

# SAN FRANCISCO BAY CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

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**TO:** Commissioners and Alternates  
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**SUBJECT: Status of Bay Area Ferry Service Planning and Implementation**  
(For Commission consideration on August 16, 2007)

## Summary

The Commission's strategic plan includes a goal to "improve and implement BCDC's program for protection, use and restoration of Bay resources." To accomplish this goal, the plan includes an objective that provides "[b]y September 1, 2007, the staff will provide the Commission with a report on the ongoing ferry system planning and operations." This report achieves that objective. The staff believes the key issues raised for BCDC by ferry operations are: (1) the potential for achieving regional goals for more transit-oriented development at ferry terminals; (2) the environmental impacts of dredging needed at ferry terminals; (3) the impacts of ferry operations on wildlife; (4) conflicts between ferry terminals and shoreline recreation; and (5) reconciling the goals of increasing public access with the security of ferry operations.

## Staff Report

**Existing Ferry Service.** Passenger ferry service on San Francisco Bay is currently provided by a variety of operators, funded through fare box receipts, federal transportation dollars, and state, regional and local funds.

- The Golden Gate Bridge Highway and Transportation District (GGBHTD) owns and operates ferry service between Sausalito and Larkspur in Marin County and San Francisco. GGBHTD also provides special event ferry service between Larkspur and the San Francisco Giant's ballpark for most home games.
- The Blue and Gold fleet provides contract ferry operation services for the Vallejo and Alameda-Oakland ferry services; and provides commute ferry service from Tiburon and midday service from Sausalito to San Francisco, and from San Francisco and Oakland to Angel Island.
- The Alameda/Oakland Ferry is a publicly subsidized public transit system operated by the City of Alameda and the Port of Oakland. Blue & Gold Fleet provides maritime services for



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the ferry service under contract with the City of Alameda.

- Alameda Harbor Bay service is a publicly subsidized water transit service operated by Alameda from the Harbor Bay Isle Ferry Landing located at the end of Harbor Bay Parkway on Bay Farm Island (City of Alameda) to the San Francisco Ferry Building. The City of Alameda contracts with Harbor Bay Maritime to provide this service.
- The Angel Island-Tiburon Ferry Company provides ferry service between Tiburon and Angel Island State Park, and the Golden Gate National Recreation Area provides service to Alcatraz Island from San Francisco through Hornblower Dining Yachts, a contractor.
- The Vallejo Baylink Ferry, operated by Vallejo Transit, a division of the City of Vallejo under contract with the Blue and Gold Fleet, provides service between San Francisco and Vallejo with connecting bus service to Six Flags Marine World.
- The San Francisco Bay Area Water Transit Authority (WTA) is a regional agency authorized by the State of California to operate a comprehensive San Francisco Bay Area public water transit system. The WTA seeks to create a partnership with other operators to run the best transit system in the Bay Area. Currently, the WTA does not operate ferry service on the Bay, but is working towards developing new ferry service at several Bay Area locations. The WTA is responsible for operating new ferry services.

**Proposed Ferry Service Expansion.** Planning for expansion of ferry service on San Francisco Bay is led primarily by the WTA with some assistance from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, and BCDC. In 2003, the Water Transit Authority's plan, *A Strategy to Improve Public Transit with an Environmentally Friendly Ferry System*, was approved by statute (Senate Bill 915, Ch. 714, stats of 2003). The plan calls for eight new routes plus service improvements on the existing ferry systems (See Figure 1). The WTA plans to add as many as 31 new passenger ferries to the existing fleet over the next ten years and to triple ferry patronage from four to twelve million commuters per year by 2025, drawing the majority of its riders from cars.

The WTA's first priorities for implementing its plan include delivering routes and facilities with identifiable funding sources, such as new bridge toll revenues from Regional Measure 2, which was passed by Bay Area voters in March 2004, local sales tax measures (San Francisco, Contra Costa and San Mateo counties), federal grants and fare box recovery. The routes that are supported by these funding sources include:

- South San Francisco-Oakland-Alameda
- Berkeley-San Francisco
- Oakland-Alameda-San Francisco (expansion of existing service)
- Richmond-San Francisco (capital only)
- Expansion of facilities at the San Francisco's Ferry Building

In addition, the WTA will construct two spare vessels to expand the fleet of ferries available to serve existing and planned routes on the Bay. Other projects that are moving forward with planning and environmental review include Hercules to San Francisco, Redwood City to San Francisco and Antioch-Martinez to San Francisco. Both Hercules and Redwood City routes are partially funded through county sales taxes, and additional funding for these projects is being sought. Ferry service from Treasure Island to San Francisco is being planned by the Treasure Island Redevelopment Authority in partnership with Treasure Island Community Development, LLC and with input from the WTA.

