

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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AUGUSTA, MAINE

REPORT BY THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE
OF TRANSPORTATION

on the

CONDITION AND OPERATION

of the

MAINE STATE FERRY SERVICE

In Accordance with S. P. 543

of June 24, 1975

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Edwin H. Greeley, Chairman

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STATE OF MAINE
ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTH LEGISLATURE
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

June 21, 1977

TO MEMBERS OF THE 108TH LEGISLATURE
OF THE STATE OF MAINE

In accordance with the Joint Order (SP 543), of the 107th Legislature, dated June 24, 1975 directing the Committee to study the condition and operation of the Maine State Ferry Service, I enclose herein the final report of the Committee.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Edwin H. Greeley'.

Edwin H. Greeley, Chairman
Committee on Transportation

EHG/el

Enc.

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MAINE STATE FERRY SERVICE REPORT

INTRODUCTION

During the summer and early fall of 1975, members of the Transportation Committee of the 107th Legislature together with Commissioner Roger L. Mallar and Deputy Commissioner Richard A. Luettich of the Maine Department of Transportation visited each of the islands served by the Maine State Ferry Service to carry out the purposes of Senate Paper 543 which calls for a study of the condition and operation of the Maine State Ferry Service with particular emphasis upon the establishment of a ferry service advisory board (H.P. 1308, L.D. 1651) and the establishment of half fares for certain residents of the islands served (H.P. 1391 - L.D. 1717). This report is submitted in accordance with S.P. 543 and contains the Committee's recommendations.

It should be noted that the Committee found broad satisfaction with the Ferry Service as it is being operated and with the employees involved. Most of the island residents and businesses appear to be generally pleased with the State's efforts to provide this service that is so important to life on the islands. A number of areas of specific concern, however, were expressed and are discussed in the following pages of this report together with our recommendations and any corrective action that we understand has or is being taken.

A number of concerns that were expressed have general application throughout the Service and, therefore, will be treated and discussed in that way. Those concerns which were related to a particular island or mainland terminal will follow.

A. AREAS OF GENERAL CONCERN

1. Fares. Among the comments concerning fares, those most frequently heard included the desirability of commuter fares or reduced fares for frequent travel; reduced fares for senior citizens; a change in the use of round-trip tickets; and the redemption requirements for tickets purchased in connection with reservations.

a. Commuter or Incentive Fares for Frequent Use.

This is an issue which has been raised by islanders on a number of prior occasions. In fact, the original Ferry Tariff contained provisions for such fares. These fares were ultimately removed with the concurrence of the then existing Ferry Service Advisory Committee because of non-use. The establishment of such fares requires careful analysis to determine what impact they would have upon the Ferry Service revenue and subsequent request that will be made upon the Legislature for additional operating funds. In order to adequately respond to this, the Department of Transportation is currently developing a study of the impact of such fares giving consideration to a number of options which include 10-ride and 12-ride individual or family books. It is anticipated that this study will be available for discussion by the Ferry Service Advisory Board in the very near future.

b. Half Fare for the Elderly.

While there may be some support for such fares, it is evident that there is also substantial opposition to this proposal. It appears that some of the island residents feel that many of the senior citizens are retired people fully capable of paying their share of

the cost of transportation to the islands. In any case, the Committee has concluded that the needs of elderly island persons can more appropriately be met through assistance programs designed specifically for the elderly rather than through an unrelated program such as the Ferry Service.

c. Round-trip Fares.

The present provisions of the Tariff limit the going portion of round-trip tickets to the date of sale with the return portion good for a period of 30 days. This restriction was apparently originally intended to limit the sale of round-trip tickets in order to maximize revenues. As a practical matter, however, it is very difficult to enforce and has not served its original purpose very well. In any case, it is believed that the round-trip ticket should be changed so that both portions are good for passage for a period of 30 days including the date of sale. The Department of Transportation has developed an appropriate amendment to the Ferry Service Tariff that is being reviewed by the Advisory Board and we anticipated will become effective in the near future.

d. Redemption of Tickets Purchased in Connection with Reservations.

A problem of some magnitude appears to result from the present requirements that tickets for passage which are purchased in connection with a reservation must be submitted for refund if the reservation is not used and cannot be used on another trip.

