

Thursday, February 2, 2023

Notes and comments from DB Committee on February 1st

I felt the meeting was well-represented by all the DB board members, Operations, senior Captains, and a dozen members of the public. Many issues were brought forward and I will attempt to summarize them. I am sure I will not address them all.

The general consensus was that the staff gained some insight and will work them into a new proposed schedule, if doable. However, we will need another meeting to discuss; prior to presenting to the Operations Committee and full Board. It was recognized by all that all tweaks will affect other areas of the operations. "A push here causes a bulge there"

- The KPFF schedule works but needs some tweaks, not a major overhaul.
- Islanders generally agree the schedule is good but they recognize that there are too many boats and the schedule makes some runs redundant, or at least an inefficient use of assets.
- Diamond Cove and Long addressed issues surrounding restaurants' needs regarding seating times and staff hours.
- Diamond Cove public also expressed desire to keep the 5:30 AM Portland departure to maintain the convenience of getting to Town earlier than 7:15
- Interisland, specifically between Chebeague, Cliff and Long, was discussed. No solution was determined but generally it was felt any solution does not necessarily require a schedule change, but perhaps facilitated at Captain's discretion due to the small group of riders involved.
- Order of stops and layover times affected was discussed. One member of the public questioned the need to cater to the tour passengers at the inconvenience of Islanders. (Probably addressed in our Mission Statement).
- Chebeague noted that a schedule that works for USPS is a priority as the Chebeague stop is primarily freight.
- Shoreside handling of freight is challenged by many issues but any schedule adjustment must take it into account.
- The senior Captains' input was invaluable. They identified the inefficiencies and challenges of the schedule as it currently exists.
 - Although approached slightly differently, they all recognized the morning schedule (5 to 11?) requires the greatest scrutiny.
 - They all felt the DB inter-island issue is solvable with a bit of discussing and the use of the Captain's discretion.
 - Freight is a driving issue behind being off schedule on return trips. The designation of certain trips being Freight service with reduced passengers (or more tour related riders) is worth considering. Could give a lot of options but may require a major overhaul.
 - All schedules should be adjusted and/or reduced to recognize ridership.
 - Same with late night runs past Long that have limited ridership 7 days a week.

I am confident I missed some comments or failed to take enough notes but the above gives a bit of a summary. There were a few subjects that we failed to discuss.

- The KPFF schedule analysis predicted increased service with a corresponding reduction in costs. We got the service but it is very difficult to determine if we saw any cost savings. We need to discount 20-21 due to Covid and the staff at this time cannot compare 22 to 19. The financials of the current schedule and any changes must be considered due to the large deficits we currently run.
- Another major issue that did not get discussed, as it may be another committee issue, is the effect on the hourly staff. The Union will have an input that will need to be considered if any tweak greatly affects earnings, work load, safety and crew scheduling.
- We did not talk about safety or maintenance (utilizing two boats versus three).
- As it was not in our charge, we danced around any effects concerning Peaks Island and also extending this DB summer schedule. Although important subjects, I think they are better left for staff to figure out. I can be persuaded to consider them in our recommendations, however.
- It would be helpful if we had ridership numbers in more detail; by departure time, days of the week, and accurate return numbers. Tour ticket passengers included is a must.

Mission: The Maine Legislature created the Casco Bay Island Transit District to furnish waterborne transportation to the islands of Casco Bay for public purposes, in the interest of public health, safety, comfort and convenience of the inhabitants of the islands comprising the District. Our Mission is, then, to provide sufficient dependable, reliable service in a safe and secure manner, as affordably as possible, so as to preserve our year-round island communities. CBITD shall also provide incidental tour and charter services to residents of and visitors to the Casco Bay region to enhance the quality and security of the District's regular service to the islands.

Regards

Joe Donovan