

MEETING SUMMARY

San Francisco Bay Area Water Transit Authority Community Advisory Committee Meeting Summary

CAC ATTENDEES: Mayor Al Boro/San Rafael, Supervisor Michael Kerns/Sonoma County, Mayor Pedro Gonzalez/South San Francisco, Mayor Ed Balico/Hercules, Barbara Heller/San Rafael City Council, Joan Lundstrom/Larkspur, Paul Albritton/Sausalito City Council, Bill Seelinger/San Francisco, Peter Hillier/Berkeley, Allan Maris/Albany City Council, Arne Simonsen/Antioch City Council, Nello Bianco/Martinez, Miles Berger/Tiburon, Kevin Rose for Supervisor Mark Church, San Mateo County

MEETING DATE: March 12, 2003

FROM: Veronica Sanchez, Manager and Karen Shelver, Assistant, WTA Community and Government Relations

DATE: September 24, 2003

—▶ **NEXT MEETING: June 12, 2003 – 10am-12pm, SFSU Extension, 425 Market St., Rm. 2601-2602, SF CA**

The Community Advisory Committee held its meeting on March 12, 2003 from 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. The meeting began at 10:05 am.

1. Call to Order and Motion to Approve Minutes of October 23, 2002 CAC Meeting

Chair Diane Howard called the meeting to order. A motion to approve the October 23, 2002 meeting minutes was made by Mayor Ed Balico (Hercules) and seconded by Councilmember Joan Lundstrom (Larkspur).

2. Report of Chief Executive Officer: Mr. Tom Bertken

Programmatic EIR: The WTA extended the comment period for the Draft Programmatic Environmental Report until the end of January to provide time for the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) to complete its evaluation. The WTA will be issuing another EIR alternative-the proposed routes recommended in the Implementation and Operations Plan (IOP). There will be a new public comment period up to the end of April. The Board is expected to review and certify the programmatic EIR in May.

a. **BAAQMD's REVIEW:** Their review was consistent with our environmental document, and the expanded ferry system identified in the IOP would result in less emissions than the current ferry services on the Bay.

b. **IOP:** Delivered to the California State Legislature on December 12, 2002.

3. STATUS REPORT ON PROPOSED FUNDING OPTIONS

State Legislation: Senate Bill 915 & 916 Ms. Veronica Sanchez (WTA) reported that Senate Bill 915, approving the WTA's IOP, was introduced by Senator Perata and other Bay Area members. Ms. Sanchez noted that the Bay Area Council did the laying out of the framework and the foundation for the WTA as an operating agency. Major changes proposed in SB 915 include:

- SB 915 gives the final approval for the WTA to operate the enhanced service. The proposed legislation approves the IOP (subject to future approval of the programmatic EIR). In the future the plan would be updated subject to public hearings.
- Requires WTA's boats to exceed Federal EPA 207 air emissions standards by 85%, as requested by Bluewater Network.

- Gives the WTA a lead coordinating role of ferry operators in disaster response.
- Specifies funding sources (State, local and Federal funds) that would be available to transit operators. The WTA is considering an amendment by AC transit asking it to exclude itself from apply for operating funds from the Transit Development Assistance Fund and the State Transit Assistance Fund.

Mr. Allan Maris (Albany) asked if is it a possibility that AC Transit would become a transit operator under this legislation. Ms. Sanchez responded that the IOP provides the WTA's Board with the flexibility to decide how service to new routes would be delivered.

Mr. Peter Hillier (Berkeley) asked if a discussion with AC Transit has been had with the WTA regarding the protection of current interests AC Transit has. Ms. Sanchez answered that negotiations are pending and the WTA's Board had not been briefed on AC's proposal.

Ms. Joan Lundstrom (Larkspur) asked about the Golden Gate Bridge District's stance on SB 915. Ms. Sanchez responded that the protection in the existing statute setting procedures for expanding service on existing routes has not been changed. Ms. Sanchez mentioned that the WTA is barred from going after any existing bridge toll funds (Regional Measure 1). If existing ferry operators request a transfer of their services to the WTA, the proposed legislation would allow the WTA to seek could seek those funds if a transfer occurred.