Apparently the intention of this provision was to restrict the reuse of a reservation privilege and not necessarily restrict the use of the actual ticket for passage. Accordingly, the Department of Transportation has developed a proposed revision of this requirement that is being reviewed by the Advisory Board and is expected to become effective in near future. As revised, passengers will not be able to obtain a refund for or reuse the reservation privilege in accordance with existing provisions. The actual ticket for transportation, however, which must be purchased at the time the reservation is made can be used for subsequent trips, subject to the 30-day limit.

2. Reservations. The reservation system has been a matter of some concern since it was established. The use of reservations, however, makes it possible for island residents to travel from the island to the mainland and return on the same day with certainty. Similarly, people travelling long distances to the islands can be certain of space on a specified trip without the necessity of waiting overnight for transportation.

One of the major problems involving the use of reservations has been the transportation of bait trucks from Rockland to Vinalhaven to support lobster fishing activities on the island. It appears that the availability of bait at Rockland is not always certain, making it impossible to set up any regular movement of this product. If the island fishermen are forced to go without bait for a day or more, a serious economic impact is felt on the island. In response to this situation, the Department of Transportation has suggested an amendment to its tariff to provide a third truck reservation exclusively

for bait trucks on the first scheduled trip from Rockland on the Governor Curtis each day. In addition, one of the two reservations provided on the remaining scheduled trips is also exclusively available for bait trucks provided that a reservation is made 24 hours in advance. This proposal is being reviewed by the Ferry Service Advisory Board.

The reservation system should be a matter of continuing concern for the Department of Transportation in order to insure that the system responds to the real needs of all of the Ferry Service patrons.

3. Vessel Replacement Program. There is considerable concern among island residents that a vessel replacement program be established. On the other hand, a number of individuals expressed a reluctance for an expansion of ferry service capacity through the use of additional or larger vessels. Most of the vessels now in service have been in operation for some 16 to 18 years with the exception of the newest ferry, the Governor Curtis.

In recognition of the need to eventually replace existing vessels, the Department of Transportation has on one prior occasion submitted a request for funds to perform preliminary engineering and design which were not made available. A similar request has been made by the Department in its 1977-79 Capital Improvements Program. Some \$90,000 has been requested for this purpose.

It should be noted that while many of the ferries have been in operation for some time, they have been well maintained and there is every reason to believe they will continue to serve for some time in the future. It is, however, important that all concerned give this matter their attention in order to avoid any potential crises in future years.

4. Parking Lot Security. A general concern was expressed about the security of vehicles left in parking lots. Apparently some vandalism has occurred and it was suggested that lighting and security fencing be installed.

The Department of Transportation has installed security lighting at both Bass Harbor and Rockland which are locations at which some vandalism has occurred and subsequently brought to the Department's attention. The question of security fencing will receive further consideration and will be subject to the availability of funds.

5. Scheduling. A number of schedule changes of a minor nature were discussed and the Department of Transportation either has or is making an effort to respond to these changes, wherever possible. Schedule changes have to be made in relation to additional costs that may be incurred and at the same time schedules must reflect the service requirements of the majority of patrons.

Our review indicated that there was general acceptance of the quality of service and no need was indicated for additional ferry service at this time.

B. ISSUES INVOLVING SPECIFIC ISLANDS

In addition to the foregoing general concerns that were expressed, issues involving specific islands were raised. The following is an attempt to describe those concerns and indicate what action has been taken or is recommended in response thereto.

a. Vinalhaven.

It appears that there is some interest in the location of a new terminal at the north end of the Island that could be used by the North Haven Ferry. In support of this idea, the proponents suggested that the volume of traffic to Vinalhaven, particularly during the spring, summer and fall months, is such that a supplementary service could be provided by the North Haven Ferry if a terminal was located on the north end of Vinalhaven.

This matter has been discussed by the Advisory Board and is still being considered. The Board has no recommendation to make at this time as a substantial amount of information must be obtained, including costs, site, and potential usage before a final determination is made.

b. North Haven.

The major concern at this location is the inadequacy of the present transfer bridge to handle vehicles weighing in excess of ten tons. In addition, great concern exists as to the availability of auxiliary power to operate the transfer bridge at the ferry terminal in the event of power failure.

(1) Transfer Bridge.

The Department of Transportation has completed the design phase of a new transfer bridge which will permit handling 36 ton loads. This is the standard loading capacity of transfer bridges at other terminals in the ferry system. The Department now contemplates that a contract will be let in the summer

of 1977 and work on the project will commence in the fall. When this project is completed, vehicle traffic to North Haven will be the same as the other islands.

