

MEMORANDUM

September 5, 2013

TO: MEMBERS, PORT COMMISSION
Hon. Doreen Woo Ho, President
Hon. Kimberly Brandon, Vice President
Hon. Willie Adams
Hon. Leslie Katz
Hon. Mel Murphy

FROM: Monique Moyer
Executive Director

SUBJECT: Informational Presentation by the Water Emergency Transportation Authority (WETA): Overview of WETA's System and Plans for Expansion

DIRECTOR'S RECOMMENDATION: Informational Item – No Action Required

SUMMARY

Staff from the Bay Area Water Emergency Transportation Authority (WETA) will present an overview of WETA's system and plans for expansion. WETA currently operates weekday commute service on four routes, serving terminals in Alameda, Alameda Harbor Bay, Oakland, Vallejo and South San Francisco. In San Francisco, WETA serves the Ferry Building, Pier 41 and AT&T Park. WETA's offices are located at Pier 9, which also serves as a maintenance facility and midday layover location for ferry vessels. WETA also operates weekend service to San Francisco from Vallejo and Oakland/Alameda, weekend and seasonal service to Angel Island and excursion service to Giants games at AT&T Park.

WETA is not only charged with developing and operating a regional passenger ferry system on San Francisco Bay, but also with providing emergency transportation in the event of a major disruption to regional mobility, such as may be the case in the event of a major earthquake or a situation like the recent Bay Bridge shutdown. Today's presentation by WETA staff provides an overview of WETA's current operations and planning. This includes ongoing efforts to expand the downtown San Francisco ferry terminal ("Downtown Ferry Terminal") in the Ferry Building Area, which continues to grow and evolve as a major Bay Area intermodal transportation hub.

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AGENCY HISTORY & CURRENT OPERATIONS

The Water Transit Authority, a predecessor agency to WETA, was formed by the California State Legislature in 1999 with a mandate to create a long-term plan for new and expanded water-transit services on San Francisco Bay. The enabling legislation directed the Water Transit Authority to develop an Implementation and Operations Plan, which was approved in 2003. In 2008 a new state law, SB 976, dissolved the Water Transit Authority and replaced it with WETA. The 2008 legislation defined WETA's responsibilities as consolidating and operating existing ferry services, planning new routes and coordinating ferry transportation response to emergencies or disasters. City-operated services in Alameda and Vallejo were transferred to WETA control in 2011 and 2012, respectively. WETA also opened a new terminal in South San Francisco in 2013 and is leading planning studies at several other expansion candidate sites including Berkeley, Richmond, Treasure Island, Redwood City, and others. Finally, WETA participates in regional emergency preparedness planning and has enhanced service to respond to recent emergencies and man-made events such as Bay Bridge closures and disruptions in BART service.

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WETA owns 12 vessels which range in capacity from 149 to 395 passengers. Funding has been secured to replace two of these vessels with additional, higher capacity vessels to be added as expansion projects come on line. Ferry service is provided through a contract operator, Blue and Gold Fleet, which crews vessels and provides maintenance, dispatch and scheduling functions. Light maintenance and fueling currently occurs at Piers 9 and 41 in San Francisco and a facility on Mare Island in Vallejo. Final design and construction is about to commence on a \$25 million replacement maintenance facility on Mare Island. Initial design activities are beginning for a Central Bay Maintenance Facility located in Alameda, which will serve the central bay fleet and replace the Pier 41 and Pier 9 maintenance facilities.

Systemwide ridership for June 2013 – the last complete month of data without a BART Strike – averaged 5,499 for weekdays, an increase of almost 15 percent over June 2012. Individual lines all experienced strong ridership growth over the past year, led by Harbor Bay (15%), Oakland/Alameda (11%) and Vallejo (11%). Even South San Francisco, which struggled to attract riders in its first six months of service saw strong growth in 2013 and ended its first year up 58% over its opening month. While the challenge for South San Francisco is still to attract riders to the service, the other three terminals all are experiencing crowding and capacity issues requiring more frequent service and/or larger vessels to meet current and future demand.

