

SAN FRANCISCO BAY CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

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TO: All Design Review Board Members

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SUBJECT: Downtown San Francisco Ferry Terminal Expansion and Public Space Improvements, Ferry Building Area between Piers 1 and 14, City and County of San Francisco (First Review)
(For Board consideration on June 6, 2011)

Project Summary

Applicant: Port of San Francisco

Project Representative: Dan Hoddap and James Hurley, Port of San Francisco; Boris Dramov and Bonnie Fisher, ROMA Design Group.

Project Site: The proposed project would be located within the Ferry Building area, between Pier 1 to the north and Pier 14 to the south, in the City and County of San Francisco. The site includes all areas stretching from the Embarcadero promenade to the Bay, including Pier ½, the Ferry Building, the Ferry Plaza, Pier 2, the Agriculture Building, and an open water area between the Ferry Building and the Agriculture building known as the “lagoon”. Within the Bay, the ferry basin is distinguished between the North and South Basins (reflecting the water areas north and south of the Ferry Plaza). (See Exhibits, Figure 3, p. 8).

Project Background: The Port of San Francisco (in conjunction with the Water Emergency Transportation Authority (WETA)) has prepared preliminary plans for the expansion of the downtown San Francisco ferry terminal within the Ferry Building area. In addition, the Port has developed some overall public space improvement concepts for the greater area, all or portions of which may be included as part of WETA’s ferry terminal expansion project or other future projects. As the Downtown Ferry Terminal project design becomes more developed, WETA, the project representative for that project, will return to the Design Review Board with this specific project and its public access proposal for further review.

Proposed Ferry Terminal Improvements. In 2003, the Port completed the Phase 1 improvements to the Downtown Ferry Terminal that included two new terminals (Gates B and E), and the Pier 14 breakwater and public pier (see Exhibits, Figure 3, p. 8). Phase 2 of the ferry terminal expansion would include:

Within the north basin:

- Demolition and removal of Pier ½ (as required in BCDC’s Waterfront Special Area Plan (SAP));
- Construction of Gate A; and



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- Construction of a 20-foot by 205-foot canopy structure at Gate A and a similar 20-foot by 180-foot canopy structure at Gate B for weather protection, queuing and waiting.

(See Exhibits, Figures 29-30, pp. 30-31 and Figures 34-40, pp. 36-41)

Within the south basin:

- Demolition and removal of Pier 2 (as required in BCDC's SAP) and the apron area north of the Agriculture Building;
- Filling in the lagoon between the Ferry Building and the Agriculture Building (approximately 12,000 square feet) with new pier deck;
- Construction of Gates E, F and G;
- Construction of a 30-foot-wide promenade area to connect Gates E, F and G with the Ferry Plaza and Ferry Building in the north/south direction; and
- Construction of a 24-foot by 458-foot canopy structure along the length of the new promenade to interconnect the three new terminals.

(See Exhibits, Figures 29-30, pp. 30-31 and Figures 47-48, pp. 50-51)

Phase 3 of the proposed expansion would convert the side-loading berths at Gate E to bow-loading vessels, which may become necessary to accommodate the number of riders with the full build-out of Treasure Island (see Exhibits, Figures 31-32, pp. 32-33). In addition, the expansion would involve installing boarding area amenities such as ticket machines, fare collection equipment, improved lighting, and ferry boarding and arrival/departure information signs, as well as improved wayfinding signage in the vicinity of the Ferry Building. These more detailed improvements will be presented when WETA returns for DRB review of the project.

Preliminary Public Space Improvement Concepts. The preliminary public space improvement concepts developed by the Port include the following areas:

- **North of Ferry Building, Pier ½.** With the removal of Pier ½, the area between Gates A and B would be improved as an informal public access space/waiting area with a number of benches, trash receptacles, and a potential location for bicycle lockers (see Exhibits, Figures 29-30, pp. 30-31 and Figure 34-35, pp. 36-37).
- **Ferry Plaza.** The Ferry Plaza is the open pier area bounded by the Ferry Building to the west, the Golden Gate Ferry Terminal to the north, the BART ventilation structure and the former World Trade Club (now Carnelian by the Bay) to the east, and the Bay's edge to the south (see Exhibits, pp. 48-49). The Ferry Plaza is a dedicated public access area required by BCDC permits but is often occupied by illegally parked cars or trucks. Service vehicles are permitted to travel through but not stop or park in the public access area during the day from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Similarly, limited BART and Golden Gate Ferry vehicles are permitted to drive through the Ferry Plaza to access their facilities, and under an existing lease, valet drop-offs are permitted for the Carnelian by the Bay facility. Although vehicular use of the space is limited by BCDC's permit, vehicles continue to park illegally in the public plaza throughout the day and enforcement has been difficult to manage. On Saturday mornings, the Ferry Plaza is occupied by the farmers market.

