



Prepared for:
**Washington State
Transportation Commission**



2008 Ferry Customer Survey

**Technical Paper #1:
Qualitative (Focus Group) Research**

Prepared by:



[Blank page inserted for pagination purposes.]

Preface

The 2008 WSF Customer Survey consisted of three research phases culminating in a final analysis and report of Washington State Ferry Customers.

The first phase of the research involved qualitative research with a representative cross-section of ferry customers on all routes. The primary purpose of the qualitative research was to inform and design the quantitative research process. Specifically, results from the qualitative research were used in the design of the on-board survey questionnaire.

Nine focus groups were conducted over a three-week period in November and December 2007. The focus groups were recruited using a mix of methods to reach a broad and representative base of ferry customers. Nearly 80 ferry customers participated in the groups. Most were commuters or frequent ferry riders. Participants represented a mix of vehicle and walk-on passengers. All routes were represented.

This Technical Paper contains key observations from the qualitative research. The paper is organized to reflect the general order and flow of the questions, the follow-up conversation, and the general subject matter. Direct quotations from group participants are offset in italics and highlighted by a blue bar. Comments, observations, and insights not in italics reflect ORC's analysis of the groups' comments and dynamics. It should be noted that some statements made by the participants may not accurately reflect a real or true situation. This information is useful in that it indicates what a participant believes to be true and/or reflects their current state of awareness and knowledge.

Selected quotes from respondents are provided to give further insight into how customers think and talk about the ferries.

In addition to this Technical Paper, a Video Presentation is available. This presentation can be found on this CD at:

[WSTC Focus Group Video_1.wmv](#)

Table of Contents

Contents

- Preface..... iii
- Table of Contents..... iv
 - Contents* iv
- Overall Summary 1
 - Key Observations*..... 1
- Key Findings – Travel Behavior 2
 - Summary Of Travel Behavior and Implications for the On-Board Questionnaire*..... 2
 - Travel Behaviors 2
 - Multimodal Needs..... 2
 - Vanpools and Carpools 3
 - Information to Help Users Plan Travel 3
 - Current Travel Behavior* 4
 - Choice of Travel Times and Factors That Influence This Choice 4
 - Choice of Travel Modes and Factors Influencing This Choice 6
 - Use of Public Transportation and Other Alternative Modes 9
 - Flexibility of Travel Times 11
 - Flexibility with Travel Modes 12
 - How Customers Think About / Plan to Ride the Ferry*..... 13
 - Planning to Wait / Wait Times 13
 - Willingness to Wait 15
 - Sources of Information about Ferry Wait Times 16
 - Suggestions for Potential Information Sources 17
- Key Findings – Critical Issues with / Suggested Improvements for Current Travel..... 18
 - Summary Of Critical Issues and Implications for the On-Board Questionnaire* 18
 - Critical Issues 18
 - Critical Issues with System* 19
 - Changes to Fare Policies 19

Scanning of Passes.....	21
Passenger Loading / Unloading.....	22
Scheduling	23
Announcements	24
Customer Service.....	24
<i>Positive Perceptions of System</i>	<i>25</i>
Key Findings – Reactions to Strategies to Manage Vehicle Demand	26
<i>Summary Of Management of Vehicle Demand and Implications for the On-Board Questionnaire.....</i>	<i>26</i>
Time Costs	26
Rider’s Experience	26
Fare Policies	26
Communications	27
<i>Factors Contributing to Problems with Vehicle Capacity</i>	<i>27</i>
Impact of Recreational / Discretionary Users.....	27
Willingness to Modify Travel Behaviors	28
Discounts	28
<i>Responses to Possible Strategies to Manage Demand.....</i>	<i>30</i>
Reservations	30
Priority Boarding Lanes	32
High Occupancy Toll (HOT) Lane.....	33
Congestion Pricing	34
Other Suggestions.....	36
Appendix	37
<i>Study Background & Methodology.....</i>	<i>37</i>
Objectives	37
Methodology.....	37
Recruiting Process	38
Number of Groups and Group Composition.....	38
Considerations When Reviewing Focus Group Research Findings	40
<i>Moderator’s Guide.....</i>	<i>41</i>
Objectives	41
<i>Screener.....</i>	<i>47</i>

[Blank page inserted for pagination purposes.]

Overall Summary

Key Observations

- Most participants were regular riders / commuters with fixed and difficult schedules. When they travel is “driven” by their work schedules and other constraints. Many have what would be considered difficult – even unreasonable – commute or other trips.
- Most participants reported that they try to walk onto the ferries whenever possible. Factors that influenced the decision / capability to walk on are: destination, proximity and access to terminals, and availability of convenient transportation to get to their final destination.
- 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 option, stating that they; (1) need a car for work, and/or (2) to get to other business or personal appointments.
- Participants’ flexibility in regards to their schedules at their jobs varied greatly. Some participants had some flexibility as long as they worked their core hours. Most participants however, had little flexibility in determining their schedules.
- Participants were accustomed to planning their trips to minimize wait times. Their long experience with riding helped them plan. While ferry customers are accustomed to and willing to occasionally wait, most agreed that a two-boat wait was the maximum acceptable level. Most agreed that the unpredictability was frustrating and provided suggestions about how to provide information that would help them plan better.
- Participants had both positive and negative comments about the system. Major negative comments centered on the changes in fare policies – notably expiration dates on the multi-ride commuter cards. Participants also expressed frustration with the scanning system for the Wave2Go tickets and passes, saying that the system doesn’t work consistently, slows down the loading process, and gives inaccurate readings.
- Participants in the all groups attributed most, if not all of the problem, to recreational or discretionary users of the system. They went further to say that the recreational or discretionary users should bear the primary responsibility for paying the costs of managing the demand for the system. Participants were adamant that the regular or commute riders that they were representing should not be held responsible for the problem.
- Participants suggested some strategies for better managing vehicle demand. Notably, participants suggested that a reservation system should be considered. However, most agreed that only a portion of the boat should be reserved. Their willingness to pay for a reservation varied widely. However, most agreed that there should be some kind of premium fare.
- Participants also suggested some form of priority boarding for commuters and regular riders. Some suggested this could be as simple as a specific lane for those with pre-paid fares that could be scanned. Others suggested a lane that would allow them to actually move to the front of the line. Like reservations, participants’ willingness to pay for priority board privileges varied widely. Some also expressed concern about the possible inequities of such a system.
- Participants did not feel that congestion pricing would affect travel behaviors. They reiterated that most people travel when and how they travel because they have no other alternatives. 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.

Key Findings – Travel Behavior

Following personal introductions and a brief explanation of how focus groups work, the moderator began the discussion with the topic of current travel behavior. The primary purpose of this discussion was to engage participants into the main topic. All participants ride the ferry but their frequency, purpose, and route varied by individual.

Summary Of Travel Behavior and Implications for the On-Board Questionnaire

Travel Behaviors

The quantitative survey should be designed to determine if peak vehicle demand is caused by a few people driving on all the time or a lot of people driving on infrequently as it will greatly impact the appropriate demand management strategy WSF should implement.

The travel behaviors of riders needs to be more clearly understood in order to develop an effective demand management solution. There is a recognizable demand for peak hour traffic; particularly vehicular traffic. However, at this time it is unclear whether there are a few people driving on all of the time or whether there are a lot of people driving on occasionally. This needs to be measured and quantified through the on-board surveys. Should it prove that the demand for vehicle travel is spread across a large number of customers driving on infrequently and only when they have to, some of the more common demand management strategies such as congestion pricing may be ineffective. In addition, it is unclear the extent to which customers can modify their travel behaviors. To the extent that they have no choice in how or when they travel, some demand management strategies may not be effective or equitable.

Multimodal Needs

To shift vehicle demand, WSF should consider working with the local and regional transportation agencies to develop and test strategies that reduce the current barriers to using public transportation for commuting.

Participants agreed that given the current vehicle capacity, passengers should be encouraged to use other modes of transportation instead of driving. Current barriers to using public transportation need to be eliminated. This would include better or more tightly coordinated scheduling between the ferries and the respective transit systems serving the end points. In addition, better and more secure parking and/or an expanded park-and-ride lot system would be necessary; thus, making it more attractive to use public transportation and walking up – such as improved access, covered walkways, and incentives should also be considered. Finally, providing access to shared vehicles, such as the Flex Car system currently in place, might make it easier to walk on for those who drive on because of appointments.

Vanpools and Carpools

WSF should look at vanpool and carpool policies and practices to see how they can reduce barriers to people using them and test these new strategies to see if they encourage people to use them.

The restrictive policies for vanpools and carpools may be a barrier to their increased use. The system may wish to consider allowing informal carpools to have the same privileges as registered carpools. The number of passengers to qualify for a carpool could be maintained at three. The system may also wish to consider smaller vanpools or have other more flexible requirements to accommodate schedules at different times of the year. Use, however, of carpools and vanpools may be limited given scheduling issues and other perceived barriers. Improved communications about carpool / vanpool programs and their benefits as well as establishing mechanisms to match potential users need to be set up. Finally, increasing the number of vanpools available on some routes may increase their use.

Information to Help Users Plan Travel

WSF should look at ways to improve the timely flow of information to regular users to allow them to better plan their ferry usage.

The ability to plan and predict travel is an important component of customer satisfaction and their willingness to put up with other inconveniences. Improved communication should be considered a priority and is a potentially easy solution for some of the demand / congestion problems. The system should continue e-mail alerts. However, sending them well in advance of sailings and/or when problems first occur will increase their effectiveness. Better use of technologies such as signage, web cams, text messaging and other on-line tools can be used to keep customers better informed of problems. In addition, better signage or use of variable message signs on highways leading to the ferries could help people better plan travel.

Current Travel Behavior

Choice of Travel Times and Factors That Influence This Choice

Participants were asked how they currently use the ferry and the factors that influence their choice of travel times. Because of the nature of the recruiting – that is, participants were all commuters or otherwise regular riders (ride seven or more times per month) – most participants in the groups were employed and used the ferry primarily to commute to work. No participants used the ferry to commute to school. This may reflect the fact that most of those who ride to school are in primary or secondary schools and are under the age of 18 and thus were not included in the focus groups.

The majority of participants that were employed have **set work schedules making the times they can travel on the ferry relatively inflexible**. Their fixed schedules result in difficult daily commutes with most of them traveling during peak morning hours.

“Ninety-five percent of my regular schedule is 7:30 am to 5:30 pm. I take Kitsap transit to the ferry and walk to work.”

“I try to leave the house around 6:10 am so I can leave ahead of the slow buses. Normally I take the 4:40 pm boat, which gets me home around 6:00 pm depending on the traffic. On a Sunday if I get off at 4:00 pm I’ll head to Edmonds and catch the 4:40 pm boat.”

“I work in Bellevue. My work starts at 6:45 am, so I get up at 3:45 am. I have to leave my house by 4:18 am in order to get to the boat on time.”

“I live outside of Poulsbo...and catch the 6:30 (am) ferry. I drive by myself. There is no bus to pick me up. I catch the 5:15/5:55 (pm) 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 take a 5-block walk. The only other bus drops me off 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 (pm) 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.”

A few participants that were employed indicated that their travel schedule is somewhat flexible. However, **work or other scheduled appointments continue to be the primary factor dictating the ferry schedule they choose**. Many have what would be considered difficult, even unreasonable commutes or other trips.

“I live on the boat. I’m up at 3:00 am to catch the 4:15 am at Kingston or 6:20 am 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.”

“My day starts early as a truck driver. My wife commutes also to Friday Harbor. I go on with a semi (truck) every day, and I have to go down to Bothell. Due to our business and our time frame, I have to make a minimum of 3 stops, sometimes as many as 6 to fill up my truck, so it’s really important for me to have a schedule that I can leave on the first boat then come back on the 3:30 pm, and the 2:30 pm is really tight. I don’t think they look at it (the schedules) from that standpoint. I’ve tried to write letters to WSF in regards to that, but mostly in regards to tickets and sales and I don’t get a response back so it seems like they try to distance themselves.”

