

TRANSPLAN COMMITTEE

EAST COUNTY TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Antioch • Brentwood • Oakley • Pittsburg • Contra Costa County
651 Pine Street -- North Wing 4TH Floor, Martinez, CA 94553-0095

April 12, 2012

Charlene Haught Johnson, Chair
San Francisco Bay Area Water Emergency Transportation Authority
Pier 9, Suite 111, The Embarcadero
San Francisco, CA 94111

Dear Chair Johnson:

The TRANSPLAN Board would like to thank you for having your staff attend our March 8, 2012 regular Board meeting. The presentation and resulting dialog was very informative and helpful in providing our Board with a better understanding of current and future WETA activities, the resources available to WETA, and the constraints WETA operates under.

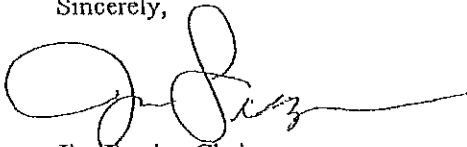
As you may be aware, the TRANSPLAN Committee is comprised of the member cities of Antioch, Brentwood, Oakley, Pittsburg and the County of Contra Costa operating under a Joint Exercise of Powers agreement. TRANSPLAN is the primary transportation planning agency for eastern Contra Costa County. Among other activities, TRANSPLAN advises the Contra Costa Transportation Authority (CCTA) on Eastern Contra Costa priorities for transportation project development and funding. CCTA, in turn, oversees the expenditure of Contra Costa's one-half cent transportation related sales tax in addition to other congestion management related responsibilities.

Given the interest in the extension of ferry service to East County and the importance of the emergency services that are to be provided by WETA, TRANSPLAN is collectively and respectfully requesting that WETA join us in establishing a Committee that would enhance communication between our agencies. The ultimate goal of this Committee would be to jointly guide the development of rapid water transit service in eastern Contra Costa County. We believe that such a Committee would facilitate communication and collaboration, and would be particularly valuable given the broad geographic scope of the area under the purview of WETA.

Again, thank you for the efforts of your staff at our recent meeting and for your efforts to implement rapid ferry service and emergency response in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Please feel free to contact me or TRANSPLAN staff, John Cunningham, at 925-674-7833 or at john.cunningham@dcd.cccounty.us to if you have any questions or wish to discuss this request.

Sincerely,



Jim Frazier, Chair
TRANSPLAN Committee

Copy:

| | |
|--|--|
| Mayor James D. Davis, City of Antioch | Mary N. Piepho, Chair – Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors |
| Mayor Robert Taylor, City of Brentwood | Federal D. Glover, District V – Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors |
| Mayor Kevin Romick, City of Oakley | Don Tatzin, Chair, Contra Costa Transportation Authority |
| Mayor Ben Johnson, City of Pittsburg | Nina Rannells, Executive Director, WETA |

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The Board of Supervisors

County Administration Building
651 Pine Street, Room 106
Martinez, California 94553

John Gloja, 1st District
Gayle B. Vilkema, 2nd District
Mary N. Piepho, 3rd District
Karen Mitchoff, 4th District
Federal D. Glover, 5th District

Contra Costa County



David Twa,
Clerk of the Board
and
County Administrator
(925) 335-1900

May 8, 2012

The Honorable Jerry Hill
19th Assembly District
Capitol Building #3160
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: AB 2433: San Francisco Bay Area Water Emergency Transportation Authority: Terms of Board Members

Dear Assembly Member Hill:

The Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors supports your bill, AB 2433, which creates staggered terms for the Board of Directors of the Water Emergency Transportation Authority (WETA). The Board of Supervisors believes that the staggering of terms will improve the continuity of leadership for this important transportation agency.

The Board of Supervisors also believes that our constituents would benefit from having representatives of the communities being served (or proposed to be served) by WETA on the Board of Directors. I, and the Board of Supervisors, believe it is essential that investment in, and development of any large transportation project or service, be guided by representatives who possess knowledge of the locality where the project will be developed in order to best reflect local priorities.

The Contra Costa County Board of Supervisor respectfully requests an amendment to AB 2433 that, in addition to ensuring leadership continuity, would promote direct geographic representation on the WETA Board of Directors. Should you choose to incorporate this concept in to AB 2433, we are available to discuss any proposed mechanism.

Thank you for authoring this important legislation. If you or your staff have any questions about this position or our suggested amendment, please contact me or Steven L. Goetz at (925) 674-7830 or at steven.goetz@ded.cccounty.us.

Sincerely,

Mary N. Piepho, Chair
Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors
Supervisor, District III

C: Contra Costa County Legislative Delegation
Don Tatzin, Chair, Contra Costa Transportation Authority
J. Frazier, Chair - TRANSPLAN Committee

L. DeLaney, County Administrator's Office
S. Goetz, Deputy Director, Dept. of Conservation and Development

The Board of Supervisors

County Administration Building
651 Pine Street, Room 106
Martinez, California 94553

John Gioia, 1st District
Gayle B. Uilkeina, 2nd District
Mary N. Piepho, 3rd District
Karen Mitchoff, 4th District
Federal D. Glover, 5th District

Contra Costa County




David Twa 3-3
Clerk of the Board
and
County Administrator
(925) 335-1900

May 8, 2012

Don Tatzin, Chair
Contra Costa Transportation Authority
2999 Oak Road, Suite 100
Walnut Creek, CA 94597

Subject: Rapid Water Transit Service

Dear Chair  Tatzin:

Staff representatives from the Water Emergency Transportation Authority (WETA) recently attended a TRANSPLAN meeting during which they provided an overview of current and planned WETA activities. Subsequent to that meeting the Board of Supervisors reviewed WETA expansion plans as well as a bill before the State Legislature (AB 2433 - Hill) that seeks to alter the terms of the WETA Board members.

