

Salt Spring Island/Southern Gulf Islands Passenger Ferry

Workshop Summary

November 16, 2016

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Prepared for:

Capital Regional District

PO Box 1000

Victoria, BC V8W 1R7

Prepared by:



KPFF Consulting Engineers
1601 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1600
Seattle, WA 98101

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Passenger-Only Ferry Charrette and Visioning Session

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

A passenger-only ferry charrette and visioning session was held on November 16, 2016, in Sidney. Attendees included more than 40 participants that ranged from local and regional governments, business owners, First Nations and existing ferry operators in the region. The purpose and goals of the meeting were to have an open discussion about what the needs and wants for passenger ferry service are, come away with an understanding of the unique operating environment and challenges of marine transportation and outline the next step to exploring implementation of a successful passenger-only ferry service for the Southern Gulf Islands and Salt Spring Island.

The Capital Regional District Planning and Protective Services department contracted with KPFF Consulting Engineers to facilitate this charrette and visioning session. KPFF's Marine Transit division has specialized expertise in the field of marine transportation and the challenges, opportunities and steps toward implementation of service. The workshop began with a presentation that outlined these opportunities and challenges of working within the marine operating environment, including the regulatory, ridership, infrastructure and organizational needs for service implementation. To supplement KPFF's knowledge, local water taxi operators also participated in the presentation, providing firsthand knowledge regarding the regulatory, ridership and business case for service. The participation of these individuals was invaluable and provided breadth and depth to the conversation and reality of the business and its operating conditions. All participants provided key insights that helped to shape the understanding of the service vision, importance to the community and also key opportunities and obstacles for service.

This document is a summary of the findings and conclusions that came out of this collaborative session. Presentation materials can be found as an appendix to this summary document, along with the list of attendees and the raw meeting notes.

MAIN TAKEAWAYS

Opportunities

- Generally, all parties present at the meeting were favorable to providing passenger-only service to Salt Spring Island and the Southern Gulf Islands.
- Private investment was represented and seemed willing partners given certain geographies are served. A public-private partnership could be considered.
- Existing private sector operators were willing to provide service, but would need investment to do so as recent experience with ridership would not financially support the service.
- It was clear that current service and service providers were not widely known to all parties present at the meeting. The potential for leveraging existing service was an opportunity that needs further exploration. Additionally, more connections to further the goals of "Experience the Gulf Islands" could be realized with more meetings that bring these parties together.

- Opportunity to market the return trip of the Gulf Island Water Taxi school charter trip from Ganges that is underutilized.
- One of the main benefits of the passenger-only ferry service would be the ability to get directly into population and employment centers (at local docking facilities), rather than where existing car ferry facilities are located.
- Inter-Island connection, as well as connection to the airport, are very important for social and economic growth for island residents and tourists.
- CRD owns pier infrastructure around the Islands that could be used for service.

Challenges

- Existing operators experienced an even lower level of ridership the summer of 2016 when compared to previous years. It is clear that all services provided could benefit from an enhanced marketing campaign.
- Biggest focus/desire of participants was to provide inter-island service; however, private investment and ridership realities will likely require links to Sidney, at a minimum.
- Consensus was that additional tourists are desired and would be seen as a benefit to the islands, as long as their vehicles did not come with them.
- Tourism would not financially support a long-term, sustainable passenger-only service; therefore, support would be needed by a sustained source (i.e., some form of taxation, strong commuter ridership, subsidy, etc.).
- Priority for CRD was for passenger-only ferries to provide value to island residence if residents chose to subsidize service (although it may be difficult at start-up or pilot project to convey and measure that value).
- CRD owned pier infrastructure gets very busy in the high season. If a scheduled service did run, they would need dedicated docking areas to meet schedule.
- Upland transportation would need to be enhanced to serve a passenger-only terminal facilities/docks.

Considerations

- Community tourism is not just about transporting passengers, but also their equipment, which may include: kayaks, suitcases, sports equipment, bikes, dogs, backpacks, etc.
- Provide service to underserved areas, not competing with existing BC Ferries service.

Service Implementation Consensus

- The concept of a spoke and hub route arrangement, with inter-island loops providing access to a central hub with access to Sidney and perhaps Ganges on Salt Spring received general consensus. The speed of the interisland spoke circulars could be on the slower side while the hub to Sidney and Ganges could be at a faster speed (Refer to Exhibit 1).



Exhibit 1: Proposed Routes

- A bus service could be used to connect the two circulars.
- If a pilot test is undertaken, it would need to be tested on and off season to get a true test of ridership and operating conditions (weather, etc.).
- Island residents need to see some benefit from service and be willing to invest in order to achieve sustainable service.
- Because of the presence, capability and knowledge of existing service providers, a central dispatch center and system which could manage the existing service and assets was an intriguing possibility that warrants further consideration. This would require staff and physical space to house the staff assigned to this work.

