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# CHAPTER 1 Introduction

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This Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment (EIR/EA) assesses the potential environmental effects of the South San Francisco Ferry Terminal Project, proposed by the San Francisco Bay Area Water Transit Authority (WTA). An EIR is a detailed statement prepared under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), while an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is an environmental impact document prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The project would provide connections to existing and programmed elements of the WTA public water transit system in order to achieve the outlined goals as stated in the Notice of Preparation (NOP). As required by CEQA, this EIR/EA (1) assesses the expected individual and cumulative impacts of the proposed project's physical development; (2) identifies means of avoiding or minimizing potential adverse environmental impacts; and (3) evaluates a reasonable range of alternatives to the proposed project, including the No Project Alternative. According to 23 C.F.R 771.119, an EA is a public document which provides sufficient evidence and analysis for determining whether to prepare an EIS. FTA may require an applicant for financial assistance to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) when the significance of the environmental impact is not clearly established. This EIR/EA is a joint document for CEQA and NEPA.

## 1.1 BACKGROUND

Due to years of expansion and population growth, the San Francisco Bay Area is experiencing an increasing problem with traffic congestion on major commuter routes, specifically on the Bay Bridge and San Mateo Bridge, both of which connect South San Francisco to the East Bay. Because of this increase in traffic, the residents of the San Francisco Bay Area depend heavily on regional and transbay public transportation on a daily basis. To meet this need, the WTA system Implementation and Operations Plan (IOP) has made its primary purpose to increase Bay Area regional mobility and transportation options by providing new and expanded water transit services and related ground transportation terminal access in the Bay Area. In addition, there is an increasing need to have alternate emergency routes to allow for rapid and effective response to disasters. The WTA has chosen a site in South San Francisco to place a new ferry terminal and related transportation facilities in order to help alleviate this congestion on major commuter routes. The project site is within a portion of the Oyster Point Marina Park (Marina).

## 1.2 PURPOSE OF THE EIR/EA

The WTA has prepared this EIR/EA for the following purposes:

- To inform the general public, the local community, responsible and interested public agencies of the scope of the proposed project, its potential environmental effects, possible measures to mitigate those effects, and alternatives to the project

- To enable the WTA to consider environmental consequences when deciding whether to approve the project
- To satisfy the procedural requirements of CEQA
- To satisfy the procedural requirements of NEPA

This EIR/EA has been prepared in accordance with CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines and NEPA and the findings of the Council on Environmental Quality. The determination that the WTA is the “lead agency” is made in accordance with Sections 15051 and 15367 of the CEQA Guidelines and 40 C.F.R. 1508.16, which define the lead agency as the public agency that has the principal responsibility for carrying out or approving a project. In addition, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is the federal lead agency as the project will make use of federal funds.

### 1.3 SCOPE OF THE EIR/EA

This Draft EIR/EA is a “focused” EIR as defined by CEQA. “Focusing” under CEQA typically refers to the use of an Initial Study to (a) analyze potential project impacts and thereby distinguish between those that are less than significant under CEQA and those that require additional analysis in an EIR; or (b) evaluate the adequacy of prior CEQA analyses on project impacts. Issues that are determined to require additional analysis are typically addressed in a new “focused” EIR.

In accordance with CEQA and NEPA, the Draft EIR/EA “tiered” from the Final Program Environmental Impact Report—Expansion of Ferry Transit Service in the San Francisco Bay Area, certified in June 2003 (2003 WTA PEIR). As allowed by Section 15385 of the CEQA Guidelines and 40 C.F.R. 1508.28, “tiering” refers to the analysis of general matters in broader, programmatic EIRs (such as the 2003 WTA PEIR) with subsequent narrower EIRs for individual projects that concentrate on site-specific issues and incorporate by reference the general discussions in the programmatic EIR. CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines encourage the used of tiered EIRs to reduce delays and excessive paperwork in the environmental review process. This is accomplished in tiered EIRs by eliminating repetitive analyses of issues that were adequately addressed in the Program EIR and by incorporating those analyses by reference. The tiering of the environmental analysis for the project allows this EIR/EA to rely on the 2003 WTA PEIR (incorporated by reference) for (1) a discussion of general background and setting information for environmental topic areas; (2) overall growth-related issues; (3) issues that were previously evaluated in sufficient detail in the 2003 WTA PEIR and for which there is no significant new information or changed circumstances that would require further analysis; and (4) cumulative impacts. In addition, this EIR/EA is a joint document for CEQA and NEPA.

CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines strongly encourage state and local agencies to prepare a combined document (i.e., one document which satisfies both NEPA and CEQA) for projects where time is of the essence (Section 21083.6, Guidelines Section 15222). The NEPA regulations similarly encourage federal agencies to cooperate with local agencies "to the fullest extent possible to reduce duplication between NEPA and comparable State and local requirements," including the preparation of a joint document (40 CFR 1506.2). A joint document cannot be prepared solely by a State or local agency; it must include direct federal agency involvement (40 CFR 1506.2).

In accordance with Public Resources Code Section 21002.1, the purpose of this EIR/EA is to: address the potential environmental impacts resulting from the demolition, construction and operation of a new ferry terminal at Oyster Point Marina Park (Marina) with an East Bay route, propose mitigation measures to reduce potentially significant environmental impacts, and identify and evaluate alternatives that could reduce or avoid the significant effects of the project. The EIR/EA process provides an opportunity for the public to review and comment upon the potential environmental effects and further informs the environmental analysis. The WTA must respond to significant environmental issues identified during the public review process.

On December 17, 2004, the WTA distributed a Notice of Preparation (NOP) to local and regional responsible agencies and other interested parties. A copy of the NOP, and the responses received during the 30-day public review period, are contained in Appendix A of this document. 13 letters were received during the public review period. In addition, the WTA conducted a public scoping meeting on January 13, 2005, for the purpose of further soliciting public input regarding the scope and content of the EIR/EA. Approximately 15 persons attended the meeting. A summary of comments received at the scoping meeting is provided in Appendix A.

Comments received during the NOP scoping period have been considered in the preparation of this EIR/EA. Based on the potential impacts of the project, and the comments received, this EIR/EA evaluates the following environmental issues:

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology and Soils
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation and Circulation
- Utilities and Service Systems

These environmental issues are addressed in Chapter 3 (Environmental Analysis) of this EIR/EA.

## 1.4 EIR/EA PROCESS

This EIR/EA has been prepared to meet all of the substantive and procedural requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (40 Code of Federal Regulations [C.F.R.] 1500.1); California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970 (California Public Resources Code [PRC] §21000 *et seq.*); California CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, §15000 *et seq.*, as amended through January 1, 2005); and the procedures for implementation of CEQA as implemented by the City of South

San Francisco. As the CEQA Lead Agency for this project, the WTA will take primary responsibility for conducting the environmental review and approving or denying the project. As the NEPA Lead Agency for this project, the FTA will review and approve the EIR/EA through development of the EIR/EA, the public review process, and the Final EIR/EA.

As a first step in complying with the procedural requirements of CEQA and NEPA, a Notice of Preparation (NOP) was prepared to announce the intentions of the WTA to initiate environmental review of the project and to solicit comments on the scope of the study. For this project, the NOP indicated that the EIR/EA would focus on the environmental issues listed above in Section 1.3.

The WTA filed the NOP with the California Office of Planning and Research as an indication that an EIR/EA would be prepared. In turn, the NOP was distributed to involved public agencies and interested parties for a 30-day public review period, which began on December 17, 2004, and ended on January 21, 2005. The purpose of the public review period was to solicit comments on the scope and content of the environmental analysis to be included in the EIR/EA. The WTA received 13 comment letters on the NOP, which are included in Appendix A of this EIR/EA. In addition, in order to solicit further comments on the scope and content of the environmental analysis to be included in the EIR/EA, a public scoping meeting was held on January 13, 2005, at the Municipal Services Building, Community Room in the City of South San Francisco, which was attended by approximately 15 members of the public.