Our review of WETA plans leads us to believe that increased participation by Contra Costa transportation interests in ferry service planning will play a significant role in successful project implementation. With four ferry terminals planned in Contra Costa County and the recent approval of Measure J funds for the Hercules Intermodal Transit Center Project, there is a tremendous amount at stake for Contra Costa.

We also believe that the development of any large transportation project should be guided by local representatives who possess substantial knowledge of our transportation issues. Given this, the Board of Supervisors has requested that AB 2433 be amended to include direct representation of Contra Costa County on the WETA Board (see attachment).

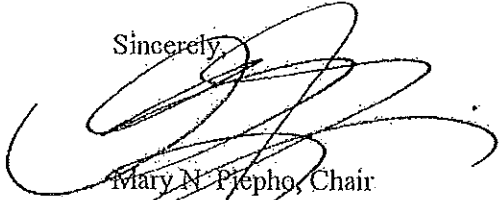
In addition to this legislative appeal, the Board of Supervisors is now respectfully requesting the assistance and leadership of the Contra Costa Transportation Authority in engaging WETA and advocating for ferry service in Contra Costa County. There are a number of opportunities to participate in the ongoing dialog on ferry service implementation. The attachments to this letter document current initiatives including a request to establish a joint committee with WETA (initiated by TRANSPLAN), and the aforementioned amendment request for AB 2433. The details of how a Contra Costa representative would be appointed have not been discussed. However, we believe that designating the Contra Costa Transportation Authority as the appointing body would be in the best interests of all of Contra Costa County.

3-4

Rapid Water Transit Service Letter
May 8, 2012
Page 2 of 2

If you or your staff has any questions about this request, please contact me or Steven L. Goetz at (925) 674-7830 or at steven.goetz@dcd.eccounty.us.

Sincerely,

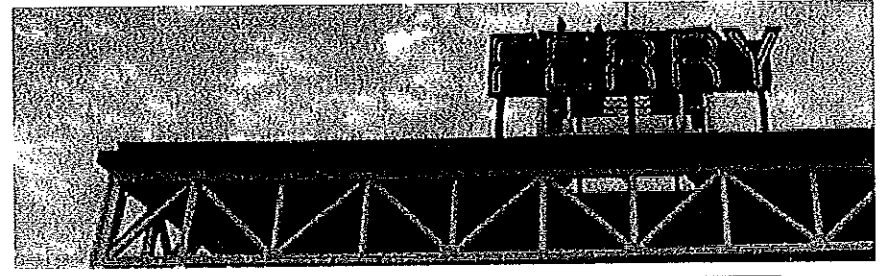


Mary N. Piepho, Chair
Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors
Supervisor, District III

Attachment:

- 4/12/2012 Letter from TRANSPLAN to WETA re: Establishment of a Joint Committee
- 5/8/12 Letter from the BOS to Hon. Jerry Hill re: AB 2433: San Francisco Bay Area WETA: Terms of Board Members

c: Janet Abelson, Chair, WCCTAC
Jim Frazier, Chair, TRANSPLAN
Julie Pierce, Chair, TRANSPAC

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ABOUT US

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WHAT IS THE EMERGENCY WATER TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM MANAGEMENT PLAN?

Per SB 1093 [\(PDF\)](#), WETA is mandated to create and adopt an Emergency Water Transportation System Management Plan (EWTSMP) for the San Francisco Bay Area. The plan was approved and adopted by the WETA Board of Directors at its June 18 meeting.

[View a Flash presentation about the Emergency Water Transportation System Management Plan](#)

The EWTSMP complements and reinforces other transportation emergency plans that will enable the Bay Area to restore mobility after a regional disaster. The Plan sets a framework for coordination of response and recovery efforts using passenger ferries and provides a detailed definition of WETA's roles and responsibilities for incident planning, response and recovery, and restoration of normal operations.

DOWNLOAD THE EMERGENCY WATER TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM MANAGEMENT PLAN

[Final EWTSMP Plan \[\\(PDF\\)\]\(#\)](#) (PDF, 895KB)

[Visit the Transition Plan page](#) for information on the WETA Transition Plan.

For more emergency preparedness information, visit 72hours.org and [California Office of Emergency Services](#).

[top](#)



TO: WCCTAC Board

DATE: June 14, 2012

FR: Christina Atienza, Executive Director *cma*

RE: Update on Ferry Expansion Plans in West County

The Board requested an update on the status of proposed ferry projects in Richmond and Hercules. Updates will also be provided on the status of the Marina Bay Parkway grade separation project (which benefitted from an advance of ferry-dedicated Measure J funds) and recent efforts to coordinate ferry planning in the County.