EXISTING OPERATOR INPUT

Three existing water taxi service providers and one special event operator were present at the workshop. Their input provided some reality to the conditions, ridership, challenges and opportunities to running passenger-only service to, from and within the Southern Gulf Islands and Salt Spring Islands. Consistent messages among all operators included:

- Ridership is not significant enough to sustain non-subsidized, regular service.
- Identifying the right vessel or mix of vessels for a particular service is indeed very challenging.
- To have safe and reliable service you need to have access to a backup vessel and skilled crew.
- Skilled crew are hard to find and hard to keep due to the seasonality of the service.
- Once you go over 12-passenger capacity, regulations, insurance and crew requirements change and therefore the expense to operate increases.

Specific provider information and input can be found below.

Gulf Islands Water Taxi

Operational Overview: Provides the school charter boat service from September to June. Operates a Summer Saturday run to the Salt Spring Island Market. 2016 was the worst year in terms of ridership to the market. At its highest, ridership is still low.

Fleet: 5 vessels and 1 back-up

Passenger Capacity: From 12 to 50

Challenges/Concerns:

- Staffing is a big issue in order to provide seasonal service to a small market share.

Sidney Harbor Cruises

Operational Overview: Running from Piers Island to Swartz Bay for 25 years. This service is fully subsidized by families of Piers Island.

Fleet: 2 vessels

Passenger Capacity: 12

Challenges/Concerns:

- Government docks can be very busy, so this could be a potential challenge for future service.
- Having vessel infrastructure that allows for both side and bow loading provides the most flexibility for passengers with cargo, differing physical abilities, etc.

Tour Des Isles Founder

Operational Overview: Yearly festival that provides tours and transportation to/from and around the Southern Gulf Islands. Made up of many vessels and landside transportation.

Fleet: varies

Passenger Capacity: varies

Challenges/Concerns:

- Finding the right size vessels for the program and associated ground transportation was very challenging.
- Each route presents its own unique challenges.
- There is demand to visit the Southern Gulf Islands and travel between the islands. There is not a mechanism in place to do so currently.

Port of Sidney Charter Vessel

Operational Overview: Vessel charter service

Fleet: 1 vessel

Passenger Capacity: 12

Challenges/Concerns:

- Finding demand for scheduled service to particular destinations seems very challenging.

NEXT STEPS

KPFF has been asked by the Southern Gulf Islands Electoral Area Director to provide a scope and fee for the creation of a pilot project implementation plan.

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Attachment A

Presentation Materials

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PASSENGER-ONLY FERRIES

Workshop and Visioning Charette



MARINE TRANSIT

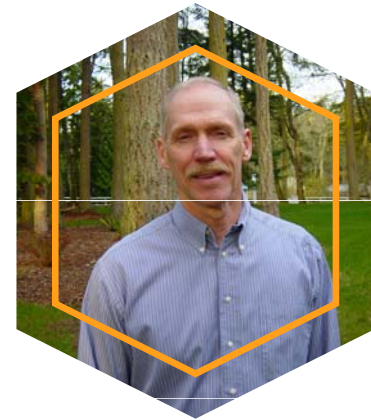
KPFF TEAM



KRISTEN KISSINGER
Planner and Project Manager



MIKE ANDERSON
Director



SCOTT DAVIS
Captain USCG (Retired)
Operations and Regulatory Specialist



Passenger-Only Ferries



Agenda

- PURPOSE – GOALS
- WHAT WE KNOW – WORK TO DATE
- PASSENGER-ONLY OVERVIEW
organizational structure – operating needs – costs
Infrastructure needs – measurement of success
- VISIONING



