



BC FERRIES

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

REPLACING THE DOGWOOD PRINCESS II

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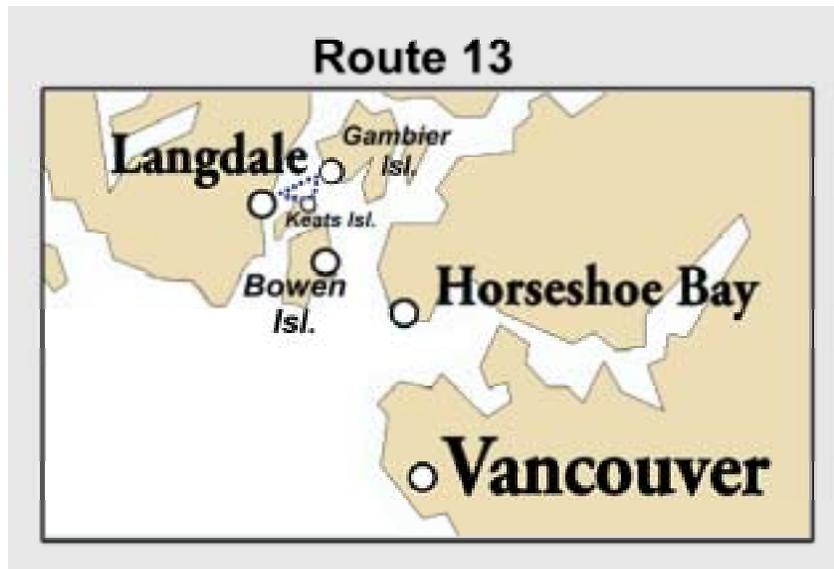
BC Ferry Corporation
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Replacing the Dogwood Princess II

Background

After 23 years of service, the Dogwood Princess II needs to be replaced. The vessel was built in Victoria in 1979 to service Gambier and Keats Islands, and is a 42 foot passenger only craft with a capacity of 38 passengers and 2 crew. It can maintain a service speed of 20 knots.

The vessel provides passenger only service connecting Keats Island, Gambier Island, and the Mainland via Route 13, between Keats Landing, New Brighton and Langdale terminals.



Terminals	Distance	Travel Time
Keats Island - Langdale	3.7 kilometres	15 minutes
Gambier Island - Langdale	2.4 kilometres	7 minutes
Keats Island - Gambier Island	4.4 kilometres	18 minutes

Why Do We Need to Replace the Vessel?

- ***Replacement of the Dogwood Princess II is required to maintain service on the route.***

Over the years, the Dogwood Princess II has been extensively modified in order to meet growing service demands. The vessel's horsepower has increased, from an initial 13 knots maximum operating speed, up to 18 knots, and finally to its current 20 knots. The engines were also moved from the stern to midships, for better planing and to increase operating speed.

Increases in speed allowed the vessel to make "double trips" when overloaded and still make connections to and from the Route 3 ferries (Langdale to Horseshoe Bay). By doubling up on the runs or splitting the trips into individual legs instead of including all stops on the islands, the Dogwood Princess II increased lift off capacity from 38 to 76.

- ***The Dogwood Princess II has already exceeded its expected service life.***

Typically, a vessel of this type (fiberglass over wood) would have a service life of 15 years, but the Dogwood Princess II is now 23 years old.

The fiberglass hull on the Dogwood Princess II is showing signs of osmosis. At each refit for the past three years, there have been major repairs to the hull, around the shaft struts and log jumpers, including extensive repairs to the keel area in 2001. In both areas, the fiberglass had been crushed and/or cracked from hitting wood, particularly when operating after dark in the winter months. It is anticipated that this will be an ongoing annual cost, since the hull is getting old and brittle and no longer stands up to the hard usage it gets.

The vessel's engines are changed or extensively overhauled every 10,000 hours or 3 years. In early August 2002, the portside engine was replaced, but the starboard engine will need replacement in the near future. The cost of replacing this engine will be about \$50,000.

All engine repairs are contracted out, and daily maintenance is performed by BC Ferries crew. In previous years where the engines were not changed or rebuilt after 10,000 hours, breakdowns during the year increased, resulting in higher service costs of between \$2,000 to \$3,000 per month. In addition, because of increased breakdowns, the costs for relief replacement vessels (private water taxis) increased to about \$2,000 per month. BC Ferries hires private water taxis to assume the service when the Dogwood Princess II is out of service, as the Corporation does not own any similar vessels.