Recommended Actions: 1) RECEIVE update, 2) PROVIDE DIRECTION to CCTA representatives and/or staff as appropriate

Background

The Water Emergency Transportation Authority (WETA) runs a majority of the public ferries in the Bay Area. There are currently four proposed ferry terminals in Contra Costa: Richmond, Hercules, Martinez, and Antioch. Planning work is currently underway for each of these projects, led by WETA in cooperation with the sponsoring cities in which the terminals are proposed to be located.

In the last few years, ferry planning in the County proceeded at a much slower pace than originally anticipated in large part due to the State's fiscal crisis. Some progress has been made for both the Richmond and Hercules sites, as well as at the other County sites.

The presentation to the Board includes a general overview of WETA and their expansion plans, updates on the specific projects in the County, and next steps – see Attachment A.

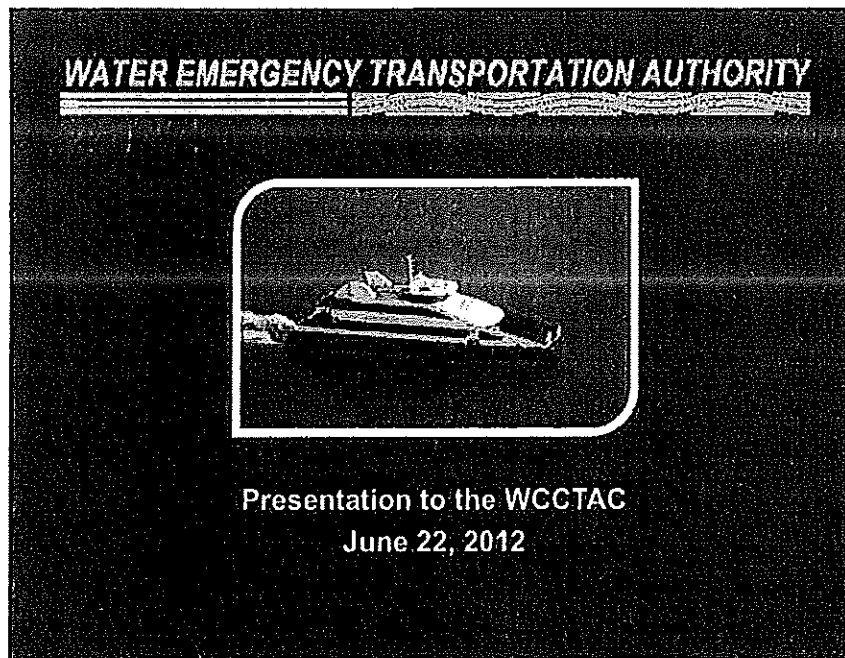
In west County, there is a dedicated Measure J fund source for ferry service (Program 22b). In 2008, at the Board and WETA's request, CCTA advanced a portion of those funds to Richmond to fund the Marina Bay Pkwy grade separation project, with the intent that the funds would be paid back out of the Measure J funds dedicated to the Richmond Pkwy upgrade, which were not available at the time. The Board will also be provided with latest status of the grade separation project.

More recently, there has been an uptick in ferry-related activities in the County. Last month, a series of articles appeared in Contra Costa Times referring to challenges facing the Hercules ferry – see Attachment B. Activities were also taking place in other parts of the County culminating in the Board of Supervisors requesting the assistance and leadership of CCTA in engaging WETA and advocating for ferry service in the County – see Attachment C.

Ferry Update
June 14, 2012
Page 2

The County's request was discussed at this month's meeting of CCTA's Administration & Projects Committee. The initial recommendation is to form a staff-level committee comprised of WETA, CCTA, the involved RTPCs, and the involved cities to gather information about the different efforts underway in the County and to generally advance those efforts. While ferry planning is expected to occur over a long timeframe, a key focus area for such a committee over the next one to two years might be to inform the planning work necessary for a possible extension of Measure J and/or a new sales tax measure, which CCTA is presently considering.

WCCTAC, WETA, Richmond, and Hercules staff will provide the requested update to the Board. The Board may wish to consider providing direction to the CCTA representatives and/or staff regarding the work of the proposed staff-level committee.



Introduction

Why are we here?

- Recent news articles on Hercules site issues with dredging
- County request for WETA Board representation
- Transplan request for working group with WETA
- Initiate initial planning efforts for possible sales tax extension or renewal

Presentation Outline

- WETA Background
- Project Updates
- Next Steps

6/14/2012

Agency Background

Authorized by California State Legislature

- Water Transit Authority – 2000
 - Expansion service development
- Water Emergency Transportation Authority – 2008
 - Emergency response coordination
 - Expansion service development
 - Regional service consolidation
 - ✓ Alameda/Oakland
 - ✓ Alameda Harbor Bay
 - ✓ Vallejo Baylink



Agency Background


Five Member Board of Directors

- Appointed at the State level (non-geographically)
 - Three appointed by Governor, subject to Senate confirmation
 - One appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules
 - One appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly

Expansion Plans

System Expansion Plans Completed in 2003

- 8 Potential New Routes Identified
 - Antioch
 - Martinez
 - Hercules
 - Richmond
 - Berkeley
 - Treasure Island
 - South San Francisco
 - Redwood City
- Programmatic EIR Completed



