
Date November 2, 2007
To Martin Crilly, BC Ferries Commissioner
Alan Eastwood, Deputy Commissioner
From William Cottick
Executive Vice President Corporate Affairs & General Counsel
Subject Follow Up RE: Bowen Island

I am writing in response to your email of October 15, 2007 regarding complaints received by the Commissioner's office with respect to Bowen Island. The following identifies and responds to your points individually:

1. On-time Performance

We ask that BCFS provide details of the on-time performance for various time periods, especially for the early morning sailings, perhaps up to 9.00am ? and for the late-afternoon sailings.

Attached, please find particulars of the on-time performance for both the early morning and late afternoon sailings. As you will note, particularly over the summer, on-time performance suffered primarily due to having only two operational berths in Horseshoe Bay as opposed to three. The limited number of berths for six vessels created congestion and impacted schedules for vessels operating into Horseshoe Bay.

If the work at Horseshoe Bay is continuing to disrupt service when does BCFS anticipate an end or reduction of the service problems caused by this work.

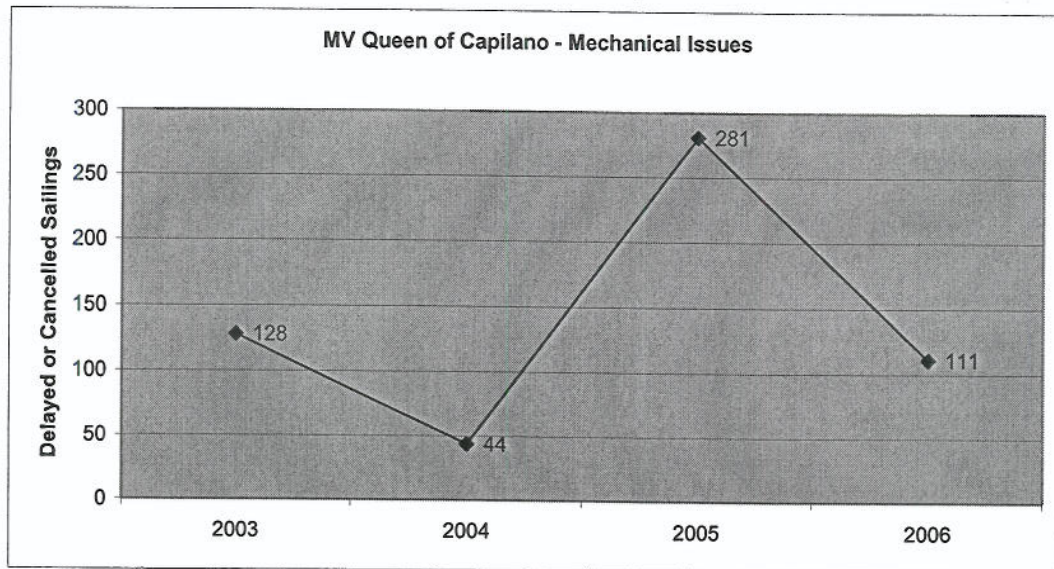
The construction work at Horseshoe Bay has disrupted service particularly for Route 2 (Horseshoe Bay to Departure Bay) and Route 8 (Horseshoe Bay to Bowen Island). It is expected that the construction will be winding up in mid-December, 2007.

2. Vessel Capability

Correspondents complain that the Queen of Capilano has had recurring problems since its return to service in April 2007. Please comment on this and whether the problems have been solved, what measures are being taken and the anticipated date of return to adequate vessel performance.

Over the performance term, the Queen of Capilano had recurring service interruptions due to problems related to the thruster units. On average, BC Ferries was replacing the units two or three times each year due to log strikes (causing dozens of cancelled or delayed sailings).

Since the replacement of the RAD units in April 2007, the reliability of the vessel has improved substantially. The chart below illustrates the number of cancelled or delayed sailings from mechanical issues for the previous 4 years.



In contrast, since the replacement of the propulsion units in April 2007, there have only been 4 delayed or cancelled sailings due to mechanical issues.

