policy states,

“Effective March 20, 2016, you must arrive at the terminal at least 45 minutes prior to departure time. If you are not processed into the holding area at least 30 minutes prior to departure time you will forfeit your reservation and travel standby on a first come, first serve basis.”

My concern is that this change represents a significant departure from the policy which has heretofore been in place and seems likely to significantly disservice many of the travelers who depend on the Ferry Service and who have come to rely on the vehicle reservation program as a positive improvement over the old “first come...first served” policies of the past. My disappointment stems from the fact that this policy is being introduced despite a highly successful first year of vehicle reservations on the San Juan routes when such a rule was neither in place nor required. As I consider the implications of this change, I find myself continually asking one basic question: Why?

Why, after spending more than 18 months promoting the benefits of the Vehicle Reservation System in its advertising, on its web site, on highway signage, on radio broadcasts and in face-to-face meetings with travellers would the Ferry Service suddenly decide to force its customers to forfeit their reservations, literally just minutes before their ferry departs, for reasons that may be totally outside the customers' control?

Why, after focussing so much on its customer service, would the Ferry Service deliberately choose to create situations which seem so likely to produce irate customers and generate delays at the terminals in the minutes just prior to the departure of each ferry?

Why, after making the reservation system work so well during its first year, would the Ferry Service intentionally implement a new policy which seems destined to produce a hostile environment at its terminals as angry customers confront terminal staffers about forfeited reservations?

In all honesty, Kristina, this policy seems pretty short-sighted and creates a myriad of entirely realistic scenarios which beg to be addressed. Among the most troubling are these;

- In Anacortes, is any consideration going to be given to the speed with which the individual toll lines move during periods of heavy traffic? It seems all too easy to envision situations in which multiple vehicles, all with reservations on the same sailing and all joining the waiting line more than 45 minutes before departure time could end up in different toll lanes as the traffic is processed through the booths. Is it really the intention of the Ferry Service to dishonor the reservation of one vehicle because its driver ended up in the slowest moving lane while the reservations of other vehicles, arriving later, are honored because their chosen toll lane moved faster?

- Will the 30 minute cancellation rule apply to commercial vehicles and buses as well as passenger vehicles? If so, has the Ferry Service considered the impact that the policy will have on businesses which not only depend on the ferries to carry their truckloads of goods and materials but which schedule their trips around the ferry timetable, often planning for trucks to arrive at their island destination, unload their contents and make it back to the terminal to return to Anacortes on the same boat? Even during the summer months, when the ferries are often scheduled to be at the island docks for more than 30 minutes, it seems unlikely that these commercial operators will be able to maintain their schedules if their vehicles need to be in line more than 30 minutes before departure time in order to have their reservations honored.

- If the policy applies to buses, has the Ferry Service considered the consequences that would arise if a school bus or a tour bus was moved to the end of the stand-by line within the last 30 minutes before sailing? If the bus isn't accommodated on its reserved sailing, the impact will extend far beyond the inconvenience to the passengers or students on the bus. Is the Ferry Service really prepared to delay an entire bus load of student athletes for two or three hours because their soccer game went into overtime or their baseball game went into extra innings?

- If, on the other hand, commercial vehicles and buses are provided an exemption from the 30 minute cancellation rule, it seems that the Ferry Service will have created a clear double standard that favors one type of vehicle over another. How, for example, is a terminal agent expected to respond to an attorney, a realtor, an accountant or any other professional who is travelling on business but using his or her personal automobile for transportation when the reservation of a commercial vehicle is honored 10 minutes after the reservation of the personal vehicle is forfeited? It seems pretty unfair, particularly when both vehicles were likely delayed by the same traffic jam or road construction project on Interstate 5, Highway 20 or in downtown Anacortes.

- What provisions has the Ferry Service made for its own, off-schedule operations? We all know that departure delays of 5, 10 and even 15 minutes can occur without warning on virtually any sailing at any terminal. Will drivers who were required to forfeit their reservations have any recourse if their reserved sailing ends up departing more than 30 minutes after they were processed into the holding area? This scenario, perhaps more than any other, demonstrates the wholly arbitrary nature of the 30 minute cancellation rule; for the policy to be universally enforceable, every sailing must depart on-time every day. While this may be a laudable goal, it is hardly realistic.