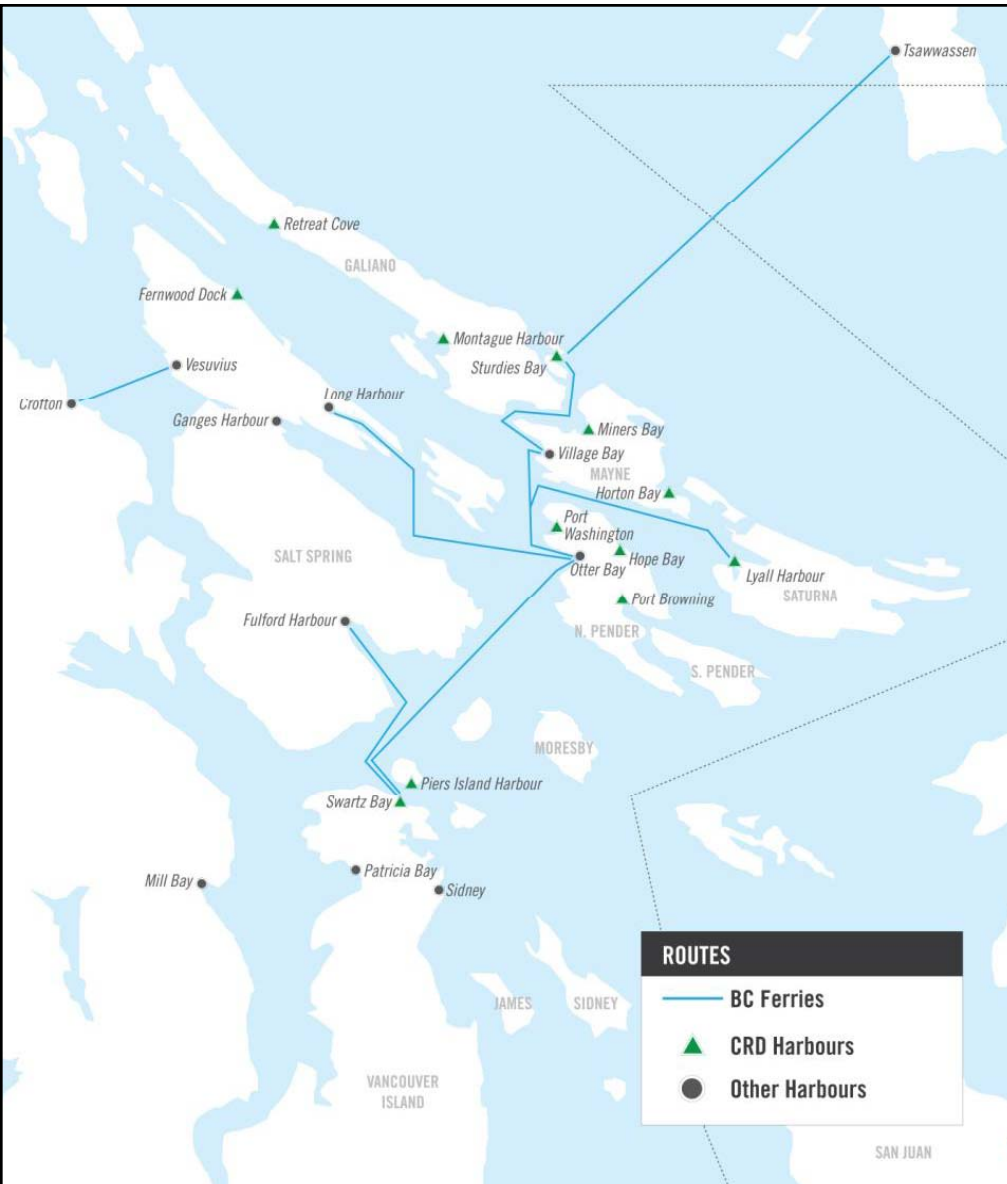
Purpose & Goals

- + Come away with an understanding of the unique marine transportation operating environment and requirements.
- + Have an open and wholesome discussion.
- + Exploring what constitutes success.
- + Outline aligned next steps.



What We Know

- BC Ferries provides service to the Islands, with time gaps and trip durations that can make traveling between the Islands challenging
- Sidney and Ganges are not directly served
- Upcoming service revisions include two new higher-capacity vessels and enhanced service in peak season



