

WSDOT Ferries Division FAC-T Review and Upcoming Tariff Cycle

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Presentation Overview

- FAC-T Review of JTC Fare Media Study
- Potential Issues and Timeline for 2013 Fare Review Cycle
- Under 14' Vehicle Fare Update

Ferry Advisory Committee on Tariff

Recommendation 1. WSF and WSTC should continue to modify their fare policies to bring the fare structure in alignment with legislative fare policies and with legislative direction to use adaptive management practices.

FAC-T members generally supported this recommendation, but had some caveats and suggestions for how the FAC-T's perspectives should be captured in the report:

- Supporting this recommendation does not mean the group endorses every adaptive management strategy identified in the Long-range Plan.
- The adaptive management policies that reflect fare policy changes should be routed through the regular tariff process.

Ferry Advisory Committee on Tariff

Recommendation 2. WSTC annual market surveys should include questions on customer households and the household's likely response to fare changes.

The group was in consensus that it agreed with this recommendation's goal to understand more about household behavior. Additional comments on current survey methods:

- The group was interested in knowing how WSF or the Commission plan to learn about people's opinions outside of the FROG survey, including non-users and randomly sampled people.
- Sample bias from the FROG survey and the Voice of Washington survey was listed as a concern.

Ferry Advisory Committee on Tariff

Recommendation 3 (and 9). Wave2Go should be replaced with an account-based fare system that offers customers a variety of fare media products and interoperable payment options through Good To Go!, ORCA, and emerging payment technologies.

- The group is in agreement that this is an important recommendation, and wants WSF to ensure it is pursuing implementation and requesting adequate funding from the Legislature to support the proposed timeline.

Ferry Advisory Committee on Tariff

Recommendation 4. WSF's vehicle fare structure should be based on a per-foot charge, which will require the installation of automatic vehicle length measuring devices at an estimated FY 2012 cost of \$0.9 million.

In general, members are comfortable with this concept and think it is a good direction for WSF to work toward. The group also expressed some concern and risk around implementation:

- The group wants to reflect that it sees risk in this recommendation, and wants WSF to ensure that the system selected for implementation will be accurate and consistent.
- Recommends that WSF emphasize ongoing maintenance, specifically verification of accuracy and calibration conducted by an independent agency, such as the state Weights and Measures Group.

Ferry Advisory Committee on Tariff

Recommendation 5. WSF should reinstate discounted joint passes with transit agencies on routes with significant numbers of commuter customers.

- The group agreed that it is not interested in this recommendation, because it provides little additional benefit and is counter to WSF's fare simplification goals.

Recommendation 6. WSF should streamline Sidney fares by establishing a single Sidney-Anacortes fare with the ability to stop in the San Juan Islands and by eliminating the separate commercial and RV fares.

- The group felt that there is general support for consolidating the RV and commercial vehicle fares and less support for a single fare on all legs of the Anacortes-Sidney-Friday Harbor route.

Ferry Advisory Committee on Tariff

RV Fares/Commercial Fares Differential

- There is support for combining the oversize fares, but WSF should be careful to avoid any situation where an overheight vehicle is charged less than the next shorter regular height vehicle.
- The FAC-T recommends that WSF conduct a market screen to set this new combined fare at a reasonable level.

Anacortes-Sidney-Friday Harbor Fares

- The group wants to add to its perspective that WSF should review the Sidney fares – all legs of the route.
- There is a general recommendation to study these ideas further and more holistically in the 2013 tariff cycle.

Ferry Advisory Committee on Tariff

Recommendation 7. WSF should allow its passenger multi-ride cards, and if operationally feasible its vehicle multi-ride cards, to be purchased and loaded on ORCA cards

- Some group members who commute in the central and south sound feel it's important to get passenger multi-rides on ORCA so commuters only have to use one card for their buses and ferries.
- Regarding the vehicle multi-ride cards, the group expressed doubt about whether or not ORCA would be adaptable to measuring vehicles by foot, as it has been difficult to incorporate some Wave2Go products onto ORCA already.

Ferry Advisory Committee on Tariff

Recommendation 8. WSF should implement Good To Go! as a form of payment at vehicle toll booths.

- It was noted that this recommendation is about increasing customer choice and not about forcing anyone to use a specific method of payment. For the foreseeable future, there will likely be a highway product (such as *Good To Go!*) used in the Puget Sound region, and it would benefit WSF to be interoperable with this system.
- The group noted that not all WSF customers may choose *Good To Go!*, since it requires an account. Therefore, the fare should be the same for all customers, regardless of payment method.

Ferry Advisory Committee on Tariff

Recommendation 10. WSF should consider Good To Go! as the exclusive payment option for fares on the Southworth-Vashon-Fauntleroy route (and possibly for other routes that will not have a full reservation system).

The group is opposed to this recommendation:

- The lack of payment options is a major concern, and the FAC-T recommends the fare should be the same regardless of the method of payment.
- The group also expressed concern that this would not be compatible with frequent user discounts.
- Generally opposed to the concept of not charging for passengers, and having vehicle fares make up the revenue loss.
- Lack of system-wide consistency/fairness in passenger fares.

