

Lummi Island Ferry COVID-19 Policy Public Comments and Agency Responses

<u>Comments/Questions:</u>	<u>Answers/Responses:</u>
<p>Is there a reason why the county cannot postpone the terminal and ferry repairs until next year due to the pandemic.</p>	<p>Postponing the annual dry dock and terminal repairs may seem like an easy way to deal with pandemic issues, but the reality is that the terminal repairs are critical and can't be delayed any longer. Not performing the repairs will result in de-rating the facility, which could mean additional vehicle weight restrictions, or even lead to shutting down the terminal. The Whatcom Chief is the only vessel that runs continuous, year-round service to Lummi Island, it is almost 60 years old. Deferring maintenance creates a high and unacceptable risk for the life and safety of passengers and crew, as well as loss of service.</p>
<p>I believe that the County should defer the annual maintenance of the Whatcom Chief until after the current pandemic has ended, and request the U.S. Coast Guard conduct visual inspection of the vessel and extend its annual recertification, until normal drydock is safe. Continuing with planned passenger service and alternative transport places this entire small community at unacceptable risk of sickness and death.</p>	<p>The Whatcom Chief is the only vessel that runs continuous, year-round service to Lummi island. The vessel is almost 60 years old. Deferring maintenance creates a high and unacceptable risk for the life and safety of passengers and crew, as well as loss of service. Any loss of service would prevent not only the loss of regular passenger service, but also emergency transport services for EMS, law enforcement, and fire response.</p>
<p>Being that only 33 will be allowed on board at a time, will there be some way to keep a line up for ferry correct, it's just a mess sometimes with people waiting on dock with some people just moving to front of line even though others have been waiting longer then them, thank you.</p>	<p>Public works will put up queuing areas for passengers to line up for the ferry.</p>

that "neck gaiters", bandana's, scarf's or any very porous material not be accepted. a mask will be provided instead - both for staff and passengers. if refused passenger is not allowed on van or ferry. add signage and info for people to keep mask over nose - refusing or not doing so will be grounds for not getting in the van or on the ferry. thank you.

[Face coverings are required](#) as outlined by state guidelines. Vessel and van crews have been instructed to educate riders. Our goal is not to punish people, but instead to educate and ensure compliance. We will provide face coverings for those who need them.

Thank you for allowing input from the public regarding the DRAFT plan concerning the ferry dry dock and COVID 19. First, I believe that under the very restrictive conditions of the passenger-only ferry the CDC guidelines cannot be achieved unless passenger levels allow for 6 feet of separation in addition to the clear vinyl barriers noted. I believe such 6 foot separation cannot be achieved with a 33 passenger manifest. Given CDC guidelines cannot be adhered to, a clear message to that effect must be boldly posted at the docks and onboard as well in public pronouncements. Related to my comment I am assuming that the Whatcom County Public Health Director was consulted in the process of arriving at your DRAFT policy.

My second remark concerns the shuttle van. I am unaware of any posting of schedule information on the dry dock web page. Therefore, I am assuming a truncated schedule as in years past when I say if the desire is to reduce load factors over the entire day on the ferry then why not a whole day shuttle rather than partial. Additionally, 12 passengers on the shuttle cannot meet a 6 foot separation of bodies. Again, CDC non-compliance needs prominent posting.

Thank you for the thoughtful opportunity to provide feedback to the DRAFT policies.

The shuttle van and passenger only ferry schedules have been posted along with additional information about their use and restrictions. The vessel and van occupancy numbers were determined by taking in account family/close contact numbers, since people who live together would not have to maintain 6 feet of separation. Additionally, folks can use the outside vessel space and wear appropriate clothing for the weather, as well as a face covering. According to the state's [COVID-19 website](#), staying home is still safest, and we encourage people to stay home, and follow health department rules and guidelines.