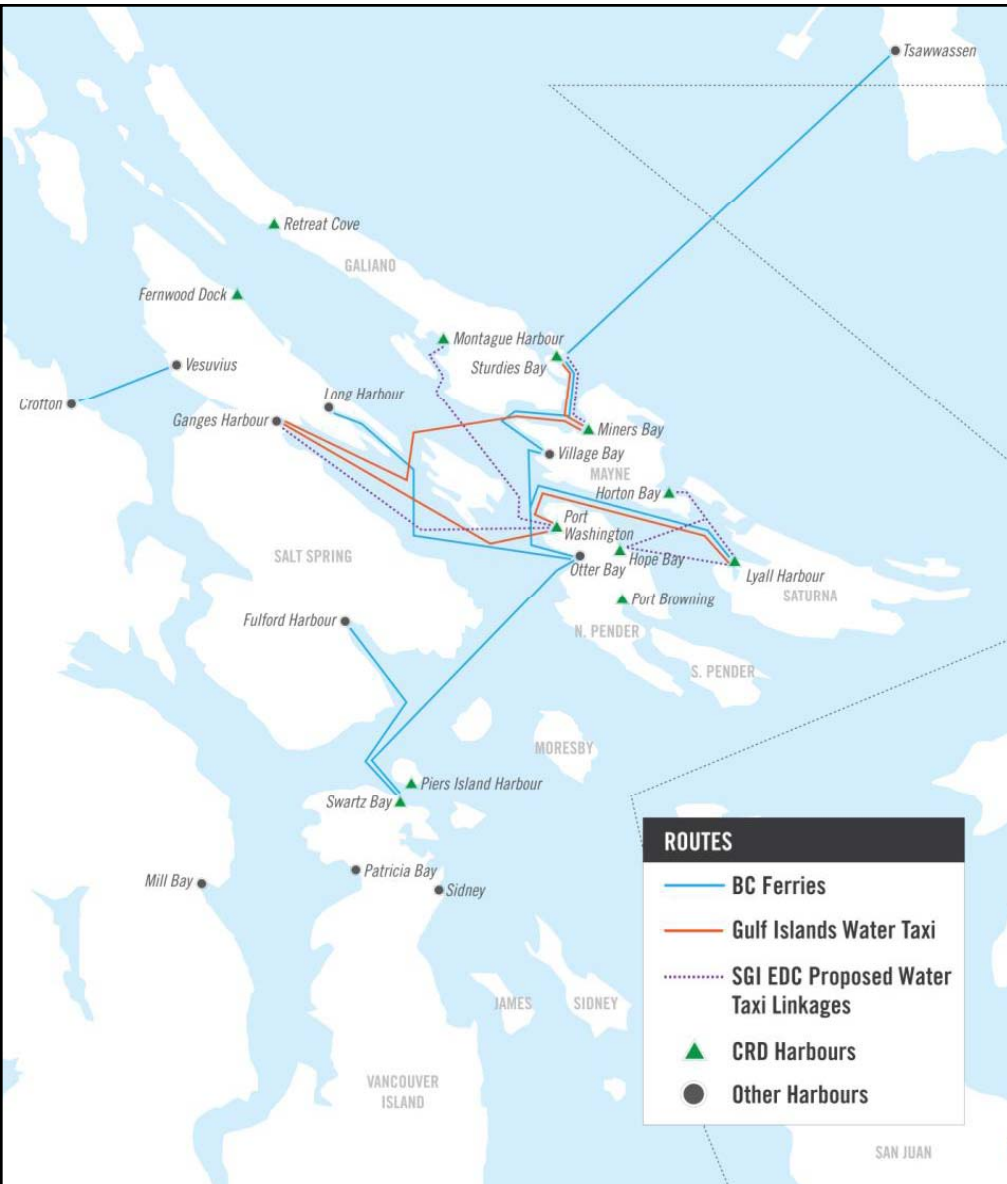
What We Know

- Gulf Island Water Taxi
 - Provides service on regular routes and schedules
 - Primarily for school children
 - Two routes



What We Know

- BC Transit feasibility study looked at opportunities to support an interisland ferry
- There are other private marine providers offering charter service to the area.



DEMOGRAPHICS AND EXISTING SERVICE

What We Know

Galiano Island



1,140

Mayne Island



1,075

N/S Pender Island

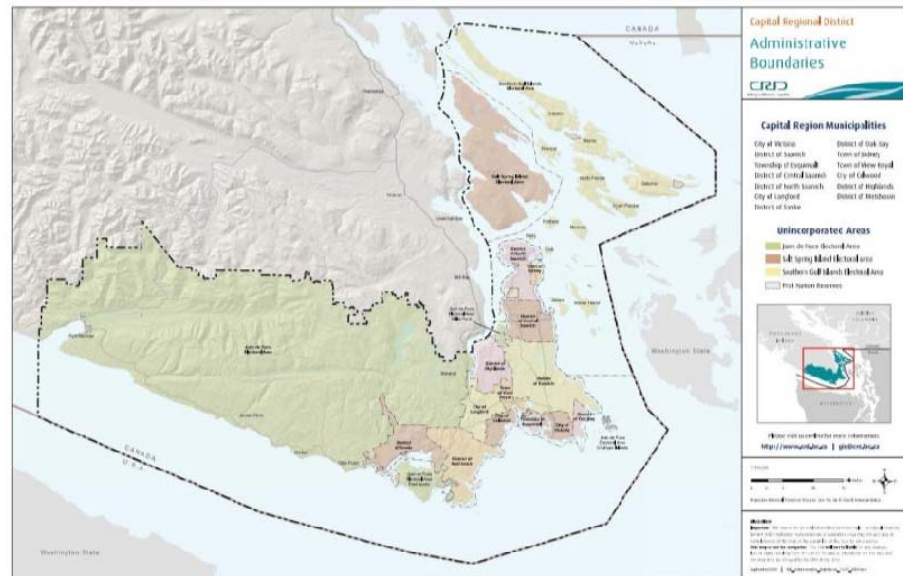


N=2,035
S=190

Saturna Island



320



Salt Spring Island



Town of Sidney



*2011 Census Information. 1=1,000 people

Work to Date

An island archipelago located off the south-east coast of Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland, the Southern Gulf Islands are widely regarded as a recreational paradise and ecological wonder. Made up of six major islands interspersed with a multitude of islets, the area is a popular tourist destination and home to about 15,000 year-round residents and a much larger seasonal resident population.

- Experience the Gulf Islands Concept Plan

6-D. Continue to explore passenger only small craft linkages between the islands

- + 2014 Alternative Transportation Visioning Thesis
- + 2016 Experience the Gulf Islands Concept Plan
- + 2014 Southern Gulf Island and Salt Island Transportation Survey.

BENEFITS OF SERVICE

+ Convenience

- Decrease in travel time.
- Increased accessibility.

+ Economic

- User Benefits
- Real Estate Benefits
- Wider Economic Benefits

+ Options / Linkages

- Linkages between the islands with enhanced options for residents and visitors.
- Reducing reliance on one type of service

+ Green Factor

- Providing options to leave the car at behind.



Initial Understanding

- + Type of service?
- + Locations served?
- + Demand?
- + Frequency?





PASSENGER - ONLY FERRY SERVICE

Overview

HOW TO ORGANIZE?

WHAT ARE THE OPERATING NEEDS?

WHAT ARE THE INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS?

WHAT WILL IT COST?
operating - capital

HOW WILL YOU PAY FOR IT?

HOW WILL SUCCESS BE MEASURED?

How to Organize?



PRIVATE

- Economic feasibility



PUBLIC

- Organization, staffing and management
- Marine skills and expertise required



PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

- Contract relationship

What Infrastructure is Needed?



VESSELS



DOCKING SPACE



MAINTENANCE FACILITIES



ADMINISTRATIVE HOUSING

What are the Operating Needs?

