



Ferry Customer Survey Qualitative Research Findings / Project Update



Washington State
Transportation Commission



WSTC Update
January 22, 2008



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Statement of Purpose / Outcome

- Multi-phase study, the purpose and outcome of which are to:

Overall Purpose

- To gather information from a representative sample of ferry customers on their travel attitudes and behavior
- To identify fare policy, operational, and customer-centric strategies that could be effective in modifying demand for peak hour vehicular travel and/or increasing walk-on passenger traffic while continuing to accommodate demands for existing and future ridership



Key Outcome

- A better understanding of customer attitudes and behaviors to
- Estimate the impact of changes in fare policy, operational, and other customer-centric strategies could have on travel behavior
 - Inform decisions that will better utilize existing ferry capacity, increase operational efficiency, reduce the need for capital expansions, and improve cost-efficiency while maintaining ferry revenues and continue to meet the needs of customers



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Qualitative Research Objectives

- Explore current travel behaviors
 - How do customers think / talk about travel
 - What factors influence travel decisions
 - Ability to change / modify travel behaviors
- Identify / understand key customer characteristics
 - Their potential impacts on attitudes, needs, and expectations for service
- Understand current attitudes toward travel and assess preliminary impacts of pricing and operational strategies on ridership behavior
- Identify customer requirements / expectations for service and their willingness to pay for / trade-off alternatives to manage demand / improve flow
- Assess methods for measuring impacts of pricing and operational strategies on ridership behaviors



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Focus Groups – Recruiting

- Nine (9) focus groups conducted
 - Most were conducted where people live
 - All routes represented
- A mix of methods used to identify potential participants and invite them to participate
 - Posters on-board ferries
 - Flyers distributed in vehicle boarding areas
 - E-mail blast to WSF customer database
 - Random dialing to households in target areas
- All potential participants had to call in to ORC-NW to be screened and recruited
 - Ensured a representative, cross-section of ferry riders were included
 - Entirely different process than public meetings, potentially providing a different viewpoint



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Focus Groups: Group Composition / Number / Route

- Seattle / Edmonds residents (1 group)
 - Both frequent and infrequent
 - Two were "reverse commuters"; remainder were occasional discretionary travelers

- Bainbridge (3 groups)
 - 1 group commuters only -- a mix of walk-on and alternative transportation users (bicycles, motorcycles); 1 freight customer
 - Held in Seattle
 - 2 groups with commuters and frequent non-commuter riders heavily weighted to those who drive on at least sometimes
 - Held on Bainbridge

- Vashon Island / Southworth (1 group)
 - Commuters and frequent non-commuter riders
 - Mix of vehicle and walk-on passengers



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Focus Groups: Group Composition / Number / Route

- **Bremerton (1 group)**
 - Commuters and frequent non-commuter riders
 - Mix of vehicle and walk-on passengers
- **Edmonds / Kingston (1 group)**
 - Commuters and frequent non-commuter riders
 - Mix of vehicle and walk-on passengers
- **Mukilteo / Clinton and Port Townsend / Keystone (1 group)**
 - Commuters and frequent non-commuter riders
 - Mix of vehicle and walk-on passengers
 - 2 were Port Townsend residents / held before route was shut down
- **San Juans (1 group)**
 - Regular riders – must travel at least sometimes to Anacortes
 - Mix of vehicle and walk-on passengers



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Question

- How do you currently use the ferry and what influences how you travel?
 - Describe your typical trip(s)
 - What factors into your decision(s) of when / how you travel



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: Choice of Travel Times

- Most participants –regular riders / commuters – have fixed and difficult schedules
- When they can travel is “driven” by their work schedules and other constraints
- Many have what would be considered difficult – even unreasonable – commute or other trips

- *“I live on the boat. I’m up at 3:00AM to catch the 4:15AM at Kingston or 6:20AM in Bremerton. It depends which one I make it to. I walk on. One of my workers will drive us out. On the way back they’ll drive me to the boat and I’ll walk on. Most of our time is travel.”*
- *Ninety-five percent of my regular schedule is 7:30AM to 5:30PM. I take Kitsap to the ferry and walk to work.”*
- *“ I work in Bellevue. My work starts at 6:45AM so I get up at 3:45AM. I have to leave my house by 4:18AM in order to get to the boat on time.”*
- *“I live outside of Poulsbo ...catch the 6:30 ferry. I drive by myself. There is no bus to pick me up. I catch the 5:15/5:55 ferry home. There is no bus system except for the bus that comes 20 minutes after the ferry lands. For a long time I road the bus; but to catch it you have to take a 5-block walk. The only other bus drops me a mile from our destination. There are no carpools because my hours are 7-5. Even though I get off at five I get on the 5:55 because of traffic. The buses are consistently scheduled 5 minutes before the ferry comes so they don’t have to deal with the ferry traffic. They changed their schedule to specifically beat the ferry traffic.”*



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: Choice of Travel Times

- Some participants have been able to develop travel schedules that accommodate their work and/or other schedules
 - Most of these trips end as walk-on passengers
 - Many include the use of public transportation
- Trips are well-planned and highly routine / scheduled / planned

