

## Ferry advocates host a day on the bay

### March ballot measure would expand service

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San Francisco's postcard blue sky and come-hither skyline did more to boost proposed new ferry routes -- and the higher bridge tolls that would pay for them -- than the politicians who rode a pair of boats up the bay Saturday to publicize the idea.

"It was wonderful! Fantastic!" enthused Annette Lantos, as she exited the blue and white "Express II" at the city's Ferry Building with her husband, U.S. Rep. Tom Lantos, D-San Mateo. "I've taken ferries around the world and have not seen one so fabulous."

That's because the air was crisp, the hot chocolate was free, and the anti-ferry people were not invited.

Currently, six ferry routes serve the bay. The southernmost stop is at Harbor Bay Isle, just north of Oakland's airport. Service to the north goes as far as Vallejo.

Passage of Measure 2 -- or what opponents call the "\$1.00 Bridge-Toll Increase Scheme" -- on the March 2 ballot in Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara and Solano counties would raise money for nine new routes by 2012.

Service would extend south to South San Francisco and Redwood City, and reach as far east as Antioch with stops at Treasure Island, Berkeley, Richmond, Hercules and Martinez along the way. The cost for 31 new ferries, eight new terminals and shuttles would be \$646 million over 10 years, says the Water Transit Authority, which was formed in 1999 to study how best to use the region's water systems for transportation.

All bridge tolls but the Golden Gate's would rise by \$1 as of July 1. Backers say the fees would also help expand BART and add express bus lines and -- in a nod to Contra Costa County -- a fourth bore to the Caldecott Tunnel.

For a taste of how the new ferry routes would work, the Water Transit Authority invited politicians and plain folks to take a weekend ride.

People looked aglow as they poured from the ferries onto the dock at San Francisco's renovated Ferry Building -- even those who had hidden below-deck for the ride. They were smiling even before

pausing to snap a photo with San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom. And they looked especially eager as they aimed for the oyster bar at the Ferry Building's new farmer's market.

"I would take this all the time," said Mario Duri, a retired carpenter. "It was comfortable."

So would Jaroslav Kharitonov, 16, who said it beats taking the train and landing in the middle of nowhere south of Market.

"The ferry goes right downtown," he said.

Opponents include the San Francisco Neighbors Association and the Contra Costa Taxpayers Association.

"We are not opposed to public transit," says the No on 2 Web site. "But (motorists) should benefit from a tax they are required to pay."

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