



# PIERCE COUNTY WATERBORNE TRANSPORTATION STUDY

## ADVISORY GROUP MEETING: JANUARY 14, 2015

### MEETING SUMMARY

#### **In Attendance:**

Jim Bixler (Chief, Anderson Island Fire and Rescue)	Krista Ullis (Riviera Club Media: Anderson Island)
Marion Chenaur (Ketron Island Resident)	Laurie Vallieres (Anderson Island Elementary Principal, Steilacoom School District)
Ann Dasch (Anderson Island Resident)	Valerie Thorsen (Pierce County Public Works and Utilities)
Chris Frye (Anderson Island Resident)	Michael Hodgins (BERK)
Dave Jacobsen (Anderson Island Citizens' Advisory Board Ferry Liaison)	Melanie Mayock (BERK)
Paul Loveless (Administrator, town of Steilacoom)	Vivien Savath (BERK)
Kendel Lyman (Anderson Island Volunteer Patrol)	
Rich Sullivan (Anderson Island Citizens' Advisory Board)	

#### **Welcome & Introductions**

General consensus that this location works well - thanks Paul for arranging.

Conflict with April 8<sup>th</sup> meeting date; will need to re-schedule. **Tentatively April 7<sup>th</sup>.**

Michael gave a recap of what's been done and went over the purpose of today's meeting: to run through the Situation Assessment and get Advisory Group reactions. The goal is to plan for a range of potential ridership and then get into options, to help prepare the County for a range of futures. In addition, surveys will be finalized soon. Today BERK will give a high level summary of previous surveys and what we want to ask, to provide a chance for this group to weigh in.

Michael explained that if Advisory Group (AG) members see any issues in the previous meeting summary, they can email their comments.

#### **Ridership, Market, and Demographic Analysis**

Michael walked the Advisory Group through the findings in the Ridership Trends and Projections draft paper. Questions, comments, and responses are as follows.

AG Member: The 2010 Census said there were 900 people on Anderson Island, not 822, shown in the handout (Exhibit 3, page 9). Michael: we'll double check our numbers.

AG Member: How do you forecast based on only three data points for 20 years?

Michael: We pulled from previous study and the Census for basic data.

AG Member: There have been major changes in fare policies, such as reductions in discounts for commuters, youth, etc. This affects who can afford to live on Anderson Island.

### **Jobs on Anderson Island**

- AG Member: The statement that most jobs on the island are held by people who live off island. Is that the County or contractors? What's your definition of jobs?
- Michael: this comes from census data.
- AG Member: 96% of island employees live on the island at biggest employer. Of six businesses that are commercial, all live on the island.
- AG Member: Early morning ferries coming to Anderson have contractors and county workers. Afternoon ferries leaving the island are packed. It's an impact, but not as you would think.

### **Commuter Tickets:**

AG Member: "46% travel with commuter tickets". Call them value pass tickets because it's not only commuters, but frequent users.

### **Age Groups (Exhibit 6):**

- AG Member: Could you change the age groups, for a work-age group (include 20s)? Because the ferry is funded on people commuting for work – that's where see biggest revenue, affects morning and other schedules. If we include the 60-64 year-olds, it masks the working group.
- Discussion about how to structure age groups, considering a lot of early retirees.
- AG Member: The net migration off island of people older than 65 – interesting.
- Michael: because of medical facilities (lack of)
- AG Member: need a care facility, then pass away. Had that population who have been here since year 1.

### **Income**

- AG Member: can't assume low income is retirees. Had families move into vacation home because they lost their house.
- AG Member: The ferry group did a survey and confirmed the amount of wealth that moved on to the island.
- AG Member: people who are retiring are not contributing much to the ferry (\$1k vs \$4k).

### **Employment and commuting**

- AG Member: over 16 employed for Pierce Co (56%) – why so low? Counts kids, stay at home spouses, retirees.
- Michael: much higher proportion not in labor force on Anderson.
- AG Member: I question that data on commuting location (big increase from 2006 to 2007). We had a lot of working families move here around that time.

### **Jobs on Island**

- AG Member: It's incorrect to say that the majority of jobs on the island held by people not living on the island – incorrect. Michael: we'll look at the way they define job in the Census.
- AG Member: 69 jobs might be correct (full and part time, seasonal, contractors).
- AG Member: 14 licensed contractors show Anderson Island as location. Probably 100 self-employed. Not questioning the 69 number, but who has those jobs.

### **Ridership:**

Michael: we want to understand what was driving ridership. (population, fares, etc.) See what we can learn from history. Ridership is declining, probably related to fares. On the first cut, didn't look at discounts and changes to fares.

AG Member: : how did you get resident numbers for years other than from 2000, 2010? Michael: We'll look.

AG Member: 2007 and 2008 are understated for ridership – scanners didn't work for 2 months – trips not counted. 2007 and 2008 figure doesn't capture actual ridership. Valerie will see if there's info on that.