Travelers are expected to police themselves and follow the guidelines on our [dry dock website](#) and the [Whatcom County Health Department](#). If you feel uncomfortable with the number of people on the vessel or the van, you have the choice to wait. If you must travel, we encourage you to plan ahead and travel outside of typical commuting times like weekdays from 6am-9am or 3pm-6pm. Additionally, if we enforce 6 feet of separation for all van riders (including family members) we would only be able to transport 2 people at a time. This would make the shuttle service financially unsustainable and would result in discontinuation of the service.

<p>Since the ferry and passenger only ferry are for essential use only, I think this is more than reasonable. It would be so great if persons who live on Island were given standing above others, that would be super awesome....but I know that is not possible, so great job at helping to keep us safe.</p>	<p>Thank you for understanding!</p>
<p>The draft plan is well done and compliant with state and county guidelines. Thank you.</p>	<p>Thank you! The crew works really hard to provide safe and reliable service.</p>
<p>Has there been an exhaustive search to find a substitute CAR ferry that could be leased/utilized during drydock? I DO NOT feel safe riding on a passenger ferry. Please find a substitute ferry or even a barge that could be utilized for drydock</p>	<p>An all-inclusive ferry service request for proposals - that included the services you highlighted - was conducted, and unfortunately, the current passenger only vessel was the only response we received.</p>
<p>look at alternatives to passenger ferry during drydock and come up with other solutions:</p> <p>https://sanjuanmarinefreight.com/portfolio-of-projects/ http://www.island-transporter.com/ http://samsontug.com/services/ https://horizonship.com/ship/52m-catamaran-high-speed-ferry-2011-105-pax-22-cars-dwt-68/</p>	<p>An all-inclusive ferry service request for proposals - that included the services you highlighted - was conducted, and unfortunately, the current passenger only vessel was the only response we received.</p>
<p>It sounds like all the bases are covered.</p>	<p>Thank you, the crew works really hard to provide safe and reliable service.</p>
<p>You should have more scheduled ferry runs if only 33 can ride per route. That would help the congestion that will happen.</p>	<p>As always, if any single scheduled run is overcapacity and can't accommodate all travelers, an additional run will be made directly after. Additional runs will be on an as-needed basis when crew schedule and safety requirements can be met.</p>

<p>Even a short trip in a small vessel (POF) will carry a risk to infection for both passengers and crew alike. Balancing that risk is, well, Risky! I think a simple assessment of that risk and a few measures we can take by the Counties Health Dept Director, to our community, through messages via normal channels would help educate the public that staying home is the best way to reduce that risk. Many channels are available to get that message across, and should be used between now and Sept 12th (start of POF). LIFAC will be putting a poll in the field this weekend to gage number of trips planned. Let's work to get that number down.</p> <p>Do you have the Total Trips taken last year on the POF during drydock? That could come from the Purser sheets for those days, and assume that was considered when selecting the 33 number for capacity. Could you share your data with me?</p>	<p>We intend to collect ridership information and share it with the community so everyone can make informed decisions about their travel.</p>
<p>please only allow island residents or essential workers (post office, trash person, etc) on the passenger ferry. coming to dinner at the willows or staying at a VBRO etc is NOT essential and only encourages more people from afar to interact with an older population. and actually the car ferry currently is listed as essential, but is full of tourists all the time.</p> <p>contact tracing will be even more important then ever for everyone on the passenger ferry. a plan for this needs to be developed.</p>	<p>The Lummi Island ferry is operated for the benefit of all county residents equally. We cannot discriminate against users based on where they are from, nor can we query passengers about their intent prior to boarding. The pandemic has been a fearful time for many. Fortunately, we now know what tools work to combat the virus – social distancing and face coverings. We have worked with the Health Department to put together a plan that uses these science-based tools to create a passenger ferry experience that is as safe as possible for all travelers.</p>