Funding

Local, Regional, State and Federal Funding Partnerships

- Regional Measure 2 Operating and Capital
 - Berkeley, SSF, Alameda, Vallejo
 - System Infrastructure
- San Mateo Measure A - \$30 million
 - South San Francisco and Redwood City Service
- Contra Costa Measure J - \$45 million
 - Richmond and Hercules Service
- State Proposition 1B
 - Environmental/conceptual design and capital infrastructure
- Federal Ferry Boat Discretionary Capital

6/14/2012

Recent Accomplishments

Created regional ferry system operation

- Assumed Alameda/Oakland and Harbor Bay ferry services
- Worked towards Vallejo Baylink service transition set for July 1
- Consolidated operations and maintenance contract
 - Blue and Gold
- Launched "San Francisco Bay Ferry" name and website



Recent Accomplishments


Added ferry transit capacity in San Francisco Bay Area

- Constructed 4 new ferry vessels
- Constructed new berthing facilities in San Francisco
- Constructed new ferry terminal at Oyster Point Marina and launched new South San Francisco Service on June 4
- Developed plans for Ferry Operations & Maintenance Facilities
- Developed plans for Downtown SF Berthing Expansion



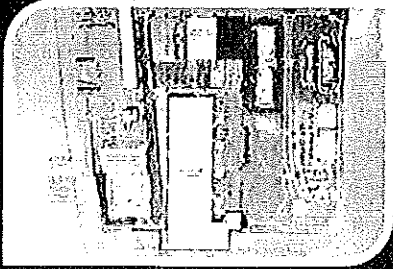
Expansion Projects

- WETA continues to partner with the cities identified in the IOP for potential expansion services
- Conceptual design and environment review is funded by Prop 1B and RM2
- Design and environmental review for the expansion projects are at various stages
- WETA updated its Ridership Model to support the concept design and environmental review processes



Richmond Terminal

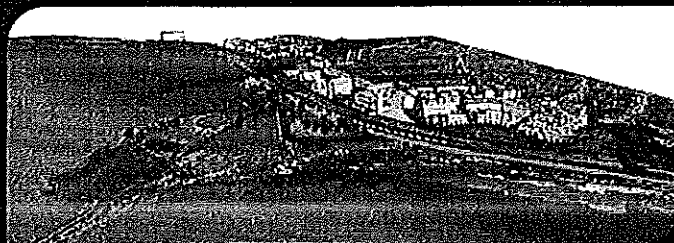
- Richmond terminal project is in the conceptual design phase
 - State and federal environmental review started in early 2012
 - Public Scoping meetings held on June 21, 2012
- WETA has engaged BCDC early in the concept design process
 - Existing BCDC permit for Ford Building
 - Parking facility area is designated as a Port Priority use in the Seaport Plan
- Project involves:
 - Replacement of an existing float
 - Reconfiguration of existing parking facility
 - Phased parking
 - Bay Trail/Access improvements
- 2035 Projected Ridership: 1,083 • 1,715



- Latest update on Marina Bay Pkwy grade separation

6/14/2012

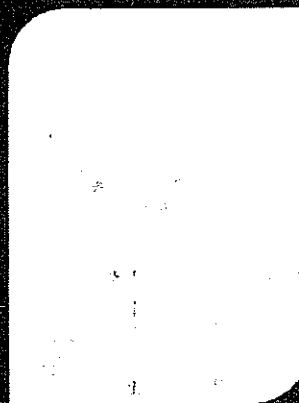
Hercules Terminal



- Hercules Terminal project was separated out from larger Hercules Waterfront project in September 2009 at City request
- A draft EIR/EA has been substantially completed but not published
- WETA staff, as the project lead, has established on-going coordination with Hercules staff to review project status, schedule, and funding
- Challenges include:
 - Timing linked to intermodal station
 - High capital costs
 - Large initial dredging
 - Terminal design
 - High Operational costs
 - Frequent maintenance dredging
 - 2035 Projected Ridership, 416 - 565
 - Lack of sufficient capital/ops funding

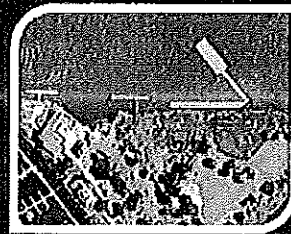
Martinez Terminal

- Martinez terminal project is in the conceptual design phase
- WETA has engaged stakeholders including BCDC, EBRPD and the California State Lands Commission
- Challenges include:
 - Distance from downtown Martinez
 - The site and vicinity are designated as a Park Priority use area in the BCDC Bay Plan
 - Site is within the EBRPD Martinez Shoreline Regional Park
 - 2035 Projected Ridership, 480 - 614
 - Lack of capital and operations funding