- *"I live in Manchester. I work in Lynnwood. I catch the 7:00 ferry in the morning and the 4:30 ferry coming home."*
- *"Door to door it's about an hour and twenty minutes. (I take) Kitsap Transit to the boat for the 5:20am boat, and 3:00pm on the way back"*
- *"Five days a week I catch Kitsap transit about 2 blocks from my house, catch the 6:20am ferry, and the 3:45pm or 4:40pm ferry going home and then I walk on this side because it's 3 blocks from the ferry."*
- *"I leave the house at 6:05am to make the 6:20am ferry and I get to work by 7:05am. Then I leave the office at about 5:10pm to catch the 5:30pm boat and I'm home by 6:20pm by bicycle."*



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: Choice of Travel Times

- Some participants indicated that they had been able to adjust their schedules to avoid travel during peak periods
 - In many cases, this translated to taking an earlier morning ferry to enable them take an earlier boat in the afternoon / evening.
 - Others stay late at work or stay downtown to avoid the peak periods
- *"I've shifted my whole work day to the earlier side so I can try and not be in the peak hours."*
- *"I ride on, 5 days a week. I usually take the 9:40 in the morning in order to miss the peak boat because the atmosphere on those morning peak ferries is horrible I think – I just don't like to be there. Then, I take the 5:30 coming back which is definitely a peak."*
- *"I usually do the Kingston ferry as opposed to the Bainbridge ferry because most of my trips are north and I don't usually do rush hour, I typically catch the 9:30am ferry and come back at 8:00pm."*
- *"The 5:45AM ferry is fast. Get at work by 6:40AM. Leave work at 3:30PM. Try to catch the 4PM ferry but that's just impossible, so always catch the 4:20PM. It's pretty good for an early commute."*



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: Choice of Travel Times

- Other factors that riders consider when determining what ferry to catch include:
 - Traffic
 - Weather
 - Cost
 - Day of the week or season and the impact of the recreational traveler on the system

- *"I was always affected by the traffic."*
- *"Traffic. In the summertime I'm either going to go very early or going at noon."*



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: Choice of Travel Modes

- Participants generally agreed that their decision to drive on the ferry is driven by necessity rather than choice.
 - Some drive on because they have no other options
 - Need car for work
 - Appointments
- Two factors clearly impact the decision as to when and how often to drive
 - Cost
 - Amount of time required

- *"I drive on everyday, I manage construction projects, and drive to various projects."*
- *"I frequently drive on the ferry because for me it works better, I actually need my car for meetings. When I go off to the mainland, I could be going a number of different places."*
- *"Most of the time I drive on because I have appointments, I have to go some place other than downtown, I don't know the bus routes, so I have to drive."*
- *"So many factors go into our decision whether to drive across or walk on, if the weather is really bad I need to take that into consideration, if it's going to be a really slow walk, I'll drive on. If I know I'll be working late I don't want to walk from my building to the terminal in Seattle, that's kind of scary so I'd rather have a car, so I'll know if the morning if I need a car."*
- *"I'll consider what day of the week is it; what are the traffic patterns and that will help me figure out what mode to use."*
- *"I say the cost is a factor on whether I should take the car over on the weekend. It's just crazy and particularly when you live here and you find you're caught in summer increase. So if I have to take the car, because it's aggravating I drive over and then plan on driving around on my way back home."*



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: Choice of Travel Modes

- Most participants try to walk on the ferries whenever possible. Factors that influence the decision / capability to walk on are:
 - Destination
 - Proximity / access to origin terminal
- Some participants mentioned personally having or knowing people who have two cars so that they could walk on

- *"I walk on. A lot of us that are regulars sit together and play cards and that kind of stuff."*
- *"The ferry is perfect for me – I walk on all the time."*
- *"I think walking on works great if you are downtown, other than downtown it become a nightmare."*
- *"I walk on, I live about 3 blocks from the ferry terminal."*
- *"I keep a car over here and I don't have to pay parking. I walk on 90 to 95 percent of the time. I actually look at the weather as a factor to my decision – whether I should stay, etc."*
- *"I have employees who live in Edmonds and keep a car in Kingston and walk on the ferry (to Kingston)."*
- *"I have one friend that has a car on each side."*



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: Choice of Travel Modes

- Other participants mentioned using alternative modes for accessing the ferry to avoid the cost and time required to drive on
 - Bicycling is popular, notably among Bainbridge commuters
 - Motorcycles
 - Scooters

- *"Coming from Seattle to Bainbridge, I try to ride my bike so I don't have to wait one ferry rotation. I want to get everything done earlier so I can leave earlier."*
- *"I use the ferry 5 days a week. I ride a bike to downtown Seattle where my car was stashed."*
- *"I have a 6 mile (bicycle) ride to the ferry, I leave my house at 6:30am to catch the 7:05 ferry and come back at 5:30pm. When the weather is really horrible I'll take the bus. I avoid driving on if possible."*
- *"I live in Kingston and I ride my motorcycle back and forth most of the year and sometimes I drive."*
- *"I found that motorcycle is the best way to do this. Because you have a mode of transportation on each side, it's easy to load and unload, it costs double as if you are walking on but a lot less than if you are driving a car."*
- *"I have a scooter. After getting frustrated by the time the bus takes, I can go early to work. If I have errands, I'll take the scooter. The scooter is good – gas is great!"*



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: Choice of Travel Modes

- Many participants' choice of travel modes are situational driven and hence change frequently. Situational factors include:
 - Destination
 - Trip purpose
 - Number of people traveling
 - Weather

