



## PROPOSAL to COUNTY COUNCIL

### Amendment of Fare Structure Ordinance on Lummi Island Ferry for

Multi-ride tickets w/quantity discount for Vehicle/Driver and Passenger/Pedestrian

LIFAC, after long, careful, detailed study, recommends a modification of these multi-ride round-trip ticket fares to:

1. \$81 for a 25-ride RT ticket for passengers and pedestrians (approx. 50% discount).
  2. \$163 for a 25-ride RT ticket for vehicle & driver (approx. 50% discount).
  3. \$78 for a 10-ride RT ticket for vehicle & driver (approx. 60% discount).
- These modifications affect about 107,000 trips in the two highest-profile user categories.
  - These modifications reflect a \$7,000 surplus over the 55% budget requirement for the Ferry Fund, maintaining the fund at a requested minimum of \$1.5 million. (Currently it contains about \$1.7 million.)

#### Discussion Points:

- The recommendations come from a thorough study and scalable model compiled by LIFAC members Chuck Antholt (professional economist) and Cris Colburn (transportation professional with WTA), based on multiple cost projections, using Whatcom County budget and projection numbers and Public Works fiscal information.
- The proposal is fiscally responsible at least through 2015 while the LIFAC continues its in-depth planning for longer-term recommendations, both for ferry usage and fare structures, and for ferry replacement options.
- Benefits of the modification: Modest, yet significant relief for core customers of the County's ferry transportation – i.e., the most frequent users (a common application in transportation) – and the possibility of stimulating more frequent ridership. (This could, for example, save a commuter family more than \$1,000 a year, yet sustain the County model for fiscal responsibility.)
- The recommendation meets all criteria set forth in County mandates, the main two of which are sustaining a \$1.5 million Ferry Fund, while meeting a

55% application of ferry funds to overall ferry operations costs.

- The core question at the heart of this recommendation: Would the modifications still capture the 55% of ferry operations costs applied from the ferry fund (i.e., fares)? The answer clearly was yes, with room to spare.
- Another contributing factor to the recommendation was a useful and informative session with Public Works administration and finance personnel that thoroughly explained the Ferry Fund, and other fiduciary practices.
- LIFAC also considered modifications to the cash fares for vehicles/driver/passenger/pedestrian, but found through the model that those changes would not support the budget requirements, and that the incentive of a discount for multi-ride users – a common best practice in transportation – more productive.
- Finally, the months-long movement toward this recommendation stemmed from discussion of removal or reduction of the \$3 across-the-board surcharge imposed three years ago on ferry fares. That move came from a PW concern over a diminished Ferry Fund, and it was perceived widely – both by County Council members, and by ferry users (primarily Lummi Island residents) – as a temporary measure. We found that fiscal responsibility would not support a blanket removal of the surcharge, but that, with the crisis averted, a modification to the core ridership would provide relief and possible incentive to increase ridership.