FIGURE 1<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Excerpted from "A Strategy to Improve Public Transit with an Environmentally Friendly Ferry System, Final Implementation & Operations Plan, San Francisco Bay Area Water Transit Authority, July 2003

The entire expanded water transit system improvements described in the WTA's plan were projected in 2003 to cost \$646 million over ten years. Capital costs were projected at \$396 million, and annual operating costs at \$46 million. The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) reviewed the plan and agreed with the WTA's ridership projections and findings that the investment in new routes proposed in the WTA Plan is cost-effective.

In addition to the ferry service expansion being planned by the WTA, the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) is exploring the potential for creating a recreational ferry service linking population centers with National and State Parks, such as Fort Mason, Fort Baker, Angel Island and East Shore State Park. GGNRA has conducted user surveys and is analyzing the results as part of the update to its General Management Plan for the GGNRA.

**MTC's Transit-Oriented Development Policy.** MTC's Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Policy, adopted in July 2005, aims to capitalize on investments in new transit corridors in the region by promoting the development of vibrant, mixed-use neighborhoods around new stations. MTC is updating the policy with the following three key elements:

1. Station-level thresholds to quantify appropriate minimum levels of development around transit stations along new corridors. MTC is considering a threshold of 2,500 housing units within one-half mile of a ferry terminal site.
2. Local station area plans that address future land-use changes, station access needs, circulation improvements, pedestrian-friendly design, TOD-supportive parking policies and other key features in a transit-oriented development.
3. Corridor working groups that bring together CMAs, city and county planning staff, transit agencies, and other key stakeholders.

One of the main aims of the TOD policy is to promote system efficiency, by ensuring that future transit extensions maximize ridership and productivity.

**BCDC's Role.** To help implement its TOD policy, MTC contracted with the Commission in the fall of 2006 to obtain the Commission's assistance on the preparation of station area plans for new ferry terminals; to work with MTC and the WTA and others on the update to MTC's TOD policy; to identify, analyze and help resolve constraints to development of TOD at selected ferry terminal sites; and to work directly with local governments to provide technical assistance. The agreement also provides that BCDC will work closely with the WTA in its efforts to advance its plan for expanding ferry service while integrating TOD around ferry terminals.

Since last fall, BCDC's staff has worked with MTC, the WTA and local governments to develop revisions to MTC's existing TOD policy that would establish higher residential development threshold requirements at those ferry terminal sites where development is possible and to require the provision of station access plans that demonstrate ridership potential equal to developed sites. MTC staff briefed the Commission on this policy at its June 21, 2007 meeting.

BCDC's staff has also provided technical assistance to several local governments planning to develop ferry terminals, including some that will develop TOD, and one local government that is unable to support this type of development. In particular, the staff has worked with Hercules, Richmond, Alameda, and South San Francisco on an ongoing basis to identify constraints and develop strategies to overcome them. For example, working with the City of Alameda, the staff

advocated for polling, and the use of a stakeholder process to open a dialogue on the City's Measure A, a charter provision that limits density on the island, and effectively prohibits TOD. Working with the WTA and its consultants, City of Richmond staff and stakeholders, the staff has worked to protect and integrate existing shoreline and Bay recreation uses into proposed TOD there. The following summarizes the status of these new ferry terminal/service projects.

**South San Francisco-Oakland Service.** The WTA's ridership studies anticipate nearly 1,000 daily passenger trips to and from South San Francisco by 2025. Conceptual plans of the terminal have been completed, the EIR was certified in December 2006, and detailed design is progressing in anticipation of permitting in 2008. The WTA is working with the San Mateo County Transit District (SamTrans) and the Peninsula Congestion Relief Alliance to provide feeder bus or shuttle service to the new terminal. The WTA developed a detailed marketing plan to promote the service. Boat construction commenced in Seattle in July, 2007. The proposed Oyster Point terminal will have a connection with the planned Bay Trail, which will provide a direct biking and pedestrian connection along the shoreline with connections to the street network. The Commission's Design Review Board will review the proposed project in the fall of 2007, and a BCDC permit application is expected to be submitted by the WTA for the project this year.

**Proposed Timeline**

1. Planning and Design: 2006-2007. (The design is currently about 35 percent complete).
2. Terminal and Pier Construction: 2008; Gangway and Float Construction: Fall 2007.
3. Initial Service: winter 2008.
4. Timeline dependent on permitting process, weather and related factors.

