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Making Cents for Ferries: Half-cent Sales Tax Measures Add up to \$75 million for Ferry Service to San Mateo and Contra Costa County

The San Francisco Bay Area Water Transit Authority announced the successful passage of two sales tax measures in San Mateo and Contra Costa Counties. The additional money these measures included for ferry service means a big victory for ferry advocates. Both measures officially kick into place in 2009, when the current sales taxes expire, and extend for 25 years. Early passage of the measures allows counties to bond against the future revenue to get projects started sooner.

San Mateo County: the Region's First New Ferry Line

Measure A, San Mateo County's half-cent sales tax measure is expected to raise \$1.5 billion to fund transportation projects within the county. The measure passed by a whopping 75%, far exceeding the 2/3 support required for reauthorization.

"The passage of Measure A ensures San Mateo County can continue to address mobility issues throughout the county," said Steve Castleberry, CEO of the San Francisco Bay Area Water Transit Authority (WTA). "Along with the funding we've already secured, this final amount will allow us to connect South San Francisco directly to the East Bay via ferry service." Measure A allocated \$30 million for San Mateo ferry service over the measure's 25-year life span.

Additional funding for San Mateo County ferry service: RM2 will contribute \$12 million to buy 2 new vessels, and \$3 million in annual operating costs for a total of almost \$226 million; federal dollars, such as the \$1 million for vessel construction secured by U.S. Congressman Tom Lantos (D-CA); transit impact fees; and, of course, fare box revenue. Also, Rep. Lantos is seeking \$6 million for construction of the South San Francisco terminal.

Measure J allocates money for Contra Costa County Ferry Service

Contra Costa County Supervisor John Gioia, who championed Measure J's inclusion of \$45 million for ferries as part of Costa County's transportation improvement efforts, said, "We've prioritized ferries because of development happening along shorelines such as Richmond's. With the technical support of the WTA, we expect to make water transit a success story for Contra Costa county."

Like San Mateo County, Contra Costa's measure handily won approval from more than 2/3 of voters, with 70% support. Measure J, is expected to raise \$2 billion over 25 years for transportation projects throughout the county. Richmond and Hercules ferry services are expected to benefit. Additionally, Richmond received \$1 million for planning from Regional Measure 2; the WTA hopes to bridge the funding gap for Contra Costa using Federal Ferryboat Discretionary Funds, transit impact fees, and farebox revenues. Assuming funding, community support, and environmental clearance, Richmond ferry could launch as early as 2009.

Additional information about the Authority and future ferry service can be found at

www.watertransit.org.

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