“I ride to the church park and ride and then I go to Poulsbo to pick up the other guy. I’m on flextime so typically we catch the 5:15/5:55 in the morning and shoot for 5:55 on the way home. He has the same time of hours so it works out well. I do that five days a week. I can’t really use vanpools because they are rigid so it doesn’t work out and mass transit is not set up for ferries. Since our office moved, it would take three or four hours on the bus.”

Some employed participants have developed trips that accommodate their work and/or other schedule needs. Most of these participants walk to their destination and/or rely on public transportation. Regardless of their travel mode, the recurring theme was that **participants' trips are well planned and highly routine**.

"I live in Manchester. I work in Lynnwood. I catch the 7:00 (am) ferry in the morning and the 4:30 (pm) ferry coming home."

"Door to door it's about an hour and twenty minutes. I take Kitsap Transit to the boat for the 5:20 am boat and the 3:00 pm on the way back."

"Five days a week I catch Kitsap Transit about two blocks from my house. I catch the 6:20 am ferry and the 3:45 pm or 4:40 pm ferry going home. Then I walk on this side because it's three blocks from the ferry."

"I leave the house at 6:05 am to make the 6:20 am ferry and I get to work by 7:05 am. Then I leave the office at about 5:10 pm to catch the 5:30 pm boat and I'm home by 6:20 pm by bicycle."

Some employed participants stated that they have adjusted their schedules to avoid "peak" travel periods. Some **work to avoid at least one of the peak periods** – either morning or evening. Other participants travel less frequently than regular commuters so they can have a more flexible schedule and travel outside of peak periods. Participants reported catching either very early boats in the morning and coming home early in the afternoon or catching later boats in the morning and traveling home after the evening rush. This may have the long-term implication of simply stretching out peak travel periods.

"I ride on, five days a week. I usually take the 9:40 (am) 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 (pm) coming back which is definitely a peak."

"I've shifted my whole work day to the earlier side so I can try and not be in the peak hours."

"I normally take the 9:00 (am) boat so it's after the rush hour."

"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 9:30 am ferry and come back at 8:00 pm."

"I catch the 8:45 am ferry and take Kitsap transit and walk on and usually head back on the 5:30 pm boat."

"Typically I take the Clinton-Mukilteo ferry. We try to take it as off-peak as possible. We take it no later than 3:00 pm."

A major factor that participants said determined their choice of travel times is the **amount of time required for the total trip**. More specifically, participants stated that they consider the impact that traffic and ferry boat wait times may have on total travel, which reflects the value participants place on their personal time.

"For me it's traffic. I start to work early at 7 am so I have to take an early boat. I tried 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 was always affected by the traffic."

"Time and distance."

"We've tried to measure the difference between waiting and getting the ferry versus driving. Over a one boat wait, it's cheaper to drive from where we live to Seattle. It's only 57 miles, so if there's a one boat wait we'll drive around."

Travel times are also greatly affected by the **day of the week or the season** and the **impact of the recreational traveler on the system**. Notably, Edmonds / Kingston, Mukilteo / Clinton, and, to a lesser extent, Seattle / Bainbridge, which experience higher fluctuations of demand by seasonal or recreational travelers.

“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.”

“Traffic. In the summertime I’m either going to go very early or going at noon.”

“It used to be in the summer. But since the mass exits people from that side to this side, it is every Thursday and Friday or near a holiday.”

Weather was the final factor mentioned frequently. Especially during the winter season, some participants want to ensure that they get to their destination in a timely and convenient manner, so they prefer driving to avoid bad weather which can cause delays in trips. Vashon participants were the most likely to mention weather as a factor. However, it should be noted that the night the Vashon group was conducted, there was a major rainstorm and traffic on the ferry was impacted by this weather.

“Because of the weather and how dark it is, I wake up at 4:20 am then I get on the boat.”

“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 in the morning if I need a car.”

“Weather is a factor. When it’s raining, buses aren’t as crowded.”

Choice of Travel Modes and Factors Influencing This Choice

Participants were also asked to elaborate on their most frequent means of accessing the ferry – that is, whether they walk on or drive a vehicle on – and their reasons / motivations for using that mode.

In general, participants said they use multiple modes to access the ferry. **The mode they use is contingent upon the purpose of the specific trip they are taking**. Some participants, who use a car as their typical mode of travel, would prefer to use public transportation and not drive, but do not have convenient / well-scheduled public transportation available and/or were not aware of how to use it. Furthermore, some participants claimed that **public transportation is unavailable or is inadequate** for their needs. This was notable among those commuting to destinations outside of downtown Seattle and particularly among those traveling to East King County. For example, some drivers in the Edmonds / Kingston group stated that they work in East King County and that there was no reasonable public transit service available from Edmonds to their destinations in Bothell or Kirkland.

In general, all participants agreed that **driving is expensive and that they do not do so by choice**. Those participants that currently drive agreed that they do so because they absolutely have to. Some drive on by necessity because they **need a vehicle for work**. Others stated there are **no reasonable alternatives**.

“I drive on every day. I manage construction projects and drive to various projects.”

“Being retired my riding schedule is probably a little different. When I go over it’s usually a little after 7 am. I always now take a car because the buses don’t go where I want to go. We go to restaurants, shopping, medical reasons...that means I’m on an early ferry. We take care of grandchildren every Thursday. So we ride the ferry every Wednesday evening to get our grandchildren and ride it back and then reverse that process.”

“My friend’s mom used to do it (drive) for health reasons. She had bad lungs and couldn’t handle the walk from the parking lot. She would drive every day. It cost her quite a bit of money and she wouldn’t want to (drive), but it’s what she had to do.”

“I ride the ferry every day; Kingston to Edmonds and back. Sometimes I ride the Bremerton route to Seattle, but rarely. I drive on and off. I live in Mukilteo, and I work in Bremerton, so I drive to Edmonds, take the ferry to Kingston, drive down to Bremerton (for work).”

Needing quick and accessible transportation for things such as appointments and occasional errands also required participants that usually walk on to drive occasionally.

“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.”

“I go back and forth to the office. 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.”

“Depends on what you are doing on the other side – if errands, I take my car.”

Nearly all participants, including those that drive on, agreed that **walking on the ferry is preferred as it is the least expensive**. Participants generally agreed that they try to walk on the ferry whenever possible. **Destination and proximity or access to the terminal** are the two primary factors that influence participants’ capabilities to walk on. Several walk-on participants said they drive to get to the ferry and/or have a car on the other side once they get off the ferry in order to avoid paying the drive-on price.

“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 keep a car over here and I don’t have to pay for 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 walk on. I live about three blocks from the ferry terminal.”

“I use the ferry five times a week and I work over in Bainbridge. I usually walk on.”

“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.”

Participants also reported that they have **sought other means to avoid the costs of driving on**. Some walk-on participants mentioned bicycles as their primary means of accessing the ferry. Bicycling was particularly popular among Bainbridge participants. A few walk-on participants also mentioned motorcycles and scooters as a means to get to and from the ferry. **Weather was often cited as a barrier** to bicycling and/or using motorcycles and scooters.

“Coming from Seattle to Bainbridge, I try to ride my bike so you don’t have to wait one ferry rotation. I want to get everything done earlier so I can leave earlier.”

“I use the ferry five days a week. I was riding a bike to downtown Seattle where my car was stashed.”

“I’ve been on Bainbridge since 1993 and biking on the ferry since 1998...”

“I have a six mile (bicycle) ride to the ferry; I leave my house at 6:30 am to catch the 7:05 (am) ferry and come back at 5:30 pm. 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 (a) 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!”

Many participants’ choice of travel modes are driven by a specific situation and hence change frequently. This is true for both drive-on and walk-on participants. Factors affecting the decision to drive or walk include their **final destination, trip purpose, the number of people traveling, weather, and cost**.

“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).”

“Depending on my wife’s teaching schedule I’ll go with her. I ride with her in the car. Sometimes I catch an unofficial carpool or the Sounder Train.”

“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 three 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.”

“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.”

Use of Public Transportation and Other Alternative Modes

Participants were asked if public transportation is available from where they live to the ferry, and from where they get off the ferry to their final destination. They were also asked about their current use of public transportation, their willingness to use transit, and barriers that keep them from using transit.

About one-third of the participants reported that they currently use public transportation in conjunction with their ferry ride. As would be expected, walk-on passengers were most likely to use public transportation as part of their trip. This was most prevalent among those traveling from Bainbridge or Bremerton and, to a lesser extent, Vashon. Most participants who walk on do so because **they have public transportation that is convenient, well-coordinated, and fits their personal schedule.**

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

“I love the bus system over here – they’re wonderful.”

“I live by the highway so I get on the bus outside my house at 10 (minutes) to 7 am. I usually work 9 am to 5 pm. Unfortunately, the boats coming home from downtown leave at 4 pm something, which I can’t take since I would have to leave an hour early which I can’t do. So I get on the 118 bus which is easy and make it to the 5:40 pm ferry. The bus actually drives up to the ferry.”

“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 6 am.”

“I catch the 7 o’clock bus and get to work by 8:30 am. It takes me to the ferry in Clinton. I take the 5 o’clock boat home.”

Some participants who now drive on said they had tried using public transportation in the past but are currently unable to do so. The **amount of time required because of lack of direct service** or the need to transfer was the main deterrent to using public transportation.

“I try to think about the economy, how can I make this commute for less money? I need this vehicle on the Seattle side so that (vehicle) has to be parked somewhere. And I’ve tried before leaving it at the office and taking the bus to the ferry then taking the bus home, but my day is so long already the bus trips on both end...it’s not worth it to me.”

“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 have tried every alternative – walking on, driving on, public transportation, etc. But I found every one of them to be frustrating – running to the ferry when you are walking on. So at the end, I found that (a) 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.”

Availability of convenient service and **coordination of schedules** between ferries and transit are the primary barriers **for drive-on participants** to using public transportation.

“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 two hours to get to Bothell.”

“They (Metro and WSF) aren’t that synchronized either.”

“If Kitsap transit had service to the 4:40 am ferry I would use it.”

“If there was a reasonably priced secure lot on the other side (I would park there and walk on).”

Some participants who do not use public transportation said there is a **lack of information** on how to use public transportation.

“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.”

Vanpooling was used by those participants going to a common destination. Participants who vanpool said that the primary benefits of vanpooling include **convenience, low cost, and priority loading**. Those that vanpool said they were able to do so because their **work hours are very regular** and because a **large enough number work in a common destination to form 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 five 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 on the island on the highway about 5:30 in the morning. I’m on the ferry at 6 am. 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 loading 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.”

Although seen as a good alternative to driving alone, some vanpoolers mentioned problems with boarding when **they are late due to work schedules**.

“There are four 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 an Island Transit Vanpool five days a week. There are six of us. We only have a five minute window of getting the 4 o’clock boat so we usually take the 4:30 pm one.”

Some participants had vanpooled in the past but had **stopped because something in their work had changed or the vanpool schedule was too rigid**. Several participants had tried to join a vanpool but found they were full. Others suggested that it was **very difficult to get the required number of passengers** required for participation.

“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 every day.”

“I can’t really use vanpools because they are rigid; so it doesn’t work 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, I and make it legitimate that would help. They need to promote that better. They need to allow more options so more people can qualify.”

“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 three 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 least frequently mentioned mode of accessing the ferry was carpooling. Only two out of approximately 80 participants were in formal / registered carpools. Some had formed informal carpools and many suggested there was little effort made to help or provide incentives to form a formal carpool. While discussing carpools, many participants were **unaware of the benefits of forming a formal carpool**. Others said that there was **no convenient mechanism to identify potential carpool partners** and suggested a web site or postings to help them find people going to common destinations.

“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 ways to encourage them. Encourage by matching more people who go to (the) same destination – it’s already enough incentive because of the savings.”