**Project Cost: \$46.2 Million**

1. Terminal construction: \$29 million (includes environmental review, design and ferry related marine improvements).
2. Vessels: \$17 million (two 149-passenger fast ferries).
3. Annual operating costs: \$3 million.

**Proposed Funding Sources**

1. Regional Measure 2: \$12 million in capital (2 vessels) and \$3 million in operating annually.
2. Federal Ferryboat Discretionary Fund (\$8 million).
3. San Mateo County Measure A Sales Tax Extension (\$20 million).
4. Farebox Revenues.

**Berkeley-San Francisco Service.** Four sites along the Berkeley waterfront are being studied as potential terminal locations. From south to north, the potential sites are located: (1) south of the Berkeley fishing pier; (2) the Berkeley Marina basin; (3) near the foot of Gilman Street; and (4) near the Berkeley-Albany border. Plans call for the Berkeley terminal to offer good connections to Amtrak, and for the WTA to work with AC Transit to provide feeder service to terminal in Berkeley. A Berkeley/Albany ferry could also provide connections for cyclists and pedestrians using the Bay Trail. Traffic studies are underway to model access to each of the four alternative sites. The WTA has commenced preparation of an environmental document, which will evaluate each of the sites and identify a preferred alternative, based on environmental,

operations, access and other considerations. Conceptual plans for each of the four alternative sites are being developed.

**Project Timeline**

1. Planning, Design and Construction: 2006-2011.
2. Initial Service: 2011.
3. Timeline dependent on availability of funds, environmental impacts and local support and commitment.
4. Environmental document scoping meeting held in March 2007.

### **Project Cost**

Cost estimates are not available at this time because a site has not been selected, a design has not been prepared, dredging amounts have not been determined, and other substantial project details have not been established.

### **Proposed Funding Sources**

1. Regional Measure 2 Bridge Toll Funds for vessel purchase (\$13 million) and for operating funds (over \$3 million annually), terminal development is partially funded.
2. Federal Ferryboat Discretionary Fund.
3. Farebox Revenues.

**Richmond-San Francisco Service.** The WTA's ridership studies anticipate 1,947 daily passenger trips between Richmond and San Francisco by 2025. The majority will be commuters shifting from cars to water transit. Plans for the land surrounding Richmond's Marina Bay include approximately 1.5 million square feet of office and R&D development, more than 1900 residential units and mixed-use development. The ferry terminal locations being evaluated are within the Richmond Marina Bay Yacht Harbor basin south of I-580. Richmond ferry service potentially offers good connections to the Richmond Amtrak station, which is adjacent to BART, in the heart of Richmond's downtown. The WTA is funding an ongoing study and stakeholder process to develop a preferred alternative design that would meet MTC's TOD goals. WTA is also working with AC Transit and BART to provide feeder bus service to a Richmond ferry terminal. Comprehensive waterfront planning could minimize the need for large and expensive parking facilities by tying together pedestrian and bicycle access between existing and new residential development, the Bay Trail and the ferry terminal.

### **Project Timeline**

1. Planning/Design: 2006-2008.
2. Initial Service: Unknown.
3. Timeline dependent on availability of funds, environmental impacts and local support and commitment.

### **Project Cost**

Cost estimates are not available at this time because a site has not been selected, a design has not been prepared, dredging amounts have not been determined, and other substantial project details have not been established.

### **Proposed Funding Sources**

1. Regional Measure 2 Bridge Toll Funds.
2. Federal Ferryboat Discretionary Fund.
3. Transit Impact Fees.
4. Farebox Revenues

**Expansion of Existing Oakland-Alameda-San Francisco Service.** MTC has awarded a station-area planning grant to the City of Alameda to develop an area plan for redevelopment of the Alameda Point portion of the closed Alameda Navy base. The City of Alameda, after an unsuccessful planning endeavor with one developer, has contracted with a new developer to create a plan for the site that would include a new ferry terminal potentially located in the seaplane lagoon on the southern shore of the island. Since the developer was recently hired,

little has been accomplished on developing new plans for ferry service at this time. BCDC's staff is working closely with the City of Alameda, MTC and WTA on this project. The WTA's Implementation Plan also calls for expansion of ferry service between Oakland-Alameda and

San Francisco, primarily by acquiring new boats to increase the frequency of service. Progress on this portion of the Plan has been impacted by other work and attention to issues such as contingency planning.

**Project Timeline**

1. Planning/Design: 2007-2009.
2. Initial Service: 2011.
3. Timeline dependent on availability of funds, environmental impacts and local support and commitment.