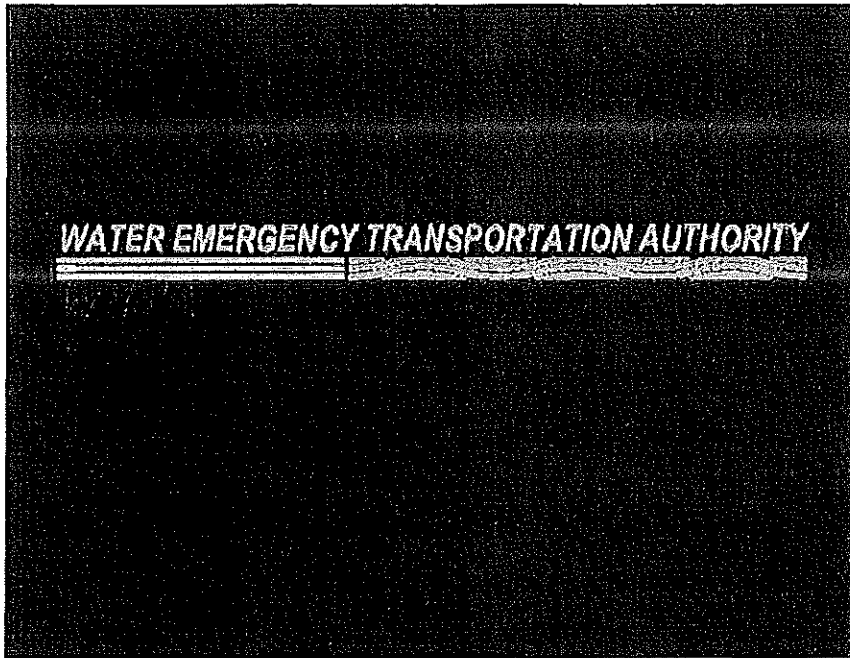
Antioch Terminal

- Antioch terminal project is in the conceptual design phase
- Challenges include:
 - Travel time/trip distance
 - Competition with eBART
 - 2035 Projected Ridership: 375 - 445
 - Lack of capital and operations funding



Next Steps

- WETA to continue to develop regional ferry system infrastructure and services
- WETA to continue to work with cities on site-specific planning and design
- In Contra-Costa County, WETA, CCTA, RTPCs, and cities to create staff-level forum for discussing and coordinating county-side ferry planning



Mudflats prove daunting hurdle to Hercules' vision of creating ferry link to San Francisco

By Tom Lochner

Contra Costa Times

Posted: 05/20/2012 07:22:38 AM PDT

Updated: 05/20/2012 07:23:08 AM PDT

On a map of the Bay Area, Hercules appears the ideal place for a ferry connection to San Francisco.

Traffic-snarled Interstate 80 passes about a mile from San Pablo Bay. The Union Pacific Railroad tracks hug the Bay coast, carrying Amtrak Capitol corridor trains.

The ferry would dock somewhere across the tracks from a planned Hercules passenger train station and bus transfer area along Bayfront Boulevard.

But nautical depth charts reveal a serious inconvenience: Hercules' shoreline is mired in mud and shallows, extending more than a half-mile into the Bay -- a fact that often goes unmentioned during discussions of the proposed transit center. Other times, it gets brushed off as readily solvable by the dredging of a channel or by the deployment of hovercraft, vessels that ride a cushion of air and can navigate in shallow waters and even onto beaches.

Other proposed solutions include conventional vessels with a lesser draft than the ferries currently plying the Bay.

The San Francisco Bay Water Emergency Transportation Authority, the umbrella organization of Bay ferries and operators, better known by its acronym WETA, has pegged the cost of dredging a channel in Hercules at \$17 million to \$20 million, plus about \$3 million every two or three years for maintenance dredging.

On Tuesday, John Sindzinski, WETA's manager of planning, will make a presentation to the Hercules City Council on the future of ferry service in Hercules.

WETA routes connect San Francisco with Alameda, Oakland, Larkspur, Sausalito, Tiburon and Vallejo. The authority is considering future routes between San Francisco and Antioch, Martinez, Berkeley, Hercules, Redwood City, Richmond and Treasure Island, as well as South San Francisco-Oakland. According to a 2003 environmental impact report, among the proposed WETA expansion sites, only a Hercules-Rodeo terminal would require significant dredging.

How the Hercules-Rodeo site morphed into Hercules-only is unclear, but the change of reference occurred in official documents and news reports around late 2002 or early 2003. Civic leaders in unincorporated Rodeo once had vied with Hercules not only for a ferry but also a train station.

An April 2011 Hovercraft Feasibility Study commissioned by WETA found that from a physical and engineering perspective, hovercraft would be a feasible mode of water transit to and from Hercules. But significant logistical and cost questions remain, including the need to have separate or hybrid maintenance facilities for hovercraft and conventional vessels.

Additionally, San Francisco, the ferry network's main nexus, would have to add a hovercraft landing facility such as a landing ramp.

Hercules had spent about \$13.5 million of its own money on the intermodal transit center as of January, more than half of it with HDR Engineering Inc. for environmental work, design and engineering. The combination of transportation modes could make the transit center the only one in the western United States to combine bus, rail and water transit, its promoters say.

The city's latest cost estimate to build the ITC, on top of the money already spent, is \$76.1 million, with the bulk of it expected to come from regional, state and federal funds.

That amount does not cover a ferry terminal, which the transit center's federal environmental impact statement, published in April, relegates to a future stage. But the ferry is a main selling point in pitches for funding for a Hercules transit center and in the promotion of an adjacent transit village, Hercules Bayfront, to be developed by a private developer.