“We drive from our house to carpool parking.”

“Why isn’t there a web page that says ‘Hey I live in Fort Warden and I want to take the 5:20 am (boat so you can carpool with others)?’”

Flexibility of Travel Times

Participants that were employed were asked how much flexibility they have in the times they travel and/or the modes they use to access the ferry. As noted earlier, because of the nature of the recruiting, the majority of participants in the groups were employed. Participants’ **flexibility with their job and commuting varied greatly**. Some participants indicated that their jobs are flexible, allowing them to shift their hours to accommodate their commute. Often those with flexibility at their jobs **have a longer employment history or are self-employed**.

“I have a varied schedule. A couple days a week I leave at 7:00 am to catch the 7:05 am, and use the 4:40 pm boat. Two days (a week) I take the 10:00 am ferry and the 7:30 pm ferry home. I have varied office hours at work for mornings and afternoons.”

“People who ride the ferry and live (in places) where they need to take the ferry usually get the flexibility where I work – you talk to your boss and adjust your work schedule accordingly.”

“My boss looks the other way when I come into work because she knows I’m lost at sea.”

“I’ve been long enough at the company. There is flexibility. Average time I wait is for two boats. On average, I get on the second boat.”

“I have the flexibility to choose when to leave. If you’ve lived here long enough you learn at what time you have to get there to get on (a) certain boat so take that into account.”

“I have a lot of flexibility because I’m the boss.”

A few participants stated that while they have some flexibility, they are **still required to be at work during “core hours”** leaving them little time to adjust their schedule for commuting.

“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 eight hours.”

“I’m as flexible as you can get with core hours. But there are some things like meetings, so it usually ends up being 9:00 am to around 4:00 pm.”

“We have flexible telecommuting. No one’s (schedule) is fixed (and able to telecommute when they want). I don’t like them to be consistent (as a senior manager) because I don’t want them to get in the habit of a three day weekend.”

“I can flex within reason or (for) core hours.”

However, the majority of employed participants said that their **job requires them to be there at a specific time** forcing them into regular commute times, **often during peak hours**.

“I work with people on the east coast, so I have to be there at 6:00 am. It’s just a matter of what you do at the office.”

“There is just a small portion of us employees who would use the flex time so it’s not worth it for them (the company to have flex time).”

“Used to be possible (to have flexibility).”

“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.”

“We have to be there from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm for the customers, so less flexible at this job.”

Flexibility with Travel Modes

Participants who **drive on** the ferry for work indicated that they **drive because they have no choice**. For some, it is because they **need a car for work**. For others, there are **no other reasonable options** to get from the ferry to where they work.

“Unlike us, some people don’t have flex schedules so they have to be there at 7:00 am so they drive because they can’t walk or catch a bus to be there on time.”

“I start to work early at 7:00 am 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.”

“My commuting trip just changed recently since my job changed, which is better. Only that now I have to park in Mukilteo and drive myself...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 every day.”

How Customers Think About / Plan to Ride the Ferry

Participants were asked for how long and for how many boats they generally have to wait before they can drive on. In addition, they were asked the frequency with which they have to wait and the factors that influence them when and how often they have to wait. Finally, participants were asked what they consider to be a reasonable or unreasonable number of boats to wait through. Note that nearly all participants drive on the ferry at least sometimes. In most cases, those that walk on do so primarily for their work / commute trips. However, when traveling for non-work purposes (e.g., to visit friends and family or recreation / shopping) or when traveling to destinations outside of downtown Seattle, they generally drive. Therefore, all participants were able to respond to this sequence of questions and to provide input on how they plan for wait times when they drive on the ferry.

Planning to Wait / Wait Times

Participants, who are regular travelers and who drive on, stated that their experience with ferry travel helps them plan for when to travel and how long they are likely to wait. Although participants rely on a variety of sources to estimate wait times, they are **generally resigned that they will have to frequently wait for the ferry and expect to do so for their trip based on experience**. If they have appointments, they generally plan to take **one boat in advance** of what they would take without a delay to ensure that they are on-time. Most participants indicated that approximately half of the time they get on the earlier boat and the remainder of the time they 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.”

“I know if it is rush hour, I’ll have to sit through and wait for the next boat.”

Participants who drive on acknowledged that certain routes, such as the Edmonds / Kingston and Mukilteo / Clinton, yield longer wait times because of the recreational traffic. Moreover, **certain times of day or year** are more **predictable** in determining wait times.

“We can predict the ferries, so we like that. We actually moved to the peninsula because we prefer the ferry system over to driving to Seattle from where we used to live; which took about the same time and is a lot more relaxing on the ferry than driving.”

“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.”

“The early boats in the morning are full; I’ll wait an hour for a 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.”

“Don’t drive on Thursdays or Fridays.”

In many instances though, participants noted that when driving on, there is some degree of **unpredictability** that usually stems from **weather, special events** in Seattle, **problems with vessels, and traffic**.

“There’s a critical window. If traffic is bad, I’ll get bumped.”

“I’ve changed my flights to nights, I used to take the red eye, just because I don’t know what the traffic will be on the other side; I always go a boat early...fear factor.”

“A week ago, Thursday, the boat was down...”

“Sometimes I take my car, and I have to be there before I’m planning on because it’s always packed. Sometimes they stop and they don’t let anybody on until they allow a flow on the dock. But then, it always depends on what’s going on.”

When they drive on, participants indicated that they are **accustomed to planning** for their trips to minimize wait times. Their long experience with riding helps them plan. In some cases, they delay their departure to minimize the wait.

“It took me three years to figure out the patterns.”

“It’s trial and error based on experience.”

“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...”

“Weekends – I try to avoid as much as possible. (...) But if I have to go to town in the weekends, 9 o’clock in the morning or depends what is needed.”

“Typically I take the Clinton-Mukilteo ferry. We try to take it as off-peak as possible. We take it no later than 3:00 pm.”

“Can’t go to town on Sundays – lines are so long. Monday morning the lines are also long so you just have to get there early.”

“Sometimes, since my husband is there, we have dinner and wait for the 9:00 ferry.”

Willingness to Wait

While participants were accustomed and willing to occasionally wait when they drive on, most agreed that a **two-boat** wait was the **maximum number they consider acceptable**. For routes like Bremerton where frequency of service is less because of the length of the trip, participants felt that waiting more than one boat is a burden and that they would consider driving around.

“It’s pretty awful to wait for two boats.”

“It’s quicker to drive around than to wait for two 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).”

“You definitely drive around if there’s a two-boat wait.”

“If I know it’s going to be two (boats to wait to get on) I can drive around.”

“Most of us know the schedule during off-season. But during the summer it just gets out of control.”

“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.”

Although the ferry vessels are able to carry a larger proportion of walk-on versus vehicle passengers, participants were asked to explore why sometimes the “vehicle bulge” is greater than the “passenger bulge.” Participants pointed out that **seasonality** is the primary contributor. As would be expected, those that regularly drive on were more likely to note the seasonal effects. Again, those on the Edmonds / Kingston and Mukilteo / Clinton routes were the most likely to mention seasonality. Participants in these groups indicated that the “seasons” were becoming longer and that specific days of the week were regularly impacted. Those on the San Juans also mentioned seasonality. However, they seemed to be more likely to simply avoid those days of the week when seasonal travel out of Anacortes is high.

“It’s very seasonal.”

“In summer there are days I go ‘What! Why?!’”

“During summer, I remember there was a time the ferries had a problem and people here were waiting 4 hours or so. Otherwise, it’s usually on Saturdays or the weekends.”

“There is also a low ridership sometimes. I’ve taken a ferry when it’s almost empty. But in summer that same run is over the seams – people vacationing that don’t know the patterns which add complications especially if you are not familiar with the travel patterns. It’s a real tough route – in summer you can get severe tides or winds.”

“There are more cars on the boat over the course of the day.”

Sources of Information about Ferry Wait Times

Participants were asked how they get information about wait times. They **mentioned e-mail alerts** most often as their means for receiving information to plan their trip. This was notable among commuters. Although used frequently and seen as a potentially valuable aid, participants complained that the **alerts are not timely** and that they often **receive them long after the information is useful**.

“I get the e-mail alerts the 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 e-mail schedule that comes for delays that’s not informative and it comes too late. I can just look out the window and see that the ferry is late.”

“I get e-mails at work that let me know if it’s going to be late.”

“I like some advantage. E-mail alerts at work when you get them on time, not when you are already there.”

“I think that a lot of people don’t know about the e-mail alerts because none of my family uses them. And I use them and started vanpooling. I have to say though that our ferry, not Port Townsend, is very reliable. Port Townsend is just so unpredictable.”

Participants agreed that being able to view ferry lines in real time via the **ferry cams** is also helpful for them to plan their trip. Web cams were relied on by both commuters and those that travel regularly on the ferry. Participants said they would like to continue to rely on the ferry cams but suggested that they would be more helpful if the ferry cams were **not pointed only at the dock and loading areas but also at the areas and roads feeding into the loading area** – e.g., up the highways. Participants indicated that they can generally judge wait times based on how far up the ferry holding areas or highways cars were stopped.

“Those cameras are good. However, the ones on (the) Seattle side are not necessarily focused on what they should be focused.”

“They lost a web cam down here (Bainbridge); now Bremerton doesn’t have a web cam. When they had it they only showed the parking lot. We don’t want to see the parking lot. We want to see the road. You need to see north of the light, south of the light, and the parking lot; those three so to know whether it’s one boat or two.”

“Ferry cam on the dock is nice; however, I need to know how long the line is above the dock.”

“If the ferry cams work and they were truly updated, and the cameras were in a well lighted spot where you can actually see what’s going on...they are seldom right because you can’t see on certain roads because it’s essentially worthless.”

“The ferry cams as good as they are, they aren’t very good.”

A few participants reported they **go online** to get information regarding their ferry trip. These were generally less frequent riders.

“When’s there’s problems, we use vessel watch. We are always aware, but we really don’t have a good plan B in the event that we have a problem with an inner-island boat. There was no way to communicate. When the thrusters were down there was no communication.”

“It’s very frustrating on the ferry page (website). It’s like some 3^d grader wrote (it) – they should plan one boat ahead – why even have the link?”

Suggestions for Potential Information Sources

Participants gave several suggestions to improve the existing sources of information. Obtaining information in **a timely** manner and/or having **up-to-date / real time** information was a continual theme. This was notable among those relying on the e-mail alerts.

“It’s gotten pretty bad where I haven’t gotten any (e-mails) or I’ve gotten them after the boat has left.”

“The e-mail 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.”

“Getting back is worse. The e-mail alerts are late too. I see it the next day that the 4:20 boat is going to be late. Well duh!”

Participants were irritated with the lack of consistent information throughout the system. They complained that different sources provided conflicting information – **having consistent information through a variety of mediums would help riders’ better plan trips**. Those that rode regularly but were not commuters appeared to be more likely to rely on the web site and/or direct contact with ferry employees which appeared to provide inconsistent or inaccurate information.

“If there was a reliable way to check on the web, I would use it every time I drove on.”

“If their e-mails were accurate (I would use it all the time).”

“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.”

“When it’s broken down or there are high winds it seems like there is misinformation. I will go down to the terminal and ask them. I’ve learned you just sit (and wait for the boat).”

“I don’t think it’s the way we get messages. I think it’s the content of the messages, mostly of what we don’t get really. I think that what they have is a great system but it’s just under-utilized.”

Participants **suggested use of the following media** to help customers plan for and predict wait times for trips.

“Make good use of those plasmas. Maybe if they could post schedules or show where the park and rides are at...what a great place for information. It would be great if it’s right in front of me because I’m already waiting in line.”

“Radio could be good too.”

“They should text you to your cell-phone.”

“Like the reader boards for highways – tells you how much time you have.”