AG Member: In Exhibit 15, change "commuter" to "frequent rider"

AG Member: divide passengers and vehicles, adult and senior, because senior fare was changed. Some of the commuter gain is seniors buying that pass because it's cheaper. Michael: It's not uncommon to have a disconnect between the reported category and the people who use that fare type.

### **Projecting ridership trends**

- Michael: We are embedding an assumption of no new fare increases or service changes – those things will have an effect. Trying to have a simple look – keeping other things equal, what do housing and population trends suggest for ridership? Range of 215,000-240,000 annual rides.
- AG Member: Given the current trend of ridership per household, is there a scenario that ridership will continue to decline? Response: Hard to separate that effect from price change effect. Ridership decline from fare increase, but other things contributed – e.g. recession, etc. Don't want to assume all the causes will continue together. We will examine fare policy separately, but we need a baseline outline that is clean of fare and schedule issues. Then can say what happens to ridership when you change fares, etc.

### **Housing projection:**

- AG Member: projection of 404 additional housing units – was that a study for the island or extrapolation countywide? Michael: the county has a zone system to determine expectation for new growth. County planning department looked at Anderson Island and considered potential growth.
- AG Member: given the challenge with septic, shoreline management, scarcity of potable water, that number surprises me, if they would be able to pull that off.
  - Michael: I was a little surprised by that number. There has been a jump recently, but there are challenges for building on islands. From a planning perspective, I'd rather over-estimate housing projections to cover the upper band of demand that County might need to accommodate from a service perspective. If we're conservative, might not plan for enough growth. For our purpose: range of possible outcomes for growth, ranging from conservative to optimistic – from a planning perspective, we're capturing reasonable futures.
  - AG Member: There are major water issues. No large housing communities will be built. In talking to contractors, fewer than 6 new houses a year are being built, and many take more than one year to build. How does the 404 estimate compare to the rest of Pierce County? Is this slower or faster growth than the rest of Pierce county? Michael: we can add that comparison.

### **Miscellaneous**

Michael: for future ridership, we need to break down by season – has different implications.

AG Member: we've had problem of estimating Census data. The planning review group on the Island asked for electric meter data (from Tanner company), which tells you which homes are occupied. Without violating privacy, they can tell you how many homes are occupied full time.

AG Member: I'm guessing this study won't project the need for another ferry? Michael: projections don't show double or triple demand. Might even be over estimating. Pierce is one of only with two boats. The question is how to productively use the two boats, rather than a bigger fleet. I think that's pretty fair. AG Member : capital investment capacity will be answered then. Michael: other capital issues, not just number of boats. There can be capital demands even if not adding new capacity, Could be land-side things. Heard in

the first meeting about issues on Anderson Island Sunday nights. Are there capital needs to address those? In terms of addressing overall throughput capability, we have some flexibility with existing assets. Can't imagine adding to the fleet.

AG Member: looking at replacing vehicle ferry with passenger ferry? Michael: next meeting we will start talking about options. Not looking at that specific question. The challenge with passenger only is they tend to be just as expensive to operate. It's almost always more economical to run a vehicle ferry with some passenger facilities. Doesn't mean it's not appropriate in some situations.

AG Member: look into eliminating triangle runs? Michael: yes, look at service configurations, how county assets are used to provide service and meet demands.

AG Member: Schools data, page 11: there were 35 students, not 5, OSPI is incorrect. Will get us the middle school, high school data.

AG Member: what's not included is students who go out of district, private school, home school.

### **Concluding**

Michael: if questions come up later, let us know. Feed us stuff as we go along, we'll incorporate questions, comments.

## **Fares and Financial Situation**

Vivien walked through the paper on fares.

### **Feedback/questions:**

AG Member: \$5.30 base fare should be shown differently (adult and senior). Michael agreed.

AG Member: The value pass varies by season. The expiration date has changed a lot; at one time there wasn't one, has been 40 days for a decade. (No other tickets expire, unless there's a fare change.)

AG Member: The over length vehicle charges go up, not in proportion to length – greater penalty for size.

AG Member: How you price the deck is important because deck space is what the ferry has to sell. Things that matter like not having a surcharge for value tickets during peak period means it's just as cheap to go then. If you didn't charge more for larger vehicles, then some folks could be left behind. How you price the deck is a key part of the study.

### **Variable pricing/reservations:**

- AG Member: we talked about a reserve system, which might alleviate stress. Could allow reservations on low-ridership routes for trucks and large vehicles, to alleviate trucks/campers coming at main commuter times. We know there are runs with only 4 cars. Could add to survey.
- AG Member: we looked at a ferry system that did that, but ticketing system wouldn't support that. Michael: county in process of upgrading ticketing. Include in situation assessment the flexibility of the new system. Reservations, variable pricing – a lot of ways the County can maximize utilization of the deck and price market segments in a reasonable way – grow revenue and ridership. Make sure the deck space is being used well.

AG Member: We need other categories, like multi-trip pass. This was 40% discount and now 20%.

AG Member: this could be more helpful if cost per trip for multi ride tickets.