During preparation of the EIR/EA, agencies, organizations, and persons who the WTA believed might have an interest in this project were specifically contacted in accordance with Sections 15063, 15082, 15083, and 15083.5 of the CEQA Guidelines and 40 C.F.R. 1501.4(b). Information, data, and observations from these contacts are included in this EIR/EA. Agencies or interested persons who did not respond during the public review period of the NOP will have an opportunity to comment during the public review period for the EIR/EA, as well as at subsequent hearings on the project.

This EIR/EA is being circulated for review and comment by the public and other interested parties, agencies, and organizations for a 45-day review period. During the review period, which will be from February 14, 2006, to March 30, 2006, copies of the EIR/EA will be available for review at the WTA offices, the City of South San Francisco Economic and Community Development Department and at the South San Francisco Main Library during normal business hours. In addition, all of the background documents referenced in this report will also be available for review during normal business hours at the WTA. The following are the addresses for the City of South San Francisco Municipal Services Building and the South San Francisco Main Library:

City of South San Francisco  
Economic and Community Development Department  
315 Maple Avenue  
South San Francisco, CA 94080

South San Francisco Main Library  
840 West Orange Avenue  
South San Francisco, CA 94080-3125

Written comments on the EIR/EA should be addressed to the following:

Mr. John Sindzinski, Program Manager  
San Francisco Bay Area Water Transit Authority  
120 Broadway  
San Francisco, CA 94105

After the close of the written public comment period, responses to written and recorded oral comments on the environmental effects of the project will be prepared and published. A Final EIR/EA (comprising this Draft EIR/EA, comments on the Draft EIR/EA, and written responses to those comments) and the Mitigation Monitoring Program, which describes the process to ensure implementation of mitigation measures, will then be considered by the WTA in a public hearing.

The WTA will review and consider the Final EIR/EA prior to any decision to approve, revise, or reject the project. Approval of the project will be accompanied by the adoption of written findings and, if necessary, a statement of overriding considerations for each adverse and unavoidable environmental impact identified in the Final EIR/EA. In addition, the WTA must also adopt a Mitigation Monitoring Program, which will describe the process to ensure implementation of the mitigation measures that have been incorporated into the approved project to reduce or avoid significant impacts on the environment. This monitoring or reporting program would ensure CEQA compliance during specific project implementation. The FTA will determine whether to issue a Finding of No Significant Impact for the project or to require preparation of an EIS.

## 1.5 DOCUMENT ORGANIZATION

This EIR/EA has been organized for easy use and reference. To help the reader locate information of particular interest, a brief summary of the contents of each chapter of the EIR/EA is provided. The following chapters are contained within the EIR/EA:

- *Executive Summary*—This chapter includes a brief synopsis of the proposed project and project objectives, community/agency issues, a description of the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program, and an overview of project alternatives. This Chapter also summarizes environmental impacts that would result from implementation of the project; proposed mitigation measures that would avoid or reduce project-related impacts; and the severity of impacts both before and after mitigation.
- *Chapter 1: Introduction*—This chapter describes the purpose and scope of the EIR/EA, a summary of the environmental and public review process, and a brief outline of this document’s organization.
- *Chapter 2: Project Description*—This chapter provides a detailed description of the proposed project, including its location, background information, purpose and need, and technical characteristics.

- *Chapter 3: Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures*—This chapter contains an analysis of environmental impacts for each environmental issue area. Each environmental issue area contains a description of the environmental setting (or existing conditions), identifies project-related impacts, and recommends feasible mitigation measures that would avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts. The introductory paragraph at the beginning of each section provides an overview of the scope of the impact analysis, including the identification of issues evaluated within the 2003 WTA PEIR and prepared for the project.
- *Chapter 4: Other CEQA Considerations*—This chapter summarizes impacts that would result from the project, including adverse environmental impacts, adverse and unavoidable environmental impacts, irreversible changes to the environment, and growth-inducing impacts. In addition, a discussion of cumulative projects is also provided, including a list of projects that were identified as relevant to the cumulative analysis.
- *Chapter 5: Alternatives*—This chapter provides description and analysis of feasible alternatives to the project that could reduce or avoid adverse impacts. A comparison of the impacts of the alternatives and the identification of the environmentally superior alternative is also discussed in this section.
- *Chapter 6: Report Preparers*—This chapter identifies the individuals responsible for the preparation of this EIR/EA.