Contact Tom Lochner at 510-262-2760.

if you go

What: Hercules City Council ferry presentation

Where: Hercules City Council chamber, 111 Civic Drive

When: 7 p.m. Tuesday

East Bay looks to hovercraft for ferry service

By Tom Lochner and Paul Burgarino

Contra Costa Times

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Posted: 05/20/2012 08:02:06 AM PDT

Updated: 05/20/2012 08:02:27 AM PDT

Air-cushioned hovercraft vessels, long popular in Europe but little used in the United States, could be the answer for a trio of East Bay cities that long have sought ferry service to San Francisco.

Although a number of bureaucratic, political and physical hurdles remain, the Bay Area's water transit agency is exploring whether hovercraft are a viable option for ferrying passengers from Hercules, Martinez and Antioch, among other cities.

The vessels are appealing for several reasons: They are touted as more fuel-efficient than traditional catamaran ferries and as fast as the most advanced catamarans. Hovercraft also can navigate in shallow waters, even onto beaches and landing platforms, allowing them to reach areas that catamarans can't and respond to emergencies and provide service to cities saddled with shallow shorelines. Hovercraft travel on a cushion of air created by downward-thrusting air jets, while propellers mounted above deck provide forward propulsion.

Technological advances also have reduced concerns about noise and comfort that plagued hovercraft when they were introduced in Europe decades ago.

But to establish themselves in the Bay Area, hovercraft need to overcome a fundamental presumption shared by mariners and watercraft builders alike -- including a leading hovercraft manufacturer.

"As a general rule, if you can make all the connections you need using a (conventional) boat, without going around extended areas of shallow water -- use a boat," said Richard Box, a former hovercraft pilot and hovercraft operations consultant for Griffon Hoverwork Ltd. of Southampton, U.K.

Hercules sees hovercraft as the panacea for a shoreline of mud flats -- extending more than a half-mile into San Pablo Bay -- that would require costly dredging for traditional ferry service. Martinez also could require dredging, and Antioch looks to the speed of hovercraft to get passengers quickly to San Francisco, although experts, including some hovercraft specialists, say newer models of ferry catamarans match hovercraft's speed.

Antioch's and Martinez's interest in an idea fueled primarily by Hercules' lack of docking facilities addresses one crucial concern of the San Francisco Bay Area Water Emergency Transportation Authority -- that a "radical change" to hovercraft be justified over multiple routes.

It would require incorporating San Francisco into a baywide hovercraft system -- a daunting prospect at an Embarcadero terminal already busy with surrounding heavy marine traffic, and where space would need to be set aside for a hovercraft landing ramp.

Michael Bernick, a lawyer who has worked on the idea as a consultant for the East Bay cities, says a recent feasibility study completed by the water transportation authority shows the potential of hovercraft in the Bay Area.

"My own view is that it's doable," said Bernick, a former BART board member. "There are legitimate questions, but I think they can be addressed."

Questions include creating a separate or hybrid maintenance facility for hovercraft and conventional ferries and a docking facility in San Francisco. A memo written earlier this year by transportation authority officials acknowledged that hovercraft "would require wholly different operations practices and materials, as well as different docking facilities and maintenance berths."

But state Sen. Mark DeSaulnier, D-Concord, agrees that those challenges could be overcome.

"After seeing the study, hovercraft seems like a very feasible option," said DeSaulnier, who heads the Senate's transportation committee.

Bernick says the cost of operating hovercraft would be similar to traditional ferry vessels, and he noted that they would offer advantages in responding to emergency situations, an integral part of the transportation authority's mandate.

"The (transportation authority) board has been very open to the idea of a system with both (types of) vehicles," Bernick said.

The hovercraft's emergency capabilities, along with ecological advantages, make it an attractive prospect for the Bay Area, agreed Keith Whittemore, president of Seattle-based Kvichak Marine Industries, which built a hovercraft used in Alaska and the newest catamaran ferries in the Bay Area.

"From an emergency standpoint, you can pick people up from a downed bridge or a downed airplane and drive them onto a beach," he said.

Whittemore also noted that hovercraft are more fuel-efficient than catamarans at high speed but generally come with higher maintenance costs.

Unlike other existing or planned Bay Area ferry stops under the jurisdiction of the transportation authority, Hercules has no deep-water dock, nor any deep water where it could build one, that could accommodate conventional, deeper-draft boats -- a predicament apparently largely overlooked when the agency's predecessor, the Water Transit Authority, put together its expansion list starting in the early 2000s.

Dredging a deep-water harbor in Hercules for conventional ferries would cost "upwards of \$17 million" initially and about \$3 million in maintenance dredging every two to three years thereafter, according to the June 2 transportation authority memo.

"For Hercules, that makes a hovercraft financially more viable," Whittemore said.

Nevertheless, he says landing hovercraft at the San Francisco Embarcadero is fraught with challenges.

"You've got winds, tides, traffic -- that would not be a simple thing. That needs to be very carefully studied."

Hovercraft also could save Martinez dredging costs, Mayor Rob Schroder said.

The city's shoreline requires dredging on a regular basis, he said. Consultants from the transportation authority are studying the depth of the waters along the Martinez shoreline to locate a possible ferry terminal site. One of the potential locations is an old fishing pier, which likely would not require dredging.

The April feasibility study commissioned by the transportation authority estimated that travel time between Antioch and San Francisco could be cut to a little more an hour -- or about 30 minutes faster than traditional ferries used in the bay.

