

Guemes Island Ferry Technical Advisory Group (TAG)

February 9, 2025 Meeting

Anacortes Public Library

5:30-7:30 PM

Draft Summary Notes

Attendees

In-Person

TAG Members

Allen Bush, Becca Fong, Sandy McKean, Tom Fouts, Ryan Monahan, Eric Jolley (proxy for Paul Bieker)

Skagit County Staff

Rachel Rowe, Ferry Operations Division Manager, Marie Lambert, Public Works Assistant Director/Controller

Other Attendees

Hilary Wilkinson, Maul Foster & Alongi, Facilitator, Gabe Murphy

Online:

TAG Members

Corey Joyce

(TAG members Adam Paull, Jonah Petrick, and Paul Bieker were not present).

Other Attendees

Claire Moerder, Maul Foster & Alongi

Welcome and Introductions

Recap of Meeting #3 and Tonight's Agenda

Sandy McKean called the meeting to order and reminded TAG members of the work-back plan discussed in the first couple of TAG meetings. He asked that members keep this in mind, acknowledging that the original schedule has the discussion ending after the March meeting, and the writing of the report starting at the April meeting.

Hilary Wilkinson reminded TAG members of the outcomes of the February meeting. She noted that the meeting notes circulated did not include Sandy McKean's edits and highlighted his main points verbally.

- TAG members agreed that the outcome of discussion in the last meeting was that industry experts may be invited to future meetings to provide technical presentations to the TAG. **Once this change is made to the meeting #3 notes summary, TAG members voted to approve them as final.**

Hilary Wilkinson introduced tonight's agenda after circulating printed copies. She reminded TAG members of this meeting's objectives:

1. Review outcomes and status of action items from Meeting #3.
2. View and discuss proposed evaluation framework; decide whether/how to use or adapt this tool.
3. Discuss next steps for completing evaluation on which a Board recommendation will be based.

TAG Operations

Initial Discussion

TAG members asked about the news that the electric ferry shoreside battery banks would be removed from the City of Anacortes shoreline permits, and whether that would preclude building and operating a future all-electric ferry.

Rachel Rowe explained that this was a tactical decision to free up space on that permit but would not preclude a future all-electric ferry, because this can be added to other future permits. Asked whether the funding agencies for the all-electric grants had been informed, she explained this would not be a problem or surprise to them, because they understand the local permitting process and that constructing shoreside battery banks will be able to be addressed with future permits.

Hilary Wilkinson shared the TAG charter onscreen (and around the room) to remind TAG members of their group agreements.

Framework for Evaluation of Options

Hilary Wilkinson introduced the evaluation matrix as a potential model for the TAG to use to evaluate the five propulsion options the TAG has agreed to consider. She shared the list of propulsion options decided on in the last meeting.

TAG members discussed how some of these options may not end up being recommended, but they agreed to consider them and will include notes to explain whether they would be recommended to the Board.

TAG members also discussed that terminology for options 2-3 in the list from Meeting #3 was confusing. Members suggested extending the plug-in hybrid option by adding “(batteries).” They also discussed how there are multiple types of hybrid ferry propulsion options. They discussed clarifying the diesel electric option by including “(no batteries).”

They also discussed how options 2 (hybrid) and 5 (Lummi Island ferry) are similar but their design criteria would likely be significantly different; however, if Skagit and Whatcom counties could build their new ferries according to a single design, upfront capital costs would be cheaper. Also, option 5 is not a plug-in and would not require shoreside charging.

They also discussed how option 1 is technically a hybrid and would use shoreside charging. And option 2 would run primarily off diesel with electric motors as supplemental power.

They also discussed different levels of charging and agreed that it was a design question and not a propulsion option question. A summary of TAG discussions of the propulsion options is included below. **NOTE:** This table will be updated after the meeting to better reflect the six options, including appropriate titles and detailed descriptions of each.