- *"I'm haphazard, half the time I walk on, half the time I drive on. Once a month I'm going to and from the airport. If I'm walking on it's because I have some function in downtown Seattle. If I'm going to the airport I drive around (the earliest boat isn't early enough)."*
- *"When I'm doing consultations typically in businesses downtown Seattle I just walk on. Many of our trips now are to see my children and grandchildren. We catch a ferry in the morning and we come back after dinnertime. Typically for this I drive on because they all live outside of Seattle."*
- *"I have a 3 year old child. Twice a week we commute on the 7am and I drop him off at daycare in Friday Harbor. Sometimes I need to drive when it's really cruddy weather. When we can walk, we walk. I try to pack in a lot when I use my car, trying to maximize my use of the vehicle."*



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Question

- Is public transportation or other alternative modes available?
 - Where live
 - Where get off ferry
 - Willingness to use



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: Public Transportation

- Many participants who walk on do so because they have access to public transportation that is:
 - Convenient
 - Well coordinated
 - Fits their personal schedules

- *"I use public transportation every time I get off the ferry. I use (King County) Metro. I never use it on the Kitsap side."*



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: Public Transportation

- Many participants suggested that they would public transportation if there was better service. Barriers included:
 - Lack of schedule coordination
 - Lack of service to destination
 - Amount of time required
 - Lack of park-and-ride lots
 - Cost
- Some said there was no information available on using public transportation

- *"I live outside of Poulsbo ...catch the 6:30 ferry. I drive by myself. There is no bus to pick me up. I catch the 5:15/5:55 ferry home. There is no bus system except for the bus that comes 20 minutes after the ferry lands. For a long time I rode the bus; but to catch it you have to walk 5 blocks. The only other bus drops me a mile from my destination. There are no carpools because my hours are 7-5. Even though I get off at five I get on the 5:55 because of traffic. The buses are consistently scheduled 5 minutes before the ferry comes so they don't have to deal with the ferry traffic. They changed their schedule to beat the ferry traffic."*
- *"I've tried the bus thing before. It's not even the money. It's the extra time; it's so slow to take the bus."*
- *"I've tried mass transit going Kingston to Bothell but once I got off the bus in Edmonds I watched the bus go and I noticed this is consistently what happened. It would take 2 hours to get to Bothell."*
- *"They (Metro and WSF) aren't that synchronized either."*
- *"If Kitsap transit had service to the 4:40am ferry I would use it."*
- *"If there was a reasonably priced secure lot on the other side (I would park there and walk on)."*
- *"It would be nice if they had more information on the ferry. I don't ever see bus schedule information; I would love to take a bus to work."*



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: Vanpooling

- Vanpooling was used by those participants going to a common destination. Benefits include:
 - Low cost
 - Priority loading
- Those that vanpool are able to because their work hours are very regular and because a large enough number work in a common destination
- Some vanpoolers mentioned problems with:
 - Boarding when they are late due to traffic or work schedules
 - Not always having the required number of persons in the vanpool

- *"On the Seattle side I take van share to work. My company pays for van share. If I have to drive, I'll drive around."*
- *"That's why a lot of us came up with alternative transportation like a vanpool because it doesn't matter if the line is 5 days long. We catch a ferry and it's the cheapest commute I've ever had. It costs me \$65 a month for the vanpool plus my walk-on ticket."*
- *"My weekday travel is very regular. I catch a bus in the island on the highway about 5:30 in the morning. I'm on the ferry at 6AM. I either walk on the ferry or get on the van depending at what time the bus gets down there and where they are in the load process. And then the vanpool goes into downtown. And it leaves downtown at 4 o'clock and traffic allowing which is 90 percent of the time we make it to the 5 o'clock boat. Vanpool is a Metro van – it's 11 of us in the van who work near or in downtown."*
- *"There are 4 guys who are clock in clock out in our vanpool and many times we have to rush them to get them there on time so they can get their hours in."*
- *"I use a Island Transit Vanpool 5 days a week. There are 6 of us. We only have a 5 minute window of getting the 4 o'clock boat so we usually take the 4:30PM one."*



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: Vanpooling

- Some participants had vanpooled in the past but had stopped because something in their work had changed
- Participants that do not vanpool felt vanpooling would not work for them because of the rigidity of the schedule
- Some mentioned that they have tried to set up a vanpool
 - In most cases they were unable to get the required number to participate

- *"I used to vanpool and bus but I can't really do that anymore because of where I work now. Now we have two cars, so I park one in Mukilteo and my husband takes me to the ferry everyday."*
- *"I can't really use vanpools because they are rigid so it doesn't work out ."*
- *"It's hard to vanpool because they're full. For Glenwood I've called and nobody's called me back and not very many people stop at the Glenwood park and ride so it's not very convenient. Plus I'm not flexible with my hours because my job and my employer changed during the last 3 years."*
- *"We have teachers over there but in order to be a vanpool you have to do it 12 months out of the year and we have teachers over there that work 10 months out of the year so therefore they don't qualify even though they are on the same schedule and do the same thing. They have to drop out."*
- *"The ferry system has this rule that in order to qualify for a vanpool you need a driver plus four people. If they drop the number to say one driver plus three instead of one plus four, or even one plus three people, like a carpool and make it legitimate that would help. They need to promote that better. They need to allow more options so more people can qualify."*



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: Carpooling

- Very few participants carpool or have considered carpooling.
 - Only 2 out of a total of nearly 80 participants were in formal / registered carpools
 - Some were in informal carpools
- Many participants were unaware of the benefits of forming a formal carpool
- Many also suggested that there was little effort made to help people form carpools