Key Findings – Critical Issues with / Suggested Improvements for Current Travel

Participants provided many suggestions to improve their current travel and the quality of service provided by WSF. They were asked to identify the critical problems with their trip and to provide suggestions for improvement, as well as to provide positive feedback about what currently works well with their trip. Participants were most negative about changes to the fare policies, loading and unloading of the ferry, and problems with the Wave2Go scanning system. Participants provided constructive ideas for improving the system and felt if these areas were targeted for improvement, many of their concerns would be addressed.

Summary Of Critical Issues and Implications for the On-Board Questionnaire

Critical Issues

While participants were critical of several aspects of the system, they also had many positive comments. All of these areas should be further investigated in the on-board survey.

Areas where participants were most critical include:

- Changes to fare policies;
- Problems with scanning systems for passes and commuter cards;
- Problems with passenger loading and unloading, notably vehicle loading and unloading;
- Scheduling to better meet rider needs;
- The number and repetitiveness of announcements; and
- General customer service.

At the same time, participants were **generally positive toward the system**, and ironically gave positive comments about many of the same things they were negative about, such a schedules, timeliness and passenger loading.

Critical Issues with System

Changes to Fare Policies

Participants in all groups had previous experience with ticket books. This was true for both commuters and regular riders. In addition, a number of the regular commuters use a monthly pass. They discussed the pros and cons of expiration dates on tickets, transferability of passes, and the value of the discount they receive for pre-paying fares vis-à-vis the system's use of their money.

Participants did not feel there should be an expiration date associated with pre-prepaid tickets. This was true in all groups and was a major issue / bone of contention. Participants universally agreed that the face value of the tickets should remain constant regardless of the purchase date.

"The expirations – I lose 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."

"Having (an) expiration date is penalizing for those who need to ride the ferry frequently."

"Why is there any expiration at all? You pay your money (and) 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."

"If I pay for the ticket I ought to be able to use it."

"I have the same issue with my telephone. You buy minutes then you don't use them and lose them; this makes no sense to me. You bought something and put your money on the table, you should be able to use it whenever you want to."

In addition, participants, notably long-term riders and commuters, felt that as long as passes were paid for they **should be transferable to others, with no time constraints**. Some pass users expressed frustration that passes could only be used once in any given 30-minute period. They felt that since the passes were pre-paid media, they should be able to use them whenever or however they please and that they should be able to share them. There appeared to be little recognition that if this policy were to be relaxed, the system would lose revenue. Some noted that certain passes are in fact transferable and found ways to use these exceptions with their family.

"My husband and I can't go back on the same ferry together and use our ticket."

"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?"

"I walk through, scan my pass then hand it back to my daughter, then she walks through, scans the pass, then she'll pass it to my son, scan it, and walk through."

"You know you can Xerox the pass and it works, then if your kid loses it (it's okay)."

"I e-mail my passes, so there can be 9 copies of my e-ticket floating around. I like the e-ticket better than books. If you have friends you can work with, it pays off."

"One advantage of a monthly pass is that it is transferable and I also get to print it at home. I actually keep it and I have extra copies."

Pass users also suggested that **passes should be transferable across routes** and that they would only have to pay the difference in fares where applicable. In addition, they suggested that they should be able **to use their walk-on pass when driving on and simply have to pay the difference**. Currently monthly passes are only available for walk-on passengers. In addition, more expensive passes can be used on less expensive ferry routes. They cannot be used for more expensive routes. Finally, some participants suggested better integration of passes – e.g., bicycle and walk-on passes or vanpool and walk-on passes.

“What’s dumb about the bike pass it that you have to buy a bike pass then you have to buy a walk on pass. Is the bike going to ride on by itself? Why can’t you have a bike pass that includes the rider?”

“Knock off the full fare of walk-on off of my driving; if I’m a regular driver who commutes, give me credit.”

“Twenty ride pre-paid coupon. But sometimes they are within the 20-minute time frame and you can’t use the coupon even if they are in two different islands just because of the 20-minute frame and you need to buy two.”

“As (a) cyclist for instance, I have to get it scanned twice – my pedestrian ticket and my annual bike pass. So that’s longer for me.”

“It would need to be built into the existing passes. I have two passes – an annual pass that pays for my vanpool and a walk-on pass.”

Participants in several groups suggested that the ferry system should consider offering a stored value card. Specifically those on the San Juan route suggested without prompting that the ferry system should **offer a stored-value card**. Subsequent discussion suggested that participants in general were positive about the idea and saw a need for it. They felt that the **stored value card should carry the same benefits**, including a **discount**, as the other pre-paid fare media.

“I think there are other places in the states, like my brother in New York, that do this already (stored value). They allow you to attach something to your car and you just drive through. It automatically deducts tolls from your account then you are good to go.”

“Why can’t we have something like my (JC) Penney’s charge card or Sears’ card? So it would be a WSF card, \$5, \$10, \$15, \$20, \$200, and it comes out of my card. There are probably so many different programs for each terminal, so if you have a card, it’s easy.”

“The card concept would work only if you are getting a discounted rate. I don’t know if there is a lot of value, unless you are a super frequent traveler; otherwise, I’m not going to put money on the card just for the benefit that it happens faster. I would expect that if I had a standardized card then I get my frequent traveler discount.”

“Maybe there should be a minimum charge on the card.”

“During the peak season if you had a card, there should be a special booth that you go through. So if you had a card you get to go to the front of the line and don’t have to wait.”

Scanning of Passes

Participants using passes and Wave2Go tickets were frustrated with the **scanning system** as it greatly **slows down the loading process**. This was notable among those driving on the ferries. However, walk-on participants on the Bainbridge route also noted problems with scanning of the Wave2Go tickets. Among these participants, it appeared to be the sheer volume of walk-on traffic during peak periods that contributed to the problem.

“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 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 it goes faster than the commuter line. There’s such good technology nowadays – with transponders, etc.”

“The system unfortunately is not at all entrepreneurial – it’s not service oriented. Remote scanners take so long – they can’t make it work. I wasted an hour...due to that. Sometimes they will close one because someone is out sick – so now there’s no predictability because I get diverted into a long line on a Friday afternoon. They haven’t figured out how to make it efficient. The new system is worse than the slower system.”

“They don’t 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?”

Participants, notably those driving on, also reported scanners don’t work efficiently citing that the system **doesn’t work consistently**, gives **inaccurate readings** of the number of uses, and **causes them to lose their place in the queue**.

“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?”

“On the reader board you better look fast (when seeing how many uses/trips are remaining on the pass).”

“On the Colman dock every fifth person has a (roll-on) tote and takes it through the turnstile. That is the most fun because you have to turn at the turnstile, scan it (and get through) it doesn’t work.”

“We pay for these things so people can exit the parking lot. The scanners don’t work, so they put a sign up. Why do they have to go through the turnstile? Why can’t I just walk out? (In the holding area if they have already paid and want to go somewhere out of the holding area).”

Passenger Loading / Unloading

Drive-on participants also expressed concerns with loading and unloading procedures, specifically the **consistency and order of loading / unloading**. However, some walk-on passengers, notably those on the Bainbridge route, also noted problems with loading. For Bainbridge walk-on passengers, the large number of people walking on during peak periods was described as an unpleasant and sometimes difficult experience. Participants suggested that if the **timing of signal lights** were more closely aligned with the ferry system schedule, loading and unloading could improve.

“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.”

“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 six minutes.”

“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.”

“I’ve been one of the first ten cars to get on and then who turns the car off, guesses it wrong then I don’t get on. Why isn’t it first come first serve? It’s not consistent, I don’t know who makes (the) decisions to load and unload.”

“I wish they would fix almost every procedure relating to loading and off-loading. It’s pretty awful. There is no consistency to it. There seemed to be consistency, but often it’s not followed. As an example, you see signs all over the ferry terminal...the sign for the bicycles on the Seattle side where you are loading says ‘Bicycles! Do not do this! Wait for the attendant!’ It’s like there’s this attitude of we don’t trust you guys and want to make you wait; it’s just not a good feeling.”

Frequent users of the ferry system expressed frustration with having to wait for tourists during the loading and unloading process. While this was particularly true among those driving on, walk-on passengers, particularly those on the Bainbridge route, also expressed frustration with tourist and recreation travelers having difficulty negotiating the system. **Education and better signage** may help ease frustration with the procedure.

“As a commuter and being selfish, there is a distinction between regulars who have it down and people who are casual tourists...I’ve been behind people where there are four people in a car and everyone wants to pay for it separately. There’s got to be a better way to get people through. If there was a distinction of a regular commuter who just wants to buzz through and go home (the process would be faster).”

“You can expect more intelligent behavior from regular commuters...they know where to park, what to do, how to pay.”

“The first time you go through the ferry system is one thing, I’ve been here for 30 years. A person coming here for the first time, the ferry loaders have a problem not trying to get run over...they don’t know what they are doing (first timers).”

In addition to comments regarding the loading and unloading of vehicular traffic, participants offered suggestions for **improved bicycles and pedestrian loading**.

“I don’t understand why they make the bicycles go through (the same lane) with cars. Someone is going to get killed. They should have a route bikes take to the waiting area so they can dribble in their own way.”

“If the bikes went last (after cars), the cars would be out of their way.”

“They don’t leave a path for the bicycles to get off.”

“You need to have a certain path, or take one lane of the cars and make it for bicycles at certain times during the day.”

“Maybe they should do bicycles up front (of the ferry) and motorcycles behind (in the back of the ferry).”

“There is no very well planned out pedestrian zone; you have to try to avoid killing a pedestrian.”

Scheduling

As would be expected, participants in nearly all groups expressed concerns about scheduling; particularly centered on scheduling of boats to **better meet rider schedules and provide more frequent service during peak periods** to meet vehicle load requirements. However, Bremerton participants were the most vocal on this subject. Few participants acknowledged the high costs associated with running more vessels on routes and/or the difficulties in having boats “stand by” or move around the system.

“Why can’t they just run two boats?”

“(The solution) is to have another boat. That uncertainty is probably the main thing most commuters would mention – knowing that they can get to work. They understand the tides and weather. Otherwise, in general, most people have a very good sense of other modes of transportation.”

“I would change the schedule. If there was one at 10:40 pm that would be great for me. But there isn’t so I have to take the 9:30 pm 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.”

“Expand the volume – more boats - during the peak hours.”

“Put a ferry boat on during the peak that come and goes.”

“You get misinformation, so they need to update the system. Sometimes it will say a two-hour wait and it’s only a 40 minute wait.”

“You know you have to wait an hour and a half because it’s going to overload. But period after period they keep the same schedule – if they know they have a problem why aren’t they addressing it? They don’t see it as a problem, otherwise they would fix it. I don’t think they don’t care, but it’s an effort to solve a problem, so it’s easier to keep the (current) schedule. I understand that there are a lot of complications that we (the riders) don’t know about, crew times, union regulations, it’s complicated. There has to be transportation design software. They don’t really look at what’s happening to people.”

Announcements

While participants recognized the need for on-board announcements, participants found them annoying, saying they were **too loud, too frequent, and irrelevant**. The Bainbridge groups were the most negative about the frequency of announcements. In addition, behaviors of the ferry personnel often contradicted the announcements.

“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).”

“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.”

“Communication from the WSF – they say they have a two 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 two minutes, do it. People are sitting there saying, ‘What do you mean I can’t get on the boat? It doesn’t leave for two more minutes.’ There is no official WSF clock.”

“I had five minutes before the two minute warning and they said sorry (and wouldn’t let me on).”

Customer Service

Some participants also expressed concerns about specific aspects of service, notably **cleanliness** of the boats and restrooms, **on-board amenities**, and **employee attitudes**. Those in the Bremerton group were the most negative about the cleanliness of the boats.

“The ferry experience has changed since 9/11. Before it used to be relaxed, and now it’s so hard, crowded due to security that delays the loading / unloading process. I’ve done it for a long time, and they really need to change the process to increase their ridership. Now, there’s no privacy or personal space.”

“Cleaning should be better. They (restrooms) are dirty.”

“Better chairs.”

