

BERKELEY/ALBANY

FERRY NEWS

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The Water Emergency Transportation Authority (WETA) continues to plan for new ferry service from Berkeley/Albany to San Francisco. This issue of Berkeley/Albany Ferry News focuses on efforts to complete the Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/S) and secure additional project funding for the project. Please contact Shirley Douglas, WETA Community Relations Manager at 415-364-3191 or douglas@watertransit.org with comments.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROCESS CONTINUES

The Scoping Process was the First Step

Through input from public meetings, four potential ferry terminal sites in Berkeley and Albany were identified (pictured at left) and are being studied in the EIR/S. The environmental process got underway in March 2007 with scoping meetings in Berkeley and Albany.

Nearly 300 individual comments were received throughout the scoping period. The most frequently cited concerns expressed

were: traffic, parking, the existence of state and local parklands at alternative sites, recreational impacts and impacts on water quality particularly due to dredging.

In addition to comments from the general public, the Albany City Council passed a Resolution (by a vote of 3 to 2) asking that two sites in their city be dropped from further consideration, including the alternative at the foot of Buchanan and the Gilman site. While the Gilman site is in the City of Berkeley, the City of Albany's border is quite close.

For more information on the scoping comments please visit www.watertransit.org.

Completing the Draft Environmental Document

Since the completion of the scoping meetings, WETA and its consultants have been analyzing possible project environmental impacts at each site, along with measures to mitigate significant impacts identified. These analyses are incorporated into a draft EIR/S now being reviewed by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Once FTA's comments are incorporated, a Draft EIR/S will be issued for public comments for 30-45 days. We expect to hold at least two public hearings on the EIR/S in early Summer 2008 in the Berkeley/Albany area. Comments will also be received via e-mail, fax, and regular mail. Information on the public hearings will be posted on our website www.watertransit.org.

Findings To Date

The Draft EIR/S will present the specific environmental analyses for each of the four sites investigated. Some of the unique impacts of each site are summarized on the next page.

Once comments have been taken on the Draft EIR/S, the WETA Board of Directors will revisit the viability of each alternative, and will likely eliminate a number of alternatives from consideration before proceeding to the Final Environmental Document. Eliminating alternatives with significant environmental impacts in the final document will expedite the preparation of the EIR/S and the approval process.

SB976

As a result of recent legislation, our name has changed and our mission has expanded. Details on the next page.

WATER EMERGENCY TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

Findings To Date (continued from front). Site impact summary below.

Site Alternatives	Environmental Issues
Buchanan St	A terminal at Buchanan requires a significant amount of dredging. In addition, the site is opposed by California State Parks, who would be required to issue a permit for the site.
Gilman St	A terminal at Gilman requires a significant amount of dredging, and has significant impacts to adjacent eelgrass and rafting bird areas. The site is also opposed by the California State Parks, who would be required to issue a permit for the site.
Berkeley Marina	A Berkeley Marina terminal would disrupt existing uses within the Berkeley Marina.
Berkeley Pier	The Berkeley Pier site would impact parking at adjacent businesses and would require construction of a breakwater to protect the terminal from adverse weather.

MORE FEDERAL DOLLARS FOR BERKELEY/ALBANY FERRY SERVICE

In January 2008 Congresswoman Barbara Lee held a press conference in Berkeley to highlight the additional federal dollars that will be coming to her District from the recently passed 2007-2008 Appropriations Bill. The Appropriations Bill includes \$643,000 for Berkeley/Albany ferry service, which both Congresswoman Lee and Berkeley Mayor Tom Bates strongly support.

“We are continuing to look for federal earmarks each year as part of our Funding Plan for Berkeley/Albany ferry service,” says WETA CEO Steve Castleberry. “Each dollar brings us one step closer to delivering the project, so we are grateful for the leadership of Congresswoman Barbara Lee, Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, and other Bay Area political leaders for showing strong support for ferry service in the Bay Area.”



Congresswoman Barbara Lee and Berkeley Mayor Tom Bates

MORE FERRIES ON THE BAY

In late 2007, the WTA ordered two more passenger ferries, which will be put into service on either the new South San Francisco ferry route or the Berkeley/Albany ferry route scheduled for 2010/2011. The



vessels will also

be available as spare vessels for emergency response in case of temporary disruption of transit service or damage to the Bay Area highways and bridges. They are being built by Kvichak Marine Industries in Seattle, Washington.

The new vessels continue our mission of expanding ferry service in the San Francisco Bay area using vessels that are 10 times cleaner than existing ferries. In the past year WTA has awarded four vessel contracts, more than have been built in the Bay Area in the previous 10 years combined. The two new vessels will each have a 199 passenger capacity, have room for 35 bicycles and will be capable of speeds up to 25 knots.

Effective January 1, 2008, a new State Law - SB 976 - replaced the Water Transit Authority (WTA) with a new agency, the San Francisco Bay Area Water Emergency Transportation Authority (WETA). This bill gave the new agency the responsibility to coordinate ferry's response in the event of a disaster. This responsibility is in addition to the current mission of delivering new ferry services, such as the SSF project.

The new agency will be governed by a new five person Board of Directors, four of which were announced on March 20. Board members include the following appointments by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger: Charlene Haught Johnson, Board Chair and former chair of the WTA Board; Anthony Intintoli, Jr., Board Vice-Chair, former WTA Board member and former Mayor of the City of Vallejo; and Gerald Bellows, Logistics Management Officer for the US Marine Administration. The Senate Committee on Rules appointed Beverly Johnson, Mayor of the City of Alameda and former WTA Board member. The final Board member will be appointed by Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez but has not yet been named. The first meeting of the new WETA Board of Directors is scheduled for Monday, March 31 from 9 AM to 12 noon at the Port of San Francisco, Bayside Conference Room, Pier 1 on the Embarcadero, at the foot of Washington Street in San Francisco. Go to www.watertransit.org for the meeting agenda.