**Project Cost**

Cost estimates are not available at this time because a site has not been selected, a design has not been prepared, dredging amounts have not been determined, and other substantial project details have not been established.

**Proposed Funding Sources**

1. Regional Measure 2 Bridge Toll Funds
2. Federal Ferryboat Discretionary Fund
3. Transit Impact Fees and County Transportation Funds
4. Farebox Revenue

**Expansion of facilities at the San Francisco's Ferry Building.** The WTA has identified the lack of docking capacity at the ferry building as a key capacity constraint for ferry emergency response. This project is one of the highest priority emergency response projects. The WTA has prepared a draft plan for improvements to the San Francisco South Basin Ferry Terminal, including the addition of two access floats, and conceptual plans for adaptive reuse of the historic Agriculture Building. The project raises significant historic preservation, seismic and access issues. The cost will be extremely high, and will require multiple sources of funding, including Regional Measure 2, federal and local funds, Proposition 1-B bond funds and possibly a public-private partnership.

**Treasure Island-San Francisco.** Development plans prepared by Treasure Island Community Developers, LLC (TICD) call for expanded residential and commercial development of 6,000 housing units, 250,000 square feet of retail, and 400-500 hotel rooms. Implementation of these plans would create significant traffic increases between the Island, San Francisco and the East Bay. Ferry transit would be a key element meeting this traffic demand. Initial ferry service is proposed between a new Ferry Quay on the western shore of Treasure Island and the Ferry Building in San Francisco. Future service to the East Bay from the east side of Treasure Island is a possibility. In addition to the new Ferry Quay an Intermodal Transit Hub is planned for the western side of Treasure Island. The proposed mixed-use development clusters most densely around the Intermodal Transit Hub. Residential units would be located within a reasonable walking distance to the Ferry Quay/Transit Hub. Streets and pathways will be designed to give priority to bicycles and pedestrians.

Ferry service to Treasure Island would reduce traffic congestion by taking travelers to and from Treasure Island off of I-80 and the Bay Bridge. It would also provide another mode of access to the island, which presently has limited one-lane ingress/egress onto the bridge.

**Project Timeline**

1. Planning, Design and Construction: 2005-2008.
2. Initial Service: Unknown.
3. Timeline dependent on availability of funds, environmental impacts and local support and commitment.

#### **Project Cost**

1. Terminal construction: Unknown.
2. Vessels: \$17 million (two 149 passenger boats) (staff estimate).
3. Annual operating costs: Unknown.

#### **Proposed Funding Sources**

TICD will fund the purchase of one ferry vessel and 20 percent of two additional ferry vessels, in addition to funding the construction of the Ferry Quay/Transit Hub. Vehicle tolls will help fund ongoing transit operations.

**Hercules-San Francisco.** A new Hercules waterfront development, a mixed-use commercial and residential area, complete with a multi-modal commuter rail station and ferry terminal is currently in design. The ferry terminal and train station are being planned for the same building. The Hercules waterfront will include over 2,000 dwelling and live/work units within one-half mile of the ferry terminal, 490,000 sq. ft. of retail, office and civic space, parking and a variety of restaurants and cafes. It will be pedestrian and bike friendly. A total of nearly 2,900 dwelling units have been or are in development along the Hercules waterfront. WTA's ridership studies anticipate 1,022 daily passenger trips to-and-from Hercules/Rodeo by 2025.

Railroad tracks in Hercules separate the developing Town Center and anticipated parking garage from the proposed ferry terminal location. A new Amtrak/Capitol Corridor station along the shoreline of Hercules is proposed, and will be integrated with the ferry terminal, adding to the City's transit-oriented possibilities. Hercules planners envision a pedestrian bridge crossing the tracks for easy access to a potential ferry terminal. The Western Contra Costa Transit Authority (WestCat) currently provides bus service to and from Hercules and BART and could easily connect with the new ferry terminal.

#### **Project Timeline**

1. Planning/Design: 2010-2011.
2. Initial Service: 2012.
3. Timeline dependent on availability of funds, environmental impacts and local support and commitment.

#### **Project Funding.**

The City of Hercules is eligible for Contra Costa County Measure J funding. Additional funding sources will be needed to complete this project.

**Redwood City - San Francisco Service.** WTA's ridership studies forecast 1,420 daily passenger trips between Redwood City and San Francisco by 2025. Most will be commuters shifting from cars to transit. A Redwood City terminal would enhance shoreline access and support the city's growing waterfront business and residential communities. In addition to serving job centers, this terminal could serve proposed residential projects. Redwood City is revitalizing its downtown and several downtown residential housing developments are under

review. WTA will work with SamTrans to provide feeder service to the Redwood City ferry terminal.