- Are there provisions in the policy for vehicles whose reservations are on sailings for which a published delay has been issued? Consider the following e-mail message which was issued about a month ago on January 21:

Elwha Running 30 Minutes Behind Schedule

"The 5:20pm sailing from Anacortes to Lopez left 30 minutes behind schedule due to earlier delays. This will also affect the 6:10pm sailing from Lopez to Anacortes, and the 7:10pm sailing from Anacortes to Shaw and Orcas. This will also affect the 8:00pm sailing from Shaw, 8:25pm sailing from Orcas and the 8:50pm sailing from Lopez back to Anacortes."

When the Ferry Service advises passengers by e-mail that certain sailings will be operating behind schedule, how is the 30 minute cancellation rule to be applied? If the sailing time itself is unknown, how can the Ferry Service enforce a 30 minute cut-off time? If, as in the example above, sailings will be delayed but revised departure times cannot be provided, how are passengers to know at what time the 30 minute cancellation rule will apply to their sailing?

● How will the 30 minute cancellation policy be applied during service disruptions? Fortunately there haven't been many service disruptions since the advent of the San Juan Vehicle Reservation System but they are still bound to occur. With a service disruption policy that gives boarding priority to all reservation holders over any stand-by vehicles, the forfeiture of a reservation under the 30 minute cancellation policy could subject that vehicle to hours and hours of waiting. One would hope that the 30 minute rule would be suspended during service disruptions but that will be of little consolation to the driver whose reservation was forfeited an hour before the service disruption occurred and who is now faced with the prospect of waiting for hours before reaching his destination.

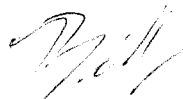
Kristina, as you know, I have been a member of the Partnership since it was formed in 2012 and, as one of only two "mainlanders" in the group, I have spent hundreds of hours at the Anacortes terminal, helping to educate the public about the reservation system and then watching the system operate throughout last year. With a professional background in both transportation and customer service, I'd like to think that I've been able to bring some positive ideas and useful experience to both the Partnership and the Ferry Service. That said, I am at a loss to understand why there is a need for the 30 minute cancellation policy and, more importantly, why the Ferry Service would think that such a rule would be either useful or necessary. The Ferry Service is a service provider, just like doctors, barbers, teachers, restaurants, hotels and most every other type of transportation system. Just like every other provider, the Ferry Service has to deal with customers who arrive for their appointment or reservation later than they should. In some cases, including the Ferry Service, customers who arrive too late will quite literally miss the boat, but for those who are merely running "tight on time" it is the mark of a good service provider to remain flexible and accommodating, realizing that unanticipated delays can occur without warning and that the late arriving driver is not only a customer but the customer to whom, in this case, the Ferry Service has promised to "Save-A-Spot." Having made that promise, the Ferry Service must be prepared to honor each reservation until it is no longer capable of accommodating the reservation holder's vehicle. Anything less is simply a disservice to the customer.

In closing, I have to tell you that, in my opinion, the 30 minute cancellation policy is simply wrong. It will create ill-will among the customer base, it will produce arguments and confrontations between customers and terminal agents and it will ultimately disenfranchise the very people to whom the Ferry Service has been promoting the Vehicle Reservation Service in the first place. Ultimately, the 30 minute cancellation policy is just bad customer service from an otherwise very good customer service provider. I urge you and your superiors to suspend the implementation of this policy before it becomes effective and to reconsider the wisdom of embracing any approach to traffic management which applies arbitrary cancellation deadlines to vehicle reservations.

To the extent that the other members of the Partnership, the FAC and I can assist in developing alternative ideas, I am sure that we all stand ready to help.

Thank you.

Yours truly,



William H. Pike

cc: B. Churchwell / WSF
J. Corenman / SJI FAC ✓

San Juan Islands Task Force

FAC Discussion

December 16, 2016

WSDOT

1

San Juan Islands Outreach Process

- August outreach
 - Meetings with local officials, FAC, and tourism industry reps.
 - Community meetings on San Juan, Orcas, Shaw and Lopez islands attended by 200+ people.
- Internal task force formed to respond to comments
- Ongoing discussions with FAC
- Draft recommendations presented to Lynne and directors on 12/15



WSDOT

2

Task Force Goals and Guidelines

Goal:
To determine operational and/or policy changes that can be implemented in time for spring 2017 season

Guidelines:

- Consistency
- Easy to communicate
- Transparency
- Budget constrained
- Focus on “quick wins” now