<p>Mine is a question. I deliver UPS on the island and need to know if I and the USPS person will get priority boarding. I believe we are considered essential services so this is important to us.</p>	<p>Yes, please have your packages staged as always.</p>
<p>I would like to suggest that the transportation of bicycles not be offered during this year's dry dock period on the passenger ferry. If this policy is implemented I would also suggest that the County Bicycle/Pedestrian Committee and any other appropriate agencies be advised so there is a chance for public awareness of the policy change. Thank you.</p>	<p>Up to six bicycles will be allowed on the ferry at any given time on a space-available basis. When needed, the area normally reserved for bicycles may be designated for people who have a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 to allow those individuals to have further separation from others.</p>
<p>here is not identified accommodations made for those with disabilities or special needs for transportation while the Whatcom Chief is in dry dock. I work with many residents on Lummi Island that have expressed grave concern for being able to seek out medical services during dry dock. What services may be in place to support those with complex medical needs?</p>	<p>Public Works has limited capacity for specialized services. However, Parish Nurses are available for general assistance for people with specialized healthcare needs.</p>
<p>Please establish protocols for people who have tested positive or are going to mainland for testing.</p> <p>Thank you!</p>	<p>Anyone who has a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19, or that has been directed by a healthcare professional to seek testing for COVID-19, should contact the Ferry Coordinator prior to their ferry travel at 360-594-7033. The Ferry Coordinator will notify the vessel, and those individuals will be provided with an isolated area on the vessel during transit.</p>

Since an exposure to Covid 19 is considered 15 minutes of less than 6 ft exposure, and it is cumulative! both staff and public, especially commuters will clearly have increased exposure risk. Mitigation measures for staff might include covid tests for all crew and staff to rule out positive asymptomatic cases prior to drydock. daily screening procedures for crew. the WCHD can assist with this protocol. School district decisions to open all windows on busses to increase airflow would apply to both cabin of dry dock boat and the shuttle van. All crew in enclosed areas (cabin & shuttle van) need N95 masks because of repeated cumulative exposure. Strong direction from county that ONLY emergent trips should be made on Passenger ferry. No Bike club trips, holiday trips etc. We want to protect our wonderful ferry crew as well as the public.

Daily employee screenings will be performed and crew will wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), which could include N95 masks when appropriate.

We have owned property on Lummi Island for 64 years, and you guys still can't figure out how to get a replacement ferry so car service can continue. It is crazy what you put tax paying citizens through each year...none of you obviously live on the island and have no concept of what this really does to the residence of Lummi...not to mention Covid 19...dumb!

We encourage you to contact the [Lummi Island Ferry Advisory Committee](#) (LIFAC), they are your Whatcom County Council appointed representatives. LIFAC is currently working on funding for the new vessel.

<p>WTA has set president by limiting standard size busses to 12 passengers for safety of drivers and passengers. The 6 ft distance in public places mandated by Gov. Inslee protects public and ferry crew. My concern is ferry crew and Public. Not putting the crew at increased risk is primary. Strictly limiting capacity of ferry seems prudent with current Covid risks. Thoughtful planning for crew safety and distance between runs is also important. A single file Que line with circles drawn every 6 ft would assist public to avoid crowding while entering and leaving passenger ferry boarding areas. Thank you for this opportunity to comment. Such a challenging time.</p>	<p>Signage and spacing cones will be installed in queuing areas to help travelers maintain six feet of separation between themselves and others they don't live with. We have worked with the Health Department to ensure our COVID-19 protocols keep passengers and crew as safe as possible. This includes both social distancing and a face covering requirement.</p>
<p>With limited capacity on the passenger ferry, signage and a defined social distancing waiting line needs to be provided for both docks. Every year people cut in line. They walk to the front of the line at the last minute. As a essential worker for the Post Office I would appreciate your help with this problem.</p>	<p>Signage and spacing cones will be installed in queuing areas to help travelers maintain six feet of separation between themselves and others they don't live with.</p>

