

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

TAC ATTENDEES: See below.
MEETING DATE: May 17, 2005
FROM: Tristan Bettencourt
DATE: May 23, 2005

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) held its meeting on May 17, 2005 at the Metrocenter Auditorium, 101 Eighth Street, Oakland. The meeting began at 9:10 a.m.

Call to Order and Introductions

TAC Chair Mark Kasanin called the meeting to order followed by a round of introductions. He described the historical role of the TAC for the WTA. He noted that the TAC hasn't convened during the last two years. Mr. Kasanin stated that there has been continual progress in establishing new routes, and that the WTA is actively developing a new terminal in South San Francisco, and is proceeding toward the construction of two vessels.

Comments of WTA Board Chair, Charlene Haught-Johnson.

Ms. Haught-Johnson said that the Board is excited at the WTA's progress. She attended the first meeting of the TAC, four years ago and noted that the group was much larger at that time. She hopes that the group's size will grow again.

She stated that

- The WTA is making the transition from planning to operating a ferry system. WTA is starting site-specific EIR's.
- WTA is in discussions to take over the operations of the Oakland/Alameda ferry service.
- We are starting the "real-time" ferry information service.
- We are assembling a strategic marketing plan, and are working with some of the other ferry services in this project.
- The Board of Directors held a retreat in April, at which they agreed on a vision for the WTA of developing a world-class ferry system that is safe, reliable, and affordable.

Comments of WTA CEO, Steve Castleberry

Mr. Castleberry stated that the TAC was mandated by the California state legislature when they established the WTA. The TAC's composition was guided by statute. It was originally composed of approximately 75 members from a wide range of disciplines. The TAC exists to give guidance to the Board of Directors.

Mark Kasanin introduced Mary Culnane, WTA Manager of Marine Engineering. She introduced Vladimir Shepsis of Coast & Harbor Engineering.

Mr. Shepsis explained that his firm had been hired to perform wakewash studies. The purpose of these studies is to minimize adverse effects of ferry wakes, to develop guidance for operational procedures, and to establish standards for the study of routes and areas within the bay.

He said that his firm used the most current and sophisticated scientific tools and methods. They ran computer models to compare wakewash effects at the two possible terminal areas near Berkeley's Gilman Street, and at the foot of University Avenue. They also validated the computer models with six hours of live testing using a real ferryboat. Their conclusion is that University Avenue looks like the safest site.

He showed a Powerpoint presentation with detailed graphics and animations to illustrate the studies that they performed. The final wakewash protocol is to be delivered to the WTA in June 2005. (The presentation is available from the WTA on CD-ROM.)

Mary Culnane then introduced John Takekawa of the US Geological Survey who will speak about the effect of ferry traffic on rafting birds in the bay.

Mr. Takekawa explained San Francisco Bay's environmental importance as a major component of the Pacific Flyway. (The presentation is available from the WTA on CD-ROM.) Large populations of numerous bird species spend a considerable amount of time on the Bay. The Bay is a very urbanized environment which raises numerous environmental considerations. We think of the Bay as a single resource area, but it is made up of several distinctly different functional areas, including wetlands, estuaries, shorelines, and open water. Different species are adapted to different niches within the Bay, so any given species may only make use of a geographically small part of the Bay.

Many species are declining along the West Coast. It is important to determine the effect that high-speed vessels may have on the various species with which they interact. Mr. Takekawa and his staff rode several ferries and observed the reactions of several species to the passage of the vessel. Some species were more affected than others. The more-affected species would take a longer time to return to the area which they had fled, or return to their natural activities.

He indicated his study will help the WTA:

- Create maps of areas with highest habitat value
- Refine methods of gathering data on the effects of ferries
- Identify the best routes and terminal sites
- Examine traffic timing options which minimize exclusion of birds
- Protect shoals and mudflat foraging habitats

John Sindzinski, WTA Manager of Planning and development gave a status report on the progress of the South San Francisco Ferry Terminal

Ellen Johnck asked Mr. Shepsis to confirm that the wakewash studies showed no adverse effects. Mr. Shepsis said that the effects were minimal.

Ms. Johnck suggested that we find ways to coordinate actions which resulted from each of the two studies (wakewash, and rafting birds) so as to minimize the total effects of our ferry system.

Len Cardoza of the Harbor Safety Committee asked whether the WTA is considering the effects of any dredging operations which we might undertake?

Mr. Sindzinski confirmed that dredging is considered in the site-specific EIR's and in the preliminary stages of design development.

Mr. Cardoza asked whether we are taking into account the effects of the sounds produced by pile-driving?

Mr. Castleberry stated that we can't speculate, yet, because we don't know what will be defined by the design choices. In any case, our pilings will be smaller than the Bay Bridge pilings.

Lindy Lowe of BCDC asked whether each potential terminal site will be studied to determine the wakewash effects in its area.

Mr. Shepsis explained that we have been developing a methodology which is transferable to other sites, and that we would study each future terminal site using those methods.

Ms. Lowe urged WTA to be cognizant of any effects upon recreational uses of the shoreline and the Bay. BCDC considers good public access to be essential.