“Clean...the seat I’ve sat in every time has the same garbage.”

“Add breakfast.”

“Customer service – I can’t say all are rude, but they’re about control.”

“Attitude is really bad.”

“Their customer service from the corporate end is lacking.”

“Assuming I have an area to sit in. On the Kitsap ferry they bring you a newspaper and coffee. I’d pay a little extra.”

“The ferries are overcrowded, they are not very pleasant, and you are doing that because you need to.”

Positive Perceptions of 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, such as schedules, timeliness and loading.

“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 (operating the system) 365 days a year, 7 days a week, 24 hours a day and they are amazing. Look at Amtrak (in comparison).”

“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.”

“The ferries are generally on time.”

“They are very prompt leaving.”

“I recall they revised the schedule...I carry a radio with me to listen to traffic. It’s impressive their effort to load the boat with two destinations going. They’ll wait for a while...They handle unpredictable things very well, and employees seem well-trained with good attitudes.”

“I like the turnstiles now. It does seem to get through quicker than before although there still is a backup because they are very close to the door.”

“The walk on system though, it’s a lot better now than it used to be.”

Participants also were pleased with the general environment or atmosphere of the ferry system and the **customer service** provided by WSF employees.

“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 WSF workers have gotten better. They tend to be more helpful.”

“The morning person who loads bikes, he’s great. He loads consistently, we have a good rapport. We respect what he is saying.”

“I’ve enjoyed the announcements. I think it’s been a major improvement. Lately, I’ve been taking the car more, so I might be missing it.”

Key Findings – Reactions to Strategies to Manage Vehicle Demand

The balance of the focus groups focused primarily on potential strategies for managing the demand for vehicle capacity during peak travel periods, with all participants agreeing that there are problems with vehicle capacity on the ferries at least some of the time.

Summary Of Management of Vehicle Demand and Implications for the On-Board Questionnaire

Time Costs

WSF should consider time as another form of “cost” to riders’ use of the ferry system when developing strategies that reduce peak vehicle demand.

Participants appear to be willing to accommodate a reasonable wait, notably in situations when the weather is bad, when there are special events, and/or when tourist or recreation travel is high. They appear, however, interested in and willing to pay for systems that would potentially allow them to move faster through the system and/or would give them priority loading over the recreational and occasional user. However, the amount they would be willing to pay may be insufficient to warrant the cost of implementing and managing these systems. The survey research will be useful in clearly quantifying customers’ willingness to pay.

Rider’s Experience

WSF should look at systems that improve the riders’ experience but should also weigh the perceived fairness of such systems on the average rider.

Issues with scanning passes and loading are key areas the system could improve that would both increase customer satisfaction and improve the efficiency with which the system operates. Notably, a reservation system and some form of priority boarding for regular users may garner significant support and use. However, the system must have an appearance of fairness and not unduly burden those that regularly use the system and/or those that cannot afford to pay.

Fare Policies

Both WSF and riders need to be “winners” in any changes to fare policies as riders are feeling “tapped out” under the current system and do not feel they have an acceptable alternative to not using their vehicles.

In discussing passes and prepayment of fares, participants recognized that the use of pre-paid fares resulted in a significant discount, but felt that they should receive additional benefits, without additional costs, because of this pre-payment. In addition, they felt that the funding of the ferry system was given a lower priority than funding for roads and public transportation. The system may wish to use marketing communications to increase customers’ awareness of the issues surrounding general funding for the ferry system. In addition, these communications could be used to build awareness of the reasons for some of the fare policies to build support for the changes in policies.

Communications

What WSF does in the next several months from a communications and operational standpoint could have enormous consequences on the relationship between riders and the system if WSF does not recognize the customers' needs, wants, and frustrations.

It was clear from the focus groups that participants were generally favorable and supportive of the ferry system. Many participants evidenced a real sense of ownership in the system. This would suggest that with effective communication and a sense of participation in the process, they may be willing to support some strategies to improve the system and the way it operates, even if it means a higher cost for the service or a requirement for them to modify their behaviors. The quantitative research is important in identifying which strategies that garner wide-spread support.

Factors Contributing to Problems with Vehicle Capacity

Impact of Recreational / Discretionary Users

With all participants in agreement that there are problems with vehicle capacity on the ferries at least some of the time, and particularly during peak hours, they were asked what factors contributed to the problem. It should be noted that participants living in the Kingston and Clinton areas were the most likely to indicate that there were significant problems with vehicle capacity. This was also true, but to a somewhat lesser extent, among those participating in the Vashon and Bainbridge groups.

Participants in all groups attributed most, if not all of the problems, to demand by occasional and recreational riders, specifically vehicle demand, as being the primary, if not the only, source of the problem. In addition, participants agreed that the recreational / discretionary users are the ones who should pay for the cost of managing demand for the system rather than regular or commute riders.

“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 run the system.”

“The other thing is to penalize tourists.”

“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.”

Willingness to Modify Travel Behaviors

Participants who were commuters and regular riders felt that they **should not be responsible for modifying their travel behaviors to reduce this demand**. Most felt that they are the “backbone” or “bread and butter” of the system and agreed the problem was the occasional user and “tourists”. Some participants expressed the concern that the system was benefiting from tourists / recreational riders at the expense of the regular / commuter riders. Again, participants reiterated that they drive because they have to and hence have little ability to modify their behaviors while the recreational user does not have to travel during peak commute hours.

“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.”

“We are their bread and butter.”

“We, the commuters, are the backbone of the system.”

“They aren’t going to change any more for tourists because Nordstrom, Mariners, etc. will complain and the ferry will bow to the corporations. Instead they need to be prepared and aware of events.”

Discounts

Participants who pre-paid their fares felt they are helping to fund the system – i.e., providing interest-free use of their money. They reported they should receive **additional benefits for pre-paying** their fares.

“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).”

“Knock off the full fare of walk-on off of my driving, if I’m a regular driver who commutes. Give me credit.”

Some participants questioned the perceived **inequity in funding** for roads and public transportation when compared with the ferries. This was notable in the Vashon, Clinton, and San Juan groups, perhaps reflecting that they have little choice in how to travel. This also seemed to be more prevalent among those who walk on the ferry, suggesting that they view the system as public transportation rather than as a highway. Many felt that the ferry system was held more responsible than both roads and public transportation to provide for full or near full funding of the system through fares / tolls.

“We would like more state money spent on the ferry system so fares would go down.”

“We should get the same crack at money that goes towards mass transit to land vehicles as maritime vehicles, and that’s not what’s happening for a long shoot.”

“It has gone up dramatically in the last five years. It is one of those things where the state has to bite the bullet on it. It is not going to pay for itself.”

“We already pay taxes for roads and the zoo. We already pay both.”

“I think the ferry system should get paid as much as the certain counties that are supported by a few people and have really nice highways.”

“Legislators need to get the message. Users cannot keep paying more.”

In discussing funding and discounts on fares there was **no consensus** among participants as the **system’s role as a highway versus a public transportation system**. Some felt it was a part of the state highway system, others indicated it was a mass transit system, and some were unsure how to classify the ferry system, saying it was both a highway and public transportation system. Regardless of the consensus of the classification of the ferry system, participants generally felt the system deserved more subsidies.

“It’s both a mass transit system and state highway system. The car deck is a highway system and the passenger deck is a mass transit system.”

“By law it’s a state highway system.”

“The reality is it’s a boat. How can it be a state highway system if you ride it? How can it be only mass transit if it’s funded by the state highway system? The reality is, it’s both, but it’s fallen through the cracks.”

“I think it’s very expensive, but prior to it being so expensive it was a scarce commodity, waiting two boats to get on. I would rather pay \$14 and drive my car on than pay \$9 and have to sit for two boats. In a roundabout way the government is achieving an un-egalitarian distribution of resources.”

“It’s a toll road.”

Responses to Possible Strategies to Manage Demand

With participants agreeing that there are issues with vehicle capacity at certain times, participants delved into possible strategies the ferries could use such as reservations, HOT lanes, congestion pricing, mode shift, and various intermodal connections to better move passengers and/or discourage peak hour use by vehicle passengers. Participants said all scenarios have both positive and negative implications. They raised many questions about how these strategies would work. Their willingness to pay for these services varied widely. The following section explores their thoughts.

Reservations

Participants were asked to talk about whether a reservation system would be an effective strategy for managing demand. In addition, they were asked to describe in detail how a reservation system should work. Finally, they were asked about their willingness to pay a premium for a guaranteed space on the ferry at a specific sailing time.

Without prompting, participants in all groups suggested that it is time to consider a reservation system. This was noteworthy in the San Juan Island route group. Other groups, specifically the ones held in Kingston and Clinton, mentioned it as well.

“I hate saying (this), but I think a reservation system would work. When I get on my boat – always the same – it’s the same people on that ferry, so a system that helps those regular users, would help.”

“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...”

“People would like that (referring to a reservation system).”

Participants had many other questions and concerns as well as suggestions or solutions regarding the logistics of a reservation system. Concerns included the amount of time in advance they would need to reserve, amount of time in advance of the ferry they would need to arrive, and what would happen to space if a vehicle with a reservation does not come at all or arrives late.

“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.”

“Get a phone bank and some voicemail options, type in your credit card then you are reserved. They take the money whether you make it or not.”

“You would phone in or go on the web and specify that this is the time you would like to travel...up to 70 or 80% of the boat. If that boat is full you make it on the next. Then you have dinner on the Edmonds side. I wouldn’t imagine an extra charge.”

“They have to take the money at the time of the reservation and it’s not refundable whether they make it or not.”

Most participants agreed that only a percentage of space on the vessel should be available for reservations. However, opinions about the amount of space that should be set aside for reservations **varied greatly**.

“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 think only 20% of the boat should be dedicated to reservations.”

“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).”

Participants indicated that there should be **distinctions for regular riders and residents** in communities that rely heavily on the ferries from the recreational / occasional riders. Further, if a reservation system is implemented, participants felt that regular riders and island residents deserve preferential treatment over tourists. Participants felt that the amount of space reserved on a vessel should be user specific, so regular users and island residents would be guaranteed an exact percentage of space on each ferry. Notably, San Juan participants were the most adamant about implementing a reservation system and ensuring a system that gave priority to regular users or residents.

“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 know the ferry system keeps saying it can’t do that. But how can people in Seattle with public roads get parking reservations where only the people that live there can park there and I can’t park there? They could give preference to residents here on the use of state highways if they chose to. 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 year long. We rely on it as our I-5. It’s our only way to get home. It’s our state road.”

“I think it’s a good idea (specific amount of the boat dedicated for residents vs. tourists).”

“My concern with reservations is that it would affect the locals and commuters since maybe a tourist would have the capability of doing so.”

“There should be a priority for locals. Have a type of ID to show to the ferry system that you live on the island and get on the ferry first. Have 60% percent of (the) boat be filled with residents, and then the rest you can fill the boat with the rest of people.”

“Have (a) certain percent of the boat reserved for the locals and commuters, have certain percent of the boat reserved the locals, and the rest for non-locals.”

“The problem with having a reservation system for residents is that you can’t define a resident. Who is a resident? We have more residents in the summer than in the winter.”

Although participants were positive about the reservation system, willingness to pay for a reserved space varied widely. Some participants felt that they should not have to pay more to make a reservation as they are already paying enough. Others suggested that there should be a resident program and that the amount they pay to reserve should be less than that paid by non-residents. Note, however, that participants agreed that it would be hard to come up with a fair or realistic definition of who was a resident.

After considerable discussion, participants agreed that a reasonable fee should be charged for a reservation. **A reasonable fee was defined as 10 to 20 percent more.** Most participants agreed that they would use the reservation system occasionally, such as peak evening hours or days of the week when recreational use is high and when there are special events. Those most likely to suggest they would use and pay for a reservation system were those traveling on the Edmonds / Kingston and Mukilteo / Clinton routes. Those on the San Juan route also suggested they might use a reservation system at least sometimes.