+ Vessels

Size and equipment

+ Operating Environment

Regulatory/legal; certification, inspections

+ Insurance

+ Maintenance

Routine, periodic, planned and unplanned

+ Staffing Needs

Licensing & Training



What Will it Cost?

CAPITAL EXPENSES



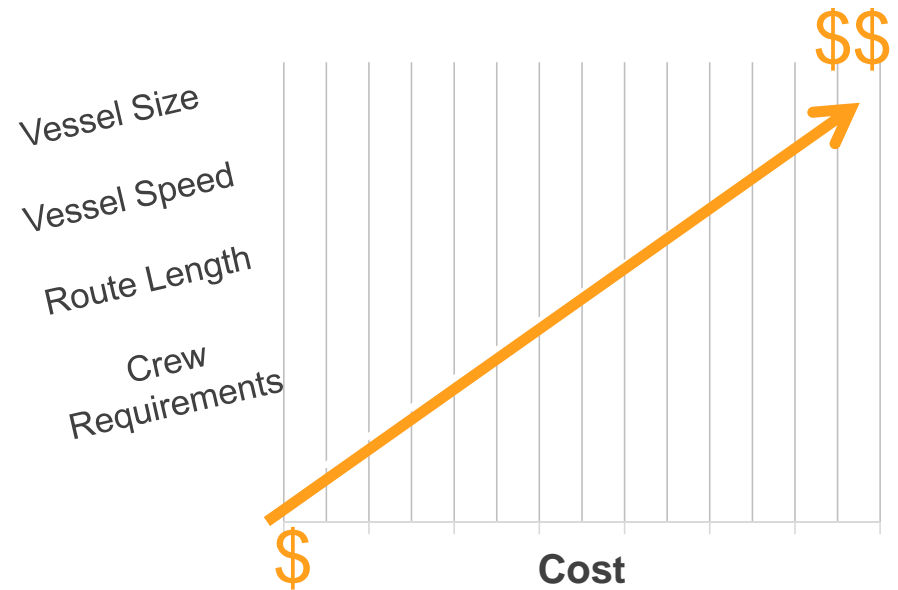
- Vessels (number, size, speed, capacity, attributes)
 - Ridership demands
 - Reliability/Redundancy
 - Seaworthiness/comfort
 - Frequency & duration of trips
 - Fuel consumption
 - Regulatory requirements

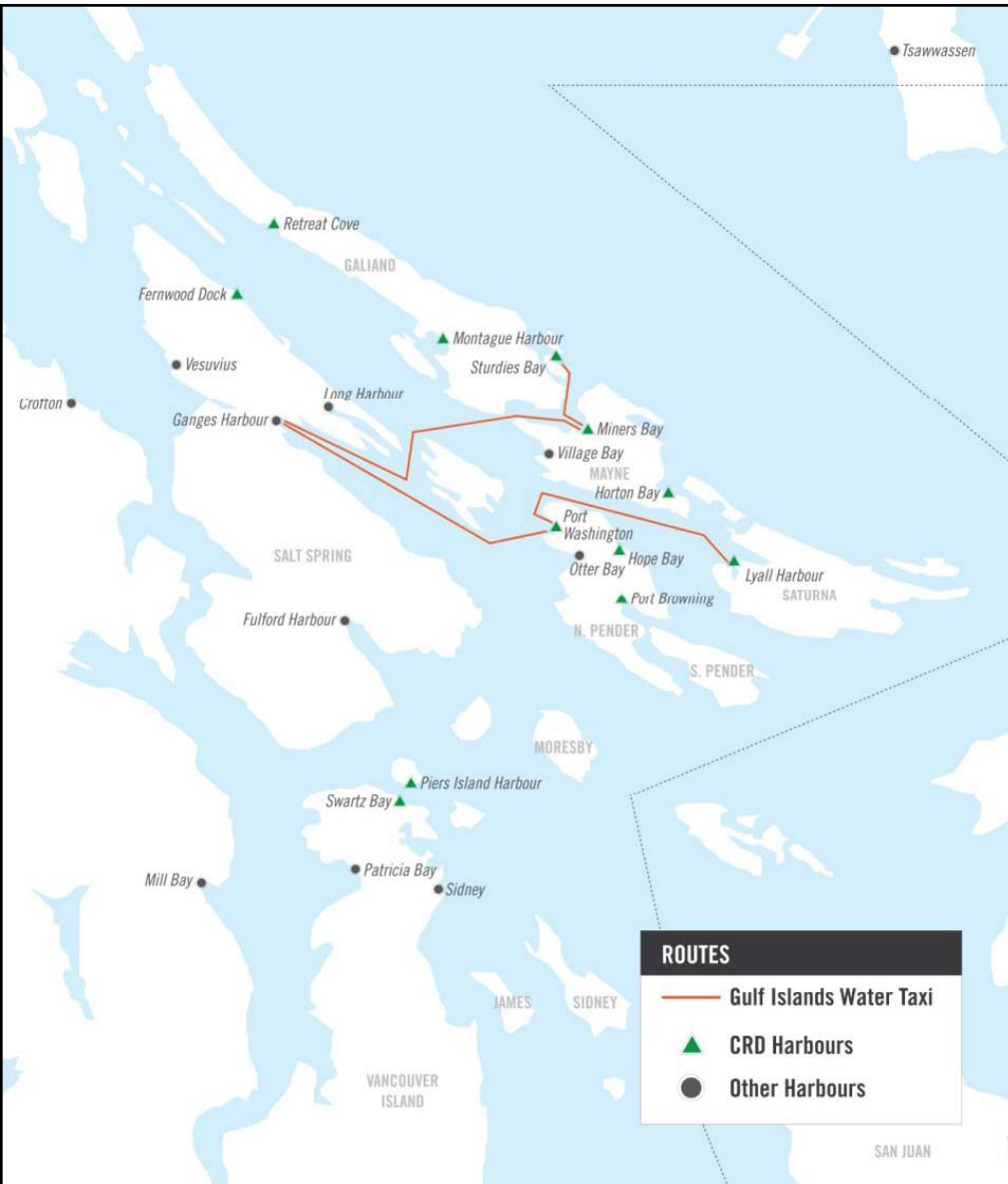
- Facilities
 - Terminal Amenities
 - Washrooms
 - Transit connections
 - Parking
 - Services
 - Maintenance & Office

