

Frequently asked questions concerning the south side ferry marshalling option

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Q. Is BC Ferries interested in the south side option?

A. In a recent email (June 10th. 2011) Mark Collins, Vice-President Engineering for BC Ferries) wrote that:

“BCF does believe the south side option would have some important operational advantages over the existing Snug Cove berth. The approach would be simpler and more direct for the vessel. ... Pick up and drop off areas could be purpose designed for efficiency and safety. And the vessel would have greater separation from other marine traffic in the cove, improving marine safety.”

Q. Is there money to pay for such a project?

A. In a recent email (June 10th. 2011) Mark Collins, Vice-President Engineering for BC Ferries), wrote that:

“The second point to address is terminal construction costs and funding. My comments of today are the same as 2004 in that the cost of constructing a terminal is not an issue provided BCF Ferries is able to recoup the full full cost in the usual way, which is from route group operations (i.e. ferry fares). ... BCF has no difficulty raising capital to build major infrastructure works provided BCF is earning returns from route group operations that enables us to pay off the capital borrowings.

...

“Regarding the total cost of the south side option, everything we have seen in terminal construction costs since 2004 confirms our belief that it is at least a \$25m project. We recently provided design guidance on a greenfield terminal project near Klemtu similar to what the south side option would require; that project was approximately \$20m to construct.” [the government picked up the ferry dock cost on top of that]

If the south side option were to go ahead, there would almost certainly be infrastructure funding from various sources to defray part of the cost. Even if the entire cost were put on ferry fares, with 2% infrastructure financing, a modest fare surcharge would pay for it over a 25 year amortization period. The amounts are estimated at \$1.50 for vehicles and 50¢ for passengers even if there were no other financing sources. The last three years have seen fare increases of \$3.81 and \$2.01, respectively, with little benefit.

Q. Has the financial squeeze affected the likelihood that BC Ferries would underwrite the cost?

A. In an even more recent email, *after* the squeeze (August 25th. 2011), Mark Collins replied to a query on exactly this issue as follows:

“I think it’s fair to say we are facing a tightening climate for our capital programs. Each and every project will have to stand on its merits compared to all other priorities demanding capital expenditure. Those projects with the greatest need and/or greatest return on investment will naturally get the priority. A project which generates (or is supported by) revenue increases to cover the long term cost of an investment would be viewed more favourably than an investment not so supported.

Q. Will moving ferry marshalling to the south side hurt the Cove merchants?

A. It is very important that the merchants are supported. Indeed, one reason for dealing with the ferry issue is to allow Snug Cove to be made a more attractive destination both for islanders and for visitors. At present, the ferry marshalling dominates the village and makes any kind of parking a problem. Also, visiting traffic is channeled directly out of the village, except that people can visit the general store or Cates Corner, where there is limited parking for those “in the know”. If the ferry is moved to the south side, those walking off the ferry would have a 3 or 4 minute level walk to the Cove. Those arriving by vehicle could park in the new parking available as part of

the marshalling area and walk, or they could drive around a sign-posted route to the ample parking in the village that would then be available. The merchants should benefit.

Q. Will traffic be able to negotiate the Four Corners, especially large trucks?

A. Even large trucks frequently negotiate the Four Corners without difficulty, in all directions. Also, there is room to add an additional traffic lane (perhaps two) for the Dorman Road approach to Four corners. This is not a real problem. One could even put a round-about there, but that might actually be counter-productive. I have discussed this issue with a trucker, who sees no problem.

Q. Will Metro Vancouver give up the land needed to implement the south side option?

A. When Crippen Park was set up, part of the agreement was that the lands to the East of the Miller Road line (which seems to include the south side) would remain available for ten years. That agreement, which has lapsed, should be resurrected. However, the same objection applies to any development in the north park, which did not prevent the council for considering such schemes. The south park area under consideration (it does *not* include Dorman Point) is largely derelict land, filled with debris, essentially unwalkable, and includes a sewage works. Unlike the north park or the village, the south side option land is right on the southern boundary of Crippen park. The suggested use would actually improve the area from point of view of any park use. The foreshore deck would provide an extension of the Lady Alexandra Promenade. The land area (not counting the over-the-foreshore deck) needed is around 20 acres. The total area of Crippen Park is around 9,000 acres.

Q. Will the south side ferry marshalling interfere with the Bowfest grounds?

A. The proposed south side ferry marshalling runs into the woods, well clear of the Bowfest grounds. Interestingly, if the option were implemented, it would provide extra parking within a minutes walk of the grounds, and would also allow arriving walk-on visitors to get to the Bowfest field very easily, and also to the village to visit the shops, restaurants, marinas, kayaking, and so on. Access to the Dorman Point trail would be improved.

Q. What about the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO)—how would we negotiate with DFO and would they agree?

A. BC Ferries deal with DFO all the time, and would do so in this case. The foreshore deck would actually create some enhanced habitat for some marine flora and fauna. According to DFO officials the department's "protection of habitat" goal is often in conflict with other community goals, and that compromises are thus frequently necessary. Effective emergency evacuation from the island, which only the south side option permits, is an example of such goals. The possibility of a DFO refusal is no argument against Bowen selecting the SS as the preferred option. One thing for sure: we'll never make progress unless (a) we specify what we want; and (b) make a case for it to whichever external authority must approve it.

Q. Won't too many people move to the island if the ferry service is improved?

A. There are specific limits to growth in the OCP, so the ferry is really not relevant to this issue. The OCP also says that the ferry service should lag the demand, and there should be traffic demand management. This is well and good, but are current residents to be faced with overloads and delays based on some ideological theory that people can be *coerced* to stay away by making the ferry pain to use? Is Snug Cove to be a permanent marshalling yard to put people off even *visiting*?

Q. A better ferry service/bigger ferry will surely encourage too many islanders to take their cars to the mainland too often?

A. People don't take their vehicles to the mainland unless there is a good reason. It will always be expensive to do so and it is unfair to make it more inconvenient and time-consuming than necessary. Note that the reason we didn't get the *Island Sky*, which was designed for Bowen, is because the ferry marshalling facilities are not adequate. Mark Collins stated this explicitly in his email dated June 10th. 2011:

"We also wish to clarify the reason the Island Sky is not deployed on the Bowen Island run is that the road network adjoining our terminal is simply not capable of delivering or absorbing the vessel's 120 car capacity within the

scheduled turn-around time. You may recall we made that clear to the BIM council at an open meeting in which we advised the ship would be elsewhere deployed if the shore side road network was not upgraded. Again, I mention this only to emphasize the road network adjoining the terminal is a critical factor in our ship deployment decisions.”

In conclusion

Given that the council needs to increase the tax base to pay for the facilities that most islanders are asking for (such as a community centre), it is illogical that some population increase should, at the same time, be prevented, *at the expense of those who need to travel* (and remember, most of the island income is earned on the mainland. If controls are needed, there are other ways of achieving the goals in an open, transparent and acceptable manner. We need to manage growth through zoning, and other open measures, not by unnecessarily disrupting the lives of residents.

The ferry marshalling issue has prevented action on making Snug Cove an inviting and effective destination for more than thirty years. Not only is marshalling and traffic on government disruptive to normal uses of the village area, but, coupled with the many busses and cars that use the lower Cove, it is disruptive to those who live or use Cardena Road and the Snug Point area generally; it adversely affects trade in the village; and it discourages visitors. It is time to grasp the nettle

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