"That time reduction makes (the hovercraft) pretty competitive and a lot more appealing," Antioch Councilman Gary Agopian said.

But experts say technological advances in conventional watercraft have largely nullified hovercraft's erstwhile speed advantage.

The newest high-speed ferry from Vallejo to San Francisco, put in service in 2004, has a service speed of 34 knots fully loaded and a maximum speed of 38 knots, according to the website of Baylink, the route operator. By comparison, hovercraft envisioned for that crossing would travel at 40 to 45 knots, according to the feasibility study.

Hovercraft's greater susceptibility to headwinds could reduce any speed advantage, said John Sindzinski, the transportation authority's planning and development manager.

One possible obstacle to popular acceptance of hovercraft in the Bay Area, Sindzinski said, is the notion that they are noisy.

Paul Edwards, Griffon's director of business development, traces that perception to a previous generation of hovercraft that used noisy turbines for propulsion. Those craft have been largely phased out, he said.

Advancements have also allowed for a smoother ride. A Kvichak-built hovercraft ferry based on a Griffon design connects King Cove on the Alaska Peninsula to an airport eight miles across a bay, weather permitting.

"I was on it when the wind was 35 knots, and I stood the whole time," King Cove Mayor Henry Mack said. "You can walk around."

For local leaders, the choice is simple. They want whatever vessel will at last make ferry service a reality for their cities.

"We're going to favor which ever option gets service to Martinez faster," Schroder said. "At the same time, Martinez will work together with Hercules and Antioch to find the best option for the region."

Contact Tom Lochner at 510-262-2760 or tlochner@bayareanewsgroup.com. Contact Paul Burgarino at 925-779-7164 or pburgarino@bayareanewsgroup.com.

HOVERCRAFT VS. FERRY

Hovercraft are being considered for ferry service in San Francisco Bay. Here's how the hovercraft compares with traditional ferry service now offered.

Feature Hovercraft Catamaran ferry

(BHT150) (M/V Solano)

Cost per vessel \$12 to \$14 million \$11.8 million

Passenger capacity 150 300

Speed (knots) 40 to 45 34 to 38

Fuel per hour (gallons) 92-172 300

Crew members 2 (min.) 4

Sources: Griffon Hoverwork Ltd., Kvichak Marine Industries, Vallejo Baylink Ferry

Water transit expert: Hercules ferry faces daunting challenges

By Tom Lochner
Contra Costa Times

Posted: 05/23/2012 12:45:40 PM PDT
Updated: 05/24/2012 12:57:09 PM PDT

A water transit expert threw some cold water on Hercules' dreams of a ferry connection to San Francisco this week, telling the City Council that dredging costs are much higher and ridership projections lower than at other potential East Bay ferry terminal sites such as Richmond and Berkeley.

And the San Francisco Bay Water Emergency Transportation Authority, the umbrella organization of bay ferries and their operators, is far less sanguine than it was just a few years ago about air-cushioned hovercraft vessels as a possible answer to Hercules' shallow coastal waters, said John Sindzinski, planning manager for the agency better known by its acronym WETA.

The bay's existing ferry runs between San Francisco and Alameda, Harbor Bay, Oakland, Larkspur, Sausalito, Tiburon and Vallejo use more conventional watercraft such as catamarans.

"A hovercraft facility is totally and absolutely incompatible with a catamaran facility," Sindzinski said, noting that there would have to be separate landing facilities at San Francisco's Embarcadero terminal, as well as separate maintenance provisions for the two types of craft.

That view was challenged later by Charles Ivan King, a hovercraft promoter representing the firm EPS Navy Systems who attended the council meeting. King said in an email Wednesday that some existing terminals could accommodate hovercraft, or separate hovercraft ports could be built at relatively low cost.

Hercules is the only site on the transportation authority's potential expansion list that would require significant dredging to accommodate conventional watercraft. WETA has estimated it would cost at least \$17 million just to dredge a channel from Hercules' mud-mired shores to deeper bay waters, plus about \$3 million every two or three years for maintenance dredging.

The cost does not factor in possible environmental add-on requirements, depending on the level of contamination of the mud with pollutants from industry and other sources.

Another rap against hovercrafts is that the boats are too small, with a capacity of about 150 seats, making them uneconomical, Sindzinski said. By comparison, the M/V Solano, on Baylink's San Francisco-Vallejo run, has a capacity of 300.

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But officials at Griffon Hoverwork, of Southampton, U.K., a world leader in hovercraft design, have said that developing larger-capacity hovercrafts would present no formidable technological challenge. Russia's giant Zubr military hovercraft, the world's largest, reputedly can carry up to 500 troops or eight amphibious tanks.

Hovercraft also have the reputation of being loud, which would make them a hard sell, especially in San Francisco, Sindzinski said. But Griffon officials say that perception applies to 1960s-vintage hovercraft, and that modern hovercraft are much quieter.

Sindzinski's latest ridership projections to and from San Francisco, which several council members questioned, are 416 to 565 one-way trips a day for Hercules versus about 1,000 each for Berkeley and Richmond. The previous projection, which is still on WETA's website, was for 1,022 one-way trips daily between San Francisco and Hercules.

Moreover, a Hercules-San Francisco commuter connection already exists, in the form of the popular WestCAT "Lynx" bus, which logs about 400 daily round-trips on weekdays, according to WestCAT general manager Charles Anderson.