<p>It is unclear how large the shuttle van is, so limiting the number of passengers doesn't give a clear idea of safety. According to the WTA website cited, the rider limit on full buses is 12, so I can only hope that the shuttle van is a full-size bus and not something smaller. If not, I would like to see what relevant County or State guidance has been used in determining the safety of the dry dock shuttle van. It would also be safer if passengers were allowed to sit in a row together only if they live in the same household. Thank you.</p>	<p>Information on the shuttle van and passenger only ferry is available on our dry dock website. The capacity numbers for both the vessel and van were derived by taking family/close contact numbers into account. You do not need to maintain six feet from someone who lives with you.</p> <p>Additionally, folks can use the outside vessel space and wear appropriate clothing for the weather, as well as a face covering. According to the state's COVID-19 website, staying home is still safest, and we encourage people to stay home, and follow health department rules and guidelines.</p> <p>Travelers are expected to police themselves and follow the guidelines on our dry dock website and the Whatcom County Health Department. If you feel uncomfortable with the number of people on the vessel or the van, you have the choice to wait. If you must travel, we encourage you to plan ahead and travel outside of peak travel times. Additionally, if we enforce 6 feet of separation for all van riders (including family members) we would only be able to transport 2 people at a time. This would make the shuttle service financially unsustainable and would result in discontinuation of the service.</p>
<p>I do not feel comfortable with the Covid plans for the ferry and think you should not take the ferry out this year</p>	<p>Postponing the annual dry dock and terminal repairs may seem like an easy way to deal with pandemic issues, but the reality is that the terminal repairs are critical and can't be delayed any longer. Not performing the repairs will result in de-rating the facility and could lead to shutting down the terminal. The Whatcom Chief is the only vessel that runs continuous, year-round service to Lummi Island, it is almost 60 years old. Deferring maintenance creates a high and unacceptable risk for the life and safety of passengers and crew, as well as loss of service.</p>

<p>if you are recommending "essential" travel only - why don't you just say Island residents & emergency workers ONLY and keep the tourists off the island. NOTIFY all restaurants, AirBnB owners & VRBO owners that tourists can not use the passenger ferry, it's just too dangerous. Provide random checks at the gooseberry side to verify people live on the island.</p>	<p>The Lummi Island ferry is operated for the benefit of all county residents equally. We cannot discriminate against users based on where they are from, nor can we query passengers about their intent prior to boarding. The pandemic has been a fearful time for many. Fortunately, we now know what tools work to combat the virus – social distancing and face coverings. We have worked with the Health Department to put together a plan that uses these science-based tools to create a passenger ferry experience that is as safe as possible for all travelers.</p>
<p>please enforce essential travel rules on this ferry - tourists & visitors will increase the risk for everyone. we already have people coming here from more impacted areas saying they think it's safe here - not realizing that may be carriers.</p>	<p>The Lummi Island ferry is operated for the benefit of all county residents equally. We cannot discriminate against users based on where they are from, nor can we query passengers about their intent prior to boarding. Face coverings are required as outlined by state guidelines. Vessel and van crews have been instructed to educate riders. Our goal is not to punish people, but instead to educate and ensure compliance. We will provide face coverings for those who need them.</p>
<p>It would be helpful to post guidance for the 6 ft distancing. In my experience, it's difficult for people to know/remember what this looks like & it would be helpful to have a guide at both ferry dock waiting areas reminding us to keep a 6 ft distance & depicting how far about that is in reality.</p>	<p>Signage and spacing cones will be installed in queuing areas to help travelers maintain six feet of separation between themselves and others they don't live with. We have worked with the Health Department to ensure our COVID-19 protocols keep passengers and crew as safe as possible. This includes both social distancing and a face covering requirement.</p>
<p>please enforce essential travel on the ferry & van. vacations, tourists & eating out is not essential and only increases risk for everyone.</p>	<p>The Lummi Island ferry is operated for the benefit of all county residents equally. We cannot discriminate against users based on where they are from, nor can we query passengers about their intent prior to boarding. Face coverings are required as outlined by state guidelines. Vessel and van crews have been instructed to educate riders. Our goal is not to punish people, but</p>

