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WTA LOCKS IN FEDERAL MONEY FOR BAY AREA FERRY SYSTEM EXPANSION

San Francisco — The San Francisco Bay Area Water Transit Authority (WTA) announced that the recently passed federal transportation bill "SAFETEA-LU" designated the WTA as the recipient of \$14 million for ferry boat and terminal construction, while greatly increasing the national fund which provides WTA with significant additional funding each year.

For the first time, the Bay Area's ferry system will receive a dedicated, guaranteed stream of Federal funds to build new boats and terminals. "Getting these Federal guaranteed funds for the WTA's expansion was a huge win and it was one of our top goals since we first started in 2001," said Charlene Johnson, President, WTA Board of Directors. "The federal dollars provide a steady stream of revenue and helps us to delivery new routes faster," added Ms. Johnson.

This set aside of \$2.5 million per year for a total of \$10 million in new Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds over the next four years will allow WTA to efficiently plan the acquisition of new boats and terminals. Currently the Bay Area Ferry system is already the third largest in the nation but it never received a set-aside of federal ferry funds like Alaska, Washington and New York until passage of SAFTEA.

SAFTEA benefited ferry operators across the nation by increasing the FBD from \$38 million per year to \$55 million for the first year (2005) and \$67 million by FY 2009. "Congress stepped up to the plate and showed strong support for the role of ferries in our nation's transportation and disaster response networks," said Ms. Johnson. The WTA's federal legislative team worked with a coalition of other ferry operators, maritime labor and business groups to seek this increase. Since 2001, WTA has received \$4.6 million from the Federal Ferry Boat Discretionary (FBD) fund. The WTA will continue to seek FBD earmarks in addition to its yearly FTA set-aside.

The WTA secured \$4 million for the South San Francisco Ferry Terminal with the help of Rep. Tom Lantos (D-San Mateo) and Minority Leader Nancy L. Pelosi (D-San Francisco). The new South San Francisco to East Bay Ferry Service will be the first new commuter ferry route to start in Bay Area in over a decade and is scheduled to start in 2008. It will serve the thriving biotechnology hub in North San Mateo County. The WTA plans to select a shipyard to build these vessels in Spring 2006 and undergoing environmental review.

Since its start in 2001, the WTA has received \$18.6 million of federal funds including the funding recently approved in SAFTEA. The federal funds add to the \$300 million in regional bridge toll revenues and \$75 million from local sales tax measures in San Mateo and Contra Costa Counties that have been designated for expansion of new ferry service in the Bay Area. The WTA is a regional agency authorized by the State of California to expand ferry service using environmentally friendly state-of-the-art ferry boats with convenient landside connections.