“The first three in the morning and three in the afternoon are higher peaks, and the ferry system knows that. We need bigger boats.”

“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 (get priority)? It’s no big deal for them and everybody else who drives on; do you want to make them show up a half hour earlier?”

“Ten percent (10%) of the ferry ticket price (for reservations) is reasonable.”

“Five dollars (\$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.”

“Jack up the price on private vehicles, big buses, campers and boats.”

Priority Boarding Lanes

Participants were next presented with the concept of a priority boarding lane system for vehicles with pre-paid tickets. They were asked for their reactions to the system, their likelihood of using the system, and their willingness to pay a premium for the service.

Participants in all groups suggested priority loading lanes for frequent users such as commuters, residents, and pass holders. However, feelings were mixed as to whether they would be willing to pay for priority loading as many felt that this should be a benefit for pre-paying their fares. Again, those on the Edmonds / Kingston and Mukilteo / Clinton routes were most positive towards and willing to pay for a priority loading lane. Those on the Vashon and, to a lesser extent, Bainbridge and Bremerton routes were the most likely to feel that such as system was unfair.

“You have people buying a bunch of tickets at once; passes now. If they buy ahead of time, they should be able to go faster than people having to pay cash.”

“It’s (pass) close to \$200 so why shouldn’t you be able to get into the lane faster.”

“They have two 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.”

“Think of yourself as a business; would you rather have a client come to you at the beginning of the month (and) give you a \$100 for 6 months, or would you like me to put \$600 down on the table for the next 6 months? It’s a tremendous advantage to the ferry system to have these thousands of people buying 5 or 6 at a time because it represents a tremendous amount of cash flow going into their business that they are holding onto and could potentially make interest on.”

“Have a lane for people who use frequent passes. They do it for vanpools, they do it for motorcycles. Why not say these are the people that support the ferry system. We do it every day; we are paying the way. We should have some type of priority.”

High Occupancy Toll (HOT) Lane

Another alternative discussed was the concept of a High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lane. In the groups this was presented as a lane that vehicle drivers would be able to use in peak hours if they paid a premium fare. It should be noted that at the time of the groups, the structure of a HOT Lane on the ferries was still under development. Following the groups, the concept of a HOT lane was further refined by the WSF operational strategy team and focused more on a true high occupancy toll lane.

Participants were generally unfamiliar with the concept of a HOT lane. When described how the system would work, reactions were mixed. Participants were unclear how this 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.”

The most negative comments regarding HOT lanes centered on the **perceived inequity** of such a system – that is, only the wealthy would be able or willing to pay. This was notable among those on the Vashon route, although several participants on the Bremerton and Bainbridge routes mentioned this concern as well. Some participants felt that this should be a free benefit to regular riders.

“In Vashon, people usually feel equal. Everyone’s equal here. If you start doing something like that, it would cause revolution over here.”

“Exclusivity thing – it’s not how we work here on Vashon.”

“For something like that, that’s mass-transit related, I think you are getting into two classes – those who can and those who can’t. And I’m one of those wealthier people who could do that, but I would feel embarrassed of doing that. I could just picture the Mercedes line there. I don’t think that’s the solution, ultimately.”

“I think that’s hurting people who don’t have a higher salary. That’s not equitable.”

“Manufacturing wages have been pretty bad. I don’t make too much money and it’s very expensive, and if I have to drive in it’s a major expense. And it just went down to \$14.50 sometimes it’s \$18.50. Now, if you have enough money...then you’ll be able to buy a group of tickets which will come up to be \$11.75 each which is pretty good. But that’s only for people who have enough money. So the poor pay more all the time. You end up paying the top dollar. Those who have enough money can buy several tickets at a time...but those who don’t, can’t. My son was not in the island (...) so I was driving over twice a week paying \$18.50 and had to work on gardening to supplement my income to afford going over to Seattle. It’s easy to say the solution is money if you have it.”

Some participants were interested in the concept and saw HOT lanes as a type of priority boarding line that they would pay to use only when they needed it. This was notable on Edmonds / Kingston participants. However, some Bainbridge participants indicated they would use a HOT lane when there is a special event. This would be distinct from a priority lane that they would use and pay for all the time as part of their pass.

“Sometimes or most of the time, I’m not in a hurry. But there are some 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.”

“Instead of planning ahead you can use it now.”

Opinions on pricing of the HOT lane greatly varied among participants.

“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.”

Congestion Pricing

A final strategy under consideration that was discussed is the use of a congestion pricing model in which a higher fare is charged for vehicles accessing the ferry during peak travel periods. This could also include discounting the walk-on fare and/or discounting the vehicle fare during off-peak travel periods. Participants were presented with a general description of this concept and asked to provide their feedback.

Participants generally agreed that vehicle congestion on the ferry system varies greatly by season, day and time of day. However, they had mixed feelings about variable pricing by time of day and/or by season. Most were very resistant to seasonal pricing that would affect everyone. In general, participants who ride on a regular basis felt they are **paying enough** and are **unwilling to pay more** under any circumstances. This was a universal theme in all groups.

“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’m on the boat every day and will not be penalized by paying more.”

“Not regulars should pay 50% more.”

However, some suggested peak / off-peak pricing levels similar to Metro.

“I think charging a higher amount during peak hours is fine. What I don’t necessarily agree with is the seasonal change in fares. If it was (a) higher cost I’d be okay with that...it could diminish demand.”

“I think you do need to look for ways to spread the load out; maybe charge a premium for the rush hour.”

“Rather than penalize people that want those prime times. It’s (about) the incentives of going at another time.”

Participants generally felt that **congestion pricing would not affect travel behavior**. Most agreed that people **travel when they do so because they have to**. Most participants again stated that they do not have a lot of flexibility with the time they need to take the boat and felt it would be unfair to “penalize” those that are unable to adjust their schedule. Many again indicated that it is unfair to “toll” ferries and not roads.

“I don’t think that incentives would work (for non-peak times). Nobody takes the 5:30 am ferry unless they really have to. Those ferries are overcrowded, they are not very pleasant, and 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 fair to punish people to ride at peak times.”

“Most people that drive on those boats (during peak times), I don’t think it would be their choice to drive on at that time.”

“People may not have a choice. That might be the boat that they have to have.”

Other Suggestions

As a wrap-up, participants were asked for any further suggestions they could make to WSF to better manage demand for vehicles during peak travel periods. There was nearly universal agreement that **commuters and regular riders are not the problem with system demand and utilization**. Frequently calling themselves the “backbone of the system,” they felt that the **target for any program to manage demand should be the recreational / discretionary user** as opposed to regular riders / commuters. Participants generally felt that the recreational user should bear the brunt of paying any sort of penalty when driving on the ferry during peak times.

“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 respon; they don’t even know about the ferry rates.”

“I read in 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.”

“Us locals are what keep the system going all year long.”

“If you take out the commuters who does the ferry system have?”

While nearly all participants indicated the recreational / discretionary user was the main problem, they acknowledged that the routes like Keystone / Port Townsend and the San Juan routes heavily rely on tourism for revenue in those communities.

“Look at the number of spaces allocated to San Juan Island and the number of spaces allocated towards Orcas (Island). We have half the population and they have a third of the population and they have much more tourists because they have more state parks. Look at the summer, there are many more spaces allocated towards Orcas than San Juan even though the resident population is substantially larger. That tells you plainly that the ferry system is geared towards moving tourists.”

“Port Townsend is such a tourist destination. The vast majority of riders on that ferry are tourists. It’s seasonal and it’s also event-oriented. In September it was awful since we didn’t have two boats but only one boat service.”

Appendix

Study Background & Methodology

Objectives

The primary purpose of the qualitative research was to help inform and design the quantitative research process. Specifically, results from the qualitative research were used in the development of the on-board survey questionnaire. The specific objectives of the qualitative research were to:

- Explore current travel behaviors, including frequency of travel, trip purpose, travel mode(s), travel time(s), and reasons behind choices of travel modes and times.
- Identify / understand key customer characteristics (e.g., employment characteristics) and how these characteristics affect their travel decisions; their attitudes toward travel on WSF; and their attitudes, needs, and expectations for service.
- Understand current attitudes toward travel and existing ferry services and assess how their travel characteristics and these attitudes influence participants' attitudes toward / reactions to potential pricing and operational strategies being considered to more effectively manage demand for vehicle capacity on the ferries and to improve traffic flow.
- Identify customer requirements and expectations for ferry service and their willingness to pay for alternative programs / services that could more effectively manage the demand for vehicle capacity on the ferries and/or in the terminal loading areas and improve traffic flow into and out of these facilities.
- Identify customers' willingness to make trade-offs in their existing travel patterns to effectively manage demand for vehicle capacity on the ferries and/or in terminal loading areas and improve traffic flow into and out of these facilities.
- Assess different methods for measuring impacts of pricing and operational strategies on ridership behaviors that could be used in the subsequent quantitative research.

Methodology

The qualitative research used focus group research. A focus group is a form of qualitative research in which a group of people is asked about their attitude towards a product, service, concept, advertisement, idea, and packaging. Focus group research is based on facilitating an organized discussion with a group of individuals selected because they are believed to be representative of some specific segment of people – in this case, ferry riders. Questions are asked in an interactive group setting where participants are free to talk with other group members.

Recruiting Process

The focus groups were recruited using a mix of methods to reach a broad and representative base of ferry customers. To reach known ferry customers, participants were recruited through a variety of methods including posters on-board the ferries and distribution of flyers to vehicle passengers waiting at Colman Dock, and at the Edmonds and Fauntleroy terminals. In addition, WSF sent information to customers in their e-mail database. Interested customers were invited to contact ORC to complete a screening questionnaire to determine their eligibility. Also, telephone recruits were made from a random digit dial sample of households in the ferry communities.

All potential participants were screened and recruited by ORC data collection specialists to ensure that a representative cross-section of ferry riders was included in each group. Participants in all groups had to meet the following screening criteria:

- Have ridden a ferry in the past year.
- Commuters (take 24 or more one-way rides per month) or frequent / regular riders (take 7 or more one-way rides per month).
- Must be comfortable participating in and speaking their opinion in group settings.

In addition, some standard screens were used to not include participants that could potentially bias the overall group response:

- Household members not working in advertising, market research, or transportation planning, as an employee of Washington State Ferries, or as elected official for a state or local government agency.
- Were “extremely negative” in their attitudes toward how well WSF is currently being managed.
- Could not have participated in a focus group in the past six months, participated in more than three focus groups, and/or participated in transportation-related focus groups.

Number of Groups and Group Composition

A total of nine (9) focus groups were conducted with ferry riders in the Puget Sound region at various locations over the course of six evenings from November 14th through December 15th, 2007. Participants were segmented into the nine groups based on the route they ride most often and by various other ridership factors and characteristics. All groups were traditional focus groups comprised of eight to ten participants. ORC recruited approximately ten to twelve riders for each group. On average, eight (8) individuals participated in each group. Most groups were held in the communities where WSF riders live.