WSDOT

3

Task Force Work To Date

- Mtg #1: Categorized comments from community
 - Issues requiring further discussion
 - Issues related to sailing schedule
 - Issues to be answered in a FAQ
- Mtg #2: Identified priority issues
- Mtg #3: Review data and develop draft recommendations

WSDOT

4

Priority Issues

Issue	What we heard from the community
30-minute arrival window	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is lingering frustration with the 30-minute arrival policy • Concern over commercial vehicles having to adhere to 30-minute rule
Standby space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase standby space for last minute travel needs. Specifically, consider allocating 20% of sailings for standbys in off-season. • Residents not utilizing standby space due to lack of predictability, time to wait for next sailing is too long if they don't get on.
Customer reservation experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call center challenges including difficulty getting through by phone when new reservations are released and long wait times. • Frustration over ongoing problems with reservations website and mobile app.
Email alerts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the policy on email alerts when a boat breaks down? Accuracy and timeliness of alerts is inconsistent.

5

Customer reservation experience

What we heard from the community:

- Call center challenges including difficulty getting through by phone when new reservations are released and long wait times.
- Frustration over ongoing problems with reservations website and mobile app.

Problem Statement:

The San Juan Island community has expressed concern about long wait times preventing customers from reaching the WSF call center by phone, particularly when a new tier of reservations are released. Related to this is frustration with the reservations website and mobile app—it can take up to 30 minutes to make a reservation at busy times, with some customers getting booted out of the system mid-transaction.

6

Customer reservation experience

Call Center volume:

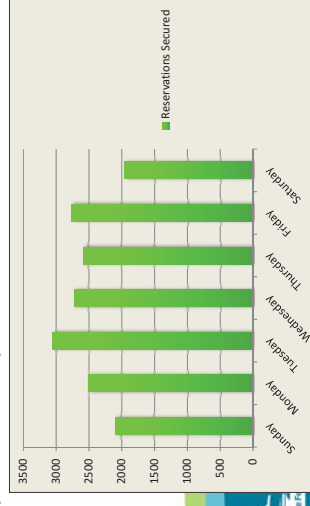
- Call volume increased by 185% since 2014 due to reservations in San Juans.
- Call center staffing was increased by only 33% in 2014 but that increase will be lost in fiscal year 2017 due to call center not being fully funded.
- Limited information available on why people call.

7

Customer reservation experience

Phone and website reservations secured (April 12 – Sept 4):

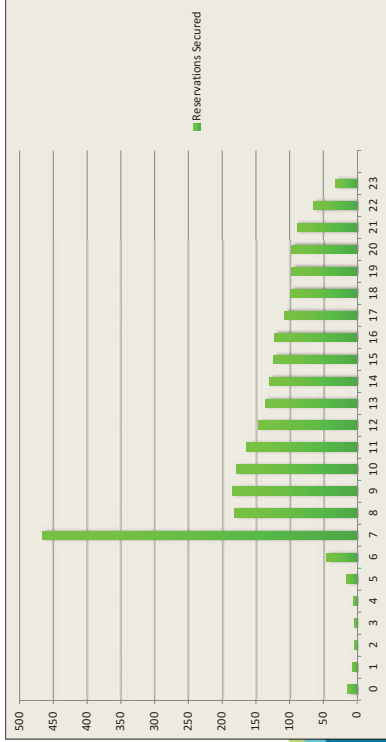
- Tuesday is shown as busiest day due to 13,406 reservations being made when we released summer 2016 reservations.
- Wednesdays are typically the busiest for Friday reservations and Fridays for Sunday reservations.



8

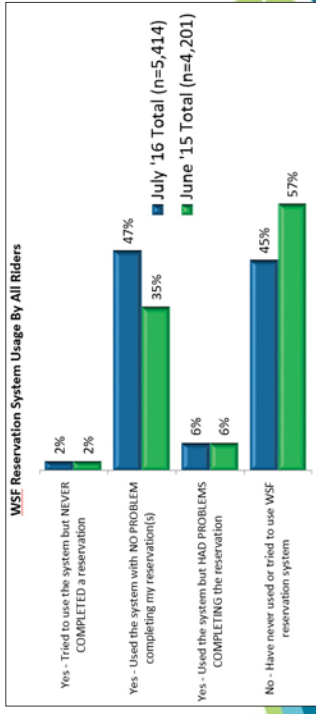
Customer reservation experience

Phone and website reservations secured on average by time of day (April 12 – September 4).



