

Town of North Haven
16 Town Office Square
Post Office Box 400
North Haven, Maine 04853
207.867.4433

July 3, 2019

Bruce Van Note
Commissioner, Maine Department of Transportation
16 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333-0016

Re: Draft Maine State Ferry Service Pricing Structure

Dear Commissioner Van Note,

As you requested during last week's Ferry Service Advisory Board meeting, here is North Haven's feedback on the pricing structure you have proposed.

Rate Increase: We respect and appreciate the manner in which you have worked to address the proposed increase in ticket prices, particularly your efforts to meet the island communities and listen to our collective concerns. As we have noted, most of us live on tight budgets and would prefer no increase at all. Seventeen percent is a significant increase. We continue to welcome discussions on ways to increase ridership and improve Ferry Service efficiency. We would also like to discuss the possibility of regular rate increases that keep up with inflation instead of larger, less frequent increases.

Islesboro: North Haven appreciates how recent ticket price increases affect Islesboro's economy and quality of life. As we have pointed out in our June 2019 letter to Chief Counsel Jim Billings, North Haven shares many of those same concerns in regard to our own island. We also appreciate that the Islesboro runs account for a significant share of MSFS fare box revenues. With that said, North Haven would not object to your working with Islesboro to create a rate structure that differs somewhat from the structures for the remaining islands, so long as the goal is to preserve Islesboro's contribution to fare box revenue. We have enjoyed the uniform rate structure imposed under Tariff 8, but we recognize some form of differentiation may be in order. Thus, if defining peak and off-peak differently for Islesboro or increasing the number and cost of reservations available to Islesboro riders would help the overall system, North Haven would not object. In contrast, we would object to a fare structure that would base prices on distance traveled.

Reservations: North Haven would appreciate your leaving the current reservation structure in place for our island. While increasing the number of reservations sounds good, the effect would be to reduce the number of non-reservation vehicle spaces available from 13 to 12. This would impact the many island residents who are unable to schedule their trips 30 days in advance and rely instead on obtaining a number to line up.

Peak versus Off-Peak Ticket Prices: While seasonal rates is something with which we are unfamiliar, your proposed pricing structure with lower rates from October 1st through May 31st seems to strike an appropriate balance, both in terms of the months in which the rates are in effect and the price differentials. We ask that in crafting the formal proposed rule, you do not lengthen the peak season or increase the peak-season prices. We also hope you remain open to discussions about how this new structure will affect us.

Municipal Contributions: Although you have said seeking contributions from the island municipalities will not be a part of this year's proposed price structure, we would like you to know at the outset that we have significant concerns about this concept. Once established, we fear municipal contributions would only increase.

In closing, we want to express our gratitude for the way in which you have approached the fare increases. Your willingness to come to the island and to the Advisory Board meetings, to listen, and to respond to our collective concerns is most welcome. We look forward to continuing to work with you and your staff.

Yours truly,

//s//
Jonathan Demmons
Chair, North Haven Select Board

//s//
Jon Emerson
Member, MSFS Advisory Board

//s//
Rick Lattimer
Town Administrator

Copy to:
Bill Pulver
Mark Higgins