#	Propulsion Option*
1.	All electric (current design), with plug-in/shoreside charging and a generator
2.a.	Plug-in hybrid, primarily electric; diesel supports primary electric motors
2.b.	Hybrid with batteries (without plug-in), does not require shoreside charging
3.	Diesel electric, primarily diesel; electric motors improve efficiency (no batteries)
4.	Preserve current ferry
5.	Whatcom County / Lummi Island design and/or propulsion system (diesel electric, battery hybrid)

**This table is to clearly capture the notes from Meeting #3. A final list of propulsion options has been developed in consultation with the TAG and circulated separately.*

Sandy suggested finalizing these terms as a TAG via email prior to the March meeting. Later discussion formalized the steps for this process.

Next, TAG members looked at the evaluation matrix and agreed that emission data may not be available yet for all the options. A more general comment was that the TAG would need benchmarks for the scale-of-impact questions in column E for each criterion.

In general, TAG members agreed that this tool is going to result in more subjective answers, and Sandy McKean acknowledged that the TAG was formed with both industry experts as well as members of the community, calling out that subjective opinions matter.

TAG members discussed removing the scale-of-impact question (column E) and relying on yes/no questions (column D) and the agreed-upon weighting system. TAG members agreed there is a wealth of helpful information in the existing studies which could be used as a guide. Then, TAG members discussed leaving column E as a confidence statistic. There should be more scoring options than 0-3 to ascribe level of confidence (for instance, 1-10). TAG members also discussed how this removes the option to fine-tune big differences which are easily known, such as for terminal impacts. TAG members also discussed how level of confidence would be tricky for options that haven't been built before.

Hilary Wilkinson asked if any TAG members were opposed to changing column E to “level of confidence” and having a scale of 1-100. There were no objections to this suggestion.

TAG members discussed how they would move forward, such as assigning level of confidence based on level of agreement among the TAG members as they discussed each criterion for the 6 new options. Members discussed how the math in column F would need to be carefully looked at to see that the model still worked and the larger range of scoring in column E wouldn't overwhelm the rankings assigned in column F.

TAG members discussed some more about how mimicking the Whatcom County / Lummi Island ferry design would save a lot of money because that's how the industry works—once they've made it once, they can do it more efficiently a second time, because they've worked through a lot of mistakes already. On the other hand, the downside would be that the two counties would have to fully agree on a common design and on other project parameters.

Hilary Wilkinson suggested that the TAG come back together at the next meeting with the updated matrix, then spend the following 1-2 meetings with small group work (2-3 people working on an option together) trying to complete the spreadsheet. Then, each group can report out their findings.

Sandy McKean proposed an alternative: each TAG member fills out the matrix on their own prior to the next TAG meeting, at which point they would discuss as a group. **Becca Fong** suggested and volunteered to create a Google form and accompanying graph to tabulate

everyone's answers and give the TAG an average prior to discussion, while still retaining a copy of each member's answers.

TAG members agreed **MFA/Skagit County** could draft a new list based on discussion and share it with the TAG for refinement. At the same time, **Eric Jolley** would help define the options using industry standards. **Sandy McKean** would coordinate the TAG via email in "smushing" the two lists of propulsion option definitions together into a final list.

TAG members agreed that Friday, March 6 is the deadline to complete the form.

Decisions

- Sandy McKean will take input from MFA/Skagit County and Eric to lead the process of carefully defining each propulsion option with the TAG.
- The TAG will use the amended scoring matrix provided by MFA. Becca Fong will integrate the matrix into a Google form to gather and aggregate individual TAG member scoring.

Action Items

Skagit County will

- Distribute the meeting summary and Zoom link for the next TAG meeting.

TAG members will

- Send Rachel Rowe any contacts they'd like to invite to future meetings.
- Review and participate in the refinement of the list of propulsion options and their descriptions.
- Participate in the Google form/scoring matrix process moving forward.

MFA will

- Draft summary notes.
- Update the list of propulsion options and the scoring matrix based on discussions in today's meeting.