- *"We drive from our house to carpool parking."*
- *"We are not a formal carpool. Whoever is driving drops the other off at the terminal and they walk on. There aren't enough people available that can work the wacky schedule that we have."*
- *"Recently we started carpooling parking in the carpool park-and-ride and walking on."*
- *"There could be a much more aggressive outreach to try to get people through the Internet in formal carpools. I think they could do a lot more way to encourage them. Encourage by matching more people who go to same destination – it's already enough incentive because of the savings."*
- *"Why isn't there a web page that says 'Hey I live in Fort Warden and I want to take the 5:20am' (boat so you can carpool with others)?"*



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Question

- What degree of flexibility do you have in your travel on the ferry?
 - To travel at different times
 - To use a different mode



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: Schedule Flexibility

- Participants' flexibility in regards to their schedules at their jobs varies greatly. Key factors were . . .
 - Nature of job
 - Employer attitudes
 - Tenure on job

- *"People who ride the ferry and live where they need to take the ferry usually get the flexibility of where I work – you talk to your boss and adjust your work schedule accordingly. But people who don't ride the ferry much don't get that."*
- *"My boss looks the other way when I come into work because she knows I'm lost at sea."*
- *"I've been at my job long enough at the company. There is flexibility. Average time I wait is for 2 boats. On average, I get on the second boat."*
- *"I've always been a morning person all my life...so morning is the thing that I do. We have a flex time with core hours...so as long as I do my 8 hours."*
- *"I have a varied schedule. A couple days a week I leave at 7:00am to catch the 7:05am, and use the 4:40pm boat. Two days (a week) I take the 10:00am ferry and the 7:30pm ferry home. I have varied office hours at work for mornings and afternoons."*



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: Schedule Flexibility

- Some participants had some flexibility so long as they worked their core hours
- Most participants, however, had little flexibility in determining their schedules. In most cases, the influencing factor was:
 - Nature of the job

- *"I've always been a morning person all my life...so morning is the thing that I do. We have a flex time with core hours...so as long as I do my 8 hours."*
- *"I'm flexible as you can get with core hours, but there are some things like meetings, so it usually ends up being 9:00am to around 4:00pm."*
- *"I can flex within reason or core hours."*
- *"I work with people on the east coast, so I have to be there at 6:00am."*
- *"We have to be there from 8AM to 5PM for the customers so less flexible at this job."*
- *"I work with people and I have to be there when the office staff is there."*
- *"A lot of government employees, city, federal and state have fixed hours that are not flexible...some people have to be there, or they get charged."*



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: Mode Flexibility

- Participants that drive on have little choice other than driving

- *"Unlike us, some people don't have flex schedules so they have to be there at 7:00am so they drive because they can't walk or catch a bus to be there on time."*
- *"I start to work early at 7AM so I have to take an early boat. I try taking the bus from the other side; getting the bus from here there's no problem, but to take it to where I have to work at Kirkland, I can't do it because it won't get me there on time. So I have to drive on."*
- *"I pay peak-fee. I don't have another option – I have to drive."*



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Question

- How long / for how many boats do you have to wait before you can drive on?
 - Frequency of having to wait
 - Factors influencing when / how often have to wait
 - Reasonable / unreasonable number of boats to wait through



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: Planning to Wait

- Ferry customers generally plan their trips with the expectation that they might have to wait one boat
- However, in many instances, they plan for more than one boat wait. Wait times are greatest and predictable:
 - On runs with high recreational traffic (Edmonds / Kingston and Mukilteo / Clinton)
 - Certain days of the week / times of the year
- Other times are unpredictable and are usually due to:
 - Weather
 - Special events in Seattle
 - Problems with the boats

- *I know if it's rush hour I'll have to sit through and wait for the next boat."*
- *"Depends on the time of day. If it's a peak I need to get there early. I need to give myself a window."*
- *"You best be ready to wait in line."*
- *"It used to be in the summer but since the mass exits of people from that side to this side it is every Thursday and Friday or near a holiday."*
- *"Don't drive on Thursdays or Fridays"*
- *"And in the summer you don't do it at all"*
- *"I know if it's rush hour I'll have to sit through and wait for the next boat."*
- *"Depends on the time of day. If it's a peak I need to get there early. I need to give myself a window."*
- *When I was working full time I would leave work at noon on Friday or leave at 7 or 8 because I couldn't justify sitting two hours in the car. It isn't economically feasible. It's a waste of my time and fuel is expensive now. You can't shut your transmission down because you have to creep forward and forward. There is a lot of contamination to the environment with those people sitting idle."*



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: Planning to Wait

- Ferry customers are accustomed to planning for their trips to minimize wait times
- Their long experience with riding helps them plan
- In some cases, they will delay their departure to minimize the wait

- *"When we go to Seattle to visit family or friends, coming back we never plan on catching a boat before 8 o'clock in the evening. You get the 8:05 or later. The 7:15 or 7:20 pm on Fridays is impossible. We plan to be there an hour earlier to be able to get on the boat."*
- *"It's the nature of the beast. It's in the afternoon from the Seattle side where you have issues getting on and waiting. We have grown to know each other (because we wait)...It's our community for social life..."*



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: Willingness to Wait

- While ferry customers are accustomed to and willing to occasionally wait, most agreed that a two boat wait was the maximum level that would be considered acceptable
 - However, for those on longer routes, more than one boat became a problem
- All agreed that the unpredictability was frustrating

- *"It's pretty awful to wait for two boats."*
- *"It's quicker to drive around than to wait for 2 boats."*
- *"Sometimes, there's an hour gap between boats."*
- *"That's one of the problem, you don't know how many boats you have to wait. Nobody comes up to you and says 'you need to wait x amount of boats' (so often they are unsure of how long they will have to wait)."*



Question



- How do you get information about wait times?