Over the years, the Port and BCDC have actively tried to improve the public access use of the Ferry Plaza. As part of Phase 1 of the Downtown Ferry Terminal project, BCDC Permit No. 7-97 required the Port to redevelop the Ferry Plaza “with a new phased public access plan and program to enliven and improve public use of the area.” These efforts have included increasing security to monitor cars entering the area and putting out moveable chairs to study where the public gathers within the plaza. The study showed that the public tended to gather around certain areas, such as around the Gandhi statue, along the Ferry Building edge, or along the southern Bay edge and that a need exists for more tables and chairs in the area for people purchasing food nearby. Several photos show the public using the chairs for sitting, putting up their feet and as a table for food.

The Port proposes to improve areas along the south edge of the pier (South Bayside Promenade) and the east edge of the Ferry Building (East Bayside Promenade) and to allow the Ferry Plaza to remain as a flexible space for a mix of vehicular and pedestrian activities (see Exhibits, Figures 41-52, pp. 42-53). Suggestions for the Ferry Plaza have included providing a new concrete topping slab, possible special paving treatment, extending outdoor café seating into the Ferry Plaza, and moving the statue of Gandhi further east and adjacent to the new South Bayside Promenade and onto a new more engaging pedestal (see Exhibits, Figures 42, 43, and 55, pp. 44, 45, and 59).

Although there is a desire to keep the Ferry Plaza area as flexible as possible for farmers market days and for limited vehicular access, more definition to the space is needed to turn the plaza into a successful waterfront destination and an area that encourages public and pedestrian use, rather than vehicular use. BCDC staff believes more design treatments for the Ferry Plaza should be explored and developed to enliven this space as a public access space, emphasize this space as first and foremost a pedestrian-oriented area, discourage rampant vehicular use, and complement and add to the improvements proposed in the adjacent areas. BCDC staff suggests that bollards dividing this area from the adjacent public access areas be discouraged and instead, other pedestrian-friendly design treatments be explored that still separate vehicle and pedestrian areas (as needed) but that knits these areas together and that serve public access users over vehicles. Examples include the use of benches, bullrails or low concrete benches, as depicted in Figure 54, Type C of the Exhibits (p. 58) between the Ferry Plaza and the adjacent promenade areas. BCDC staff seeks the Board’s feedback on possible design improvements for the Ferry Plaza area.

- **East Bayside Promenade.** The East Bayside Promenade which currently stretches from Gate B to the northern edge of the BART platform would be improved and extended south to connect the Ferry Building area with Gates E, F and G (see Exhibits, Figure 47-48, pp. 50-51). The improvements include continuing the Embarcadero grey concrete paving with score joints at 5 feet on center, and installing a metal painted decorative guardrail, wood slat benches, and granite portal structures with a granite medallion at each gate. Adjacent to the Ferry Building on the Ferry Plaza, a continuous row of lighted bollards in a band of truncated domes is proposed to separate pedestrians and service vehicles and to provide a clear visual extension of the promenade path. A canopy structure is proposed to interconnect Gates E, F and G, provide weather protection and give structure to queuing and waiting.
- **South Bayside Promenade.** The South Bayside Promenade would improve the southern edge of the Ferry Plaza which, according to the applicants, currently “reads” as a roadway given the presence of motor vehicles and grade difference. The concept includes creating a clearly defined pedestrian promenade from the Embarcadero Roadway to the end of the BART platform and pier that emulates the pedestrian pier structures along the waterfront, such as Pier 7 and Pier 14 (see Exhibits, pp. 52-59). The promenade would reinforce the path of pedestrian movement with a bold graphic paving pattern, a unique guardrail, and seating. Various guardrail and seating

options along the promenade are proposed and are described on pages 56-58 of the Exhibits and illustrated in Figures 50-54. On the western portion of the promenade adjacent to the southern side of the Ferry Building, the promenade would be separated from vehicle use by bollards (see Exhibits, Figures 42-45, pp. 44-47). These bollards could continue east alongside the promenade and the Ferry Plaza, or could be replaced by low seating as illustrated in Figure 54, Type C, p. 58 of the Exhibits, to connect the promenade with the Ferry Plaza.