	<p>instead to educate and ensure compliance. We will provide face coverings for those who need them.</p>
<p>Concern: Ferry crew and their safety. The majority of the crews exposure will be when they are collecting fares. They have to walk through the entire boat and go close to every passenger on the boat multiple times a shift.</p> <p>Solutions: Suspend ferry fares during dry-dock OR Set up a pay booth at the top of the ramp and have people pay there. This person could also check for masks and hand them out when needed. A large sandwich board or sign could also be put on or next to booth instructing people on how to load.. eg People going to the top deck load first... Let people who cannot climb the ladder sit in the cabin... Try your best to distance. Keep your mask on.. If you inform people and answer questions before they get on the boat it will prevent a lot of confusion and unnecessary conflict.</p> <p>Concern: Cabin too crowded during rough and or rainy weather.</p> <p>If the weather is really bad and there are 33 people waiting to get on the boat and they all try to fit in the cabin there will be no social distancing.</p> <p>Solutions: If the weather is really bad then limit the amount of people allowed on the boat to around 16-20 and do extra runs. Or you could give people the option to wait for the next run if they are not</p>	<p>The Lummi Island ferry is operated for the benefit of all county residents equally. We cannot discriminate against users based on where they are from, nor can we query passengers about their intent prior to boarding. We have worked with the Health Department to put together a plan that uses these science-based tools to create a passenger ferry experience that is as safe as possible for crew and passengers. We are not able to suspend fare collection during dry dock, and this would be detrimental to the long-term viability of the ferry system.</p> <p>We will have signage and markings to remind people of best practices and COVID-19 procedures like remaining six feet from anyone who doesn't live with you. Face coverings are required as outlined by state guidelines. Vessel and van crews have been instructed to educate riders. Our goal is not to punish people, but instead to educate and ensure compliance. We will provide face coverings for those who need them.</p> <p>According to the state's COVID-19 website, staying home is still safest, and we encourage people to stay home, and follow health department rules and guidelines. Travelers are expected to police themselves and follow the guidelines on our dry dock website and the Whatcom County Health Department. If you feel uncomfortable with the number of people on the vessel or the van, you have the choice to wait. If you must travel, we encourage you to plan ahead and travel outside of peak travel times.</p>

comfortable with the amount of people. Then do an extra run for those people.

Other suggestions:

Mark out 6' intervals on the dock for people waiting in line.

Remember to have a cart available for people to haul their stuff down the ramp and onto the boat.

My questions? Is there any way to enforce Non-Essential travel? e.g. if a group with bicycles wants to get on the boat and come across for a bike ride..

is there anything that can be done to stop them?

Maybe a HUGE sign listing what non-essential travel is..

And lastly...

this is only for 3 weeks so if there is any time that we should make exceptions, shell out more monies and think outside the box this is it. Number 1 should be the health and safety of our community. We have done pretty good so far, lets keep it that way. Thank you, Robyn

I understand the ferry workers will have N95's as they will be at higher risk due to multiple trips, etc. If someone gets infected (passenger or worker) that would happen during a particular crossing. In other words, it will only take one crossing for any one person to become infected. The fact that the ferry is less than 15 minutes should not be a determining factor. The CDC qualifies this by saying "Data are insufficient to precisely define the duration of time that constitutes a prolonged exposure."

Given the close environment of the cabin, lack of ventilation, that passengers will not be wearing N95's, that a vast majority of residents are elderly

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and many people do not wear their masks well (noses are frequently not covered), I recommend the following:

1. Reduce numbers that travel on the ferry but enforcing the ESSENTIAL travel only rule. This is not being currently enforced on the car ferry and is of utmost importance in this unique situation. Only people currently living on the island full time should be allowed. Tourists should not be allowed. Also those who's 2nd home on the island should not be allowed - it's NOT essential that they come.

Advertise this on social media, to the restaurants, to the AirBnB's, to the VRBO (yes they can't drive onto the ferry to get there but some of the business offer van pick up from the ferry). Post office workers, trash pick up workers, etc. would be allowed on island. Building Contractors would not - unless it is an emergency (safety of home, etc) and this is proven in advance.

2. Ask the sheriff's department to check ID on the Gooseberry side on the weekend afternoon's and at some random times. Make several Public Notifications about this.

3. Ask people not to talk while on the ferry - even this will help reduce transmissions.

Just making all of this public would reduce the numbers and make it safer for everyone.