

WSDOT Ferries Division Operational Strategies Review and Ridership/Revenue Update

Paula Hammond, P.E.
Secretary of Transportation

Dave Dye, P.E.
Deputy Secretary

Steve Reinmuth
Chief of Staff

Ray Deardorf
Planning Director
Ferries Division

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Presentation Overview

- Operational Strategies Review
- Under 14' and 14' – 22' Vehicle Fare
- Ridership/Revenue Updates

Operational Strategies Background

- In 2007, the Legislature directed WSDOT Ferries (WSF) to develop, and the Washington State Transportation Commission (WSTC) to review, operational strategies “to ensure that existing assets are fully utilized and to guide future investment decisions.”
- WSF and the WSTC responded to this legislation with a jointly developed evaluation and prioritization of operational strategies.
- Broader aspects of ESHB 2358 pertaining to adaptive management strategies were also addressed, including pricing. The report listed several priority operational and pricing strategies.

Operational Strategies - Status

Reservation System

- The vehicle reservation system is the keystone of WSF's operational strategies. WSF is about to implement Phase 1 of the new system later this spring. Phase 1 will involve consolidating those aspects of WSF's current reservation systems.
- If funded by the legislature, Phase 2 will expand the system to all vehicles in the San Juan Islands, plus commercial carriers on all other routes.
- Phase 3 will expand the system to all vehicles on all the other remaining routes in the system with the exception of the routes serving Vashon Island and Mukilteo/Clinton.

Operational Strategies – Status (cont.)

Transit Enhancements

- WSF modified its sailing schedule on the Edmonds/Kingston route to meet a series of objectives; one was to connect with the commuter rail Sounder better in Edmonds.
- Discussion with regional transit partners on facilities to enhance ferry/bus connectivity have been primarily focused on downtown Seattle. At this point in time, most transit operators that WSF connects with are in various states of financial distress.

Operational Strategies – Status (cont.)

Fuel Conservation

- WSF has instituted selected vessel slowdowns on strategic off peak sailings with success in reducing fuel consumption.
- Capital improvements to allow the vessels to reduce consumption at the dock while loading and offloading are still being explored.

Differential Vehicle and Passenger Pricing

- The concept of increasing the spread between vehicle and passenger fares, making it relatively more financially attractive for riders to travel as a passenger than as a vehicle driver, has been discussed and evaluated with the Ferry Advisory Committee on Tariff (FAC-T) but has not yet been part of a tariff recommendation.

Operational Strategies – Status (cont.)

Reservation System Pricing

- The concept of charging extra for vehicles with reservations was evaluated at the reservation system pre-design phase and discussed with a community partnership group created to help WSF define the system.
- In order to achieve maximum efficiency in implementing reservations, they should be available at no additional cost above and beyond what a rider would pay for the fare without reservations.

Fuel Surcharge

- Language prescribing a fuel surcharge formula was proposed by WSF and adopted by the WSTC with the fall 2011 tariff cycle.

Other Lower Priority Strategies

The report identified several other lower priority strategies that have had action since the report was published:

- **Enhanced User Information** - WSF has added “best times to travel” information to each sailing schedule for each of the four seasons. It graphically depicts what the lighter and heavier traveled sailings are so that riders can adjust their travel plans accordingly.
- **Seasonal Surcharge** - The WSTC proposed a “peak of the peak” summer surcharge during the 2009 tariff outreach.
- **Small Car Discounts** - WSF proposed, and the WSTC adopted, a fare schedule which gives vehicles under 14 feet in length a favorable price compared to standard length vehicles. Effective October 1, 2011, the smaller vehicles traveled for 10% less than standard cars; on May 1, 2012 the discount will be 20%.

Under 14' Vehicle Fare - Systemwide

- Developed to encourage travelers to choose to use smaller vehicles when traveling aboard WSF routes, freeing up car deck space and “growing the boat”.
- Used by 167,236 vehicles in October through February, or 4.5% of all vehicle traffic.
- Under 14' are 4.5% of all under 22' full fare paying vehicles
- Under 14' are 5.2% of all under 22' multi-ride card paying vehicles
- 10% reduction in fares compared to standard vehicles.
- 20% reduction in fares effective May 1, 2012.

Under 14' Vehicle Fare – By Route

Above average percent of total vehicles

- Point Defiance/Tahlequah: 6.8%
- Port Townsend/Coupeville: 5.6%
- Seattle/Bremerton: 5.5%
- Seattle/Bainbridge: 5.3%

Average percent of total vehicles

- Fauntleroy/Vashon/Southworth: 4.5%

Below average percent of total vehicles

- Edmonds/Kingston: 4.0%
- Mukilteo/Clinton: 4.0%
- Anacortes/San Juan domestic: 2.7%
- Anacortes/Sidney, B.C: 2.4%