Table 1: Number of Groups and Group Composition

Group Description / Location	Number of Groups	Group Composition
Seattle / Edmonds Residents (held in downtown Seattle)	1	Both “frequent” and “infrequent” riders included Two participants were “reverse” commuters – that is lived on the east side of Puget Sound and commuted to a west side destination Remainder were “discretionary” travelers – that is, traveled primarily for recreational or social purposes
Bainbridge Commuters (held in downtown Seattle)	1	All participants were commuter and the majority worked in downtown Seattle. Participants used a mix of modes to get to / onto the ferry – walk-on, bicycle, and transit One participant was a freight customer
Bainbridge / Seattle riders (held in Winslow)	2	Commuters and frequent / regular riders Heavily weighted to those who drive onto the ferry at least occasionally Drew primarily from Bainbridge Island and Poulsbo / Silverdale area
Vashon / Southworth / Fauntleroy riders (held on Vashon)	1	Commuters and frequent / regular riders Mix of vehicle and walk-on passengers 1 Southworth resident; balance were Vashon residents
Bremerton / Seattle riders (held in Bremerton)		Commuters and frequent / regular riders Mix of vehicle and walk-on passengers (although primarily walk-on) 1 freight customer Drew primarily from Bremerton and Silverdale
Kingston / Edmonds Riders (held in Kingston)	1	Commuters and frequent / regular riders Mix of vehicle and walk-on passengers (although primarily walk-on) Drew primarily from Kingston, Poulsbo
Clinton / Mukilteo and Port Townsend / Keystone Riders (held on Whidbey Island)	1	Commuters and frequent / regular riders Mix of vehicle and walk-on passengers (although primarily walk-on) Two participants were Port Townsend residents Groups were held prior to route and schedule changes resulting from the Steel Electrics being taken out of service
San Juans (held in Friday Harbor)	1	Regular riders All traveled between Anacortes and the San Juans at least sometimes; could also use the Interisland ferries Primarily vehicle passengers Mix of different island residents

Considerations When Reviewing Focus Group Research Findings

Readers of this Technical Paper are reminded that focus groups are qualitative research and the findings presented here should not be extrapolated to the general population as a whole without further quantitative research, using a probability sample. The results of focus groups should not be considered reliable in the “statistical sense.” It is not possible to exactly replicate the recruiting of the respondents, nor can the moderator ask the same specific questions of each respondent, or probe in the exact same manner from group to group.

Focus group research is intended to provide an initial, exploratory step in determining in-depth feelings, awareness, attitudes, and opinions. The following biases are generally inherent to qualitative research, and are listed to remind the user that the data presented cannot be projected to the entire universe of individuals in the study area.

- Focus group participants tend to be more outgoing and more assertive than individuals who decline to participate.
- Respondents “self-select” themselves. That is, they are people who are not only willing to participate in a group discussion, but are also available on the night the group is scheduled.
- Individuals who attend focus groups are usually more willing to express their opinions and may have more strongly held opinions than those who decline to participate.
- People in groups may respond differently to a question than if asked the same question individually. For example, a participant may follow the lead of a stronger personality or someone they consider to be more knowledgeable about a topic.

Moderator's Guide

Objectives

- Explore current travel behaviors, how customers think / talk about travel, and factors that influence travel decisions
- Understand current attitudes toward travel and assess preliminary impacts of pricing and operational strategies on ridership behavior
- Understand key customer characteristics and their potential impacts on attitudes, needs, and expectations for service
- Identify customer requirements / expectations for service and their willingness to trade-off some elements of service in order to encourage behavior change
- Understand current attitudes toward travel and assess preliminary impacts of pricing and operational strategies on ridership behavior
- Assess best methods for measuring impacts of pricing and operations strategies on ridership behaviors

Introductions & Instructions

10 minutes

Purpose of focus groups

- Opinions / how you feel and why.
- No right or wrong answers.
- Expect agreement / disagreement.
- Encourage synergism / talk one at a time.
- Recruiting process / source of list / you represent audience.
- How results will be used.
- Tape / others watching.

Personal Introductions – Name, occupation, length of residency, etc.

- Tell me about your typical ferry travel – the type of trip you take most often.
 - Where does your trip start / end?
 - What times of the day do you ride – i.e., what time does your trip generally start and when do you generally return?
 - What “drives” that choice of travel times?
 - Do you typically walk-on the boat or do you drive-on?
 - If drive-on, do you drive-on alone or with others?
 - If with others, are you typically the driver or the passenger?
 - What “drives” that choice of whether you drive or walk-on the ferry?
 - If walk-on,
 - How do you typically get to the ferry from where you live? What factors influence your decision to do that?
 - When you get off the ferry, how do you typically get to your final destination? What factors influence your decision to do that?
- Do you have public transportation available where you live that you could use to get to the ferry? Same question in reverse – do you have public transportation available where you get off the ferry that you could use to get to your destination? If there is / were to be reasonable public transportation services available, how likely are you to use it instead of driving on the ferry or driving to the ferry and parking? Why / why not?
- How does this trip generally work?
 - What works well?
 - What problems if any do you encounter?
 - What would make the trip work better?
- What degree of flexibility do you have in your travel on the ferry?
 - Can you catch an earlier or later boat than what you typically take? How much earlier / how much later?
 - For those who drive-on, could you walk-on instead? Why / why not?
 - For those who drive-on alone – have you ever considered carpooling? Why / why not?
- Now tell me a little about your job and its environment?
 - What hours do you work?
 - To what extent do you have flexibility in scheduling your start times / end times?
 - How often do you have to work late? To what extent does that influence how you ride the ferry?
 - Describe any other work / job related factors that influence your choices as to when and how you use the ferry?
 - What do you think is the general feeling towards / philosophy toward using alternative modes – other than driving alone – at your work?
 - What do other employees at your workplace say / think / feel about people using alternative modes?
 - What does your employer say / think / feel about using alternative modes? Notably to what extent do you think your employer supports use of alternative modes? How is this evidenced?

- What are the primary factors you consider in deciding when and how you make your ferry trips?
 - What are the primary factors affecting what times of the day you decide to make your trips?
 - What are the primary factors affecting whether you decide to drive or walk on the ferry?
 - What are the primary factors affecting whether you decide to use the ferry or make the trip in some other way?
- How much latitude do you have in the following decisions?
 - Time of day you travel?
 - Whether you drive or walk on the ferry?
- If I were to say to you that there are problems with capacity on the ferries, particularly during peak hours, what do you think...
 - The ferries should do about that?
 - Ferry passengers should do about that? What role / responsibility for, if any, do passengers in general have for helping the ferry system manage demand?
 - What specifically would you be willing to do to help the ferry system manage demand during these peak periods?
- Still considering my statement that there are problems with capacity on the ferries, particularly during peak hours, what would you be willing to do / could you see yourself doing to potential travel differently?
- How willing would you be to do any of the following? Why / why not?
 - Walk-on versus drive-on
 - Drive-on but as a carpool rather than by yourself
 - Instead of driving on during the peak periods, driving on earlier or later. How much earlier / how much later?
 - Use public transportation to access the ferry where you board? Where you get off?
 - Switch to a route that has more capacity?
- What would motivate you to consider modifying your ferry travel in the following ways:
 - Walk-on versus drive-on
 - Drive-on but as a carpool rather than by yourself
 - Instead of driving on during the peak periods, driving on earlier or later.
 - Use public transportation to access the ferry where you board? Where you get off?
 - Switch to a route that has more capacity?

Reservations

- One of the problems customers often encounter during peak travel periods is how long / for how many boats do they have to wait before they can drive on.
 - What would you say is a reasonable number of boats you should have to wait through before driving on during these peak periods?
 - What is the maximum number of boats you feel you should have to wait through before driving on during these peak periods?
 - When is the wait / the number of boats so extreme that you would stop riding the ferry altogether, get really mad, and call the governor to complain?
- What should the ferry system do about minimizing the number of boats you should have to wait through during these peak travel periods?
- What should customers do about minimizing the number of boats they have to wait through during these peak travel periods?
- One option that has been presented to minimize the number of boats customers would have to wait through would be to institute a reservation system?
 - How would you see such a system working?
 - What is your immediate reaction to this idea?
 - What do you see as advantages? Potential problems or issues?
- PROVIDE DESCRIPTION OF HOW SUCH A SYSTEM WOULD WORK
 - Now with this information – what is your immediate reaction to this idea?
 - What do you see as advantages? Potential problems or issues?
 - How likely would you be to use this system? Why / why not?
 - What would you do if the ferry system implemented a reservation system on the route you use most often?

Pricing

- Let's completely shift gears here. Which of the following ideas have you heard about and what do you think of them?
 - Toll roads / bridges? Why do they toll? What impact do you think it has on the use of the roads / bridges?
 - Having differential tolls on roads / bridges based on the time of day?
 - Opening up HOV lanes during off-peak periods for all users?
 - Allowing people to pay more to use HOV lanes during peak periods even if they are driving alone?
 - Substituting a mileage based tax instead of the gas tax? In other words the more you drive the more you pay.
- What other kinds of things like this have you heard of that are being used to make people travel differently?
- How would / could any of these types of strategies apply to the ferry system to help them manage demand?
- Thinking specifically about driving a car on during peak travel periods. And let's assume that the current fare is \$xx.xx.
 - What would you say would be a reasonable amount more to drive a car on the ferry during peak travel periods than during off-peak travel periods?
 - What would be the maximum amount more that people should have to pay to drive a car on the ferry during peak travel periods?
 - What would be the amount that would be so high that it would be absolutely unconscionable for the system to even consider such a strategy?
- If the system were to implement a system where people who drive on during peak travel periods . . .
 - What would be your immediate reaction to this strategy?
 - What do you see as the pros and cons of such a system?
 - What would you expect customers should get in return?
- PROVIDE DESCRIPTION OF HOW SUCH A SYSTEM WOULD WORK
 - Now with this information – what is your immediate reaction to this idea?
 - What do you see as advantages? Potential problems or issues?
 - What impact do you think it would have on people's behaviors?
 - What would you do if the ferry system implemented this kind of fare policy?

- What do you feel should be the primary mission of the ferry system in terms of providing service to its customers / riders?
- When you think about the ferry system, what do you see it as being – a mode of transportation, a public transportation system, a highway, or a combination of all?
 - If you think of the system as being a mode of transportation, what do you feel should be the primary mission of the ferry system in terms of providing service to its customers / riders?
 - If you think of the system as being a public transportation system, what do you feel should be the primary mission of the ferry system in terms of providing service to its customers / riders?
 - If you think of the system as being part of the state highway system, what do you feel should be the primary mission of the ferry system in terms of providing service to its customers / riders?
- What do you feel are the primary problems / issues facing the system?
- Thinking of everything we have talked about during this discussion, if you could make one recommendation to encourage riders to modify their behavior in order to maximize utilization of the existing system, what would you recommend? That is, what do you think would be the greatest motivator?
- [ASK OBSERVERS] Is there anything else?
- Thanks and incentives.

Screener

[PARTICIPANT CALLS IN] Thank you for contacting us! My name is [NAME], from Opinion Research Northwest and on behalf of the Washington State Ferries we're conducting a very brief research study with Washington State Ferry riders to help determine the future direction for the ferry system. Your opinions are very important to us and everything you say will be kept strictly confidential. This call may be monitored to ensure quality.

INTRODUCTION

Hello, my name is [NAME], I'm calling from Opinion Research Northwest and on behalf of the Washington State Ferries we're conducting a very brief research study with Washington State Ferry riders to help determine the future direction for the ferry system.. Let me assure you this is not a sales call, the study is being conducted for research purposes only. Your opinions are very important to us and everything you say will be kept strictly confidential. This call may be monitored to ensure quality.

FOCUS GROUP EXPLANATION - READ IF NECESSARY

What we are doing is recruiting participants for a Focus Group Discussion [on behalf of the Washington State Ferries and Washington Transportation Commission] where participants will share their opinions and ideas about determining the best way to utilize existing Ferry routes effectively. The Group is relaxed and informal, it only lasts 2 hours and we are offering \$60.00 for participation. All I would need to do is ask you a few questions to see what Group and category you would fall under for the Project and see if space is available - this would only take a few minutes.

Q1. Do you or any member of your family currently or in the past worked for: (READ LIST)

- An advertising agency or market research company. (CURRENT OR PAST)
- In Transportation planning (CURRENT OR PAST)
- For the Ferry System (CURRENT OR PAST)
- For an elected official for the state or local government (CURRENT OR PAST)
- NO TO ALL

TERMINATE
TERMINATE
TERMINATE
TERMINATE
CONTINUE

Q2-1. Do you live on the east (Seattle) or west side of Puget Sound?

- EAST / SEATTLE
- WEST SIDE OF PUGET SOUND / ISLANDS

CONTINUE
CONTINUE

Q2. Have you ridden a Washington State Ferry at least once in the past year?

