

# B.C. on the Move: Engagement Meeting Notes

OCTOBER 30, 2014

9:00AM

QUEEN CHARLOTTE

<b>ATTENDEES/AFFILIATION</b>	Colleen Gellein, Forestry, Lands, and Natural Resource Operations Warren Foster, Sandspit Airport Mayor Carol Kulesha, Village of Queen Charlotte Greg Martin, Village of Queen Charlotte
<b>MOTI REPRESENTATIVES</b>	Scott Maxwell, Acting Regional Manager Northern Region, Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MoTI) Randy Penner, District Manager, Transportation, Skeena District, MoTI
<b>NOTE TAKER</b>	Selina Bull, Kirk & Co. Consulting Ltd.
<b>KEY THEMES (3-6)</b>	
<p>1) <b>Ferries:</b> Participants all noted that BC Ferry service reductions on the inter-island and mainland route is proving an extreme challenge for island communities, in terms of accessing services and economic development.</p> <p>2) <b>Service reductions (ferry/airline):</b> The participant from Sandspit airport noted that the reductions in both ferry and airline services has caused the population in Sandspit to drop dramatically. It is no longer possible for people who live in Skidegate to commute to work in Queen Charlotte City.</p> <p>3) <b>Service reductions (ferry/airline):</b> Participants also noted that service reductions raise concerns with residents' ability to access emergency medical services.</p> <p>4) <b>Ferries:</b> Participants welcome an opportunity develop creative solutions to fill in the gaps caused by BC Ferries cutbacks. Participants agreed that there is an opportunity to improve the efficiency of BC Ferries reservations systems.</p> <p>5) <b>Cycling and pedestrians:</b> Representatives from the Village of Queen Charlotte noted that there is an opportunity to develop and improve pedestrian and cycling facilities. The Mayor noted that cycling and pedestrian facilities are important for rural areas, and that Bike BC should offer grants not just for cycling, but also for pedestrian corridors. She also noted an opportunity to build a cycle/pedestrian corridor between Queen Charlotte and Masset.</p>	
<b>CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants noted that BC Ferry service reductions on the inter-island and mainland route are proving an extreme challenge for island communities, in terms of both accessing services and economic development.</li> <li>The participant from Sandspit airport noted that the reductions in both ferry and airline services has caused the population in Sandspit to drop dramatically. It is no longer possible for people who live in Skidegate to commute to work in Queen Charlotte City.</li> <li>Participants also noted that service reductions raise concerns with residents' ability to access emergency medical services.</li> <li>Participants welcomed the opportunity to develop creative solutions to fill in the gaps caused by BC Ferries cutbacks. All participants agreed that there is an opportunity to improve the efficiency of BC Ferries reservations systems.</li> <li>Participants from the Village of Queen Charlotte noted that there is an opportunity to develop and improve pedestrian and cycling facilities. The Mayor noted that cycling and pedestrian facilities are important for rural areas, and that Bike BC should offer grants not just for cycling, but also for pedestrian corridors. She also noted an opportunity to build a cycle/pedestrian corridor between Queen Charlotte and Masset.</li> </ul>	
<b>MOVING FORWARD – STRATEGIES</b>	
1) Moving People and Goods Safely and Reliably	
<u>Village of Queen Charlotte:</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Representatives from Village of Queen Charlotte noted that with growing interest in cycling and walking, they support wider shoulders and earlier sweeping in the spring to make for safer surfaces for these transportation options</li> <li>Representatives from the Village of Queen Charlotte also noted that inappropriate ferry parking on the side of the road in Skidegate is a safety concern.</li> </ul>	
<u>Regional/All:</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants felt very strongly that the main concern for safety was the poor access to emergency medical services, especially for the aging population in Sandspit.</li> <li>Participants noted that a main concern for moving people and goods reliably was the inefficient BC Ferries reservation system, which causes passengers to be placed on a "Standby" waiting list while the ferry often runs under capacity.</li> <li>Participants also noted that island residents who need to access medical and dental services on the Mainland now often have to stay several days to wait for the next sailing back to Skidegate.</li> </ul>	
2) Growing the Economy	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants felt that the economic prospects on the islands are being hurt by the limited transportation options to get on and off the island. The poor Ferries reservations system and reduced services dissuades tourists from coming by ferry to the islands, while the reduced air services have put pressure on potential tourism and on the export of goods like mushrooms from Moresby Island.</li> <li>A participant from Sandspit Airport noted that the arrival times of flights from Vancouver does not connect well with ferry departures from Sandspit to Skidegate: if the flight from Vancouver arrives late, there is a risk that passengers will not catch the last ferry to Skidegate. This can further cause problems for tourists coming to Haida Gwaii.</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Mayor of the Village of Queen Charlotte noted that if this government is trying to achieve economic development, Haida Gwaii is being left out of that. She also noted that if residents of the islands wish to work in LNG development, there will be a problem of getting workers to other parts of BC in a timely manner.</li> </ul>	