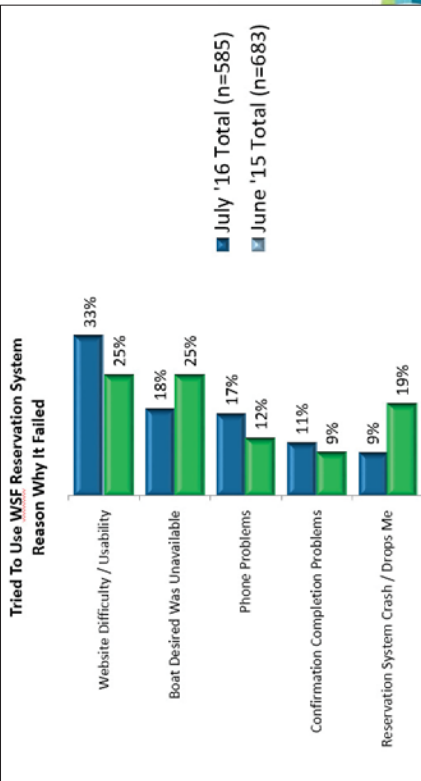
Customer reservation experience

- 86% of those who used the reservation system had no problems completing their reservations.
- 11% of those who used the reservation system had problems completing their reservations.



Source: 2016 FROG Survey

Customer reservation experience



Customer reservation experience

- Key findings:
- Lack of data on phone system to analyze call statistics.
 - Call center staffing has been severely cut
 - Tiered release creates spikes in activity
 - Almost 3x as many reservations are made at 7am than the rest of the day.
 - Over 5x as many reservations made during the release of the summer season than the average made in a single day.
 - In 2016, Microsoft reviewed our reservation website and found the below issues:
 - The VRS site currently makes too many requests to the database, which degrades the user experience.
 - The size of each individual VRS web page is too large, causing pages to load slowly.

Customer reservation experience

Recommendation(s)	Timeline	Actions	Requested Exec Decisions
(Short-Term) Realign call center staffing according to call volume and demand	Completed (on-going effort)	n/a	n/a
(Short-Term) Improve phone system to improve customer experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place SureConnect closer to front Evaluate phone center database software capabilities to help with forecasting, staffing levels 	2 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Telephony resource to reconfigure SureConnect Engage WSF and WSDOT IT for phone center database evaluation Look at Tolling Division resources 	Concurrence and prioritization of this project
(Short-Term) Develop "makeshift" manual data collection system to gather call center data.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use data to inform a white paper requesting additional funds. 	Concurrence and resources
(Short-Term) Implement Microsoft recommendation to improve website client and backend to better utilize existing CPU resources with scalability as the main goal	By spring 2017 sailing season (14 weeks development)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development effort by existing IT resource 	Concurrence and prioritization of workload
(Mid-Term) Evaluate reservation demand to identify if the tiered release of reservation space can be spread out over time to eliminate the competitive spikes	6 months to 1 year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify internal resource to lead effort and fit into the organization RFQ to hire data analyst to review reservation demand Communicate changes to FAC & public prior to implementing 	Concurrence, prioritize workload, and provide funding 13

Standby space

What we heard from the community:

- Increase standby space for last minute travel needs. Specifically, consider allocating 20% of sailings for standbys in off-season.
- Residents not utilizing standby space due to lack of predictability, time to wait for next sailing is too long if they don't get on.

Problem Statement:

Is the current standby allocation at an adequate level or should it be modified?

Customer reservation experience

Recommendation(s)	Timeline	Actions	Requested Exec Decisions
(Long-Term) Implement Microsoft recommendation to develop new website user interface to better use current technologies and conform to industry standards	18 weeks development + usability testing (as needed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development effort by existing IT resource Hire testing resource RFQ for usability testing 	Concurrence, prioritize workload, and provide funding
(Long-Term) Fully fund the WSF reservations program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase call center staffing to meet demand Reinstate Reservation Migr to better facilitate online reservations and operations at the terminal Reinstate Reservation Supervisor at Anacortes to answer customer questions and resolve issues on-site Fund appropriate technology (phone, website, etc.) so that it is responsive to current needs 	FY 2019 and on	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop white paper for FY2019 supplemental budget request Begin legislative outreach and supporting materials 	Concurrence and support white paper

Standby space - % full in off-peak

In May, our average month for the year, only 21% of our sailings are departing full, which means there is sufficient space available for additional drive-up vehicles during those less busy times.