It should be noted there are two technical matters from the refit that are still unresolved: the acceleration of the vessel, which is somewhat slower than pre-refit, and fuel consumption, which is up about 3% since refit. Neither of these affects vessel serviceability. We anticipate the acceleration problem to be resolved by March 2008 following some adjustments by the equipment manufacturer. As well, we expect fuel consumption to drop gradually as familiarity with optimizing the operation of the new propulsion system increases over time.

In addition to these issues, there was a recurring problem with the elevator on the vessel during the weeks following refit. While the issues with the elevator were not the result of any work carried out at refit, customers may have assumed the issues were related to the refit. The problems with the elevators have since been resolved.

Vessel operating speed has been questioned by customers believing the vessel is slower than was the case pre-refit, due to the challenges that have been encountered in maintaining on-time performance. However, sea trials conducted before and after refit have documented the operating speed of the vessel to be the same or slightly faster post refit. Average crossing time is the same after refit as it was before refit, at approximately 19 minutes.

It may be perceived by customers that shortcomings with on-time performance are the result of vessel mechanical issues, but vessel mechanical reliability is up significantly, as shown above. However, as noted in question 1 above, on-time performance has been impacted by construction at the HSB terminal.

3. Corporate Policy

We ask that you confirm or clarify the policy regarding the advance time for foot passengers to purchase tickets (10 minutes) and does that include the purchase of ticket books using credit card?

At Horseshoe Bay, foot passenger and vehicle ticket sales terminate 5 minutes prior to departure, regardless of the form of payment. At the 5 minute cut-off, the Tower calls the booths and gives 5 minute notice for clearance of the vessel. Once this clearance call has been made, the sale of commuter books ceases in order to expedite the processing of those customers still in queue. All customers in the queue are processed and ticketed with regular tickets. Sales of commuter books are curtailed during this period because these transactions are significantly more time consuming than regular ticket sales, and this is generally known and accepted by passengers.

Currently the 5 minute cut-off is not adequate for a vehicle to be processed and travel from the ticket booth to the berth. Also, Horseshoe Bay is the only Major Terminal in the system with a 5 minute cut-off; all other terminals have a 10 minute cut-off. In the interests of safety and improving on-time performance, at the next FAC meeting BC Ferries will propose increasing the cut-off time at Horseshoe Bay to 10 minutes. This will provide the time required for customers to make it to the berth in time for vessel clearance (2 minutes prior to departure), and may also accommodate the last minute sale of commuter booklets.

Can foot passengers board the vessel and pay on board ? If so, is this frequent?

Only passengers connecting between routes (for example, from Route 3 to Route 8) may purchase a ticket onboard. This is a convenience to customers so they do not have to walk up to the ticket booth and back. All passengers entering the terminal other than by connecting ferry MUST be ticketed prior to entry into the terminal.

Does the early a.m. sailing from Horseshoe Bay (5.00 a.m. but not part of regular schedule) accept any passengers and, if so, under what circumstances?

There are no ticket staff on duty until 5:30 am, and passengers are not able to purchase a ticket for the 5 am sailing from Horseshoe Bay. This sailing is a deadhead positioning run sailing empty. There is generally little or no demand at this time of day for travel to Bowen Island.

Under what circumstances does BCFS charter water taxis to provide services?

BC Ferries provides a water taxi service during lengthy service interruptions.

If it is difficult to maintain the schedule has BCFS considered amending the schedule to meet current conditions?

At the next FAC meeting on November 7th, BC Ferries will be presenting a revised schedule that will lengthen the travel and in-dock time during busier commuter periods. It is anticipated this schedule change will alleviate some of the current challenges.

I hope this information is of assistance to you, and if you require anything further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



William Cottick
Executive Vice President Corporate Affairs & General Counsel

Attach (1)

Route 8 On-Time Performance

OTP Departing Bowen Island (AM)				OTP Departing HSB (PM)			
5:35	6:30	7:30	8:30	16:30	17:30	18:30	
100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	50.0%	25.0%	50.0%	
96.0%	93.5%	90.3%	77.4%	29.0%	9.7%	9.7%	
96.2%	90.3%	93.5%	83.9%	22.6%	19.4%	16.1%	
91.7%	93.3%	89.7%	80.0%	66.7%	53.3%	60.0%	

Average All	
Sailings	73.6%
June	54.9%
July	58.5%
August	78.6%
September	