Mr. Miles Berger (Tiburon) asked if service to Tiburon is precluded from competing for funds because it is a public/private service. Ms. Sanchez responded that Tiburon is not precluded from expanding or enhancing service for this reason as long as the WTA follows the set process.

Mr. Nello Bianco (Martinez) asked what role MTC has in allocating funds to the WTA and if MTC can put restrictions on the money that we receive from the Federal and State sources through MTC. Ms. Sanchez responded that MTC programs Federal discretionary funds and the WTA cannot supercede this authority because of Federal law.

Mr. Bill Seelinger (San Francisco) if the new boats would achieve an 85% lower emission rate per passenger mile, compared with currently existing boats, with regard to ferryboats versus automobiles. Ms. Mary Frances Culnane (WTA) responded yes. Mr. Bertken added that automobiles have become so clean that, with the provisions that we have put into SB 915, moving people in our vessels would be cleaner than other modes of transit, cleaner than autos or buses that are currently transporting people. Ms. Culnane further said that the comparison between emissions per seat on a ferryboat to that of a car, the ferryboat emits .06% more emissions per seat. Comparing emissions per seat of a bus and that of a ferry, the ferry came in lower in emissions than the bus. The ferry industry is only starting to be regulated this year. There is much catching up to do as far as EPA regulations go with regard to emission comparisons. Ms. Sanchez said that extensive ridership studies show that the target ferry rider will most probably not ride another form of public transit. This is further incentive to get people out of cars and onto a cleaner form of public transit.

Ms. Sanchez reported that Senate Bill 916, the proposed toll expenditure bill, was also introduced but it does not have a spending list of recommended projects. She summarized projects that had been submitted for consideration to the Toll Advisory Committee: BART's retrofit (at \$200 million), future BART expansion to Central Contra Costa County, Express Buses, and Transbay Terminal. The WTA's requested funding for all routes recommended in the draft IOP. Due to limited funds, Senate Select Committee staff is recommending:

- a. Expansion of 2 boats in Alameda-Oakland;
- b. Two boats to start Berkeley services with operating costs for ferries and bus included;
- c. Two spare boats for the system;
- d. Expansion and improvements to the San Francisco Ferry Terminal;
- e. Funds for the WTA to do planning, environmental and engineering studies (including \$1 million for Port Sonoma studies);
- f. Funding of WTA's administrative expenses at \$3 million per year.

Questions and Answers

Ms. Barbara Heller (Larkspur) asked what agency the WTA asked for toll funding from and who made the decision to request that funding. Ms. Sanchez answered that the Toll Advisory Committee was convened last fall. It is jointly staffed by the Senate Select Committee on Transportation (Senator Perata's staff) and MTC's legislative staff. Other CMAs and transit agencies participated by submitting their priority projects to assist Senator Perata's staff in developing an expenditure plan for the revenues from the new toll. The projects on the list must allow for connections to take traffic off of the bridges that they serve so the increase could meet the legal definition of a user fee. User fees only require a majority vote in the Legislature and at the ballot.

Where CMAs or local officials did not making ferry service as their top priority for toll funding, the WTA's requests were at a disadvantage. Ms. Sanchez clarified that contrary to press reports in the Marin Independent Journal, the WTA did request funding for Golden Gate Bridge Corridor services would cross the San Rafael Bridge from Marin County to Richmond. Ms. Sanchez indicated that all CAC members from Marin would be received a copy of the WTA's rebuttal to the inaccurate articles by the end of the week. However, other projects were of higher priority to the county and GGBHTD such as SMART (Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit), and express bus service.

Mr. Morrison (WTA staff) commented that in terms of the \$125 million a year or so that the \$1 increase would raise, somewhere around 17% of that money would go toward new water transit projects, which is good considering the keen competition.

Ms. Sanchez added that the WTA conducted a poll (copy enclosed) at the request of Senator Perata showing that 87% of the public expects a toll increase on State owned bridges. When the package was polled for transit enhancement for a regional measure of funding for better intermodal connections, it was found that even after negative arguments, support for an increase was still holding at 64%. Support for expansion of ferries polled at 62%.

