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CONGRESS FLOATS FUEL CELL BOAT WITH \$2.5 MILLION

(SAN FRANCISCO, CA) – The Water Transit Authority (WTA), a regional transit agency, announced today that it was awarded \$2.5 million in federal funds to build the world's first fuel cell powered commuter ferry.

The WTA's Manager, Marine Engineering, Mary Frances Culnane said, "This is an exciting opportunity for the Bay Area to lead the world in reducing the ferry industry's reliance on foreign oil while simultaneously relieving the environment of toxic pollutants and smog. The way things are going, by 2020, fuel cells should be as common as personal computers."

The \$2.5 million grant was secured as an earmark in the Omnibus Appropriations Bill with the leadership of Representative Pelosi, Senators Boxer and Feinstein. The money will pay for building a 49-passenger boat to serve Treasure Island, one of the 7 new ferry routes the WTA has recommended around the Bay based on future ridership demand.

Fuel cell propulsion technology involves pumping hydrogen and oxygen, into a fuel cell that converts it into efficient energy to run the electric motor. The only emissions are water vapor and heat. The heat is absorbed through the engine so that there is no displaced heat or vapor into the bay. The Water Transit Authority is looking into the future possibility of using wind wave and sun power on Treasure Island to produce hydrogen for the fuel cells.

WTA Board President, Charlene Haight Johnson said, "We appreciate the entire team who helped to obtain funding for the boat, itself, including the leadership of the Bay Area Congressional Delegation, Bluewater Network, and the City of San Francisco's

Department of the Environment.” The WTA is currently discussing possibilities for public/private partnerships to supplement this grant by paying for the fuel cells, batteries, hydrogen storage facilities, and hydrogen supply.

"Thanks to Leader Pelosi, the world's first solar-assisted fuel cell passenger vessel will be showcased here on San Francisco Bay," added Russell Long, executive director of Bluewater Network, a national advocacy group headquartered in San Francisco. "This will set a new standard for water transit around the planet."

Jared Blumenfeld, Director of the San Francisco City and County Department of the Environment said, "The department is committed to making San Francisco the country's first hydrogen-powered city. The WTA's good work toward building the first hydrogen fuel cell ferry will push us toward that goal."

Approximately one year ago, the Federal Highway Administration awarded \$100,000 to the WTA to create a detailed design of the fuel cell vessel. That design will be completed in the Spring of 2003. The WTA expects to secure the next round of federal funding within 6-8 months. Once that money is available, the WTA can sign a contract with a boat builder and begin running the anticipated one-year clock required to build the boat. The WTA expects the boat could be ready to sail by as early as 2006, if other funding and necessary approvals are secured.

In October 1999, the State of California formed the San Francisco Bay Area Water Transit Authority (WTA), a regional agency mandated to create a plan for new and expanded water transit and related services in San Francisco Bay. The Authority's mission to build and operate a cost-effective, convenient and environmentally responsible ferry system will increase regional mobility within the Bay Area.

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