(2) Auxiliary Power.

On a few occasions in the past, local power failures have made it difficult, if not impossible, to operate the transfer bridge at the terminal. This problem has occurred at both North Haven and Vinalhaven.

The Department of Transportation has provided auxiliary power on a permanent basis at both North Haven and Vinalhaven and plans to furnish power at other islands when and if needed.

c. Islesboro.

The major concern at this location is adequate parking facilities at the mainland terminal at Lincolnville. During periods of heavy ferry traffic, this has caused traffic to back up on Route 1 resulting in congestion and raising questions of safety to both vehicles and persons. In response to their problem, the Department of Transportation has again submitted a request for approximately \$50,000 to establish a parking lot at Lincolnville with a capacity of approximately 50 vehicles. This request is included in the Department's 1977-79 Capital Improvements Program.

d. Swan's Island.

Interest has been shown in a change in the operating schedule at this location, particularly the first Sunday trip which is indicated as being too early and a later weekday evening trip has been requested. This matter will be considered by the Department of Transportation in its semi-annual schedule revision.

Concern was also expressed about the reduction in capacity that results when one of the smaller ferries replaces the Everett Libby during periods when the Libby is drydocked for maintenance. One possible solution that has been suggested is an extra trip by the smaller vessel. This too will be considered by the Department in its scheduling revision.

e. Long Island Plantation.

Of major concern at this location is repairs to the vehicle transfer bridge. The Department of Transportation has completed the replacement of the electric motor and gear reduction box at the terminal and it is expected that the remaining work will be completed in the spring of 1977.

Following is a list of Ferry Service items that have been recommended by the Department of Transportation for the 1977-79 Capital Improvements Program. All items are subject to the availability of funds.

1. Repair and replace oak sheathing and support timbers on ferry pens at Rockland, North Haven, Lincolnville, Islesboro and Bass Harbor terminals. \$100,000

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|---|-----------|
| 2. Fifty vehicle parking lot at Lincolnville. | \$ 55,000 |
| 3. Clean, sandblast (as needed) and paint all transfer bridges (vehicle ramps) and machinery housings at all ferry terminals. | \$ 80,000 |
| 4. Preliminary engineering and design activities for a new ferry vessel. | \$ 90,000 |

CONCLUSION

As can be seen, many of the concerns made known to the Committee during our investigation have or are being responded to by the Department of Transportation. It is no doubt impossible to respond to all the concerns in a manner satisfactory to everyone. It is important to note again, however, that most of the people are well satisfied with the existing service and the way it is being operated. It is also clear to us that the service is of utmost importance to the islands and their well being.

It is our belief that the operation of the Ferry Service Advisory Board should make it possible for a clear and effective line of communication between the Department of Transportation and the Ferry Service users. Accordingly, it does not appear that implementing legislation is necessary at this time to respond to the concerns expressed to us. It is our hope that future legislative needs can reach us through the joint efforts of the Department and the Ferry Service Advisory Board.

A. OF R.

STATE OF MAINE

In Senate May 29, 1975

Ordered,

WHEREAS, pending legislation would provide transportation services at reduced rates to island residents who are 60 years of age or older; and

WHEREAS, a State Ferry Advisory Board has been proposed to give detailed advice to the Department of Transportation on the operation and future of such activities; and

WHEREAS, provision for 1/2 fare is limited by age and to residents of certain islands and an advisory board on ferries already exists within the Department of Transportation; now, therefore, be it

ORDERED, the House concurring, that the Legislative Council be authorized, through the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation, to study the condition and operation of the Maine State Ferry Service including, but not limited to, the provisions of "AN ACT to Establish the Maine State Ferry Advisory Board," H.P. 1308, L.D. 1651, "AN ACT to Allow Certain Island Residents Use of the Maine State Ferry at one-half Fare," H.P. 1391, L.D. 1717, as introduced at the Regular Session of the 107th Legislature; and be it further

ORDERED, that the Council report the results of its findings, together with any proposed recommendations and necessary implementing legislation, to the next special or regular session of the Legislature;

be it further
ORDERED, upon passage in concurrence, that suitable copies of
s Order be transmitted forthwith to said agencies as notice of this
rective.