It is not known how long the Dogwood Princess II can be maintained, although for analysis purposes, it was assumed that the vessel could be maintained for up to 5 more years. This may not be a realistic assumption since the hull is already obsolete based on industry standards.

- ***Difficult to provide equivalent quality of service to all communities.***

Traffic on Route 13 is at its maximum on the first trip in the morning and in late afternoon / evening, with school children and commuters travelling to and from Gibsons and the Lower Mainland. On weekends, cottagers travel to their island homes from Vancouver.

As traffic increased over the years, BC Ferries changed its R13 operation from a service with multiple stops on both islands, to one that focuses on a single population centre on Gambier Island while maintaining multiple stops on Keats Island. This enables the Dogwood Princess II to do back-to-back shuttle trips when traffic demands.

BC Ferries has made many modifications to the schedule to maximize the number of shuttle runs it can do in peak periods. Generally, the vessel makes 2 or 3 overload trips each Saturday and 3-4 on Sundays throughout the summer. No further changes are possible without having passengers wait so long for their connecting ferry to Horseshoe Bay that they would desert BC Ferries for the private water taxis that go directly to the Lower Mainland.

Due to the limitations on the size and speed of the Dogwood Princess II, increased service to one community means decreased service to another. Similarly, depending on the time of the trip, passengers to one of the two islands may get direct service, while passengers to the other island either wait for a second trip or take a circuitous triangle route to their stop. This is particularly significant when the Dogwood Princess II overloads, and passengers for the second stop have to wait while an extra trip to the first island is made. If the wait is too long, and BC Ferries cannot provide adequate service to a particular island, private water taxis take the business.

What Do We Need to Consider?

BC Ferries is assessing its options regarding the Langdale / Gambier / Keats route, to ensure our customers continuity of service and operational safety of the vessel. Considerations include:

OPERATIONS:

1. The Dogwood Princess II overloaded 111 times out of 9,899 sailings in the past year. However, only 6 of those were larger than could be accommodated by a “double-trip”.
2. A vessel over 50 passengers is uneconomical, as it requires three crew and has insufficient demand. A vessel smaller than 38 passengers is feasible.
3. The lower bound for vessel size is driven primarily by sea-keeping ability and should be no smaller than 32’ which would be equivalent to 25 passengers
4. A catamaran was previously excluded due to width restrictions of the Langdale berth, but it may be an option with a smaller vessel in terms of mitigating sea-keeping ability and improving efficiency. It should be noted that a smaller catamaran although more seaworthy, may increase the number of customers becoming sea sick.
5. Replacing the Dogwood Princess II with a similar sized vessel would maintain the current service without providing for additional capacity to accommodate peak period traffic.
6. Private operators absorb some of the overloaded traffic that is destined for Horseshoe Bay.

FUTURE DEMAND AND OTHER CONCERNS:

1. Large groups are the source of overloads and it is not economical to accommodate those demand spikes with a larger vessel.
2. The shoulder season has expanded considerably due to the increased use of BC Ferries’ service by large school groups. Sea to Sky Outdoor School uses the BC Ferries route at least 2-3 times per week from September to November and from March to June with groups of up to 100 students.
3. The Dogwood Princess II is used an additional 2-3 times per week during the months of September and June by Sunshine Coast school groups, outdoor education, as well as Scouting and Guide groups of 50 to 80 students.
4. Any overloads incurred by the Dogwood Princess II are accommodated by a combination of “double trips” and small private water taxis.
5. Retention and growth of current and future tour group revenue may be more efficiently achieved with a reservation system for tour groups and managing customers’ expectations of “double trips” on those sailings.
6. The Gibsons Chamber of Commerce and Harbour Master have been interested in BC Ferries providing a link to the Gibsons government dock for tourists from Vancouver who wish to visit “the home of the Beachcombers” for day trips.

What are the Service Requirements?

Given the Dogwood Princess II has reached the end of its economic life, BC Ferries is seeking input on the service requirements of Route 13 – Langdale/Gambier/Keats. Input can be provided in person, by e-mail to ann.carpenter@bcferries.com, or by faxing (250) 703-2340, Attention: Ann Carpenter. *All input must be received by November 15, 2002.* Thank you in advance for sharing your views.