

LIFAC PROPOSAL to COUNTY COUNCIL

Amendment of Fare Structure Ordinance on Lummi Island Ferry For Multi-ride Tickets with Quantity Discounts For Vehicle/Driver and Passenger/Pedestrian trips

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, est. 32,606 trips).
2. \$163 for a 25-ride RT ticket for vehicle & driver (approx. 50% discount, est. 64,956 trips).
3. \$78 for a 10-ride RT ticket for vehicle & driver (approx. 60% discount, est. 9,362 trips).

With these fares, the recommendation eliminates the need for:

1. Needs Based Passenger/Pedestrian Multi-ride 25 RT ticket (est. 2,150 trips).
2. Post High School Full-Time Student Multi-ride 25 RT ticket (est. 600 trips).

- These modifications affect about 110,000 trips in the highest-profile user categories, based on updated County estimates for ridership in 2014.
- These modifications reflect several thousands of dollars surplus (about \$7,000) over the 55% budget requirement for the Ferry Fund, while maintaining the fund at a Public Works requested minimum of \$1.5 million. (Currently it contains about \$1.7 million.)

Discussion Points:

- The recommendations come from a scalable model studied and experimented with extensively:
 - LIFAC members Chuck Antholt (professional economist), and Cris Colburn (transportation professional with WTA), developed these recommendations based on multiple cost projections.
 - Mr. Antholt and Mr. Colburn had access to an exceptional existing model from the Citizens Ferry Task Force a few years ago, reintroduced to LIFAC and updated with the latest available Whatcom County budget and projection numbers, and with financial information supplied by Public Works. (See footnote at the end of this proposal.)
 - The study took place over several months, with numerous power point presentations during open public meetings (some attended by County Council member Barbara Brenner, and all attended by a

representative from Public Works) that welcomed and received input and discussion.

- The proposal is fiscally responsible through at least 2015 while the LIFAC continues its in-depth planning for longer-term fare recommendations. This action will provide a year's worth of actual data with which to work.
- Benefits of the modification: Modest, yet significant positive relief for core customers of the County's ferry transportation – i.e., the most frequent users (a common approach in discounting public transportation).
 - This could, for one example, save a commuter family more than \$1,000 a year, yet sustain the County model for fiscal responsibility.
 - This fare structure further saves needs-based multi-ride ticket purchasers for pedestrian/passenger trips \$11 on each purchase, plus, in some cases, an additional \$50 application fee.
 - And, it saves post-HS students \$17 on each multi-ride ticket purchase.
- The recommendation meets all criteria set forth in County mandates, the main two of which are sustaining a \$1.5 million Ferry Fund, while clearly meeting the 55% application of ferry funds to overall ferry operations costs, with room to spare.
- Also contributing to the recommendation was a useful and informative session with Public Works administration and finance personnel that thoroughly explained everything about the Ferry Fund.
- LIFAC considered modifications to some cash fares, but found through the scalable model that those changes would not support the budget requirements.
 - The LIFAC study determined the incentive of a discount for multi-ride users – a common best-practice in public transportation – was more productive. As Mr. Colburn put it, “These fare reductions are responsible, modest, and low-risk. They provide positive impact for the most frequent riders and support progress for the County.”
 - Discounts for multi-ride and needs-based passengers are standard in public transportation.

Considerable discussion centered on removal or reduction of the \$3 across-the-board surcharge on ferry fares imposed by County three years ago. That fare increase 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.

- As stated by Mr. Antholt, LIFAC found “fiscal responsibility would not support a blanket removal of the surcharge, but a modification to core

ridership would impact the most people while meeting desired County financial obligations.”

We ask County Council to place this recommendation on the agenda for the earliest possible Public Works, Health & Safety Committee session. We ask the Committee to expedite these fare modifications through the County Council by introduction, followed by a public hearing and a vote.

While revising the fare ordinance, LIFAC also resubmits its recommendation from earlier this year to provide a free passage for a person designated by Ferndale School District and Beach Elementary School to accompany children under age 12 while commuting to class from Gooseberry Point and back.

Thank you.

Submitted on behalf of LIFAC by:
Mike McKenzie, Chair

A footnote from the authors of the proposal, Mr. Antholt and Mr. Colburn:

We worked with the Excel spreadsheet model originally developed by Diane Harper and the Citizens Ferry Task force. Diane updated the model with the 2014 budget estimate and with estimates of traffic by fare based on them. Those estimates stemmed from traffic growth between 2012 and 2014.

As we worked with the model, Ms. Harper helped by modifying the model for clarity and presentation purposes, but not the core content (i.e., the 2014 budget and traffic estimates, and underlying formulae for calculations in columns and rows, etc.).

Ms. Harper generously gave her time as a community volunteer to modifying the model in response to requests from Colburn/Antholt. LIFAC gratefully recognizes Ms. Harper’s invaluable contribution, and could not have performed the vast number of "what-ifs" and identified our recommended conclusions without her.