SP 543

and IN SENATE CHAMBER *Read*
TABLED BY SEN. SEN. SPEERS.
OF OF KENNEDEC

MAY 29 1975
PENDING *Passage*
HARRY H. STARBRANCH, Secretary

IN SENATE
TAKEN FROM TABLE ON MOTION
BY SEN. SPEERS. AND ON FURTHER
OF KENNEDEC
JUN 24 1975
MOTION BY SEN. SPEERS
OF KENNEDEC

Passed

SENT DOWN FOR CONCURRENCE
Harry H. Starbranch

SECRETARY
Ordered sent forthwith

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
READ AND PASSED

JUN 24 1975

Edward J. ...
CLERK

IN CONCURRENCE

ORDERED SENT FORTHWITH

(Greeley)
Name: *Greeley*
County: Waldo

presented to the
Senate on JUN 18 1975
became law without his signature.
(Gen. Stat., Article IV, Part Third)

in the office of the
of State JUN 25 1975

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD NINETEEN HUNDRED
SEVENTY-FIVE

H. P. 1308 — L. D. 1651

AN ACT to Establish the Maine State Ferry Advisory Board.

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine, as follows:

Sec. 1. PL 1971, c. 593, § 34 is amended to read:

Sec. 34. Authorization. The Commissioner of Transportation is authorized to retain members of the Economic Advisory Board, ~~the Advisory Committee of Ferry Service~~ the Scenic Highway Board and the Highway Safety Committee to serve in an advisory capacity in the Department of Transportation at the pleasure of the commissioner for a period not to exceed 2 years and they shall receive the same compensation and reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses as they heretofore received.

Sec. 2. PL 1971, c. 593, § 38, first sentence, is amended to read:

The Commissioner of Transportation is authorized to retain members of the Economic Advisory Board, ~~the Advisory Committee of Ferry Service~~ the Scenic Highway Board and the Highway Safety Committee to serve in an advisory capacity for a period not to exceed 2 years.

Sec. 3. 23 MRSA § 4205, sub-§ 5, as enacted by PL 1971, c. 593, § 16, is repealed.

Sec. 4. 23 MRSA c. 411 is enacted to read:

CHAPTER 411

MAINE STATE FERRY ADVISORY BOARD

§ 4301. Board established

There is established the Maine State Ferry Advisory Board, in this section called "the board," which shall be a board within the Department of Transportation.

§ 4302. Membership

The membership of the board shall consist of one person from each of the island municipalities and plantations serviced by the Maine State Ferry System and 3 members appointed by the Commissioner of Transportation. The members representing the island municipalities and plantations shall be appointed by the officers or selectmen of the member's municipality or by the assessors of the member's plantation and all members shall serve a term of office of 2 years. Vacancies in membership shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment.

§ 4303. Meetings

1. Chairman; meetings. The board shall annually elect a chairman from among its members, and the chairman shall serve a term of one year. The board shall meet at the call of the chairman, or at the call of at least 3 members of the board, and there shall be at least 3 meetings held a year.

2. Transportation for meetings. The Department of Transportation shall provide free transportation for board members on the Maine State Ferry Service on the days which the board holds its regular meetings. Such transportation shall be on a regularly scheduled trip, shall include both the automobile and one passenger, shall be round-trip between the mainland and the island of residence of the board member and shall include the reservation fee.

§ 4304. Duties

The board shall advise the Department of Transportation on matters relating to the Maine State Ferry Service and shall submit to the Commissioner of Transportation an annual report which shall include recommendations for change to the Maine State Ferry Service and comments upon the present and future needs of that service. Written reports and comments shall be available to the public.

§ 4305. Staff support

The Department of Transportation shall supply reasonable staff support requested by the board.

Sec. 5. Transition. Of the initial members appointed to the board, 1/2 shall serve for a term of one year and 1/2 shall serve for a term of 2 years. The Commissioner of Transportation shall, within 2 weeks of the effective date of this Act, select by lot which municipalities or plantations shall appoint a member for one year and which municipalities or plantations shall appoint a member for 2 years. After expiration of the initial term of any member of the board, any appointment to the membership shall be for a term of 2 years.

IN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,.....1975

Read twice and passed to be enacted.

.....Speaker

IN SENATE,.....1975

Read twice and passed to be enacted.

.....President

Approved.....1975

.....Governor