Mr. Paul Albritton (Sausalito) asked if the existing ferry service in Marin qualifies for the User Fee Requirement and if it is correct that when the Marin County Transportation Authority met it did not recommend ferry service. Mr. Morrison responded that the WTA stands by its ridership study that shows that over the next 25 years, ridership on the Sausalito and Larkspur routes could double, and the WTA is working with the Bridge District to accommodate that growth. Chair Howard further commented that Redwood City was very disappointed when it did not come up as a "first tier" project with the toll money. Redwood City and Contra Costa County cities desiring ferry service are going to be full participants at some time, and it may not be in the first tier, but certainly in the second or third tier.

Mr. Balico asked if private funding were found to build terminal facilities in Hercules, would the WTA be able to provide ferry service to that city with those funds. Mr. Bertken responded that an operating subsidy would still be required.

Local Funding

Mr. Morrison reported on successful local outreach efforts in San Mateo and Contra Costa counties. Resolution of support obtained from Antioch and Hercules City. The City of Martinez's resolution is pending. He indicated getting local funds from sales tax money in Contra Costa County will be critical to getting ferry service started. In San Mateo County, the business community and City are strongly supportive of the IOP and seeking local funding from their 2004 sales tax measure. City Council resolutions of support include: South San Francisco and Redwood City. The Port of Redwood City and the San Mateo Harbor District have organized a grassroots committee called Friends for Ferries. Mayor Gonzalez and Councilwoman Howard co-chair it. It includes chambers of commerce, Genentech, Oracle, other businesses, labor leaders and key stakeholders.

Chair Howard commented that everyone needs to pull together as a team, adding that service may not come to each city as soon as that city would like, but eventually as long as there is support and funding for the WTA, ferry service will be implemented in all Bay Area regions.

Ms. Sanchez said that sales tax funds at the local level could leverage other Federal or State funds for proposed services. The San Francisco sales tax measure is on the fast track to November 2003 and the list of projects getting funding is going to be done by June of this year.

Federal Funding

The WTA is seeking earmark requests in the next six-year transportation bill (TEA3) for ferry services that could be delivered early on. The WTA is working with other ferry operators throughout the country to raise the national level of funding for ferry service from \$38 million to \$150 million.

INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATIONS

- a. **Ms. Culnane gave a PowerPoint Presentation on the proposed role of the WTA in coordinating ferry operators disaster and emergency response.**

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Mr. Pedro Gonzalez (South San Francisco) asked how an emergency response or ferry rescue procedure could take place in a city where there currently is no ferry terminal. Ms. Culnane responded that because of the bow- and side-loading design, the vessels may have the capability for embarkation where there is no terminal. Mr. Morrison commented that the San Mateo County OES asked WTA to identify specific locations where this could happen. Contra Costa County OES is also supportive and interested.

Mr. Maris commented that there might be alternative sources of funding available through FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency). Ms. Sanchez commented that the Board has asked staff and its Federal lobbyists to look into this.

- b. **Ms. Culnane gave a PowerPoint Presentation on the status of the fuel cell ferryboat.**

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Mr. Seelinger commented that two years ago the WTA was developing a schedule for completion of tasks within a certain period of time. He asked what impact the financial downturn has had on the WTA's plans. Mr. Bertken said that the pressure of competition with other projects currently underway or projects having other State funds cut has affected the WTA's ability to attract as much as it hoped for from the toll increase.

Mr. Maris asked if there is the potential for a 400-passenger, 25-knot vessel and what the comparable cost would be for a larger passenger boat since the WTA now has \$2.5 million slated for just one fuel cell ferryboat that would not carry many passengers. Ms. Culnane responded that it would be feasible to have a 75-passenger, 15-knot vessel but that a comparable cost comparison is not available now for anything but the 49-passenger, 25-knot vessel, which is slated to cost \$5.7 million.

Ms. Lundstrom asked if whether the fuel cell will be the requirement for the whole fleet. Mr. Bertken responded that this is only a demonstration project for a short distance run Treasure Island to San Francisco. The fuel cell study was funded with a \$100,000 Federal grant.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Jerry Holan (Friends of the Berkeley Ferry) asked why Treasure Island is not listed in the toll spending plan. Ms. Sanchez responded that Treasure Island did not receive money from the bridge toll increase because there may be private development funds available for Treasure Island.

Ms. Sanchez adjourned the meeting at 12:10 p.m, Chair Howard leaving the meeting early having a prior commitment.

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