What Will it Cost?

OPERATIONAL EXPENSES

- Level of service
- Vessel – fuel, maintenance, regulatory
- Staffing – Crew, shoreside, administrative
- Administrative needs
- Insurance





Operator Experience:

Gulf Island Water Taxi
Island Water Taxi
Eco Cruise Boat Tours

How Will You Pay For it?

Farebox Recovery 

Fare Reasonableness / Elasticity

Public Subsidy 

This is typical for passenger-only ferry service.

HOW WILL SUCCESS BE MEASURED?

+ Passenger Keys to Success

- SAFE
- RELIABLE
- ON-TIME
- COST EFFECTIVE
- CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

+ Organizational Keys to Success

- NUMBER OF PASSENGERS CARRIED
- MEETING FINANCIAL GOALS





PASSENGER-ONLY FERRY SERVICE

Visioning Session

WHAT IS IMPORTANT?

WHERE DO YOU NEED TO GO?

HOW OFTEN? HOW FAST?

DEMAND FOR SERVICE?

WHO PAYS FOR IT?

WHAT PERFORMANCE MEASURES SHOULD BE CONSIDERED?

An aerial photograph of a coastal area, likely a bay or estuary, with a large orange V-shape overlay. The text "THANK YOU" is centered in the lower half of the image.

THANK YOU

Attachment B

Meeting Notes

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Benefits of service:

- Convenience
- Economic
- Options/Linkage
- Green Factor
- Other benefits from group!
 - Human connectivity
 - Medical services
 - Increased options
 - Serious emergencies – moving people around during emergencies
 - Recreation – competitive sports, etc like baseball teams, darts

Initial Understanding:

- Type of service? i.e. Bill services the Schools with moving the children
 - Usually we want it all, need to narrow it down, what are your priorities
 - Is it commuters, human connection with other islands?
 - Other markets that could be included in this service
- Locations served?
- Demand?
- Frequency?

What is the primary focus?

Floor discussion:

- Mill Bay Group:
 - Commuter service is important to them
 - global connection – i.e. to airport/ferry
- pushback – BC ferry service may cut back their service level
- revenue for BC Ferries comes from vehicles not passenger
- some ride just for the experience

Locations Served: where to and from

Demand: - back to primary focus

Frequency: - every 30 minutes, 2 hours? What size of vessel?

- Frequency of service still needs to be better than BC Ferries or it defeats the purpose.

Discussion:

- WA state has subsidy's, the gulf islands will need some sort of subsidy as well
- Linked with public/community bus transport on the islands
- Vancouver island has no transportation (BC Transit) service from Swartz Bay to Airport – critical

- June: community bus services – Mayne, Saturna, Galiano and North Pender. SSI has transit
- Connectivity needed to ferry, airport & north part of Vancouver Island, these are critical. We are willing to put up private funding. It's all about price point. Waiting to hear who will put up some funding from CRD or Transportation
- This will need to be subsidized
- Pilot project of TDI – interisland transport – data collected provided?
- Hard to provide a service without ridership and hard to provide ridership without a service
- Lorne from Tsawout First Nations: Penalekut FN (above Fernwood Dock) SSI – Galiano to Retreat Cove
- Adam Olsen – Salish Sea – connections to the San Juan's
- Could you give a probable "cost" based on your experience – where would the subsidy come from?
- Community Tourism piece –important to think about not just the passenger but equipment as well such as transporting kayaks, bikes, dogs, back packs etc.
- Are you looking at a CRD or private run system, or looking at either or both?
 - o June: first let's find out what we want before who's funding it, look more at partnerships & social financing. If it's CRD it involves raising taxes, so let's first find out what we want
- Mill Bay: Is there money out there to get moving forward?
 - o June: Community Works Fund and Rural Dividend Fund are two options
 - o Some form of P3 is going to be needed for sure

Slides:

How to organize; what infrastructure; what are the operating needs;

What will it cost?