Under 14' Vehicle Fare – By Route

Above average percent of frequent (multi-ride) vehicles

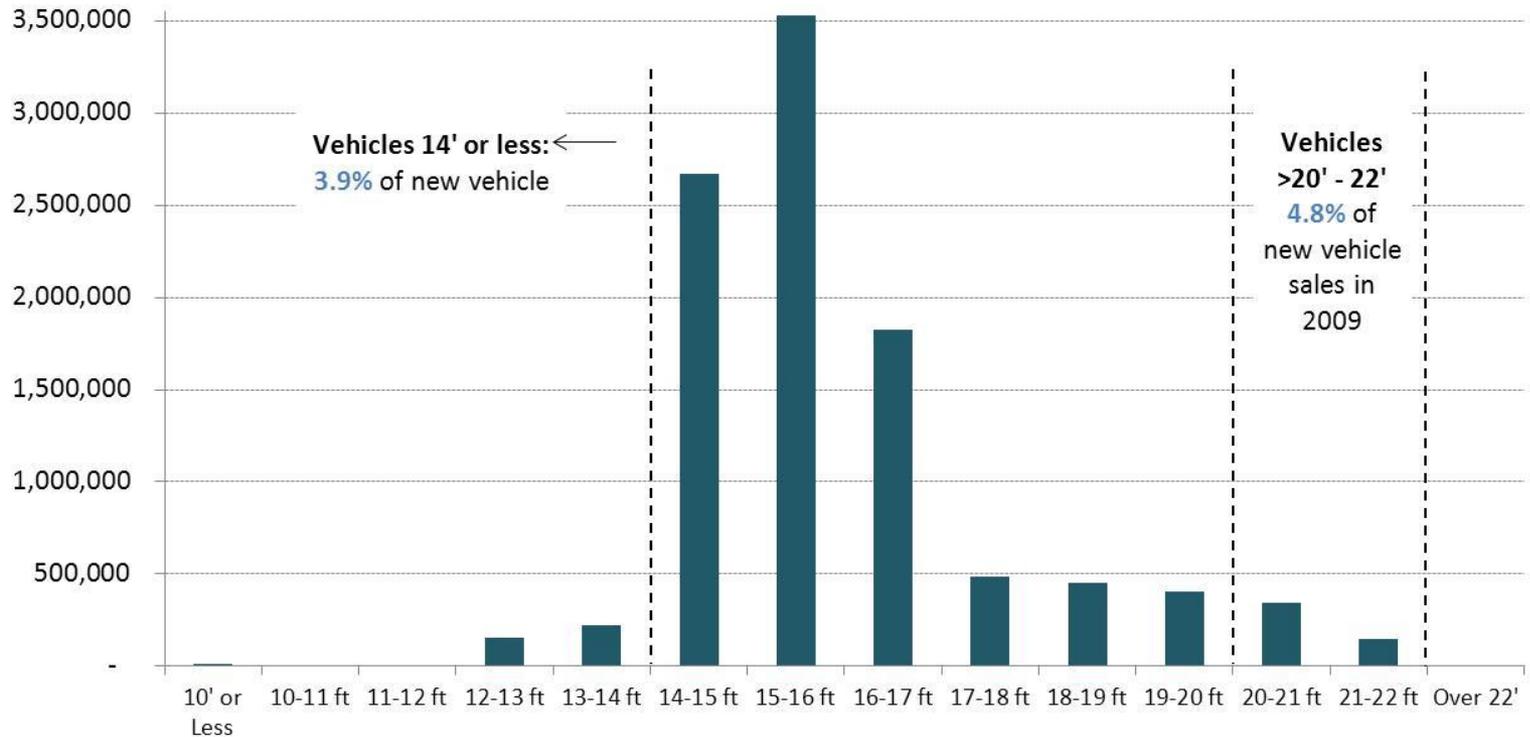
- Port Townsend/Coupeville: 8.4%
- Point Defiance/Tahlequah: 6.6%
- Seattle/Bremerton: 6.5%
- Seattle/Bainbridge: 6.0%
- Edmonds/Kingston: 5.6%
- Fauntleroy/Vashon/Southworth: 5.3%

