

PROTECT LUMMI ISLAND COMMUNITY



P.O. Box 266
Lummi Island, WA 98262
November 2, 2014

Dear Lummi Island Ferry Advisory Committee,

At the end of the PLIC General Meeting on October 29, 2014, only two of the 33 attendees recommended moving forward with the fare proposal as currently written. On October 30, 2014, PLIC board members met and agreed that LIFAC should recommend that Whatcom County introduce an ordinance amendment to lower ferry fares, but we offer the following recommendations:

First and foremost PLIC suggests that LIFAC present the detailed assumptions and projections that support its recommendations and extend the public comment period to allow for more feedback. This would result in a stronger fare proposal.

And if for any reason that is not possible, the PLIC Board strongly recommends the following for your consideration:

1. Adding a 10-ride fare for needs-based passengers of \$28. We first proposed this in our letter to you dated June 30, 2013 and understood this fare class would be added when further fare changes were introduced. Our original letter recommended eliminating the 25-ride needs-based fare when the 10-ride fare is adopted.
2. Reducing the 10-ride vehicle/driver needs-based fare to \$60.
3. Increasing the proposed fare for the 25-ride vehicle/driver as necessary to meet all criteria set forth in the County mandates currently referenced in the LIFAC proposal discussion points.

The 12 points made at the PLIC general meeting that are the basis for our recommendations have been attached for the benefit of those not able to attend that meeting.

We thank you for the extensive study that was undertaken to develop the current fare proposal and strongly urge you to consider our recommendations above.

Sincerely,

The PLIC Board of Directors

Rhayma Blake, Chair; Mike Kmiecik; Jansen Pierce; Janet Lutz-Smith; Mary Ross; Dave Wing

Summary of Comments at the 10-29-14 PLIC Presentation of the Ferry Fare Proposal

1. There were no suggestions that the single-ride fares should be changed.
2. There were however comments that all multi-ride categories need relief, not just the three fare categories specified.
3. By the very nature of the \$3 surcharge, all of the lowest fares were hit hardest by the surcharge, especially passengers who experienced a 187% increase in fares. At the same time needs-based passengers were hit even harder with a 441% increase. The impact on needs-based vehicle/drivers was also twice as high as on the regular multi-ride vehicle/drivers. The island is losing its diversity and needs-based riders should see relief as well in order to counteract this trend.
4. Ten-ride passes should not be more expensive per ride than 25-ride passes. Many who purchase 10-ride passes do so because they have a hard time budgeting for a 25-ride pass.
5. The previous request for the addition of a 10-ride needs-based fare for passengers has yet to be addressed. The current 25-ride needs-based fare of \$92 is sometimes out of reach for those who need it most.
6. It is questionable that the County Council will pass a proposal that is so irregular and inconsistent with senior/disabled/needs-based fares being higher than other multi-ride fares.
7. The model anticipates an increase in the ticket sales for medium and larger trucks in 2015 as part of its revenue projections. It was questioned whether this is a reasonable assumption.
8. It was suggested that LIFAC delay submitting this proposal to County Council until questions about assumptions and other comments could be addressed and that a schedule for resubmitting be developed that includes discussion of the proposal. It was also requested that the report referred to in the proposal be made available for review. And a time period for submitting comments should be identified and included.
9. We want to be able to say we stand behind LIFAC and we can't do that yet. It is important that a proposal be submitted to County Council that is solid and well thought out and that it be based on historical use, anticipated use and reserve need over a longer term than one year. If we don't take the time now to do this, we run the risk of reducing fares and then having to raise them again.
10. Will people want to stock up on "cheap" cards, knowing prices will increase? Islanders depend on the ferry and need to know what to expect. Radical swings in fares from year to year create a sense of uncertainty.
11. LIFAC is indicating that they will review the impact of these lower fares within the year. When fares were significantly reduced back in the 80's, it took much longer to see the effect on ridership. If there is a significant fare reduction like this, shouldn't it be in place for longer than one year?
12. But LIFAC is required to review fares on an annual basis.