Capital Expenditures; Operational expenses;

- Levels of service
- Vessel – fuel maintenance, regulatory
 - o Bigger, faster, greener etc.
- Staffing: crew, shore side, administrative
- Admin needs
- Insurance

Discussion:

- a to b to c to b or 2 or 3 destinations not just a – b – c
- very ferry system is uniquely different

Gulf Islands water Taxi:

Bill operates the school boat 12 – 50 boat capacity – 5 vessels and 1 back up

- have a backup for emergencies as well
- operate for the schools from Sept to June (winter) passenger can ride if there is space
- have a couple of commuters that work on other islands, not SSI
- Saturday in summer to SSI market from Galiano and Mayne to SSI 9am-3pm
- \$30 return includes bicycles – would like to see a subsidy!!
- 2016 was the worst year ever for taking people to the market. Not sure why.
- Staffing is an issues, need to have their certifications, keep them working year round, captains
- Ridership is down

Brian Smiley – Sidney Harbour Cruises - Swartz Bay to Piers Island 3 x 28 ft vessels (12 passengers)

- 25 years family subsidized business
- Learned they need 2nd boat for backup which they now have
- 7 sailings a week – Tuesday and Friday are big commute days
- Passenger and cargo – dogs, strollers, groceries
- Government docks are busy
- Physically challenged people – side loading
- Bow landing as well (keeps it flexible)
- Also would like to see subsidizing for this type of service.
- 50-60 full time residents
- finding the right vessel that can service these islands is challenging and would encourage you to look at possibly a mix – perhaps look to come out of canoe cove?
- Discussion on whether it would make sense to include Piers Island in an inter-island transport plan? It's possible, and maybe to work with not replace.

George Harris – founder of Tour Des Isles

- Running 5 vessels between the islands including ground transport, making sure vessels were the right size and speed – it was a nightmare
- Each route was different; some runs were busier than others, routes more popular...
- 12 is the magic number, once you go over 12 it gets more expensive
- SGI is a destination, people do want to get around the islands, they are told they can't
- Shared the challenges
- Spoke about lost connection between the islands, it will take time to rebuild those connections again
- Early 80's had a hydrofoil to Sidney – they went broke, then BC Ferries went to Ganges, then stopped and now it takes 2.5 hours to go anywhere.
- There is no service between the islands that makes sense.
- The market is there but it will take time to rebuild, won't work full time year round.

Jon Suk

- Works with Parks Commission on SSI, connecting the island by trails, with SGI Consortium on the Experience the SGI project with Social Media promoting the SGI as a region. Also on call in the Marine Industry working with Bill in the winter as staff on one of his boats
- Sees on a day to day basis how difficult it is to maintain a crew year round
- Critical to have year round employment in some capacity for these vessel carriers

Reg Kirkam – Port Sidney Charter Boat - 12 passenger vessel

- Providing a regular service is not cost effective
- More of a charter, moving bc hydro crews around, government staff around the islands
- Stop doing marketing as it didn't see a difference
- Getting 10 people to go at the same time to the same place is a challenge
- Could be service in itself for medical appointments, it's an all day trip for a 15 minute appointment
- Possibly to make it work if there was a dispatch to organize and/or set up a call center for booking a seat
- Bottom line is it a cost factor, it is only Reg with no crew

How will you pay for it?

- Farebox recovery – fare reasonableness – elasticity
- Public Subsidy – typical for passenger only ferry service

How will success be measured:

- Passenger keys to success
 - o Safe, reliable, on time, cost effective, customer experience
- Organization keys to success
 - o # of passengers
 - o Meeting financial goals
- Social Value: not measurable

- What's important to you?
 - Dangerous cargo
 - Subsidized is only partial not fully
 - Connect between island to attend meetings, conferences, seminars, social events, concerts, performances, special events
 - Is special events a separate service? Through a dispatch
 - Potential for a charter situation that is more organized with a central dispatch
 - Challenge with this is staffing....
 - Health and Medical appointments
 - Inter-island tourism (for residents)
 - Seasonality of business needs flexibility

Do you want more tourists?

- Would like to be able to move them around the islands, bikes, walkers, hikers.
- Water and ground transport needed
- There's an opportunity to market to the San Juan Islands
 - Janet Clouston with SSI Chamber discussed the SGI Tourism Consortium and their focus on year round marketing organizing with Small group travel and packages
- SSI has no more room for any more vehicles, they are maxed out! Could accommodate more tourists as long as they don't bring their cars!
- How do people get to you if you don't want them to bring their vehicles
 - Leave the vehicle at the terminals or at home and use public transport
 - Connection with the airport is so important
 - Be part of the bigger and broader transportation network
 - Want to re-establish the connections with the other islands
 - BC Ferries does not drop off in the villages and major population centers where the interisland service would
 - How do we get people to where they want to go...need a 1-900 number or dispatch, difficult to navigate direction to SGI's
- Commuter Service
 - Recognition needs to be given residents who commute
- 3 types of people: Tourists, commuters (working someplace else) residents that want to use the service
 - What is the priority
 - Although the commuters will grow if there is a service it's not there yet
 - Commuters using the current ferry service have a 12 hour day
 - Fulford and Swartz Bay has good options
 - Mayne Island to Swartz Bay has good options
 - Don't want to compete with BC Ferries
 - Whatever pilot test you do you need to test both on and off season to be a true test.