In addition to dredging for a conventional vessel, Hercules would require a terminal building at a cost of more than \$25 million, Sindzinski estimated.

Building additional docking space at the San Francisco terminal for East Bay routes would cost about \$25 million to \$30 million per berth, Sindzinski said.

Councilman William Wilkins, noting that Hercules has "fought hard and long" for a ferry as part of the planned Hercules Intermodal Transit Center, urged Sindzinski to "help keep our dream alive." Sindzinski promised his agency will continue to work with Hercules.

A Hercules-San Francisco hovercraft would not be the first trans-bay hovercraft service.

In 1965, San Francisco and Oakland Helicopter Airlines, which no longer exists, briefly ran a hovercraft commuter service on a trial basis. A video clip can be viewed at <http://bit.ly/KCWq5w>.

Contact Tom Lochner at 510-262-2760.



ABOUT US

RICHMOND FERRY TERMINAL AND SERVICE

[Scoping Meeting Notice](#) | [Site Images](#)

ABOUT RICHMOND FERRY TERMINAL AND SERVICE

The San Francisco Bay Area Water Emergency Transportation Authority (WETA) is proposing to establish a new ferry route between the existing San Francisco Ferry Terminal and a new ferry terminal on the Ford Peninsula in the City of Richmond. Passengers would embark/disembark at the San Francisco terminal and at a proposed terminal on the Ford Peninsula on the southern waterfront in the City of Richmond.

The proposed terminal site is approximately 1.5 miles south of the Richmond downtown core. A figure illustrating the proposed location and early conceptual plan is presented below. The concept plans are presented below. The proposed Richmond ferry terminal would be at the southern point of Ford Peninsula, adjacent to the Ford Building along an existing wharf. In general, the proposed new terminal would replace an existing ferry facility consisting of a gangway, float, ramping system and piles. The proposed terminal would include a gangway that would lead from the plaza adjacent to the existing wharf to a new passenger float. The new passenger float would be approximately 10 percent larger than the existing float and would accommodate one ferry vessel at a time for passenger loading and unloading. The new gangway and ramping system would be compliant with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards. Ferry passenger parking would be at an existing parking lot to the west of the Ford Building. Alternatives for expansion of parking facilities are also under study. Other project features include an access gate with informational signage and a waiting area at the Craneway Pavilion within the Ford Building. The project would include minor reconfiguration of the existing parking lot and trail improvements in the project vicinity. The project could also include improvements to existing facilities in Sheridan Point Park. Construction activities would generally include demolition of the existing facility, replacement of existing piles, construction of the gangway, and placement of the float. Minor grading and excavation could be necessary for parking lot reconfiguration and trail and access improvements.

RICHMOND SCOPING MEETING

The San Francisco Bay Area Water Emergency Transportation Authority invites you to attend a public scoping meeting for the proposed Richmond Ferry Terminal and Service. Meeting details are below.

Date: **Thursday, June 21, 2012**

Meeting One: **4:30 p.m.**

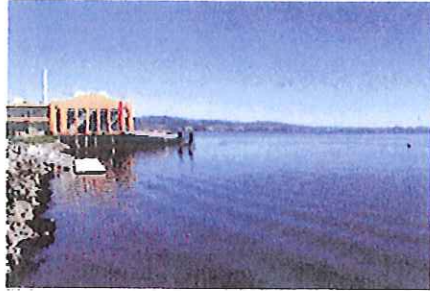
Meeting Two: **6:30 p.m.**

Marina Bay Yacht Harbor, Harbormaster
Location: Room, 1340 Marina Way South, Richmond,
CA 94804 ([Map and Directions](#))

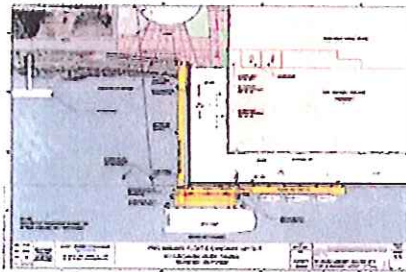
DOWNLOAD THE NOTICE OF PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

[Notice of Richmond Public Scoping Meeting](#) (Large PDF, 3.76 MB)

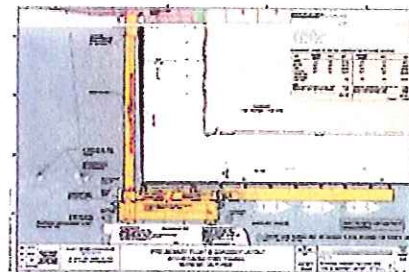
VIEWS OF PROPOSED SITE



PROPOSED FLOAT AND GANGWAY



Proposed Float and Gangway #1

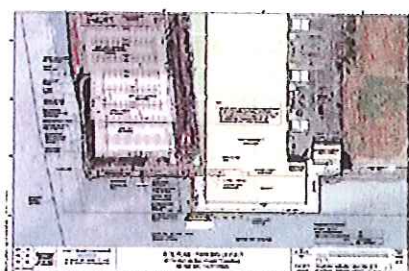


Proposed Float and Gangway #2

PROPOSED SITE AND PARKING PLANS



Proposed Site and Parking Plans #1



Proposed Site and Parking Plans #2

[top](#)