Anacortes- San Juan Islands (does not include A-Sid)	May		Vessels
	Full Sailings	Total Sailings	
Full Sailings (80%)	169	450	Elwha, Chelan,
Full Sailings (90%)	130	450	Samish, Klahowya,
Full Sailings (95%)	111	450	Hyak, Yakima
Full sailings (100%)	95	450	

Source: Traffic Stats

Standby space - % full in peak

In August, our busiest month, only 22% of sailings are departing full leaving room for more vehicles.

	August		Vessels
	Full Sailings	Total Sailings	
Anacortes- San Juan Islands (does not include A-Sid)	274	545	
Full Sailings (80%)	209	545	Yakima, Samish, Chelan, Elwha, Klahowya
Full Sailings (90%)	172	545	
Full sailings (100%)	118	545	

Source: Traffic Stats



Standby space - % reserved in peak

August 8-14 reservation statistics (Average all day).

	Mon (8/8)	Tue (8/9)	Wed (8/10)	Thu (8/11)	Fri (8/12)	Sat (8/13)	Sun (8/14)
% of Vessel Reserved	53%	56%	62%	68%	75%	62%	56%
Sailing Reservation No-Show %	11%	16%	14%	14%	18%	14%	14%
% Available for Standby	53%	53%	46%	42%	38%	47%	52%

Source: Reservation Stats



Standby space - % reserved in peak

August 8-14 reservation statistics (Average 9am-9pm).

	Mon (8/8)	Tue (8/9)	Wed (8/10)	Thu (8/11)	Fri (8/12)	Sat (8/13)	Sun (8/14)
% of Vessel Reserved	63%	70%	74%	81%	89%	71%	77%
Sailing Reservation No-Show %	11%	15%	13%	14%	17%	15%	13%
% Available for Standby	44%	41%	30%	31%	27%	40%	37%

Source: Reservation Stats



Standby space

Key findings:

- There is sufficient standby space during the off-peak seasons.
- Staff says there are few complaints related to the lack of standby space; more complaints that there are no reservations to provide customers' desired predictability.
- Terminal staff has voiced that there is typically available standby space on most sailings but customers aren't taking advantage of the current standby allocation; vessels departing with space available.
- Daily average sailing no-show rate of 11-18% increases available standby space beyond originally designed 10% standby levels.
- 10% standby level originally based on medical priority demand. Terminal staff has observed that many medical priorities are now making reservations but no data to validate.



Standby Space - Recommendations

Recommendation(s)	Timeline	Actions	Requested Exec Decisions
(Short-Term) No change to current standby allocation through summer 2017	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine how to better communicate available standby space 	Concurrence
(Mid-Term) Evaluate peak season medical priorities and no-show % rates to better identify the demand for non-reserved space	Summer 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify method and staff to head up analysis; Provide specific costs and resources for exec approval 	Concurrence and provide resources
(Long-Term) In an effort to reduce the no-show rate, require customers to purchase their vehicle fare when making a reservation (industry standard)	FY2017 RFP development, implement when Wave2Go system replaced	Add requirements to Wave2Go RFP	Concurrence

21

30-minute arrival policy

What we heard from the community:

- There is lingering frustration with the 30-minute arrival policy
- Concern over commercial vehicles having to adhere to 30-minute rule

Problem Statement:

How effective was the 30-minute arrival policy for summer 2016 and is it necessary to effectively load our vessels?



22

30-minute policy – FAC Concerns

FAC key issues with existing policy:

- End-of-line arrival versus ticket-booth
- Clock based versus some event (e.g. start of loading, or previous first-standby)
- If it must be clock-based, how to make allowance for late boats
- To the extent that tall commercials are impacted, how to mitigate that. (Start-of-loading, or first-standby as previously done, would largely resolve that).



23

30-minute arrival policy

Summer 2016 arrival statistics show that customers continue to arrive late for their sailing.

