

Colter Courtney

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Dear UTC Commission,

This letter is not a protest of the transfer of Backcountry Travels LLC (Stehekin Ferry). My intention is to comment on the service that the company has been providing and the precedent that the UTC set when allowing it. The transfer of Backcountry Travels LLC is not being done out of necessity or for business reasons. The company has been a success and surpassed expectations.

Throughout the history of transportation on Lake Chelan going back nearly one hundred years since the UTC began regulating services, there was only one passenger transportation service on the lake. Many companies tried and failed to get a certificate to operate. Backcountry Travels however, applied for a certificate with a plan focused on more consistent year-round service, opposite schedule and a highly efficient business model. When the certificate application was being considered the UTC conducted a study of the proposed Stehekin Ferry ridership estimates and found that they should be accurate based on history. That study was proven totally correct. The Stehekin Ferry has either met or surpassed those ridership number estimates. Even though service began in one of the toughest tourist seasons in recent history (2020) and after a few closures due to wildfire. The business has thrived and the Stehekin Community has thrived along with it. A Stehekin based operation allows for nearly 30% savings in most operational costs. This paired with fuel efficient vessel helps keep ticket prices down and has allowed for more consistent service than ever before.

My hope with this comment is to encourage the UTC to keep the Stehekin Ferry in mind when considering other applications both on Lake Chelan and elsewhere in Washington State. In issuing a certificate to Backcountry Travels LLC the UTC fulfilled its mandate to protect necessary transportation to a rural community.

Thanks for your consideration.

Sincerely, Colter Courtney