EXPANSION PLANS

WETA's expansion program is guided by the 2003 *Implementation and Operations Plan*. That plan identified up to 16 ferry routes that could one day traverse San Francisco Bay. The 2012-2013 *WETA Short Range Transit Plan* provided an update to the expansion program identifying near term projects with identified capital funding sources and longer term projects with only a portion or no funding source identified to date. Near term projects include new terminals at Treasure Island, Berkeley, Richmond and the expansion of the Downtown Ferry Terminal. Longer-term projects include new terminals in Hercules, Martinez, Antioch and Redwood City. In addition to these projects, there is interest in and exploratory planning taking place for terminals at Seaplane Lagoon in Alameda and Piers 30/32 and 16th Street/Mission Bay in San Francisco.

Downtown San Francisco Ferry Terminal Expansion

In December 2008 WETA and the Port entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to undertake a coordinated planning effort in accordance with the Port's objectives for stewardship of the San Francisco waterfront and WETA's mission to provide ferry service and emergency operations. Since then, WETA has been working closely with the Port of San Francisco as well as the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) on the expansion and improvement of WETA's facilities at the Downtown Ferry Terminal located in the Ferry Building area. Because most new routes converge in downtown San Francisco, this project is a centerpiece of WETA's overall expansion program. At full build out, there will be three additional gates constructed in the Ferry Building area as well as upland improvements to facilitate passenger circulation and queuing. These improvements will be needed to implement WETA's near term expansion projects as the existing two gates in operation (Gates B and E) are fully utilized. In addition, the improvements will facilitate expanded operations in the event of emergency service and provide needed flexibility to enable transfers and alternate San Francisco waterfront service plans.

WETA is presently undertaking environmental review of the project as required under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA). The project recently closed the public comment period on the Draft EIS/EIR and is expected to complete environmental review in spring of 2014. With this expected completion date, construction of the project is anticipated to commence by early 2015. Expansion can occur in phases and it has not been determined whether the North or South Basin improvements will be phased first. The overall project cost estimate is \$125 million.

The critical role of the Downtown Ferry Terminal was highlighted during the recent July BART strike. The week before the July 1, 2013 BART strike, WETA averaged 5,662 weekday passengers. However, during the strike WETA's services expanded to carry an average of 14,934 passengers – a threefold increase. That quick mobilization was made possible by the utilization of Blue and Gold staff and vessels normally in private operation. However, it highlighted constraints at terminals both in the east bay and San Francisco. In the east bay, morning waits of up to three hours and lines up to 1,000

people long occurred in Oakland because there is only one float available to serve ferry vessels. In San Francisco, because Gate E in the South Basin is the only gate equipped with Clipper fare card readers there was a significant imbalance of landings between Gates B and E. During the strike week, there were 62 landings at Gate E versus only 15 at Gate B. Passenger staging areas were concentrated in a limited area around Gate E, creating confusion and causing passenger queues to extend out to the Embarcadero or interfere with the operations of the Ferry Building.

There are both immediate and long term solutions to these operational capacity issues at the Downtown Ferry Terminal. WETA, Port of San Francisco and MTC staff are currently working to accelerate installation of Clipper equipment at Gate B in advance of a potential October 2013 BART strike. Adding two new gates in the South Basin and decking over the “lagoon” area between the Agricultural Building and the Ferry Building should also provide adequate space for future passenger queuing areas and staging zones for emergency operations.

CONCLUSION

The Port of San Francisco works closely with WETA staff and supports existing and expanded ferry service in planning, funding and construction activities. WETA’s largest project, the expansion of berthing and landside facilities at the Downtown Ferry Terminal is closely coordinated with the overall Port planning for the Ferry Building area. Port staff has coordinated ‘Proposition K’ funding for the Downtown Ferry Terminal between the multiple agencies involved in Ferry and waterfront operations. Existing facilities at Pier 9, Pier 41 and AT&T Park are owned by the Port and operated and/or maintained by WETA or its contract operator. The Port and WETA will continue to work in close partnership to implement water transportation enhancements serving the San Francisco’s waterfront.

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Exhibit A: WETA System Map



WATER EMERGENCY TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY