

# WATER TRANSIT AUTHORITY



## WTA

### NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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#### THE SF BAY AREA WATER TRANSIT AUTHORITY IS BUILDING BOATS!

It's not as big as the new bay bridge, but it's a big step towards creating a disaster response and recovery transportation system! The San Francisco Bay Area Water Transit Authority is starting to build boats, which means that expanded ferry service is not far behind. At its monthly Board meeting on Thursday, April 27, the Authority authorized issuing a Letter of Intent to Award a contract with the boatbuilding team of Nichols Brothers Boat Builders and Kvichak Marine Industries to construct two new 149 passenger vessels.

Vessel construction will start this summer, and the first boats will be delivered by 2007, the schedule outlined in the Authority's 2003 Regional Ferry Plan. "We're proud to be leading the way with regional ferry service", says Charlene Haught-Johnson, President of the Board of Directors of the Authority. "We've promised to deliver a reliable, cost-effective, convenient and environmentally friendly water transit system. And that's just what we're doing."

These boats are the first of 10 new boats that the Authority expects to build over the next 10 years. They will initially be spare vessels for emergency response in case of temporary disruption of transit service or damage to Bay Area highways and bridges. They will be put into regular service to launch the South San Francisco to Oakland route in 2008 until the boats for that specified service are delivered.

Mary Frances Culnane, the Authority's Manager of Marine Engineering, will manage the construction contract for the Authority. Crediting the Bay Area's innovative mind-set, especially regarding environmental projects, Culnane commented that "local support for ferries allows us the opportunity to push the technology envelope. We are developing the most stringent emission standard for ferryboats anywhere in the world. The boats will be equipped with Selective Catalytic Reduction (SCR) which will result in 85% lower air emissions than federal EPA requires. These boats have the potential to alter the course of

the entire ferry industry in a technically feasible, economically practical and environmentally responsible fashion.” Other distinct features of the new vessels includes CCTV for optimum security, forward searching sonar for avoiding whale strikes and a Voyage Data Recorder (VDR) – aka a “black box” for determining the root cause of malfunctions, ADA compliant restrooms, extra wide comfortable passenger seating, and accommodations for 25 bicycles.

Bryan Nichols, Nichols Brothers President and Keith Whitemore, President of Kvichak Marine Industries both attended the meeting and commented that “Our Team can’t wait to get going.” Nichols Brothers Headquartered on Whidbey Island, near Seattle, is a family business and brings over 60 years of experience in constructing boats, including constructing many of the ferries in use now in the Bay Area. Kvichak Marine, based in Seattle on the Seattle Ship Canal, was founded in 1981 and specializes in high speed aluminum vessels for a variety of applications.

*The San Francisco Bay Area Water Transit Authority is a regional agency mandated to build and operate a comprehensive public water transit system of ferries, feeder buses and terminals. The Bay Area commuter ferry fleet amounts to 13 boats serving 6 routes around the Bay. The Authority’s mission is to expand existing routes and add 8 new routes to triple ferry ridership by 2025.*