

MEETING SUMMARY

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

TAC See attached.
ATTENDEES:
MEETING DATE: March 17, 2003
FROM: Heidi Machen, WTA Public Affairs Officer
DATE: March 31, 2002

The Technical Advisory Committee held its meeting on March 17, 2003 at the Metrocenter Auditorium, 101 Eighth Street, Oakland. The meeting began at 10:05 a.m.

Call to Order and Introductions

TAC Chair Mark Kasanin called the meeting to order followed by a round of introductions. He announced that the next quarterly meeting would occur on Tuesday, May 27, 1-4 p.m.

Report of Chief Executive Officer, Tom Bertken

Tom Bertken, CEO, WTA, gave an update on the Programmatic EIR, explaining that the comment period had been extended to allow BAAQMD additional time to perform an analysis. He said that the Board was scheduled to approve it by the end of May and thanked BAAQMD for doing a professional job of evaluating the EIR. He said that they made recommendations on how to exceed federal and state regulations.

He next reported on the status of the IOP. He said that it had been delivered to Sacramento on December 12 and that the legislature was looking at a bill to approve the plan. Mr. Bertken introduced Steve Morrison, Manager, IOP, to give a legislative update.

John Boesel asked whether the Air District report was posted on the WTA web site. Mr. Bertken said that it was available for anyone who asked for it. He added that it was available as part of the addendum to the EIR which would be sent to all members of the TAC.

Discussion of Proposed Legislative Initiatives to Pursue Funding WTA's Proposed System

Mr. Morrison said that Sen. Perata introduced SB 915, which would codify the WTA's plan for expanding the ferry system, with several co-authors and that the Senator was working to add to the list of co-authors. Mr. Morrison said that SB 915 includes continuing the CAC and TAC and also includes language setting air emissions for the new fleet of ferries at 85% lower than EPA 2007 Tier 2 standards for diesel engines. Also under this legislation, he said, the WTA would be authorized to update the disaster response plan for ferries.

Mr. Morrison said that SB 916, also authored by Perata, authorizes the bridge toll expenditure plan based on a \$1 toll increase on all state bridges. He said that both bills are available online through the WTA web site.

Mr. Boesel asked for clarification of the emission standards included in SB 915. Mr. Morrison explained that the WTA has recommended technology that would meet the emission standards.

Cindy Dahler asked whether funding was included in SB 915. Mr. Morrison replied that it included some authorization, but that WTA was responding to concerns by other operators and would be changing some of the language.

Mr. Morrison then reported on Federal Legislation, saying that the WTA was working to increase the Federal Ferryboat Discretionary Fund from its present \$38 million. Additionally, he said, the WTA was working with individual legislators to fund boats for their regions; this would be an ongoing effort.

Ms. Dahler asked about the specifics of the funds, whether they were earmarked or through annual appropriations. Mr. Morrison said he wasn't entirely sure, but thought it was through appropriations.

Mr. Morrison then reported on the Sales Tax Reauthorizations, which would happen in San Mateo, San Francisco, and Contra Costa counties. He explained that these sales taxes are key funding for implementing the plan. He said that the WTA had been working with the business community in South San Francisco to gather data on an East Bay route and that it could prove viable, depending on the results. He said that Redwood City had no funding for ferries in the bridge toll because of competing projects. Thus, he said, the WTA was working to get sales tax money for that route. Also, he said, the WTA was working with cities in Contra Costa County to find sales tax money. Finally, he reported that San Francisco is on a fast track to develop a transit sales tax expenditure plan by June.

John Greitzer added that Sen. Perata's office was investigating the possibility of adding Richmond back into the bridge toll funding.

Informational Presentation

a. Status of the Fuel Cell Boat

Chair Kasanin introduced Chris McKesson, who gave a powerpoint presentation on the fuel cell technology slated to serve the Treasure Island route.

Mr. Boesel asked for clarification on the terms "attainable" and "reliable," and whether there were standards for the fuel cell.

Mr. McKesson explained that, unfortunately, no standards exist because it is cutting edge technology.

Mr. Boesel asked whether the WTA was planning 2-3 years of service.

Mary Culnane, WTA Manager of Marine Engineering, explained that the WTA had planned a 3 year demonstration project, with the boat operating 4 hours per day.

Mr. Boesel asked for further clarification, commenting that the boat would not be a workhorse to deliver passengers.

Ms. Culnane answered affirmatively.

Aaron Rachlin asked why the compressed hydrogen, which is commonly stored on buses, could not be stored on buses.

Mr. McKesson said that the compressed hydrogen would be lighter. Thus, the designers decided to start with the metal hydride and would cut back to the compressed hydrogen if the Coast Guard would allow it. However, he explained, the Coast Guard is more conservative as a regulator than landside regulators.

Mr. Rachlin commented that it requires a long time to refuel a hydrogen-powered engine and asked whether that was the reason that the boat would only run 4 hours per day.

Mr. McKesson said that there were lots of issues and that the designers had decided to take a conservative approach to resolving those issues. He said that, at this stage in the process, they anticipated that the boat could run for four hours at a stretch.

Mr. Rachlin asked whether the Coast Guard had approved this system. Mr. McKesson said that was correct.

Mr. Boesel asked for the projections with respect to weight and necessary seating loss. Mr. McKesson said that the 49 passenger vessel with fuel cell would have been a 149 passenger vessel if operated on diesel.

Mr. Rachlin asked whether there would be a top-heavy problem. Mr. McKesson said there was plenty of stability and no problem on a catamaran boat. He gave the schedule of a proposed program and said that sea trials would likely occur two years from now.

Mike Savidge asked whether this boat would be a retrofit or all new. Mr. McKesson said it would be all new construction.