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: Sources of Information

- Customers use a variety of sources to get information on wait times and are generally pleased with what is available. However, problems were mentioned in regards to each
 - E-mail alerts are effective, if timely
 - Web cams only point to the loading areas and do not provide an indication as to how far up the highway the line extends

- *"I get the e-mail alerts next day. They already knew that the boat I had to be 30 minutes early for was going to be late. If you know beforehand, it's great."*
- *"There's an email schedule that comes for delays that's not informative and it comes too late. I can just look out the window and see that they ferry is late."*
- *"I like some advantage. Email alerts at work when you get them on time, not when you are already there."*
- *"If their emails were accurate (I would use it all the time)."*
- *"Those cameras are good. However, the ones on Seattle side are not necessarily focused on what they should be focused."*
- *"Ferry cam on the dock is nice however I need to know how long the line is above the dock."*



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: Sources of Information

- Customers had many suggestions for improving communications including:
 - More timely information
 - More accurate information

- *"It's gotten pretty bad where I haven't gotten any (emails) or I've gotten them after the boat has left."*
- *"The email works great but it needs to be timely and accurate and consistent with the site."*
- *"It would be nice to have the info when we need it."*
- *"A week ago Thursday the boat was down. I checked the website but it was not updated. So are we just supposed to assume that the boat is still down? I called and the person I spoke to said the boat was back up but the website said it was down and in reality it was really down and I still had to wait 40 minutes."*
- *"The attendants don't even know. They don't have consistent info."*



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Question

- What works well with your trips?
What does not work well?
 - Critical problems
 - Suggestions for improvements



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: Changes to Fare Policies

- In all groups, customers expressed concerns with many of the changes in the fare policies. Notably, they are unhappy with:
 - Expiration dates on the ticket books
 - Passes are not transferable

- *"The expiration dates – I lost money when I buy a book...so sometimes I don't buy tickets for a whole month because I don't need them, so I will just buy some but all of a sudden they expire and I don't even get the chance to use them. I don't know how they can do that. This really bothers everybody."*
- *"Why is there any expiration [date] at all? You pay your money, get so many tickets. It doesn't matter if I use it right now or ten years from now, it should still be valid. If the ferry system does have some sort of logic or explanation I would like to hear it."*
- *"My husband and I can't go back on the same ferry together and use our pass."*
- *"Sometimes my husband drives behind me, but now with the commuter pass you cannot have 2 cars from that 1 ticket on the same boat. You pay for it, we are the same family, why can't we use it?"*



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: Scanning System

- Customers were also unhappy with the scanning system for passes, citing that the system:
 - Doesn't work consistently
 - Gives inaccurate readings
 - Slows down the loading process
 - Causes them to lose their place in the queue

- *The new ticket system is horrible. It is hard to believe that somebody actually spent money on that thing because it's absurd. The only thing that would make it work better would be the scanners, which they currently don't work. Just the process of having to hand something to someone and have them hand it back, as opposed of just handing them a piece of paper which as archaic as it might sound, it's a lot simpler and you would be moving along. Now, and especially the vanpool, the commuter lane in Seattle has become a joke because the vanpools take forever. You've got eight cards to scan there...so that's crazy. Half the time I find myself in the purchase line because goes faster than the commuter line."*
- *"The scanners for the pass for driving through, those boards are not accurate, I've gone through in the morning and it says I have 18 uses left, then I've gone through in the afternoon and it says 9 uses left...it makes me question, am I really getting my 20 uses out of this pass?"*
- *"They WSF does not know how to use technology. The best example would be their bar readers, you have a boat that holds 2,000 people, you have 20 minutes to load and reload...the readers are 10 feet from the door, not 1 person is scanned, what do you think is going to happen?"*



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: Loading

- Customers also expressed concerns with loading and unloading, specifically:
 - Consistency of loading
 - Order of loading
 - Pedestrian / bicycle loading / unloading
 - Timing of signal lights

- *"To me they ought to unload the boat roughly with the same sequence they load it. I have friends who called the ferry system or even talked to the ferry workers, but they don't seem to care. Don't unload the whole tunnel area before unloading the wings because those in the wings are those who got on last."*
- *"I don't understand their rationale for loading and unloading the boats now. They do the first few central rows, then the side rows, but unloading is not always from the same order. Sometimes the people that get on last get off first."*
- *"The biggest problem they have is unloading and reloading. They are going to put a light at the toll booth (in Bainbridge) the light is one boat length from the boat. You turn that light red, you stop the load. You are going to stop it four times during the load?"*
- *"If the boat was a train, all the lights would be green. They would get the whole boat of cars off the boat in 6 minutes."*
- *"There is no very well planned out pedestrian zone, you have to try to avoid killing a pedestrian."*
- *"There is a safety issue for bikes – I've seen a lot of accidents where people try to turn at the bottom and wipe out, it happens a lot."*



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: Scheduling

- As would be expected, participants expressed concerns about scheduling. Notably, they centered around:
 - Better scheduling of boats to meet rider schedules
 - More frequent service during peak periods to meet vehicle load requirements.