Yes **CONTINUE**
 No **TERMINATE**

Q2A. How many one-way trips do you make on the Ferry in a typical month?

_____ ONE-WAY TRIPS A MONTH **[IF >7 TRIPS = FREQUENT RIDER]** **CONTINUE**
 VARIES **CONTINUE**

Q2B. In a typical week, how many one-way trips do you make on the Ferry? Count a round trip as two trips.

_____ ONE-WAY TRIPS A WEEK **[IF <2 TRIPS = NON-FREQUENT RIDER]** **CONTINUE**
 VARIES **CONTINUE**

Q2C. What is the primary purpose of the trips you take on the Ferry?

Commute to work or school **CONTINUE**
 Personal business/errands **[IF >=2 TRIPS WK & NON COMMUTER]** **CONTINUE**
 Medical appointments **[IF >=2 TRIPS WK & NON COMMUTER]** **CONTINUE**
 Shopping **[IF >=2 TRIPS WK & NON COMMUTER]** **CONTINUE**
 Recreation **[IF >=2 TRIPS WK & NON COMMUTER]** **CONTINUE**
 Special events **[IF >=2 TRIPS WK & NON COMMUTER]** **CONTINUE**
 OTHER: _____ **[IF >=2 TRIPS WK & NON COMMUTER]** **CONTINUE**

Q2D. Over the last year, has the frequency with which you ride the ferries increased, decreased or remained the same? **[RECRUIT A MIX]**

INCREASED **CONTINUE**
 DECREASED **CONTINUE**
 STAYED THE SAME **GO TO 3A**

Q2D1. Before your frequency [INCREASED / DECREASED] how many one-way trips did you make on the Ferry in a typical week? Count a round trip as two trips.

_____ ONE-WAY TRIPS A WEEK
 VARIES

Q2D2. Why did your frequency change?

- CHANGED JOBS / MOVED CONTINUE
- JOBSITE / BUSINESS MOVED CONTINUE
- LOST JOB CONTINUE
- RETIRED CONTINUE
- FARES TOO HIGH [RECRUIT AT LEAST 2 PER GRP] CONTINUE
- PROBLEMS WITH SCHEDULE / ROUTE [RECRUIT AT LEAST 2 PER GRP] CONTINUE
- FERRIES TOO INCONVENIENT [RECRUIT AT LEAST 2 PER GRP] CONTINUE
- OTHER: _____ (IF SERVICE RELATED-RECRUIT AT LEAST 2/GRP) CONTINUE

Q3A. Which Ferry route or routes do you typically ride? [SELECT ALL THAT APPLY]

- Anacortes / Sidney B.C. (Victoria) SAVE
- Anacortes / San Juan Islands SAVE
- Port Townsend / Keystone SAVE
- Mukilteo / Clinton SAVE
- Edmonds / Kingston SAVE
- Seattle / Bainbridge Island CONTINUE
- Seattle / Bremerton SAVE
- Seattle / Vashon Po SAVE
- Fautleroy (West Seattle) / Vashon SAVE
- Fautleroy (West Seattle) / Southworth SAVE
- Southworth / Vashon SAVE
- Pt. Defiance / Tahlequah SAVE
- OTHER: _____ SAVE

[IF >1 ROUTE CONTINUE]

[IF <= 1 ROUTE SKIP TO Q3C]

Q3B. Which Ferry route would you consider your primary route? **[SELECT ONLY ONE RESPONSE]**

- Anacortes / Sidney B.C. (Victoria) **SAVE**
- Anacortes / San Juan Islands **SAVE**
- Port Townsend / Keystone **SAVE**
- Mukilteo / Clinton **SAVE**
- Edmonds / Kingston **SAVE**
- Seattle / Bainbridge Island **CONTINUE**
- Seattle / Bremerton **SAVE**
- Seattle / Vashon Po **SAVE**
- Fautleroy (West Seattle) / Vashon **SAVE**
- Fautleroy (West Seattle) / Southworth **SAVE**
- Southworth / Vashon **SAVE**
- Pt. Defiance / Tahlequah **SAVE**
- OTHER: _____ **SAVE**

Q4A. When you ride the Ferry do you usually ride during peak – defined as 5:00 to 9:00 a.m., 3:00 to 7:00 p.m. or off-peak periods?

- PEAK **CONTINUE**
- OFF PEAK **[RECRUIT AT LEAST 2 WHO COMMUTE OFF-PEAK & OR VARIES]** **CONTINUE**
- VARIES **CONTINUE**

Q4B. When you ride the Ferry do you usually...?

- Walk-on **GO TO Q4C**
- Drive-on by yourself or with someone else **CONTINUE**
- OTHER: _____ **CONTINUE**

- Q4C. How often do you drive on...?
- Never/Rarely **[SAVE]** **GO TO 5C**
 - Sometimes **GO TO 5C**
 - Frequently **GO TO 5C**
- Q5A Do you drive on alone or with others? **[RECRUIT A MIX]**
- ALONE **GO TO Q6A**
 - WITH OTHERS **CONTINUE**
- Q5B. Are you a passenger or driver of the car that rides the Ferry? **[RECRUIT A MIX]**
- DRIVER **GO TO Q6A**
 - PASSENGER **GO TO Q6A**
- Q5C. Do you ever use public transportation to access the ferry where you get on the ferry (WHERE YOU LIVE) or when you get off the ferry?
[IF YES PROBE FOR DEPARTURE OR WHEN GET OFF]
- YES ON DEPARTURE SIDE **[TRY TO RECRUIT AT LEAST 2 PER GROUP]** **CONTINUE**
 - YES WHEN GET OFF **CONTINUE**
 - NO **GO TO Q6A**

Q5D. What type of public transportation did you use? **[SELECT ALL THAT APPLY]**
[CLARIFY TRANSPORTATION AGENCY]

- KING COUNTY METRO
- SOUND TRANSIT BUS
- SOUNDER COMMUTER RAIL
- COMMUNITY TRANSIT
- PIERCE TRANSIT
- KITSAP TRANSIT
- ISLAND TRANSIT
- VANPOOL
- HOPELINK
- OTHER : _____
- DON'T KNOW/REFUSED

Q6A. On a scale of 1 to 7 where '1' means extremely negative and '7' means extremely positive, thinking about the Washington State Ferries please tell us how well you feel the system is being managed.

- | | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 1 Extremely Negative | TERMINATE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 2 | TERMINATE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 3 | CONTINUE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 4 | CONTINUE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 5 | CONTINUE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 6 | CONTINUE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 7 Extremely Positive | CONTINUE |

Q6B. If you had three weeks this fall to go anywhere you wanted on a vacation. Where would you go and why would you go there?

[IF THEY HAVE TROUBLE COMING UP WITH A PLACE, RESIST YOU ASKING QUESTION & PARTICULARLY IF THEY CAN'T ARTICULATE THE REASON WHY THEY WOULD CHOOSE THAT DESTINATION – TERMINATE]

Q6C Now I am going to read you a list of short statements. Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the statement. Would that be very or somewhat [AGREE / DISAGREE]?

a) I am comfortable in group activities

b) I'm comfortable stating my opinion

1 Strongly Disagree

1 Strongly Disagree

2 Somewhat Disagree

2 Somewhat Disagree

3 Neither Agree / Disagree

3 Neither Agree / Disagree

4 Somewhat Agree

4 Somewhat Agree

5 Strongly Agree

5 Strongly Agree

9 DON'T KNOW

9 DON'T KNOW

**[IF 1 OR 2 OR DON'T KNOW FOR BOTH STATEMENTS, TERMINATE]
[IF 1 OR 2 FOR ONE STATEMENT, CONTINUE. LIMIT TO ONE PER GROUP]**

Q7A. Have you ever participated in a market research discussion group or individual interview?

YES

NO

CONTINUE

GO TO Q8

Q7B. How long ago was that? _____

[IF LESS THAN 6 MONTHS TERMINATE]

Q7C. How many have you participated in and what were the subjects?

Subject(s): _____

(IF TRANSPORTATION RELATED SUBJECT – TERMINATE)

How many participated in: _____

**(IF PARTICIPATED IN 3+ PREVIOUS FOCUS GROUPS & /
OR 1+ INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS – TERMINATE)**

To ensure that we get a mix of people in the groups, I need to ask you a few background questions.

Q8. Please stop me when I reach the age category you fall in:

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------|---------------------------|------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 18 – 24 | | CONTINUE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 25 – 34 | | CONTINUE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 35 – 44 | [RECRUIT A MIX] | CONTINUE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 45 – 54 | | CONTINUE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 55 – 64 | | CONTINUE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 65 and older | [ONLY 1 PER GROUP] | CONTINUE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | REFUSED | | TERMINATE |

Q9. RECORD GENDER [DO NOT ASK] **[RECRUIT A MIX]**

- MALE
- FEMALE

INVITATION

[INVITE ONCE GROUP DATES/TIMES ARE DETERMINED: As further part of our research, we are inviting a group of people like yourself to participate in a focus group discussion regarding determining the future direction of the ferry system. Let me assure you that absolutely no attempt will be made to sell you any types of products or services - these discussion groups are held for research purposes only. We'd just like to hear your honest opinions. The group will be relaxed and informal, and you will simply be involved in an exchange of ideas and opinions with 6-8 other people like yourself.]

READ THIS INVITE TO ALL RESPONDENTS!!!!!!!!!!

[ALTERNATE INVITE: According to the Information you have given me you have qualified for the group .We would like to keep your information on our Alternates list in case there are any cancellations or to participate in some additional research we will be conducting in December. Would you be interested to participating in this additional research? **[RECORD INFORMATION ON FRONT] [IF YES:** Great, we will be calling you back with details of the upcoming research. Thank you very much for your time.]

[FORUM & ONBOARD INVITE: According to the Information you have given me we are not holding focus groups at this time. However, we are offering other types of research such as online forums and on-board interviews conducted on the Ferry. We would like to keep your information in case these types of research happen. If this occurs would you be willing to participate? **[RECORD INFORMATION ON FRONT] [IF YES:** Great, we will be calling you back if Participants are needed. Thank you very much for your time.]

RECRUIT INVITE: The discussion will be held at **[DESCRIPTION OF LOCATION]**. The group will take place on **[DATE]** at **[CHECK MATRIX FOR TIME]** at **[FOCUS GROUP LOCATION/ADDRESS]**. It will last approximately 2 hours, and at the conclusion of the discussion, we will be pleased to present you with a cash honorarium of \$60.00 in appreciation of your time. Will you be available to attend this discussion?

[IF YES CONTINUE OTHERWISE GET DETAILS AND RECORD ON FRONT]

Great, we'll be sending you a letter to confirm this invitation, along with directions to the facility so I will need to get some contact information from you **[RECORD INFORMATION ON FRONT PAGE]:**

PHONE NUMBERS – We will need to follow up and ensure that you have received your Confirmation Letter. Someone will also be calling you the day before the Group to verify your participation and to answer any questions you may have. It is very important that we are able to get a hold of you at any time during the day so what would be the best Phone Number for us to reach you during Daytime Hours? And what would be the best Phone Number for us to reach you during the Evening Hours?

EMAIL ADDRESS / FAX NUMBER – In case we have any difficulty sending the letter by regular mail or if we need to send any information to you at the last minute, do you have an E-Mail Address and / or a Fax Number we can send that information through?

[HAVE RESPONDENT RECORD GROUP INFORMATION]. We do ask that participants show up about 15 minutes early to get checked in and make sure the group gets started right on time. Light snacks and refreshments are provided before the group. We also need you to bring a picture ID so we can verify that you are the person we have recruited for the group. If you need reading glasses be sure to bring those as well. For this project, it is very important that we are able to count on your attendance so if, for any reason, you find yourself unable to join us or if you have any questions, please call us at 1-866-461-0700 as soon as possible. We really appreciate your willingness to participate and look forward to meeting you soon.