The Port of Redwood City retained a consultant who prepared a feasibility report for development of a ferry terminal and service. The report identifies a preferred terminal location at the eastern tip of the Port of Redwood City, within a BCDC port priority use area. The project would include a 254-car parking lot, and require approximately 17,000 cubic yards of dredging.

**Project Costs**

1. Terminal construction: \$20 million.
2. Vessels: \$22 million (two 300-passenger fast ferries).
3. Annual operating costs: \$5 million for mature service.

**Proposed Funding Sources**

1. Federal Ferryboat Discretionary Fund.
2. San Mateo County Measure A Sales Tax Extension.
3. Transit Impact Fees.
4. Farebox Revenues

**Antioch-Martinez-San Francisco.** The WTA, in partnership with the City of Antioch, is investigating three alternative sites for a ferry terminal, including the Antioch Marina, a downtown waterfront option and the Fulton Shipyard at the east end of town. Combined ferry service would provide a convenient and direct link between Eastern Contra Costa County and the Bay Area, and would complement the proposed eBART service. WTA's ridership forecasts identified 1,133 daily Martinez passenger trips and 800 Pittsburg/Antioch passenger trips to and from San Francisco by 2025. The majority will be commuters shifting from cars to water transit.

Antioch and Martinez terminals can support growing waterfront business and residential communities by anchoring Water-Transit Oriented Development (WaTOD). New plans for downtown residences, office buildings and restaurants are currently under development in the City of Antioch. New Martinez development proposals include a county recorder building, several downtown office buildings and new residential units. Martinez, Antioch and Pittsburg potentially all offer good connections to Amtrak that would complement ongoing waterfront water transit-oriented development (WaTOD). WTA will work with County Connection and Tri-Delta Transit to provide feeder service to ferry terminals in Antioch and Martinez. Next steps include finding funding for environmental studies so that a preferred alternative sites can be identified in Martinez and Antioch, and plans developed.

**Project Timeline**

1. Planning, Design and Construction: 2009-2012.
2. Initial Service: 2012.
3. Timeline dependent on availability of funds, environmental impacts and local support and commitment.

**Proposed Funding Sources**

1. Federal Ferryboat Discretionary Fund.
2. Transit Impact Fees.
3. Farebox Revenues.
4. State Infrastructure bonds subject to voter approval on November 7, 2006.

**Port Sonoma Marina.** In July of 2005, the U.S. Congress appropriated \$20 million for construction of ferry boats and a ferry terminal at the Port Sonoma Marina. There has been no progress to date on planning, design or environmental review for this project.

**Key Issues.** There are several key issues that the Commission seeks to address with ferry terminal development. Some of the most frequently raised issues are discussed briefly here.

1. **Transit Oriented Development (TOD).** The preamble and policies of the regional Smart Growth Strategy have been adopted by the Commission. As a member of the Joint Policy Committee, the Commission advocates for implementation of those policies, including supporting TOD at ferry terminal sites where such development is possible and consistent with the Commission's law and policies. An important consideration will be designing these ferry terminal TOD's to accommodate projected sea level rise.

2. **Dredging.** Many of the ferry terminals require new and maintenance dredging. The Commission requires that dredged material be reused or disposed of outside of the Bay, unless such reuse or disposal is infeasible.

3. **Habitat and Wildlife.** The WTA has prepared a Wake Wash Study and a Rafting Birds Study to assess the potential impacts of expanding ferry operations on habitats and wildlife. Increased (wake) wave action can cause sediment re-suspension and deposition in sensitive habitats or marsh erosion. Other potential impacts of concern to the Commission include effects on threatened or endangered species, other habitat impacts, such as disruption from construction activities, or dredging of eelgrass beds, spread of invasive species; impacts to resident or migratory waterfowl; impacts to fisheries, including threatened or endangered fish; and potential impacts to water quality.

4. **Recreation.** Some ferry terminal sites are proposed within areas the Commission has designated for waterfront park priority use. The Commission's policies allow ferry terminals in park priority use areas and marinas, and near fishing piers and launching ramps, provided that the ferry terminal and service does not disrupt existing or potential recreational uses at these sites.

5. **Public Access.** The Commission requires that every project provide the maximum feasible public access consistent with the project. Recently developed requirements from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security have made provision of high quality public access at some terminal locations challenging.