- *"I would change the schedule. If there was one at 10:40 (p.m.) that would be great for me. But there isn't so I have to take the 9:30AM boat which is way early for me."*
- *"One of my pet peeves is they go to holiday schedule. Holidays are the highest traffic time all year long. If you try to get to Bainbridge over Thanksgiving? Forget it, unless you are walking on. Don't cut the service, add service."*



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: Announcements

- While they recognized the need for on-board announcements, participants found them annoying:
 - Too often
 - Too loud
 - Irrelevant

- *"Stop that recording in the morning. We don't care who the governor is, just say 'if you see a bomb tell someone.'"*
- *"It demeans the meaning of the message (because it's comical) I don't take it seriously (the recordings on vessels)."*
- *"Communication from the WSF – they say they have a 2 minute warning rule, they never explained what it was going to be, when you pull the plank, as far as a walk-on is concerned the boat has sailed, it's like closing the door on an airplane. When you publish your schedule, if you want to pull the stop loading and move it 2 minutes, do it. People are sitting there saying 'what do you mean I can't get on the boat? It doesn't leave for 2 more minutes.' There is no official WSF clock."*
- *"I had 5 minutes before the 2 minute warning and they said sorry (and wouldn't let me on)."*



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: Service

- Finally, participants expressed concern about specific aspects of service, notably:
 - Cleanliness
 - On-board amenities
 - Customer service / employee attitudes

- *"Cleaning should be better. They (restrooms) are dirty."*
- *"Attitude is really bad."*
- *"Once – despite all the announcements of not leaving personal belongings behind – I saw a jacket was left and nobody from the crew was paying attention, so then I took it to one of the crew members, and they say 'oh, that happens all the time – thanks.' And that was kind of frustrating."*
- *"Their customer service from the corporate end is lacking."*



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: Good System

- Despite these concerns, participants were generally positive toward the system.
- Ironically, they were positive about many of the same things they were negative about . . .
 - Schedules
 - Loading
 - Customer service
 - Timeliness

- *"I do think the ferries do a good job on being on time. Think of all the runs they have. They do occasionally run late, but you can always see why (due to various circumstances). From that perspective they do a good job."*
- *"They leave on time. I really appreciate the crew, they work hard and they pay attention. That's a form of safety and I like that."*
- *"Think about working in the maritime environment. It's 365 days a year, 7 days a week, 24 hours a day and they are amazing. Look at Amtrak (in comparison)."*
- *"I couldn't ask for a better commute in terms of having an hour with my child every morning. We choose our way of life."*
- *"I would rather sit on the ferry for an hour and half rather than sitting in Seattle traffic. I enjoy that time, it's a really good break time from work to home."*
- *"The ferry system does their best in keeping those things running. They really try to help people get to where they're going. They do a great job in keeping those things going. So it helps us predict."*



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Question

- If we are all agreeing that there are problems with vehicle capacity on the ferries at least sometimes, but particularly during peak hours, what or who are the contributing factors?



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: Impact of Recreational / Discretionary Users

- Participants in the groups, representing regular or commute riders, attribute most, if not all of the problems, to demand, specifically vehicle demand, as being the primary, if not only, source of the problems
- Most participants agreed that it is the recreational / discretionary user who should pay for the cost of managing demand for the system rather than regular or commute riders

- *"You have tourists, residents and businesses. Part of the problem is that they are both competing for the resource, and sometimes it's a scarce resource."*
- *"As a commuter and being selfish there is a distinction between regulars who have it down and people who are casual tourists."*



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: Willingness to Modify Travel Behavior

- Commuters and regular riders do not feel that they should be responsible for modifying their travel behaviors to reduce this demand
 - Most felt that they were the “backbone” of the system
 - Most also agreed that the problem was the occasional user and “tourists”
- Some expressed the concern that the system was benefiting tourism / recreational riders at the expense of the regular / commuter riders

- *“Who is it that’s causing the problem? It’s probably not me. It’s vacationers. It’s holiday people. It’s a special event. You aren’t the problem (other people in the group), I’m not the problem, the problem is the people that get thrown into the system. They aren’t going to respond, they don’t even know about the ferry rates.”*
- *“The tourists are important, but they are very flexible...for us, the ferry rides are fun, but there are people who work or live here, it’s a necessity. There are other people for whom it’s an option, it’s not an option for me, I have to use the ferry. It’s students, it’s groups, but it’s not the bicycle tours, and the people coming to the bed and breakfast, it’s not them that runs the system.”*
- *“They aren’t going to change anymore for tourist because Nordstroms, Mariners, etc will complain and the ferry will bow to the corporation’s. Instead they need to be prepared and aware of events.”*



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: Discounts

- Commuters and regular riders who pre-pay their fares feel that they are helping the system
- And they feel they should receive additional benefits for pre-paying their fares
- Some participants questioned the perceived inequity in funding for roads and public transportation when compared with the ferries.

- *I think that if you're buying a ticket for 20 rides you've already given the money to the ferry service. You already lose the money if you don't use it in a certain amount of days. They already said they will increase the price so I don't think we should have to pay even more."*
- *"The ferry needs to be paying 80%. You need to have some other thoughts about how you use your money. It's not about just getting more money out of us."*
- *"The WSF get a fraction of the subsidies of any other form of public transportation and it's not viewed as public transportation, it's viewed as a convenience for people that live over here (i.e. Bainbridge Island)."*
- *"We would like more state money spent on the ferry system so fares would go down."*



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Question

- Again, assuming that there are issues with vehicle capacity at certain times, what are your reactions to the following strategies for managing demand?
 - Pros / cons
 - How would it work
 - Would you be willing to pay



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: Reservations

- Participants in all groups suggested without prompting that a reservation system should be considered
- However they also had many questions and concerns:
 - How much of the boat would be reserved?
 - How far in advance need to reserve?
 - How far in advance of the ferry would you need to arrive?
 - What would happen if reservation does not come at all?