### **Farebox recovery**

- AG Member: Is the farebox recovery figure of 62% incorrect? Is it actually lower? Michael: that depends on what costs you include in your base. The handout shows operating costs only, to

compare on apples to apples. It doesn't include capital improvements, which means it doesn't show the full cost of the system. WSF farebox recovery is required under state law to be only operating cost.

- Viv: next meeting we'll say more about farebox recovery and how it's changed, and will look at it in segments, operations vs all costs. The 80% target was in the 2003 report but was never adopted. Michael: we'll look at where the county should get the money and what role the customer plays.

#### **Comparison ferry systems:**

- AG Member: Could we compare to the state Point Defiance route, which is most similar and close to here? Peter: Clinton to Mukilteo is closer to same length. Ann: that's more recreational. Michael: both terminals have other ways to get there.
- AG Member: is there a ferry to Heron Island? It's a private tiny ferry. Michael: not one we've looked at.
- Michael: Guemes and Lummi are the other county islands – comparable in some ways, not others.

#### **Fares:**

Michael: We'll be looking at fares a lot, such as target segments based on price sensitivity. Two sets of questions on fares: 1) absolute amount to be collected, 2) structure questions – e.g. charge trucks less on some runs. Use pricing to ensure the boats aren't overloaded, etc., carry more people.

AG Member: In the last study, rounded fares to the latest dollar. Also, have categories that no one uses. Like 3-wheel vehicle. Suggest simplifying fare categories. And the monthly pass is something that's come up in the community. Use commuter pass was recommended by AICAB. Monthly pass – unlimited for fixed fee (like bus pass). Michael: Would never do that for vehicles, only for passengers.

AG Member: the state's \_\_\_ pass is shareable, ours is not. Michael: wasn't supposed to be, in the rules. Bar code issue. Intended to be a frequent user ticket, but not used that way – a volume discount.

AG Member: Vehicle and passenger trips? Passenger: 183,594; Vehicle: 174,576. Doesn't square with other exhibit. Viv will check. AG Member: confusion could be over whether the driver is considered a passenger (previous report). Michael: we'll dig into this. Some ferries charge vehicle and driver separately, some don't.

#### **Triangle Run**

- AG Member: heard that the Triangle run might be eliminated, but read that it may have brought cost savings.
- AG Member: Triangle was instituted in order to get for more trips for Anderson.
- Michael: our team has no preconceived ideas on Triangle and schedule. Know that it's an issue. Look at the choices based on assets and facilities.
- AG Member: the original proposal was to have Triangle not on the peak commute. Actually have less capacity on peak commute.

#### **Ketron**

AG Member: Ketron has a permanent population of 14 people. There are 14 structures. Some not occupied, some have two people. Not improving, with no marina. Can't move to the island with a boat. Service runs are limited - would like to have that changed. Trying to talk people into coming to the island (such as for repair service) is difficult.

#### **Concluding**

Viv: We can make changes to this. Michael: in advance of next meeting we'll send out draft of Situation Assessment.

## Survey Design and Key Questions

Suggestions from the AG:

- AG Member: The 2012 Pierce County survey was very insightful and might be helpful as you develop questions.
- AG Member: Suggest you ask about specific months, not just summer/not summer.
- AG Member: look at weekenders who are there all the time.
- For primary resident household: ask if they have a secondary residence off the island.
- Michael: We know there are issues around parking and secondary vehicles – doesn't look like that was asked previously. We should address.
- AG Member: How about this question: "Are you aware of residents on or off the island, weekenders, etc., who would be encouraged to move to the island with a different ferry schedule?"
  - Michael: With the question "Why did you move to the island?" – we might try to get at the challenges – what you had to overcome to make that decision. Hard to reach out to folks who were thinking about it but didn't. Trying to find out the pivot points – why would someone move to Anderson Island or not – tease out of the current residents their thought process – identify factors they felt they had to overcome.
- AG Member: Don't be shy on questions. 2014 survey was too short. 2012 survey had more details, more questions. Have it longer. Michael: trying to understand underlying factors – therefore analyze behavioral responses.
- AG Member: The island has changed since 2003, partly from the growth of surrounding communities and changes in how people work (retired people work part time, more two-income families). We were a rural island and put up with a lot to stay rural. Today it's more suburban, but we don't have benefit of large ferry service. So how do we make that transition and accommodate workers, a critical age group on the island, who want to do recreational things. The survey is critical to finding out what people need and how they use the ferry. For example, some people (including doctors) sleep in cars in Steilacoom. Small minority. Find out who they are, what they need, and whether or not we can address that.
- AG Member: Ask property owners who don't live on the island if they used to live on the island, and if so, why did they move. Michael: and the reverse too – did they move to the island.
- AG Member: Get at household ferry spending, not just the commuter.
- AG Member: For full time residents, separate into categories based on how much they travel. Michael: want to understand the household, not just the respondent. Tried to collect trip info from households. Some people might respond to both surveys.
- AG Member: Would like to see "volunteering" as a category (of trip purpose). Some people have cut volunteering because of the cost.

## Public Comment

No members of the public attended for public comment.

## Confirm Next Steps; Adjourn

Next meeting: Feb 11<sup>th</sup>, same location.