5.8 AESTHETICS

This programmatic assessment of visual and aesthetic impacts due to proposed WTA water transit service expansion is a qualitative analysis. It is broad-based and regional in nature and does not provide detailed local visual and aesthetic impact assessment. Broad types of visual and aesthetic impacts were assessed because they could occur at any location throughout San Francisco Bay due to increased ferry services.

The issues considered in the analysis include views to and from the Bay, the visual quality of new or enhanced structures, light and glare, and the aesthetic quality of construction or ferry activity along the shoreline. The assumption was made that visual and aesthetic impacts of increased ferry services would be most prominent at the existing and potential terminal locations. Therefore the assessment focused more heavily on these areas.

5.8.1 Significance Criteria

Impacts would be considered significant if they:

- Would have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista or degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings;
- Would substantially damage scenic resources, including but not limited to trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway; or
- Would create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect daytime or nighttime views in the area.

5.8.2 Impacts and Mitigation

Impact V-1 **The construction and operation of new and enhanced ferry terminals along the Bay shoreline could potentially impact land and water views of San Francisco Bay or degrade the visual character of the Bay.**

The types of impacts that could occur through construction of terminals, enhancement of existing terminals, and expansion of ferry service are summarized below. These impacts would be localized; regionwide, these structures would affect a relatively small portion of the 1,000 miles of Bay shoreline. For example, even if new terminals under Alternative 1 were implemented, they would represent less than 1 percent of the existing shoreline. Most of these terminals would be at already developed shoreline areas. Localized site-specific visual impact analysis of potential terminal locations was not performed for this program-level EIR.

- Block Bay views: New shoreline development could result in new structures or docked vessels. It is possible that in some instances these structures could be visible or even block or restrict existing views of the Bay.
- Construct unsightly buildings: Without careful planning and design, new terminals could result in unattractive development that negatively affects shoreline views.
- Create light and glare: Safety lighting for facilities, walkways, and parking lots could create a new source of light and glare that negatively affects the surrounding community.

- Construct a building that is inappropriate to a waterfront location: Inappropriate terminal designs could result in parking areas or other inappropriate structures along the waterfront.

Proposed ferry service expansion may also result in positive impacts to visual resources and the aesthetics of the Bay:

- Enhance Bay views: New terminal designs could provide new or enhanced opportunities to view the Bay from piers, platforms, and the ferries themselves.
- Improve the aesthetics of shoreline development: New terminal development could revitalize areas of the shoreline that currently do not take advantage of the Bay setting. Improving areas that currently have debris, contamination, or inappropriate development through the construction of terminals designed to visually complement the Bay and provide public access to the waterfront could result in an enhancement of public views to and from the Bay.

Planning of any development or change in or near the shoreline of the San Francisco Bay is subject to considerable regulatory review by local, state, and federal resource and permitting agencies. Site and terminal planning and its associated regulatory review process for all proposed ferry terminal projects would follow the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) San Francisco Bay Plan (Bay Plan) policies on appearance, design, and scenic views (BCDC 2002). The policies provide guidelines for enhancing the visual quality of development around the Bay while preserving views of the Bay and shoreline. In addition, the BCDC Design Review Board would review all proposed development that affect the appearance of the Bay in accordance with the Bay Plan. Local city and county ordinances, regulations, and policies would also apply on a project-by-project basis.

Summary of Impact V-1

- Alternatives 1 and 2 could result in the construction of new terminals and/or the improvement of existing terminals, which could have potentially significant impacts to views of the Bay or the visual character of waterfront areas.
- Alternative 3 could require enhancements to existing terminals, which would not result in significant impacts to views of the Bay or the visual character of waterfront areas.
- Alternative 4 would not require new construction or expansion of service. No impact would occur.

Mitigation V-1.1: The WTA established Intermodal and Architectural Design Guidelines that should be considered in the planning and design of new and enhanced ferry terminals (WTA 2002). The design objectives may include, but are not limited to, making the ferry system more attractive, integrating terminals with the local urban context, and taking advantage of waterfront views. The ideal terminal facility will serve as a catalyst to ferry service expansion in the Bay Area.

The physical design objectives focus on terminal layouts that prioritize use by pedestrians, bicycles, and other transit modes rather than individual vehicles. A seamless and efficient transfer between modes of transport will be emphasized through a logical progression of facilities, signs, and boarding points as well as a pedestrian network connecting adjacent amenities such as businesses, transit stops, and public spaces. The specific design of each

terminal facility should be developed at a local level to ensure compatibility with the surrounding visual environment.

Impact After Mitigation: The WTA design guidelines will promote aesthetic planning criteria that guide the initial development of projects in a manner consistent with preservation of views and scenic resources. In addition, future development of projects will not proceed without the prospect of meeting BCDC and local planning requirements. Impact V-1 could still be potentially significant after implementation of Mitigation V-1.1.

Impact V-2 **An increase in the number of ferryboats operating on San Francisco Bay could impact views of the Bay or degrade the visual character of the Bay.**

The current ferry services use 15 boats systemwide, with over 80,000 trips annually. Ferries share the Bay with commercial, military, and recreational boats making their way to and from the eight ports and 21 marine terminals throughout the Bay. Views of the Bay therefore include many types of shipping vessels.

The proposed expansion of ferry service under Alternative 1 could result in 160 ferryboats operating on the Bay if all routes and frequencies of service are provided. Ferry activity on the Bay would more than double to potentially 243,440 annual trips if Alternative 3 is implemented. If the most comprehensive service were provided, it would potentially increase the current activity level by more than 10 times, resulting in up to 1,182,980 trips annually.

The potential visual impact of additional ferryboats making trips across the Bay is subjective in nature. It could be seen as an enhancement of the maritime atmosphere and Bay views similar to existing views, which include ferry services, shipping activity, and recreational boating. It could also be seen as a detriment to views of the Bay. There are no established significance criteria that provide a framework to determine if increased ferry vessels on the Bay would be considered a significantly detrimental impact. Increases in service may be relatively unnoticeable to most Bay Area residents and travelers. However, full implementation of service, such as for Alternative 1, could compromise some existing views.

Summary of Impact V-2

- Alternatives 1 and 2 would result in an increase in the number of vessels operating on San Francisco Bay. This could have an adverse impact on scenic views of the Bay. Under full implementation of service routes and frequency of service, this could represent a significant impact to views of the Bay or the visual quality of waterfront areas.
- Alternative 3 would result in a minor increase in the number of vessels operating on San Francisco Bay. The minor increase in the number of boats and the lack of new terminal facilities would not represent a significant impact to views of the Bay or the visual quality of waterfront areas.
- Alternative 4 would not require additional boats or increased services. No impact would occur.

Mitigation V-2.1: This impact is partially minimized by the concentration of routes along some common alignments. It would be further reduced by implementation of other mitigation measures for air quality and energy that describe route and ferry vessel trip reductions. These

measures would reduce services considerably from those described for full implementation of Alternatives 1 and 2. No mitigation is required.

Impact After Mitigation: This impact would be mitigated to less-than-significant levels through implementation of mitigation measures for air quality. Mitigation A-1 describes a reduction of route service. No further mitigation is proposed.

Impact V-3 **Visible exhaust from current or modern ferries is minimal or nonexistent due to improvements in engine propulsion and operation. Visible exhaust plumes would not occur under normal ferry operation.**

Visible smoke plumes exhausting from an engine are a result of various conditions, but can indicate that an engine is not completely burning the fuel. Incomplete combustion results in unwanted pollutant emissions. These emissions can include particulates that may be visible in the exhaust, resulting in darkened plumes. Internal combustion engine emissions also include a large proportion of water vapor, a normal product of combustion, which may also be visible under certain conditions (such as very cold temperatures or an engine that is not completely warmed up).

Expansion of ferry service on existing or new routes would be based on engine and fuel technology that is current or state-of-the-art. Visible exhaust plumes would not occur. Modern ferry vessels on current routes are well maintained on a regular basis and would continue to be maintained with expansion of service.

Summary of Impact V-3

- Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 would increase the number of ferryboats and trips on the Bay, but all boats would continue to be maintained on a regular basis and would not result in visible exhaust plumes. No impact would occur.
- Alternative 4 would not require additional ferryboats or increased services and existing vessels would continue to be maintained on a regular basis. No impact would occur.

Impact V-4 **Expanded and enhanced ferry services, including terminals and additional ferry boats, would not impact scenic resources within a State Scenic Highway.**

Sections of Bay Area Highways 280, 580, and 680 have been designated as scenic corridors under the State Scenic Highway program but do not provide motorists with expansive or continuous views of the Bay. Therefore, these corridors would not be affected by an increase in visible ferries on the Bay or the construction of new terminals along the shoreline.

Summary of Impact V-4

- Alternatives 1 and 2 would result in additional terminals and an increase in the number of vessels operating on San Francisco Bay. This development and boating activity would not be highly visible to motorists and it does not represent a visual impact to scenic resources within a State Scenic Highway.

- Alternative 3 would increase ferry trips on the Bay, but would not result in the development of new terminals. This boating activity would not be highly visible to motorists and it does not represent a visual impact to scenic resources within a State Scenic Highway.
- Alternative 4 would not require new ferry vessels or increased services. No impact would occur to scenic resources within a State Scenic Highway.

Impact V-5 **Expanded and enhanced ferry terminals and services throughout San Francisco Bay could result in light and glare impacts.**

Ferry terminal facilities could include structures, parking lots, roadways, and pedestrian and bicycle facilities that would be lit for public safety. Terminals proposed within or adjacent to existing marinas, ports, or shoreline development would add to existing light and glare, but may not necessarily create a substantial new source. Potential terminal facilities in parkland or less developed areas would be more likely to create a new source of light and glare, and this impact could be adverse and significant. New light sources may represent a potentially significant impact to light-sensitive land uses such as nearby residential areas.

Increased ferry trips on the Bay would add to the existing vessels that already cross Bay waters. Early morning or late day/evening vessel trips would show navigation as well as cabin and deck lighting. The increase in frequency of trips and new routes to terminals not currently serviced would increase and introduce these sources of light on the Bay and at terminals, but it would be transitory and the lighting would not be a substantial source of glare to light-sensitive land uses. Therefore, this vessel lighting would not be considered adverse or significant.

Summary of Impact V-5

- Alternatives 1 and 2 could result in the construction of new terminals and/or the improvement of existing terminals, which would result in potentially significant light and glare impacts.
- Alternative 3 could require enhancements to existing terminals. This would not create new sources of light or glare and does not represent a significant impact.
- Alternative 4 would not require new construction or expansion of services. No light or glare impacts would occur.

Mitigation V-5.1: Ferry terminal designs will be required to develop site-specific lighting plans. Outdoor lighting should be focused and directed to the specific location (e.g., roads, walkways), be shielded to avoid the production of glare, and minimize up-light and light spill. Fixtures should be located, aimed or shielded to minimize stray light to or across property boundaries. Light design should use down-cast, low glare, shields, or equivalent design to minimize light and glare on surrounding land uses.

Impact After Mitigation: Impact V-5.1 would be minimized through application of Mitigation V-5.1, but the potential remains for significant impacts depending on site-specific locations and settings. This impact remains potentially significant.

References

San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC). 2002. San Francisco Bay Plan. October.