- *"It's time for a reservation system. When I moved up here 30 years ago you could drive almost anytime you wanted to. You have to plan to sit there. The amount of human time that is wasted in those lines, what is the toll of humans and their inability to schedule responsibly?"*
- *"What's wrong with a reservation system? We have millions of people going to Olympic National Park in motor homes. If we could get them to come down at specific times where they can drive right on the boat..."*
- *"I guess there is a special line, but it isn't always open. How are you going to get over (to the furthest lane) if you are stuck on the other side. If we can't get to the toll booth we've lost our reservation."*



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: Reservations

- Participants generally agreed that only a proportion of the boat should be available for reservations
- Others also suggested that there be some distinction between regular riders / locals and discretionary / recreational riders
 - They saw a need to ensure space for the regular riders / locals

- *"The reservation system could work like the airlines have it. The ferry system could determine that (hypothetically) 75% of the ferry system is reservations and then the 25% is who shows up first. So you know if you have a reservation you are going to get on the boat, but the other part is if you show up."*
- *"I'm a regular rider, as long as there is some number of consistent spaces for people who show up at the last minute, so as long as I know I'm going standby and I'm going to get there in time (I'll be content)."*
- *"I think only 20% of the boat should be dedicated to reservations."*
- *"I think it's a good idea (specific amount of boat dedicated for residents vs. tourists)."*
- *"If you do one (reservation system) it has to give preference to its residents. I The people that live here and are committed to living here and use the ferries year round deserve the right to have a certain amount of space dedicated to their ability to get home, that should take preference over people who come out here for recreational purposes once or twice a year. We are the ones that keep the ferry system running yearlong. We rely on it as our I-5, it's our only way to get home. It's our state road."*



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: Reservations

- Amount they would be willing to pay to reserve a spot varied widely
- Most agreed that regular riders would use the reservation system occasionally
 - Peak evening hours or days of the week when recreational use is high
 - When there are special events

- *"I like this idea and I would pay a little extra. You could work your life around this. You have a more reasonable understanding of when you are going to get to the other side. There is more certainty."*
- *"Say its double the price, the other people have to get there earlier. Do you want to have this premium thing where people that have money it's not big deal for them and everybody else who drives on do you want to make them show up a half hour earlier?"*
- *"10% of the ferry ticket price (for reservations) is reasonable."*
- *"\$5 doesn't sound like a lot, but when you say 20% that sounds like a lot."*
- *"I would be willing to pay 10%, but I don't need it all the time. I only need it for 6 weeks out of the year, I don't need it during the winter time."*



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: Priority Loading Lanes

- Participants in all groups suggested priority loading lanes for
 - Commuters
 - Residents
 - Pass holders
- However, feelings were mixed as to whether they would be willing to pay for priority loading
 - Many felt that this should be a benefit for pre-paying their fares

- *"Well you got people buying a bunch of tickets at once, well passes now. If they are bought ahead of time they should be able to go faster than people than sitting in their cars."*
- *"It's (pass) close to \$200 so why shouldn't you be able to get into the lane faster."*
- *"I think they should have one line. They have 2 lanes coming in from each side. They should have one of the two lanes be for cardholders only. You may end up waiting in the final line but you don't have to wait for Aunt Martha to dig through her change when she finds out she has to pay for the ferry...because it's a new experience every time. These people that have to pay every time make us crazy!"*
- *"This would be an incentive to make others use the pass, so others could drive on."*
- *"It has great value especially on Fridays."*
- *"The tourists who are coming over are supporting the system too, so would that be unfair? So yes I would pay more."*



Washington State
Transportation Commission

Ferry Customer Survey

Findings: HOT Lanes

- Participants were generally unfamiliar with the concept of a HOT lane
 - And were unclear how it would apply to the ferry system

- *"You basically are going to pay extra money to have the privilege to ride on a line where there's not anybody else riding. So I'm paying extra so I can ride in that lane and get past the traffic. So why should us commuters pay more? They can already count on us on riding the ferry every single day...so why do commuters have to pay extra? It seems that they are always penalizing the commuters either to pay extra or keeping us back or whatever it is."*
- *"I have reservations but I sometimes can't get into the toll booths because there is no extra lane. If you can't go through there, why is the HOT lane going to work?"*
- *"It appeals to me simply because it's dynamic, you can use it only when you really need to. Sometimes or most of the time I'm not in a hurry, but there are some of the times when things don't go as planned...that's when I would use it, that's when I would pay for it."*



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: HOT Lanes

- Many were concerned about equity issues
 - And impacts on lower-income customers
- Others felt that this should be a free benefit to regular riders

- *I wouldn't pay more."*
- *"Reasonable is 50% more and maximum is 100% more."*
- *"Reasonable is 25% more."*
- *"Depends on the circumstances. If it's life or death I'll pay anything."*
- *"You basically are going to pay extra money to have the privilege to ride on a line where there's not anybody else riding. So I'm paying extra so I can ride in that lane and get past the traffic. So why should us commuters pay more? They can already count on us on riding the ferry every single day...so why do commuters have to pay extra? It seems that they are always penalizing the commuters either to pay extra or keeping us back or whatever it is."*