Terminal	30+ minutes prior to sailing	10-29 minutes prior to sailing	< 10 minutes prior to sailing
Anacortes	84%	14%	2%
Friday Harbor	75%	18%	8%
Orcas	89%	10%	1%

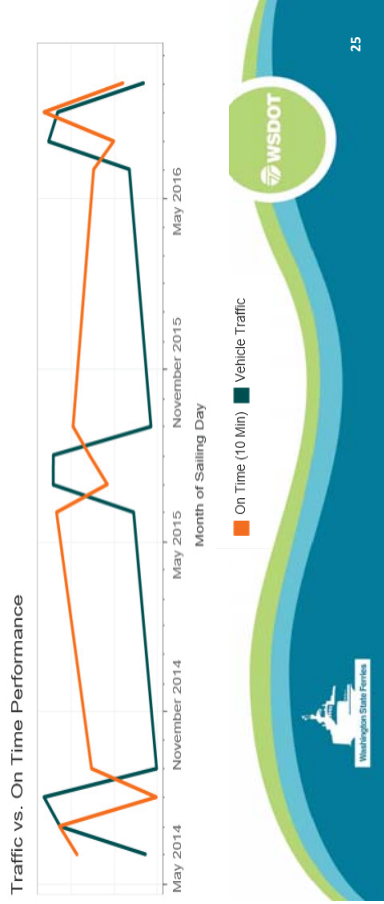
Source: Reservation Stats June-September 2016



24

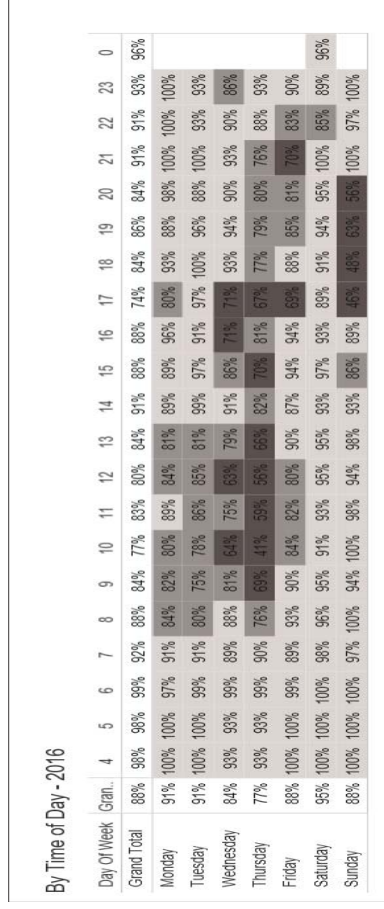
30-minute arrival policy

On-Time Performance (OTP) goes down each summer as vehicle ridership increases. OTP has improved with the implementation of the 30-minute arrival policy.



30-minute arrival policy

On-Time Performance (OTP) shows that we have areas of the schedule with insufficient dwell time to manage the demand.



30-minute arrival policy

Dwell times (June 12 – September 17, 2016).

- Anacortes Tag Shack communicates load on vessel approach.

Arrive Ana Time	Depart Ana Time	Route	Vessel	Schedule Dwell	Avg Actual Dwell
8:40	9:05	Ana-FH	Samish	25	25
9:10	9:35	Ana-Lo	Elwha	25	23
9:55	10:20	Ana-Sh-Or	Yakima	25	26
11:25	11:55	Ana-FH	Elwha	30	29
12:05	12:35	Ana-Lo-Or	Samish	30	31
13:10	14:00	Ana-FH	Yakima	50	44
14:10	14:50	Ana-Sid	Chelan	40	40
15:10	15:45	Ana-Sh-Or	Samish	35	32
15:20	16:45	Ana-FH	Elwha	85	80

WSDOT
Washington State Ferries

27

30-minute arrival policy

Key Findings

- Fall 2015 staff surveys identified that late arrivals impact the loading process; some vehicles left behind for multi-destination sailings when space was available.
- 84% of reservation holders are arriving at least 30 minutes prior to sailing.
- On-Time Performance (OTP) decreases as traffic demands increase; need vehicles to arrive earlier in the peak-season to minimize impact on OTP.
- Tourism / Hospitality group prefer having the 30-minute arrival policy as it is easier for them to communicate to the tourists.
- 30-minutes may not be necessary at Friday Harbor & Orcas due to less complicated loading process.



