

SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA WATER EMERGENCY TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

(April 16, 2009 - Alameda)

The Board of Directors of the San Francisco Bay Area Water Emergency Transportation Authority met in special session at Alameda City Hall, 2263 Santa Clara Ave, Alameda, CA.

1. ROLL CALL AND CALL TO ORDER

Chair Charlene Haught Johnson called the meeting to order at 7:38 p.m. Directors present were Chair Johnson, Vice Chair Anthony Intintoli and Director Beverly Johnson.

2. REPORT OF BOARD CHAIR

Chair Johnson explained that the purpose of the special meeting/public hearing was to receive comments on the Draft Transition Plan and Draft Emergency Water Transportation System Management Plan.

3. REPORT OF DIRECTORS

None.

4. REPORTS OF STAFF

Executive Director Nina Rannells and Operations Manager Keith Stahnke delivered presentations on the Draft Transition Plan and Draft Emergency Water Transportation System Management Plan respectively.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

Sherman Lewis: So I'm curious about the South San Francisco route. When I first -- I currently work just north of Oyster Point, but I live in Alameda; and I was hoping that eventually I'd be able to take the ferry there. But it looks like it's not going to be stopping in Alameda. It's just only going to start in Oakland and end at Oyster Point; is that correct?

John Sindzinski, Manager of Planning and Development: That's correct.

Sherman Lewis: That's the only question I had.

John Knox White: Good evening. I'm John Knox White. I'm the chair of the City's transportation commission. And with the indulgence of the Chair, I might run just a little over. I'll try to keep this short.

I have some comments on both plans. I want to thank both the City of Alameda staff. I know they've worked really hard with you on this; and I know your staff has worked very hard as well. There is a remedy from your original legislation that created WETA that I'm hoping, while it remains -- it is not fixed in the cleanup language -- your plan might at least acknowledge, if not fix. And that is Regional Measure 2 was passed by voters of Alameda, including language that specifically had money for ferry services for Alameda. It was given to the WETA, but it was specifically \$12 million for new ferry service for the Alameda Harbor Bay ferry service. When SB 936 was passed, the state legislature took it upon themselves before any of this money had

ever actually been given that service to remove the words "Alameda," "Oakland," and "Harbor Bay." So, again, I know none of you were involved in that. I'm not here to act accusatory or whatever, but the fact that the State language does not require the money to go to Alameda-Oakland and Harbor Bay does not preclude WETA from still upholding the voters -- what the voters actually passed. I can tell you that the discussion within Alameda did include the facts that the language was here. People in the city were aware that they were voting on money for their ferry service. And I think -- and if the decision is made not to acknowledge, then I think there should be at least in the transition plan some explanation of what's happening with that money and how it's being used and how it might benefit the overall system. But I think for that to disappear is problematic. And one of the reasons it's problematic, beyond the fact that it doesn't actually -- it's not in the spirit of what voters had approved in terms of this funding -- is found on page 18 of the transition plan at which the plan highlights supporting the use and passage of local sales measures or other local funds to support ongoing operating expense. I think if you don't at least explain how this kind of still meets the goals for which voters passed the money for, I think then going on and saying we may ask you to pass more taxes to fund this service causes voters to wonder, Well, how do we know that money is going to go for what it was said it was going to be for as well. Again, I know you didn't change the language, but I do think that it becomes problematic to have no acknowledgment that language has been changed.

Also, on page 18 -- I'll just put a little plug here -- it talks about the central bay facility and all the development and work that's been done on our west end and that Alameda will be the hub of two ferry stops. I'll put in a plug for finding a location within the city that would be very close to where you're going to start. Cut down environmentally on dead-heading and also costs per deadhead runs.

Lastly, in the transition plan, there's not a lot of talk in here and I don't mean to pick on Vallejo, but I think if the roles were reversed this would still be just as valid. I know that they recently in the last year raised the fares and had a dramatic drop in ridership. I'm not quite sure that the revenue figures represented here were post that ridership fall or pre-it. But I think that in this transition plan, given that we are melding two existing services, both of which have the assumption that their services are going to continue in at least the shape that they're in, that there should be some language that kind of protects the fact that Alameda service will be maintained and is not going -- that money that should be going to Alameda service to maintain and is not going to be siphoned off in order to continue to run the Vallejo service, which seems to be having ridership issues. And I think that it would be good to see some sort of acknowledgment that starting new service as well, the services that are actually -- right now you have three successful services that you're transitioning into one group. Those services should not be allowed to start not succeeding as more money is needed for Berkeley -- again, not picking on specifics -- but new routes to new cities. And I know that, in fact, that WETA in its discussions in trying to do this very thing, that was the issue that was being discussed -- how do we protect existing services while still creating this regional ferry service, which I think can be a very good thing. But I think that the riders and the taxpayers of Alameda and Vallejo as well do deserve some sort of acknowledgment that if -- that this is an issue and that one of the goals of WETA is to maintain existing services. I know you can't promise that it's going to be exactly the same; it may change and all that. But there should be some acknowledgment that that is a goal. And I may have missed it. I didn't see it in the transition plan.

