

Reprint Island Tides

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Ferry cuts – don't ask

The Minister of Transportation won't be announcing what ferry runs will be cut until late in March, a mere month before they are due to go into effect. While regular riders on some routes may by now have a good idea whether they will be affected, others will have very little notice to rejig their lives and businesses.

That's the conclusion from enquiries made by ferry customers attempting to obtain a list of schedule changes from BC Ferries. The information currently available is what was announced in November (see adjacent chart). Despite extensive consultations, there's not much more detail available except for rumours and guesses. In fact, a reading of the Kirk report on the 'consultations' would lead anyone to conclude that these consultations were completely ignored.

Generally, it seems that the runs which the Ministry has decided to cut are those which have shown low utilization statistics, typically early morning or late evening runs – even if commuters' jobs depend on those runs.

It has been suggested that some midday runs with low utilization might be cut instead, but nothing is known for sure. Some routes have been cut so much they can no longer be called

a service.

And in economic terms, the loss of business in some ferry-dependent communities is said to far exceed the estimated savings to BC Ferries. But no economic study has been made by the provincial government. In fact, no economic study has been made at any time during the last ten years of fare increases to determine their impact on incomes, assessments, and, for that matter, tax receipts.

No changes are planned for the Swartz Bay–Southern Gulf Island routes; the Tsawwassen–Southern Gulf Island route is to have (unidentified) 'schedule changes only' for a saving of \$180,000. Following strong representations from the mid-coast, there may be some restoration of the Bella Coola – Port Hardy summer route.)

The combination, of uncertainty, insensitivity, economic losses, lack of planning, and lack of information is a recipe for the destruction of ferry-dependent communities.

That they are still there, and vibrant, is testimony to their strength. ✍

ROUTE:	ANNUAL TRIPS	CANCELLED TRIPS	ESTIMATED SAVINGS
Buckley Bay – Denman Island	6,149	888 (14.9%)	\$660,000
Denman – Hornby Island	4,482	422(9.4%)	\$360,000
Langdale – Horseshoe Bay	2,985	40(1.3%)	\$200,000
Vesuvius - Crofton	5,046	605(12%)	\$210,000
Earls Cove – Saltery Bay	2,878	365(12.7%)	\$750,000
Horseshoe Bay – Bowen Island	5,569	234(4.2%)	\$270,000
Port Hardy – Prince Rupert	122	39(32%)	\$3,820,000
Skidegate – Prince Rupert	191	52(27.2%)	\$1,900,000
Comox – Powell River	1,460	94(6.4%)	\$720,000
Texada Island – Powell River	3,648	834(22.9%)	\$950,000
Gabriola Island – Nanaimo	5,732	834(14.5%)	\$800,000
Chemainus – Thetis – Penelakut	4,380	417(9.5%)	\$160,000
Quadra Island – Campbell River	6,253	468(7.5%)	\$370,000
Skidegate – Alliford Bay	4,482	1,564(34.9%)	\$1,200,000
Bella Coola – Port Hardy	39	39(100%)	\$1,450,000

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