30-minute arrival policy

Terminal & Vessel Crew Feedback

- The 30 minute arrival policy helps vessel crew to prioritize their load with reservation holders, for each destination (for multi-destination stops), tall space and medical priorities (restrooms and elevators).
- More planning time is needed for multi-destination sailings at Anacortes.
- Policy allows terminal to call vehicle counts as vessel approaches.
- Fewer issues of leaving standby vehicles behind for multi-destination sailings due to improved efficiencies.
- Afternoon international sailing will at busy times hold up our domestic reservation customers if they arrive too close to the 30 minute policy (or less).
- Frustration over inconsistency of policy enforcement.



29

30-minute policy – FAC recommendation

FAC suggested policy:

Customers arriving at the ticket booth after vehicle loading has begun will have their guaranteed space forfeited and be placed in the back of the standby line. To avoid this, reservation holders are urged to arrive at the back of the line approaching the ticket booth 30-90 minutes prior to the scheduled departure time. During the busiest part of the summer schedule, arrival 45-90 minutes in advance of the sailing time may be necessary.



30

30-minute arrival policy

Recommendation(s)	Timeline	Actions	Requested Exec Decisions
(Short-Term) Continue to require 30 minute arrival policy westbound from Anacortes	February 2017 (for spring reservations being released)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update website communication • Ongoing monitoring to ensure policy is being consistently followed • Better communicate reason for the policy 	Concurrence
(Short-Term) Evaluate whether Friday Harbor and Orcas could go to a shorter arrival policy (e.g. 20 minutes)	February 2017 (for spring reservations being released)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get concurrence from Orcas; confirm with Friday Harbor • Consider future implications of this policy change (i.e. ridership increases, changes to sailing schedule) • Update website communication • Communicate publicly on policy change and reason for change 	Concurrence
(Mid-Term) Evaluate the San Juan Island sailing schedule to create more realistic schedules and dwell times for the vessels that will be operating on this multi-destination route, including looking at more separation in the international and domestic sailings.	Fall 2017 for implementation summer 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create Sailing Schedule Strategy Team to evaluate schedule • Reevaluate 30-minute policy 	Concurrence and convene strategy team
(Mid-Term) Develop/clarify policy for commercial vehicles	Spring/Summer 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task force conduct focus group discussions with commercial operators 	Concurrence

Email alerts

What we heard from the community:

- What is the policy on email alerts when a boat breaks down?
- Accuracy and timeliness of alerts is inconsistent.

Problem Statement:

The SJL community wants to be better informed when vessels are running late, particularly because they are required to arrive at the terminal 30 minutes prior to their scheduled reservation time.



32

Email alerts

Current alert process:

- Vessel or terminal crews notify Ops Center of a late running vessel
- Ops Center notifies the Web Agents
- Web Agents send out email alert

Key Discoveries:

- Vessel crew mistakenly believed that On Time Performance stats automatically generated an alert when a vessel is running late.
- Ops Center is inconsistently notified
- Vessel Watch is not an accurate tool to generate alerts



33

Email alerts - Recommendation

Recommendation	Timeline	Actions	Exec Decisions
Develop a better procedure for notifying the public when vessels are running late. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have vessel crew notify the Ops Center via 800 MHz when the vessel is running 15 or more minutes late and can't make up the time• Ops Center to notify the Web Agent on duty, who sends email alert to the public	Immediately	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Send Quick Notice to vessel crews• Communicate policy change to Ops Center and Web Agents	Concurrence



34

Email alerts – 30-minute arrival

Key Discoveries:

- Operationally, shifting the arrival window is difficult to execute, and there is no reliable, consistent and uniform way to communicate a shift in the arrival window to everyone who may be affected.
- A shifting of the arrival window was never clearly codified or communicated to all customers in writing, even though it was communicated to some verbally and an informal “shifting” was taking place at the terminals.



35

Email alerts – 30-minute arrival

Challenges:

- While a vessel may arrive late to its destination, accurately predicting when the vessel will depart after adequate dwell time is extraordinarily difficult.
- Inaccurate predictions will lead to inefficiencies and extra delay at the terminals.
- There is no reliable, consistent uniform way to execute a shift in the arrival window internally.
- Even if the arrival window was shifted, not all reservation holders would be made aware of this fact.



36

Email alerts – 30 minute arrival recommendation

Recommendation	Timeline	Actions	Exec Decisions
Do not formally adopt any shifting of the 30-minute arrival window.	Spring 2017 (1 season's advance notice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate the policy and rationale to the public 	Concurrence



Next Steps