WSF's View – Policy Next Steps

There are several fare change suggestions that should be evaluated in next year's tariff cycle:

- Simplifying Anacortes/Sidney oversized vehicle fares
- Passenger multi-ride media on ORCA cards
- San Juan Islands to Sidney fares
- Other opportunities for fare simplification

Fare changes that should be developed in the near to mid range but require additional resources:

- Measuring vehicles in smaller increments to allow finer gradation of length based tariff

System Technology Next Steps

WSF is working on identifying organizational requirements to move forward on:

- *Good To Go!* as an additional payment option in the near to mid term
- An account based system to replace Wave2Go in six to eight years that would allow much more flexibility in fare products
- Adding the capability to load multi-ride products on ORCA cards
- Improving vehicle measurements through cost effective new technology at toll booths

2013 Tariff Cycle – Potential Issues

Issues that will be discussed

- Phase 3 of implementation of small car fare category and elimination of motorcycle oversized surcharge fare category
- General fare increase (based on 2013 legislative session revenue requirements)
- Market screen for Sidney fares

JTC Fare Media Study issues that could be taken up

Simplification of Sidney fare categories

- Collapse oversize into one set of fares by eliminating the “commercial” fares
- Re-evaluate the pricing of all trips to/from the San Juan Islands to Vancouver Island

Offer multi-ride passenger cards on ORCA

2013 Tariff Cycle – Potential Issues

Other topics

- Passenger/vehicle fare ratio – is there a cost basis for the 3.4:1 ratio?
- Youth fare
- Other – look at other opportunities for simplification

Additional Topics heard at November and December Community Meetings

- Increase Under 14' fare category by a few inches
- Hold passenger fares constant or at least spread the walk-on/vehicle fare difference
- Premium fare for first class service
- Exclude island residents from paying peak season surcharge
- Revisit distance based fare travel shed issue
- Evaluate Sidney fares in context of how they've tracked with the rest of the system

2013 Tariff Cycle – Timeline

- Initial discussion of potential 2013 tariff topics at November 2013 WSF community meetings
- February – April: FAC-T meetings
- NLT April 17, 2013: file CR 101 notifying the opening of the tariff WAC sections
- April 28: conclusion of regular legislative session and establishment of fare revenue target
- May 22, Port Townsend Local Area Meeting: WSF fare proposal to Commission
- NLT June 19, 2013: file CR 102 form with Commission fare proposal

2013 Tariff Cycle – Timeline

- July 2013: Public comment period for Commission fare proposal
- July 23, 2013 or later: Commission holds adoption hearing on tariff proposal
- NLT August 30, 2013: file CR 103 with final amended tariff
- October 1, 2013: New tariff in effect

Under 14' Vehicle Fare – System-wide

Initial Rider Response with 10% discount:

- Developed to encourage travelers to choose to use smaller vehicles when traveling aboard WSF routes, freeing up car deck space and “growing the boat”.
- 10% reduction in fares compared to standard vehicles starting October 1, 2011.
- With a 10% discount it was 4.5% of all vehicle traffic.
- Under 14' were 4.5% of all under 22' full fare paying vehicles
- Under 14' were 5.2% of all under 22' multi-ride card paying vehicles

Under 14' Vehicle Fare – System-wide

Since May with 20% discount:

- 20% reduction in fares compared to standard vehicles starting May 1, 2012.
- With a 20% discount it was 4.6% of all vehicle traffic – up from 4.5% with the 10% discount.
- Under 14' are 4.6% of all under 22' full fare paying vehicles – up from 4.5%
- Under 14' are 5.6% of all under 22' multi-ride card paying vehicles – up from 5.2%

Under 14' – By Route Since Oct. 2011

Above average percent of total vehicles

- Point Defiance/Tahlequah: 6.4%
- Seattle/Bremerton: 5.6%
- Seattle/Bainbridge: 5.1%
- Fauntleroy/Vashon/Southworth: 5.0%
- Port Townsend/Coupeville: 4.8%

Below average percent of total vehicles

- Edmonds/Kingston: 4.2%
- Mukilteo/Clinton: 4.1%
- Anacortes/Sidney, B.C: 3.7%
- Anacortes/San Juan domestic: 2.8%

Under 14' – By Route Since Oct. 2011

Above average percent of frequent (multi-ride) vehicles

- Point Defiance/Tahlequah: 8.1%
- Seattle/Bremerton: 7.2%
- Edmonds/Kingston: 6.1%
- Fauntleroy/Vashon/Southworth: 5.8%
- Seattle/Bainbridge: 5.6%

Below average percent frequent (multi-ride) vehicles

- Port Townsend/Coupeville: 5.4%
- Mukilteo/Clinton: 4.9%
- Anacortes/San Juan domestic: 2.4%

Questions?

For more information on the FAC-T Review and Upcoming Tariff Cycle, please contact:

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