- **Embarcadero Plaza.** The Embarcadero Plaza would be a new plaza area created by the filling of the lagoon for improved pedestrian circulation, queuing and waiting areas and emergency response (see Exhibits, pp. 60-65). This space would also provide for better linkages between activities in the Ferry Building, a renovated Agriculture Building, the Embarcadero and the Ferry Plaza. A number of physical improvements have been considered for this area including enhanced paving (utilizing a pattern similar to the plaza in front of the Ferry Building with either all granite pavers, a combination of granite and Embarcadero grey concrete, or all Embarcadero grey concrete), a sculpture, such as of Harry Bridges, and landscaping, such as a grove of palms. Although Figures 56 and 57 show options with the plaza open and used for the farmers market, BCDC staff believes that landscaping or other vertical elements would be desirable in such a location to give the space definition during low-use times, and to avoid an empty, unwelcoming plaza, similar to what currently occurs in the Ferry Plaza. The farmers market functions well within the Ferry Plaza, which has been designed to be flexible in its space to accommodate this one-day use. Although there are opportunities for farmers market uses to spill onto the Embarcadero Plaza on market days, the staff believes that this area should be designed as a destination plaza, independent of the farmers market.

San Francisco Waterfront Special Area Plan Policies. The *San Francisco Waterfront Special Area Plan* (SAP) states that vehicle circulation in public access areas must “be limited to service and maintenance vehicles necessary to serve the facility and should be concentrated during late night and early morning hours.” The SAP requires that public access be provided free of charge to the public, be generally accessible at any time, and emphasize passive recreation and focus its proximity to the Bay and on the views and unique experiences that nearness to the Bay affords. The SAP also requires that “on-pier public access areas...incorporate unique and special amenities that draw the public to them, including cultural expression, (e.g., public art, event programming or unique views).” The *Public Access Design Guidelines* state that public access should feel public, be designed so that the user is not intimidated nor is the user’s appreciation diminished by structures, or incompatible uses and that there should be visual cues that public access is available for the public’s use by using site furnishings, such as benches, trash containers and lighting. The *Public Access Design Guidelines* further state that public access areas should be designed for a wide range of users, should maximize user comfort by designing for weather and day and night use and that each site’s historical, cultural and natural attributes provide opportunities for creating projects with a “sense of place” and a unique identity.

Public Access Issues. At this conceptual stage, the project applicant and staff are seeking the Board’s advice on the proposal. Specifically, the Board should focus on whether the proposed ferry terminal expansion and the preliminary public space improvement concepts would create attractive new public access areas and improve existing public access use of the Ferry Building area, and whether the proposed uses would impact physical and visual access to the Bay. The staff requests that the Board consider the following design questions during its review of the project:

1. Does the site layout provide usable and inviting public spaces that are oriented to the Bay, incorporate unique and special amenities that draw the public to them, create a “sense of place” and feel public?

2. Would the proposed canopy structures provide adequate protection in inclement weather, be an attractive element in their proposed locations, and be compatible with the adjacent historic buildings?
3. Are there alternative design treatments or public access improvements that could be considered in the Ferry Plaza area to animate this space as a public access destination, emphasize the space as first and foremost a pedestrian-oriented area, and discourage rampant vehicular use, while still allowing the space to be used in a flexible manner? Would the area benefit from enhanced paving treatment, public art, more tables and chairs, and outdoor café seating?
4. Would alternatives to the use of bollards, such as low concrete seating or benches, be an appropriate way to separate promenade areas from the Ferry Plaza in order to encourage the spilling of pedestrian uses into the Plaza area, while still maintaining required separation of pedestrian areas and limited vehicle uses?
5. Is there a preferred option for the guardrails and benches proposed along the South Bayside Promenade? Does the option maximize user comfort, provide, maintain and enhance visual access to the Bay and shoreline, and create a “sense of place” and unique identity?
6. Does the new Embarcadero Plaza and the proposed treatments in this area (sculpture, palm grove, paving) adequately preserve views to the Bay and maximize the public’s enjoyment of the plaza and the waterfront? Is the plaza appropriately designed for the site and for all users? Is it designed as a public access destination? Should seating or other public access improvements be considered?