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: HOT Lanes

- However, some participants were interested in the concept
 - Saw them in a sense as a priority boarding line
- The amount they would be willing to pay to use a HOT lane varied widely

- *"It appeals to me simply because it's dynamic, you can use it only when you really need to. Sometimes or most of the time I'm not in a hurry, but there are some of the times when things don't go as planned...that's when I would use it, that's when I would pay for it."*
- *"For the HOT lane, you need to set it up, so you have an allocation you associate with the HOT lane. A certain percentage or certain number...or you'll miss the boat."*
- *"I wouldn't pay more."*
- *"Reasonable is 50% more and maximum is 100% more."*
- *"Reasonable is 25% more."*
- *"Depends on the circumstances. If it's life or death I'll pay anything."*



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: Congestion Pricing

- Participants had generally mixed feelings about variable pricing by time of day and/or by season
 - However, some suggested peak / off-peak pricing levels similar to Metro
 - Most were very resistant to seasonal pricing that would affect everyone
- In general, regular riders feel they are paying enough and are unwilling to pay more under any circumstances

- *"What really bothers me is the peak season surcharge. There are more people, why am I penalized because of that?"*
- *"I think it's ludicrous (peak pricing)...if you have to go you have to go. If you are a minimum wage person can you afford that premium price to get to your job?"*
- *"I think charging higher amounts during peak hours is fine. What I don't necessarily agree with is the seasonal change in fares. If it was higher cost I'd be okay with that...it could diminish demand."*
- *"I'm on the boat every day and will not be penalized by paying more."*
- *"I think you do need to look for ways to spread the load out, maybe charge a premium for the rush hour."*



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: Congestion Pricing

- Participants generally did not feel that congestion pricing would affect travel behaviors
 - Most agreed that people travel when they do because they have to
- Many felt it was unfair to “toll” ferries and not roads

- *“I don't think that incentives would work (for non-peak times). Nobody takes the 5:30AM ferry unless they really have to. Those ferries are overcrowded, they are not very pleasant, you are doing that because you need to. To create disincentive around those peak times is just adding insult and injury.”*
- *“Not until you start imposing tolls on 520 and I-90 and all these other bridges (should they raise tolls). We've been paying tolls forever, it's normal to pay tolls for something you use.”*
- *“I don't think it's fair. If people are going at these times when it's somewhat of an inconvenience to wait they must be doing it because they have to do it. It would just be sticking it to them. What about a discount at non-peak times? It doesn't seem fare to punish people to ride at peak times.”*



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Findings: Target the Recreational / Discretionary User

- There was nearly universal agreement that the target for any program to manage demand should be the recreational / discretionary user as opposed to regular riders / commuters
 - This applied also to area residents

- *"Who is it that's causing the problem? It's probably not me. It's vacationers, it's holiday people, it's a special event. You aren't the problem (other people in the group), I'm not the problem, the problem is the people that get thrown into the system. They aren't going to respond, they don't even know about the ferry rates."*
- *"I read on the paper that it should be us commuters who should be paying more because we are creating the over-crowding. And about tourists – who cares about tourists. If they want they'll pay \$40, they'll do it as an attraction, maybe once in their lives. However, they do create a huge load in the summer."*
- *"Tourists will go home but regulars will stay and need to be respected."*
- *"Tourism season ends, baseball season ends, football season ends but we go to work every day."*



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Implications

- Travel behaviors need to be clearly understood
 - Notably we need to know to what extent, when, and why people are driving on
 - It is unclear at this time whether we have a few people driving on all of the time or whether we have a lot of people driving on occasionally
 - And the extent to which they can modify this behavior



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Implications

- To encourage walk-on passengers, transit connections are critical
 - Greater / more secure park-and-ride lot networks also necessary
 - Other options could be access to shared vehicles – e.g., Flex Cars
- Restrictive policies may be a barrier to greater vehicle occupancy
 - Informal carpools
 - Smaller vanpools



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Implications

- Strategies / concepts are likely to be complex
 - Significant care will need to be taken in the design of the survey so that respondents can understand the concepts



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Next Steps

- Develop questionnaire. Key topics to include:
 - Current travel behaviors
 - Recent changes in travel behaviors
 - Influencing factors in travel behaviors
 - Vehicle use – when and why
 - Interest in / likelihood of using new / different service options
 - Loading
 - Access to service
 - On-board / terminal amenities / services
 - Fare payment options
 - Price sensitivity
 - Customer demographics



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Next Steps

- Sampling Plan
 - Stratified by route
 - Stratified by access mode
 - Capture all dayparts as well as weekday and weekend



Washington State
Transportation Commission



Schedule for WAVE I On-Boards

Key Tasks	Key Dates
Draft Questionnaire	1/24/2008
WSF to Provide Long List of Operational Strategies	1/28/2008
Final Draft Questionnaire for Pretest	2/1/2008
WSF to Provide Short List of Operational Strategies	2/15/2008
Pretest	2/5/2008 – 2/6/2008
Finalize Questionnaire	2/11/2008
Data Collection – On-Board Survey	2/21/2008 – 3/22/2008
Data Preparation	2/25/2008 – 4/7/2008
Data Tabulations / Analysis	4/15/2008 – 4/24/2008
Draft Report – WAVE I	5/28/2008
Final Report – WAVE I	7/1/2008