



Bruins 3, Penguins 4, Final

Steamship Authority ferry run canceled Wednesday due to 'mechanical issues'

By [Travis Andersen](#) and [Matt Rocheleau](#) Globe Staff, May 29, 2019, 9:37 a.m.

Several Steamship Authority ferry trips were canceled Wednesday morning due to mechanical issues, according to its website, conjuring images of last year's difficult stretch when the quasi-public agency was plagued by hundreds of cancellations.

E-mail alerts from the authority said four trips of the M/V Governor ferry between Vineyard Haven and Woods Hole were canceled between about 5:30 and 8:30 a.m.

Sean Driscoll, a spokesman for the authority, addressed the cancellations in an e-mail message later Wednesday morning.

Driscoll said the "M/V Governor experienced an engine derating" — a reduction in its power rating — "last night when coming into Woods Hole shortly after 7 p.m. Our maintenance crews worked on the issue overnight and believed they had it addressed; however, the derating occurred again during a sea trial with the Coast Guard. The M/V Katama has assumed the route and the Governor is now headed to Fairhaven for repair."

It hasn't always been smooth sailing for the authority.

A scathing, [140-page report released in December described the agency](#), which runs ferries to the Vineyard and Nantucket, as badly understaffed, suffering from a “penny-pinching” mentality, and hampered by sparring internal factions.

Consultants found nearly two dozen issues contributed to a high-profile breakdown on St. Patrick’s Day 2018 when one ferry lost power, stranding 72 passengers off Martha’s Vineyard for five hours. The report said if the authority noticed and fixed just one of the issues, the episode may have been prevented.

A review in May 2018 found the authority had canceled 550 trips from January through April of last year, about 15 times the yearly average.

That was a big problem for the island, since the boats operated by the Steamship Authority are a crucial link with the mainland, carrying more than 3 million passengers and nearly half a million cars last year to and from Martha’s Vineyard and Nantucket, according to statistics published by the agency.

The monthslong review last year found systemic problems. It faulted the agency’s leadership for lacking “a clear and aspirational vision,” a failure that has “led to competing factions within the organization,” the report concluded.

It also noted that managers were far too focused on “day-to-day firefighting” at the expense of long-range planning. They were also in denial about the scope of the problems, the report found. Interviews with employees found they believed the problems that began in the spring were the result of a “perfect storm” of variables outside the agency’s control.

In a statement released shortly after the December review was made public, Steamship Authority general manager Robert Davis thanked consultants for their “thorough work,” saying it contained beneficial insights.

But he stressed at the time that the ferries are safe and disagreed with the report's findings that problems were likely to crop up again if major changes aren't made.

In 1960, the state Legislature passed a law to create the authority, which operates independently from state government. The oversight board is appointed by local officials from Cape Cod, the Islands, and New Bedford.

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