Joel Suty commented that diesel power could satisfy the 85% lower emissions requirement and that this boat could only accommodate approximately 50 passengers. He asked whether the WTA could use the federal money to simply buy extra boats. Ms. Culnane replied that this grant was a one-time only grant to be used for the fuel-cell boat.

In light of the fact that diesel boats carry more passengers, Mr. Suty asked why the WTA wasn't just focusing on diesel. Ms. Culnane replied that this one-time-only project looks to the future. Mr. Suty asked whether the WTA was stuck with this choice. Ms. Culnane replied that one goal was looking to the future. Mr. Suty commented that, realistically, this was a non-starter. Ms. Culnane explained that only through demo projects like this will the fuel cell become viable.

Mr. Savidge asked whether the Coast Guard had any current regulations on fuel cell storage. Mr. McKesson said there were no current regulations.

Diane Campbell asked what sort of boat would be developed for Oyster Point. Ms. Culnane replied that whatever type of boat was developed must meet the 85% lower emission standard. Other than that, she said, it would be left to the discretion of the builder.

Geoff Potter asked whether the design specifications were available. Ms. Culnane said that the vessel performance specifications were on the WTA web site. She also discussed the modular design as being intended.

Diane Campbell asked about funding expected to come from county sales tax Measure A and also from the bridge toll and whether that money would go to the demo project. Mr. Bertken said that it would not. Ms. Campbell then asked about the derivation of the 20% local share. Ms. Culnane said that it would come from in-kind and manufacturer contributions. Mr. Morrison added that sales tax money always stays within its own county for local projects.

Mr. Boesel commented that it sounded as though partners were being pursued but that there were no commitments. Ms. Culnane said that no MOU had been executed. Mr. Boesel offered to help, since his 120 member coalition works to expand fuel-cell technology and other clean fuel. He said that the projected cost of the boat was impressive and asked whether it included the cost of batteries and refueling. Ms. Culnane answered affirmatively.

John Davey asked who would operate the boat. Mr. Bertken said that it would likely be the responsibility of the Treasure Island developer to decide on the operator.

Mr. Rachlin asked whether refueling would be at Treasure Island. Ms. Culnane said most likely.

b. Proposed Role of the WTA in Emergency Issues

Chair Kasanin introduced the next presentation, also by Ms. Culnane. Ms. Culnane gave a powerpoint presentation on the WTA's role in updating the emergency response plan for ferries.

Mike Savidge asked whether Ms. Culnane had discussed standards for terminals that might be important in a disaster. Ms. Culnane said that the Coast Guard had identified every terminal and everything was coming together. She explained that lots of data already exists. Mr. Savidge reiterated his question. Mr. Bertken said that these standards would be part of the plan that the WTA would be working with MTC to develop.

Ms. Johnk announced that May is Maritime Month and told everyone to stay tuned for a meeting in Sacramento to commemorate that month.

Chair Kasanin announced that the next TAC meeting was scheduled for May 27 and opened the floor to public comment.

Public Comment

Richard Santos, a Director from the Santa Clara Valley Water District, advised the TAC that Guadalupe Straits and Moffit field were great sites for new ferry service.

Joel Suty said that he and Julia Miller were on the original task force committee for water transit and could fill Mr. Santos in further on the details of these sites.

Ms. Johnk said that members of Bay Planning Coalition had voted to endorse the bridge toll increase and also the WTA's IOP. She asked the best way to communicate this endorsement to Sacramento. Mr. Morrison answered that the first hearing of bills was likely to happen April 1st.

Ms. Johnk asked who was carrying the legislation. Mr. Morrison replied that Sen. Perata, along with several co-authors, were the sponsors.

Heidi Machen, WTA, asked whether Ms. Johnk had a copy of the resolution that the Bay Planning Coalition had passed. Ms. Johnk promised to get a copy to WTA staff.

Ms. Johnk asked how to answer the question of falling ridership on current ferry routes. Chair Kasanin suggested that Ms. Johnk might want to talk with Ron Duckhorn, CEO of Blue and Gold Ferry. Ms. Johnk asked whether there was interest in convening the TAC's ad hoc work groups. Mr. Bertken asked if Mr. Savidge could give an update on recreational routes. Mr. Savidge said that he would like ad hoc support on the adoptions of the GGNRA for recreational service to date.

Mr. Morrison asked the TAC members to keep the letters of support and resolutions coming.

Chair Kasanin closed the meeting at 11:30 a.m.

IN ATTENDANCE:

John Boesel, CalSTART
Suzanne Bourguignon, BAAQMD
Chris Brittle, Metropolitan Transportation
Commission
Diane Campbell, San Mateo County Harbor
District
Celinda Dahlgren, Central ContraCostaCounty
Transit Authority
John Davey, Port of San Francisco
George Ellman, Sonoma County
Transportation Land Use Coalition
Natalie Fay, City of Oakland, CEDA Planning &
Zoning
John Greitzer, Contra Costa County
Community Development Department
Ellen Joslin Johnck, Bay Planning Coalition
David Kranking, U.S. Coast Guard, Marine
Safety Office, SF Bay
Nathan Landau, AC Transit
Diana Lee, San Mateo County Transit District
Anthony Lee, Caltrans
Jason Lee, BART
Wingate Lew, Office of Transit and Community
Planning
Lindy Lowe, SFBCDC
Nancy W. Okasaki, MTC
Geoff Potter, Baykeeper
Aaron Rachlin, H2Fuels LLC
Richard Santos, Santa Clara Valley Water
District
Mike Savidge, Golden Gate National
Recreation Area
Joel Suty, Bay Area Council
Charles Walther, Walther Engineering
Keith Whittemore, Kuichak Marine