- Priority needs to be for the residents but subsidized by the tourist trade, needs to meet both, for the residents but underwritten by the tourist trade.
- Best to utilize the current inventory of operators already in place, think about a central coordinator
- Quality of experience for the rider is crucial as well

Inter-island connectivity exercise.

Discussion on where the pilot project should focus, between what points and at what time of the year.

- It's relatively easy to get to Sidney, it's the interisland connections that are the challenge
- Suggested for a 1 year pilot project
- Sidney has the airport, the Washington state ferry and shopping so it may be beneficial, priority should be the residents but the tourist will not be happy to wait and be bumped for residents.
- Most of the parking at Anacortes is not tourists but the residents that fill up the parking lots, the tourist takes their cars.
- Is there any opportunity to do a more in depth market research ie Monkey survey
 - They are not contracted to do surveys but to bring back a report from today.
- A survey has already been done without great participation but enough to get an idea of where they want to go and the price point.
- Demand forecasting is very expensive and it still needs to know where you are going and level of service
- Don't want to encourage people to shop off island and making it easier will promote this. This is always in the back of our minds
- Saanich chamber believe it's more for services not as much as shopping that islanders come to Sidney
- Picking one port on Galiano to go to Ganges, it would be Sturdies Bay
- Also need to tie in Hope Bay, Pender, Lyall Harbour, Saturna and Horton Bay, Mayne.
- Sturdies to Miners with bus service to Horton to connect the two triangles
- How to reconcile the service from Ganges to the gulf islands that isn't being utilized.
 - After the school run they could run the gulf islands to Sidney
- Who is going to pay for all of this?
 - It won't pay for itself – Farebox Recovery
 - Public Subsidy, C3, partnerships
 - June is looking at private funding, unrealistic to ask the taxpayer to pay for something they won't see a value for. Example of Gabriola.
 - Investors, social financing? They would be seeing their investment working for the community
 - For reliable service you need reliable funding
 - CWF is only infrastructure not operational
 - Hard to get funding for operational costs, easier for capital investments
 - Need some kind of organizational function for coordination
 - Can be structured several different ways

- Operators can own the vessels and assets and can contract out to run
 - Talking about using existing vessels for the pilot project
 - Island infrastructure needs to be included like the existing gov't docks, parking etc. need to be considered in the funding.
- How to measure success.
 - You need to think about it,
 - On time performance – weather, mechanical issues
 - Reliability – good experience and fair value for their dollar
 - Need to raise awareness or there will be nothing to measure – must be marketed to the maximum

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Attachment C

Attendees List

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NAME

AGENCY/COMPANY

Andrew Hicik	Town of Sidney
Andrew Pearson	Mayne Inter-Island Seatours
Andrew Purdey	Port Sidney Marina
Annie Cossey	Penelakut First Nation
Bill Elford	Gulf Islands Water Taxi
Bill McCance	Mayne Island Chamber of Commerce
Brian Crumblehulme	SGI CESC/Mayne Island Trustee
Brian Dearden	Mayne Water Taxi/Chamber of Commerce
	Eco Cruising Boat Tours and Charters/Piers Island
Brian Smiley	Water Taxi
Conny Nordin	Galiano Island Chamber of Commerce
Curt Firestone	SSI CEDC
	Manager Saanich Peninsula & Gulf Islands
Dan Robson	Operations, IWS Operations
Darcy Gray	Gulf Islands National Park Reserve
Darryl Martin	Alternate Director, SSI EA
Dave Howe	Director, SGI EA
David Calveley	Sidney Economic Development Commission
Duane Shaw	Port Browning Marina Resort Ltd
Ed Andrusiak	ETGI Project Manager
Erin Bremner-Mitchell	Councillor, Town of Sidney
Francine Burnett	Gulf Islands National Park Reserve
Gary Holman	MLA North Saanich and the Islands
Geoff Dickson	President & CAO Victoria Airport Authority
George Harris	SGI CESC/Galiano Island Trustee
	Executive Director, Salt Spring Island Chamber of
Janet Clouston	Commerce
	Senior Transportation Planner, Regional &
John Hicks	Strategic Planning CRD
Jon Suk	Chair SSI Parks and Recreation Commission
June Klassen	Manager, Service Delivery SGI, CRD
Karla Campbell	Senior Manager, SSI Administration
Lee Middleton	Saturna Island Trustee
Lorne Underwood	Tsawout First Nation
Melody Pender	Administrative Assistant SGI EA Director
Michael Hoebel	Galiano Island Community Bus
Paul LeBlond	Alternate Director SGI
Randy Humble	CAO Town of Sidney
Reg Kirkland	Island Water Taxi
Robert Kojima	Regional Planning Manager Islands Trust
Sheri Steeves	Pender Realty
	Manager, Fleet Deployment & Scheduling BC
Steve Anderson	Ferries
Toby Snelgrove	Mayne Island Chamber of Commerce
Victoria Warrior	Piers Island

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Attachment D

Context Map

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Context Map