Below average percent frequent (multi-ride) vehicles

- Mukilteo/Clinton: 4.5%
- Anacortes/San Juan domestic: 2.4%

Distribution of Vehicle Lengths

2009 Sales of Passenger Vehicles and Light Trucks



22' – 30' Vehicle Fare - Status

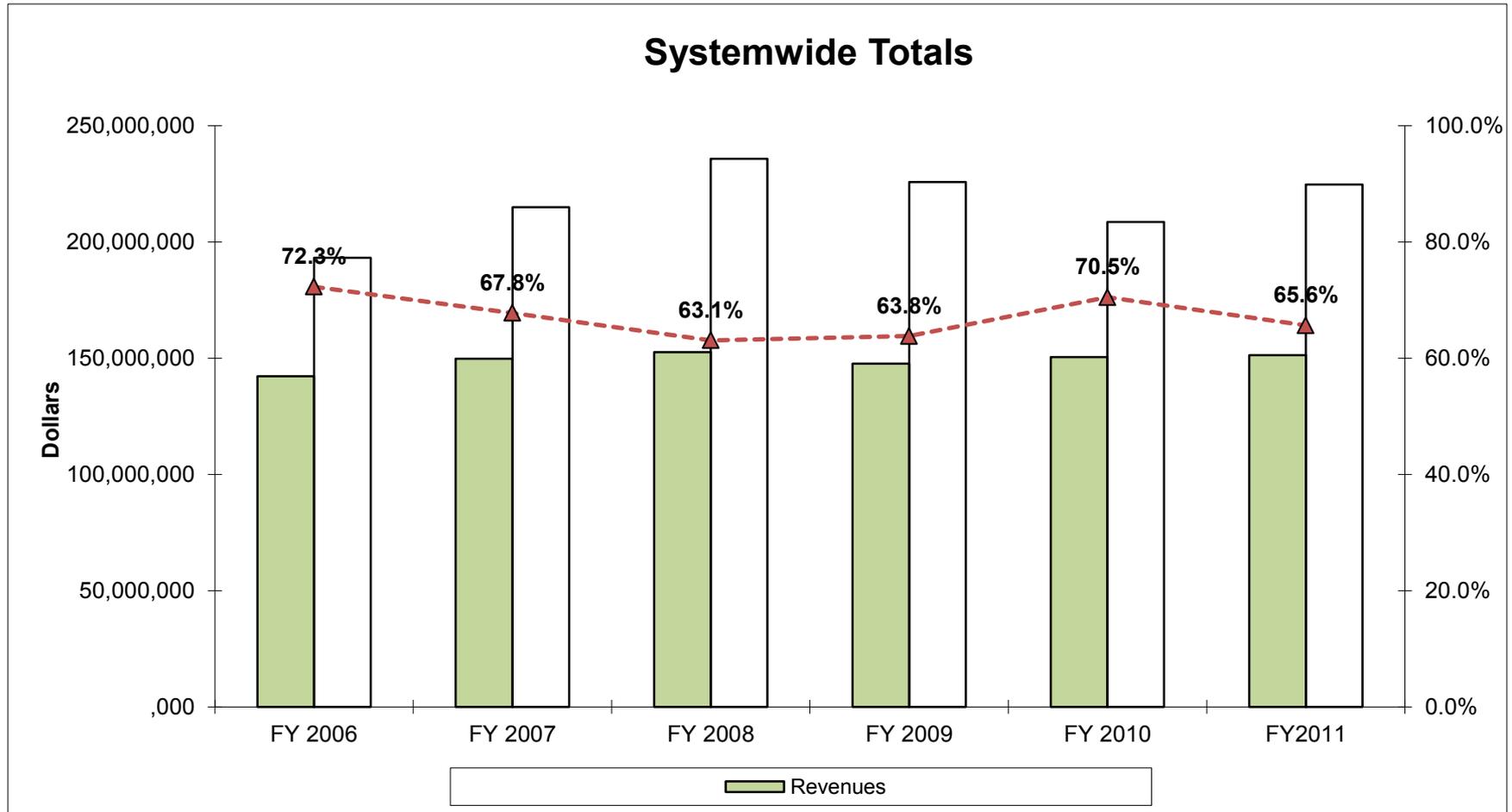
- Concurrent with the under 14' fare, the size of the standard vehicle was increased from 14' – 20' to 14' – 22'.
- Number of vehicles in the under 30' category was 30,266 from October 2011 through February 2012, down 28% from the equivalent time period last year.
- Overall vehicles (all lengths) were down 0.6% in the same period, overall 0-22' vehicles were down 0.7%
- To put this in a system-wide perspective – this fare category was 1.1% of all vehicles in the October 2010 – February 2011 time period, for October 2011 – February 2012 it is 0.8% of all vehicles.
- No further adjustments are planned.

Moving Forward with Under 14' Fare

- A more structured and consistent way of measurement has been developed – this involves metal bars and the use of a laser.
- While initially more time consuming at tollbooths, once verified, vehicles get a “green” sticker in their windshield for quick identification with subsequent transactions.
- This has been implemented at most terminals.



Ridership and Fare Revenue



Ridership and Fare Revenue (cont.)

- Calendar Year 2011 showed a slight improvement.
- Total ridership 22.6 million, up 0.7% from 2010
- Increase driven by passengers – up 2.3%; vehicles were down 1.2%
- The February 2012 forecasts indicate that WSF's ridership should grow 1.3% in FY 2012

Ridership and Fare Revenue (cont.)

- WSF has been tracking favorably against forecasts.
- Compared to the June 2011 forecasts, fare collections are ahead by \$1.2 million for the first 8 months of the biennium.
- Compared to the November 2011 forecasts, fare collections are behind \$120,000 for the prior 5 months.
- Ridership is ahead of the June forecasts by 417,000 for the first 8 months of the biennium.
- Ridership is ahead of the November forecasts by 160,000 for the prior 5 months.

Questions?

For more information, please contact:

Ray Deardorf, Planning Director
WSDOT Ferries Division, at
(206) 515-3491 or deardorf@wsdot.wa.gov.