Robert Talley of Caltrans asked for an update on the future Treasure Island terminal.

Mr. Castleberry said that we are working closely with the T.I. developer. The ferry terminal is being addressed as a part of the full T.I. project. We are providing them with terminal design criteria.

Mr. Sindzinski reported on the progress of the WTA search for a berthing and maintenance facility. WTA staff will go to the Board of Directors this month with an assessment of the three sites which we are considering. These are Alameda Point, San Francisco Pier 48, and Pier 54. We will ask the Board for permission to negotiate. We have been working with consultants to determine the needs of each site. The site we choose may be our home for the next thirty years.

Question: Did you consider Mare Island?

Mr. Sindzinski said that we had considered it, but that deadhead travel times are a significant issue.

Mr. Castleberry said that farther down the line, we might berth Martinez/Hercules boats at Mare Island. Also, Marty Robbins of the Vallejo/Baylink ferry is open to working with us.

Question: Did you consider Hunter's Point?

Mr. Castleberry said that the difference in operating costs of the longer deadhead trips would add more than \$100,000/ year.

Hanley Chan, Intern at WTA introduced his sponsoring organization, ALERT. ALERT is an emergency-preparedness group. It educates the public in preparedness for disaster. It also organizes connections among various agencies which would be involved in disaster effect mitigation.

Question: Is the WTA preparing for tsunamis?

Steve Castleberry responded that the WTA includes weather protection in the design of its terminals . The seawall design at the Downtown Ferry Building is an example. It was designed to a high standard to protect the berthing basin, but is occasionally overwhelmed by a large storm. Risks are difficult to predict. Our designs consider as many factors as possible.

Mary Culnane, WTA Manager of Marine Engineering reported on the progress of the spare-vessel program. The WTA board has approved release of an RFP. It will be on the street on the 12th of July, 2005. This is for two 149 passenger 25-knot vessels. The fuel-cell boat is still on the table. WTA has construction funds. WTA needs to show operating funds before we can obtain release of the construction funds. We are making progress toward that goal.

Jeff McCarthy of the San Francisco Marine Exchange (SFMX) introduced the San Francisco Vessel Mutual Assistance Plan (SF-VMAP). SFMX handles administration of the SF-VMAP at the request of the US Coast Guard. He demonstrated a vessel tracking system. The system is accessible on the internet to registered users. The database of trackable boats is being expanded to include ferries, tugs, fireboats, tankers, and other large vessels. Transponders on the vessels send real-time info to a database, which makes the information available on the internet as a map of vessel locations. Extensive information about each vessel's capabilities is available to the database user. There are presently approximately 200 vessels in the database. The next generation of software will include more features, such as the ability to locate the nearest vessel of a particular type.

Mik Beattie of the Harbor Safety Committee described a drill to test responses and procedures for a maritime accident. Ferries responded fastest to emergencies.

Public Comment:

Mik Beattie suggests that the Board of Directors should trust the expertise of staff on complex issues, rather than attempting to inform themselves about every detail. He said that WTA must maintain vigilance on safety and awareness. Faster, larger boats have the potential to produce dangerous situations. He recommends that WTA use IMO standards for vessels over 30 knots or 100 passengers.

Russ Robinson, representing recreational boaters, commented that many small craft are exposed to hazards on the bay. Many recreational operators don't know the rules. Carrying two licensed captains

increases safety and minimizes the risk of collision. His group is working to educate recreational users.

Ellen Johnck announced the Bay Planning Coalition's 18th annual Decisionmaker's Conference, to be held on 24 May, 2005 at the Hotel Nikko in San Francisco. Many businesses will present themselves as very "green" at this meeting. Tom Campbell is the keynote speaker. There are afternoon sessions on Delta development, and on goods movement.

Question:

How are we on funding initiatives?

Mr. Castleberry responded that RM2-funded routes are almost fully funded. We are seeking an increase in the Federal Ferryboat Discretionary Funds to benefit all ferry systems.

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

IN ATTENDANCE:

Bruce Farrell	DMJM Harris Architects
Malcolm Quint	BART
Robert Talley	Caltrans
Leonard Cardoza	Port of Oakland (HSC)
Michael Beatie	Commissioner(retired) Ca Dept Boating & Waterways
John Glover	Glover Engineering
Jim Sweeny	Seaworthy Systems
Lynn Korwatch	SF Marine Exchange
Lindy Lowe	BCDC
Ellen Johnck	Bay Planning Coalition
Scott Humphrey	Vessel Traffic, USCG
Matt Hotchkiss	All American Marine
Ana Sandoval	BAAQMD
Russ Robinson	Recreational Boaters of California
Scott Fenical	Coast & Harbor Engineering
Diane Miller	Miller Watts
Bryan Vogel	MARAD
Tom Bertken	CEO(retired), WTA
Mark Kasanin	Chair WTA TAC
Steve Castleberry	CEO, WTA
John Sindzinski	Manager, Planning and Development, WTA
Mary Culnane	Manager, Marine Engineering, WTA
Tristan Bettencourt	WTA