
Medically-Required Priority Loading

— FAC of Gabriola Island —

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Sources of information for this document:

- Gabriola Medical Clinic staff
- Patients who were given my contact information, and reached out to me
- Staff from other ferry organizations in Washington State and in Eastern Canada and in the UK

With Thanks to the Gabriola Medical Clinic

Special Thanks to Janice, Clinic Manager, for her help and information for this report.



Janice, "Dr. Magic", and Anita, clinic staff.

Defining the need

Only two major types of conditions require this special concession.

1. Recurring treatment for ongoing illness: dialysis and radiation/chemotherapy.
2. Immediate need for x-rays or hospitalization, when transport is provided by private car instead of ambulance.

Transport can be complicated for passengers with these needs.

- Long waits in lines are not always possible, ie. ability to arrive “in time” to ensure loading the normal way
- Difficulty in being away from medical support equipment, washroom facilities, etc.
- Immediate medical needs that require loading on short notice

Let's examine the current system.

Two types of passes are currently issued, in the form of letters.

(Please see examples.)

1. An annual pass, issued on BCF letterhead. Requested by medical clinic and forwarded directly to BCFerries.
2. A one-time temporary pass, issued by the medical clinic on a fill-in letter "form". (Call is made by the clinic staff to BCF at time of issue for immediate use.)

About TAP Forms

The TAP form (Travel Assistance Program) is separate from, but complementary to, any assured loading system.

- Possessing a TAP form does not grant any sort of priority boarding privilege.
 - TAP forms are to reduce the cost burden of travel to medically-required services.
 - TAP forms are issued by medical service providers.
 - There has been some confusion with patients that these forms grant other privileges; they do not.
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Currently, the clinic issues 2-4 temporary passes monthly, and only about 3 annual passes are currently issued.

This is the same system used on all islands served by BC Ferries.

However, the need may increase in coming years, due to population shifts.

Previous Obstacles

- Fraud by users on one other island
- Lack of knowledge by BCF Staff
- Lack of a way to communicate the situation to other drivers
- Loading location causing traffic congestion
- Lack of understanding and compliance from other drivers

How do other ferry systems handle this?

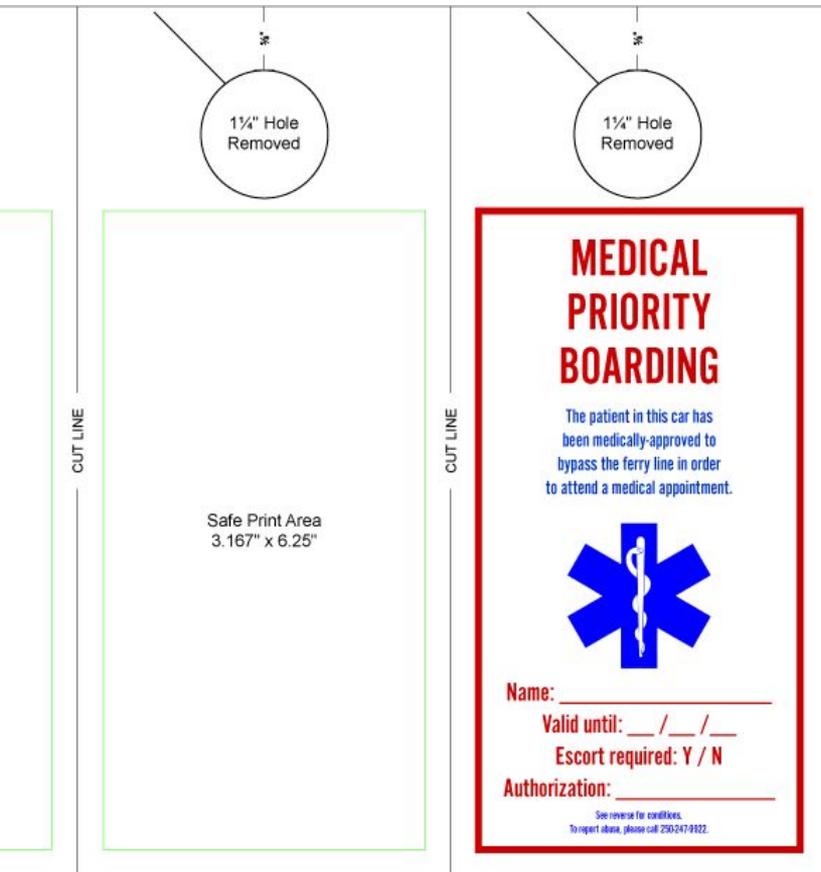
In the US and Canada:

- Letter passes, similar to our current system.
- In-Vehicle signage.
- Flags on pre-paid cards.
- Special parking designation.

In the UK/EU:

- In-vehicle signage.
- Flags on pre-paid cards.
- Licence plate scanning on automated toll systems.
- Special parking designation.

Suggested Solutions



1) In-Car Signage

(Similar to a parking pass, hung from the rear-view.)

- Could be cheaply printed locally on-demand
- Disclaimer and conditions on back
- Displayed only when desired by the patient
- Does not entitle patient to any new privileges
- Issued by medical services provider, not BCF, but BCF should standardize in order to provide unified staff awareness

**Push back the current
“line start” by 2-3
parking spots, and
designate those spots
as priority boarding.**

2) Designated
Loading Location



Aerial view of Gabriola Ferry Lineup

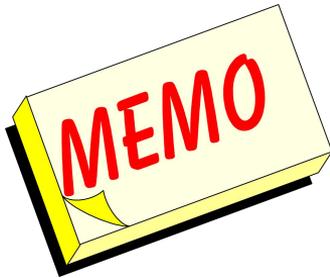
Or, temporary (AM-only) designated boarding location.

- Could be as simple as a traffic cone or flag, which can be removed after the morning loading
- Cone or flag allows for greater flexibility and lower cost



Image Source:
<http://www.accuform.com/Plant-Facility/warning-cone-flag-FBC610>

Make staff aware of new signage and/or policies and prevent discrimination.



3) Circulate a Staff Awareness Document

4) Empower BCF Employees

- By empowering BCF Staff to make decisions about loading, it eliminates burden on the organization
 - Represents another opportunity for building good relationships within the community
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Additional Requests for Priority Boarding?

Communication and/or interest received from:

- Ambulance care, a designated location rather than changeable location in the street
- Nursing staff, to allow for more patient time and significant cost savings
- Medical lab staff, due to time and temperature-sensitive specimens

Recommendation: A Public Press Release

Prevent discrimination and ensure community cooperation.

In the past, there were questions about whether public awareness would lead to fraud or unnecessary demand. But there have proven to be disadvantages to not educating the public.

By working with island medical providers, proper documentation can be provided to clearly define conditions which are eligible, and those which are not, and standardize across the organization.

Summary of Recommendations

1. In-Car Signage
2. Designated Loading Location
3. Circulate a Staff Awareness Document
4. Empower BCF Employees
5. A Public Press Release

Ultimately, it is up to the physician.

To this point, passes have only been issued by BCF based on physician recommendations. This cannot change.