



Date: December 2, 2009

TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation
FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Use of Harbour Green Dock by Passenger Ferry Services

RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT the Board approve a trial period of up to twelve months for the use of the floating walkway dock at Harbour Green Park by Coastal Link Ferries Ltd for its commuter passenger ferry service, with details as set out in this report*
- B. THAT the Board approve entering into similar trial period agreements with other companies offering comparable passenger ferry services, as applicable*
- C. THAT once the form of the licence has been approved by the General Manager and the Director of Legal Services, that the General Manager is authorized to execute the document on behalf of the Board.*

POLICY

There is no applicable policy

BACKGROUND

This dock is a floating walkway at Harbour Green Park on Coal Harbour, built in 2003. It was developed as part of the overall design of the park, and is owned and maintained by the Park Board. Its use is intended to be for transient moorage for private boats, limited commercial charter boats and ferry services. Moorage is limited to three hours, and no overnight stays are allowed. Use is steady in the summer season and very slow in the off season, when often there are no boats at the dock. There are no indications that there would be any problem in space being available for a regular passenger ferry service.

Coastal Link Ferries started using Harbour Green Dock for its commuter ferry service from Bowen Island in November, 2008. The service ran in from Bowen in the morning and back in the early evening. Coastal Link initially indicated to staff that it would only use the dock for a few months until it was able to move to its proposed new dock, east of

Canada Place. There have been construction delays and the earliest estimated date of completion is the summer of 2010. Staff approved this initial temporary use on the basis that the vessel was only to stay at the dock for loading and unloading, at all times it was to have a crew member on board and it was to move and moor elsewhere during the day, between trips.

DISCUSSION

Coastal Link Ferries

Coastal Link Ferries Limited is a private company, owned by Captain Ihab Shaker. The vessel used on this run, the “Coastal Runner” was purpose built in 2008. It is a 66 foot passenger vessel, which seats 67, has space for about four bicycles, and has up to three crew members on board. It operates in most weather conditions and only occasionally has had to cancel trips to and from Bowen Island, due to high winds.

Coastal Link Route, Schedule & Fares

The Coastal Link vessel moors overnight at Bowen Island Marina. It is currently on a month to month arrangement there and pays the Marina a moorage fee of \$750 / month.

Until November, Coastal Link operated just one trip in each direction daily, leaving Bowen Island at about 7 am (arriving at Harbour Green at about 7.40 am) and returning from Harbour Green to Bowen Island at 5 pm. On October 19, 2009, the District of West Vancouver approved its use of the dock at Ambleside (14th Street) for a six month pilot project. No license fee is being charged by West Vancouver during this trial period. Since mid November, the ferry has been stopping at Ambleside on its way to and from Vancouver, and does additional return trips from Harbour Green to Ambleside (two trips in the morning, and one in the afternoon).

Current Fares (excl GST) charged by Coastal Link are:

Bowen Island - Vancouver

One way / return	\$15 / \$25
10 / 20 trips	\$120 / \$200

Ambleside - Vancouver

One way / return	\$5 / \$9
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In comparison, adult return fares to Vancouver by bus (and BC Ferries from Bowen) are:

Bowen Island	\$16.15
Ambleside	\$ 7.50

Passenger numbers are still relatively low, particularly on the Ambleside run, since that service is so new. Coastal Link will be doing some additional promotion and advertising of the ferry in West Vancouver. It also hopes to add extra daily runs to and from Ambleside during the Olympic period to provide a convenient alternative means of transportation into the Downtown Vancouver area from West Vancouver.

Proposed terms of use of Harbour Green Dock by Coastal Link

It is proposed that Coastal Link's use of the Dock be approved on the following general terms:

- A trial period of up to twelve months, to December 31, 2010
- A \$500 monthly license fee to be paid by Coastal Link to the Board, starting January 1, 2010. This amount will be reviewed at the end of the trial period and adjusted at that time, if appropriate. This relatively nominal initial amount will assist the service in establishing itself as a viable business, while still providing a financial return to the Board. Coastal Link has been using the dock for no charge for a year already, and it is appropriate to start charging now. Captain Shaker has agreed to this fee.
- The ferry will remain at the dock for no more than approximately 15 minutes each time. For any extended periods between trips, the vessel will be moved and docked elsewhere.
- No exclusivity of use of the dock. If other passenger ferry services are approved in future, then the ferry operators will work together on their respective schedules to ensure that only one ferry is docked at a time, so that there is adequate space for other dock users.
- Coastal Link will abide by all Park Board and City requirements, including obtaining appropriate permits, licenses and insurance, and will execute a license agreement with the Board. It will also abide by all relevant regulations from Transport Canada and others.

Other passenger ferry operators

There is precedent for private passenger ferry services operating at docks on Park Board land. Granville Island Ferries has operated its ferries from the Aquatic Centre Dock since 1983. It paid a fee to the Board from the start. In order to consolidate ferry services, in 2005 the City executed a master license agreement for the two ferry companies operating in False Creek and took over management of the Aquatic Centre Dock, along with others in False Creek.

Coastal Link Ferries is the only commuter ferry company currently using Harbour Green Dock. Another company has expressed an interest in using both Harbour Green and the Jericho Dock, for a similar type of ferry service, with routes potentially also running to the North Shore and Granville Island. That company is still in its planning process but may be in a position to start up on a limited basis in February 2010. If and when it is ready, a comparable twelve month trial period arrangement with them for use of Harbour Green Dock and / or Jericho Dock is proposed. The fee would be negotiated for each dock, taking into account the potential ridership and frequency of service.

Use of Harbour Green Dock during Olympic period (approx January 30 – March 25, 2010)

It should be noted that the following information may change, should the Vancouver 2010 Integrated Security Unit (ISU) deem it necessary for security reasons.

Harbour Green Dock falls within the “controlled access zone” at Coal Harbour. Access into, and through, this zone may take place only after authorization by the ISU and subject to restrictions the ISU may place on it. The dock will not be open for private boater use, nor will it be available for charter boats during this period. Currently, it is contemplated that the only dock users would be passenger ferries, subject to the companies obtaining ISU clearance, which the ISU will discuss with them once the Board has approved their use of the dock. There is no reason at present to believe that clearance will not be given. There will be some restrictions in the vessels’ routing into the dock and how the dock is accessed by passengers, but it should not impact unduly on the service.

Community Impact

This proposed ferry service by Coastal Link is aimed primarily at commuters, who would simply be passing through on foot, mainly during rush hour periods, and not be driving or parking in the area. Staff are not aware of any complaints from area residents, park users or boaters regarding Coastal Link’s use of the dock over the past year, and several supportive comments have been received. Should concerns be expressed during this trial period, staff would investigate and they would be taken into consideration in determining whether the agreement is renewed. Captain Shaker has indicated his willingness to work with staff through any issues that may arise.

SUMMARY

Coastal Link is providing an additional public transit option for commuters into downtown Vancouver from Bowen Island and West Vancouver, for a reasonable charge to riders. This is a positive addition to transportation alternatives and may contribute to easing traffic congestion. Entering into an agreement for a trial period will give the Board the opportunity to properly assess the service and its impact on the park and the neighbourhood, while also providing a small monetary return to the Board.

Prepared by:
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