3) Connecting and Strengthening Communities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants felt strongly that service cutbacks on BC Ferries are hurting island communities. The representative from Sandspit airport noted that his community is on the verge of dying out, having gone from around 1200 to about 250 inhabitants. He also noted that people in Sandspit are isolated from social activities, from infrastructure and services, and youth are isolated from extracurricular activities. Queen Charlotte Village similarly noted that their youth were unable to participate in extracurricular activities.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The representative from Sandspit noted that it would be helpful for the province to pressure the federal government to increase airline service to Sandspit.</li> </ul>	
4) Maximizing Collaboration and Investment with Partners and Stakeholders	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most participants showed interest in working with the Bike BC and Build Canada programs to garner grants from the provincial and federal governments to resolve some of their transportation issues.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The participant from Sandspit Airport expressed an interest in working with ICBC for accident prevention through things like line painting, rumble strips, etc.</li> </ul>	
<b>TOP THREE PRIORITIES FOR TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There was a strong consensus between all participants that the absolute top priority for transportation infrastructure improvements for their communities is a re-investment in the BC Ferries. The Mayor of the Village of Queen Charlotte expressed that this was her community's top priority by far. Participants noted a need for the re-instatement of sailings cancelled in the cutbacks, as well as a need to improve the efficiency of the Ferries reservation system. Participants were open to searching for different kinds of solutions that would see increased service.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants expressed a need to increase the service and efficiency of air travel between Vancouver and Sandspit. The representative from Sandspit Airport also noted a need to ensure that departure and arrival times for air and ferry travel connect more effectively in Sandspit.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants from the Village of Queen Charlotte noted an interest from their community in the development and improvement of cycling and pedestrian facilities.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All participants agreed that there is a need to address the issue of daily/long-term parking at the Skidegate ferry terminal, as improper parking is causing safety concerns for passing traffic.</li> </ul>	
<b>ADDITIONAL COMMENTS/DISCUSSION</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants noted that there can be multi-sailing waits when connecting between Sandspit airport and the Skidegate ferry, which can leave passengers stranded on Moresby island.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The participant from the Sandspit Airport noted that the ferry is no longer reliably available for emergency call out in order to transfer patients with a medical emergency from Sandspit to Queen Charlotte and/or to the mainland.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Mayor of the Village of Queen Charlotte also noted a similar problem in emergency response on Graham Island. She remarked that the cost savings for BC Ferries are actually adding more pressure and costs to the health care system</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants noted that there have been many economic costs associated with Ferry service cuts. Tourism businesses have lost a lot of money.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants agreed that the BC Ferry reservation system in the north is inefficient. Passengers who try to reserve space on the ferry are often relegated to a standby list despite there being more room on the ferry. This causes problems for tourists who want to come to the islands but are unwilling to risk missing the ferry, while most locals know that if one is in the top 30% of the standby list, one will still actually fit on the ferry.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Mayor of the Village of Queen Charlotte acknowledged that the new yearly line painting for the islands has addressed some safety issues, and was appreciative of the increased painting frequency.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Mayor of the Village of Queen Charlotte noted that the Village cannot support a transit system itself. However, the village is trying to encourage residents to walk and cycle. There is interest in developing a walking/cycling corridor between Queen Charlotte and Masset, especially the stretch by Tlell.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In order to support more cycling activity, the Village of Queen Charlotte would like to see roads swept earlier in the spring, and is also in favour of widening shoulders throughout the island.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Mayor of the Village of Queen Charlotte suggested shortening the service area boundary distances on Highway 16 between Prince Rupert and Terrace, since conditions vary widely between these points.</li> </ul>	