

June 30, 2013

Dear Lummi Island Ferry Advisory Committee Members,

We are sharing with you a recommendation that was approved by the PLIC Board of Directors on April 29, 2013 and presented, discussed, and adopted at the PLIC General Meeting on May 28, 2013. We ask that you consider these recommendations about needs-based fares within your study of ferry fares requested by the County Council. As always, you are the Island's voice on these matters and PLIC is attempting to provide you with the current Island consensus on this issue.

At the PLIC Annual Meeting on January 22, 2013, Debi Roth presented over 100 signatures (now 120) gathered on a petition that was left at The Islander for a total period of about three weeks stating "We, the undersigned, are in favor of Whatcom County continuing with the Special Needs/Senior/Disabled discount Ferry Fares." Ten attendees at that January meeting, half of them non-PLIC members, volunteered to form a PLIC sub-committee to review the 2011 Ferry Task Force Recommendation #23 regarding needs-based fares. The sub-committee worked with the following numbers provided by the county's Treasurer's Office. The impact on revenue of the needs-based discounts in 2012 was \$18,631 when compared to buying the regular-priced punchcard.

#### Needs-Based Punchcard Sales History

	PED	VEH/DR	TOTAL
2007	89	375	464
2008	115	575	690
2009	164	740	904
2010	153	749	902
2011	109	620	729
2012	121	566	687

This sub-committee met several times and discussed the need for a discount, the level of the discount, and the administration of the program. There was concern that the needs-based punchcard fare for pedestrians of \$3.68 per round trip was still inordinately high, but it was assumed that any roll-back in fares would not be entertained by the county.

In particular, the sub-committee researched whether there was any other viable organization either on or off-island to adequately screen applicants for such a program. The Opportunity Council was the only organization to meet the sub-committee's standards of competency, privacy, and fairness. The Opportunity Council informed the sub-committee that they would process the low-income applications at \$50 each. For the approximately 33 low-income applicants, this would amount to a charge of \$1,650 to the Ferry Fund, considerably less than the \$5,000 that the Treasurer's Office recently indicated they would have to start charging for screening these applicants.

In short, the attached recommendation calls for:

1. **Retaining the senior/disabled property tax qualification** already being processed by the Assessor's Office. As of January 2013, 42 islanders received needs-based ferry discounts under that qualification.
2. **Contracting with the Opportunity Council to screen all other low-income applications applying the HUD very low income test to households.**
3. **Creating a new fare level, a 10-ride Needs-based passenger/pedestrian punchcard** for \$37 to replace the 25-ride punchcard priced at \$92. The current \$92 for the 25-ride pedestrian/passenger punchcard is out of reach for some in need. This is revenue neutral, as the per-ride cost remains essentially the same.

We ask that PLIC's Needs-based Fares Recommendation be a part of your ferry fare recommendations going forward.

Respectfully submitted,

**The PLIC Board of Directors**

Rhayma Blake - President

Michael Kmeicik - Treasurer

Mary Ross - Secretary

Janet Lutz-Smith

Janson Pierce

Dave Wing