Moving on to the emergency plan, I had a question. I don't know if staff is willing to answer the question. But the word "emergency" and "emergency services" is used a lot here. And I thought that as a request for emergency water transportation services, am I correct in assuming that that means that emergency water transportation services is something that is life or death

or getting first-responders from one area to another? Or is that possibly helping commuters who are stuck on one side of the Bay over to the other? And I'll make my comment either way. My comment is that I really appreciate that -- I know our staff worked really hard with it and I appreciate that it's in your page 47. Basic water passenger emergency transportation restoration said that once the emergency is over, we're going to have lifeline communities for which we're going to restore transportation. I think that's fantastic, but I think that also within this plan what needs to be acknowledged in these same two communities that are highlighted here -- Alameda and Treasure Island are the only two water-isolated areas -- is that in an emergency we have four bridges and some tubes here that connect the island. It's possible that during the emergency we may be cut off from the mainland in a way that none of the other mainland cities will be cut off. You can always -- it may not be pleasant -- you can drive from San Francisco around the Bay to Berkeley and so get home. I think it would be good to acknowledge, at least as a priority -- that part of the priority -- the emergency water plan takes into account that there are communities that could very well be isolated during the emergency; and given that the boats are already serving here, that they should be -- I'm not saying prioritized over the needs -- especially the life-and-death needs of other communities -- but there should be some plan to make sure that people in Alameda have a way to get back to Alameda when something happens and the bridges fail. And I didn't see that in here. I see it after the emergency is over. I think it would be good to at least acknowledge that it's an issue to be considered during an emergency.

And on page 8 is my only other comment. The planning assumptions for WETA. It would be nice -- has all sorts of good assumptions for planning, but maintaining or quick resumption of services to cities with existing services I think should be highlighted here as well. A city like Alameda or even in Berkeley, that is how they travel and get back to their cars or whatever. Prioritize that the emergency is happening and we need to figure out where we're taking. I think it would make sense to look first at bringing people to where they typically are going. You've got the bus lines going there already. You may identify emergency docks in places like Antioch; but from a planning standpoint, you already have the infrastructure and everything else at the locations where you're already providing service. I was thinking that that would be one place you might want to add.

But beyond that I think they are good plans. My question is -- I have one other one. The transition plan is on a very high level. It really doesn't talk about how you're going to transition and what are the terms of the deal and whatever else. I understand it's not trying to do that. What would be good to have in this document is what is the process for doing that, what is the public input process for that. One of the reasons we have the meeting here in Alameda is because during the cleanup it specifically said this meeting had to be held in Alameda to give those riders a chance and it would be good to see that the island is in the transition plan as well so that Alameda ferry riders know when and where they're going to have a chance to comment. Thank you. I went longer than you probably wanted.

Fred Sherman: I've only become aware of the WETA plans recently. And the thing that pops to my mind is that I've only heard about people. In fact, I think in the emergency plan it said very specifically for people only. And nothing is mentioned about freight or emergency supplies. And I think that's maybe something that you should consider if you haven't considered, because it seems to me that the plans may be deficient if they're not taking into consideration the need for getting emergency supplies around the devastated area.

I think also it seems to me that if you don't consider freight in your overall planning of this process that you're overlooking one way that it may be possible to lower the net cost of your

transportation of people by utilizing the excess time on the boats when they're not being needed for transporting people and also as adjunct of having additional service which the freight will help bear the cost of these sorts. Thank you very much.

W. Graham Clayton: I really have a tiny point here. But we're turning our ferry services over to WETA and we don't have any control over it. And the first thing that WETA has done has been to name two ferries both after astrological signs. That's not in the tradition of either the Alameda-Oakland ferry or the Vallejo ferry, who has named them after vessels previously in service and also for vessels that were named after place names. So I don't see any consultative stuff happening here. Astrological signs are a religion. And I've given you all a handout on this, you know. We can't. It's unconstitutional to name ferry boats after a religion. Why couldn't we consult with the riders about this? No. We just slapped a name on them. And they're tourists. They didn't care about what we cared about. That's a small thing. What I'm more worried about is that if we are not going to consult about simple things like ferry boat names, what are we going to do about schedules if we have schedules in place in Alameda-Oakland literally since 1952? And if we're not consulted about schedule changes, you know we're lost. You know, you've simply shelled out riders. So you got a petition there. You got my letter. I sent it on January 8th. Did I get a response from WETA? No. It was like dropping a penny into a dry well. Nobody responded to me. This is important. Our schedules are important. Our service is important. We ride it. We love it. We want it to continue. But if you're not going to consult with us, then how can we help you? That's all I have to say. Thanks.

Casey Casaes: My question might be moot because I was here to ask about the service to Oyster Point. So there will be no access from here through Oakland or schedule-wise for people from Alameda to get to the Oyster Point location?

Mr. Sindzinski: The current plan is to have direct service from Jack London Square to Oyster Point and back. In the initial planning that was done several years ago, we looked a lot at having the boats stop in Alameda and then on to Oyster Point or just start in Alameda. And what we found was the additional time in those cases of additional stops ended up with less ridership in total. So that is why the decision was made to start service from Jack London Square directly to Oyster Point. Having said that, we haven't started service yet.

Casey Casaes: And the service was planned to launch last fall, right?

Mr. Sindzinski: Right.

Casey Casaes: And now you're looking at 2011?

Mr. Sindzinski: That's correct.

Casey Casaes: And when did you do those studies?

Mr. Sindzinski: Those studies were done in 2006-2007 approximately.

Casey Casaes: A lot of changes.

Mr. Sindzinski: One of the things we've committed to doing is working through employers in Oyster Point to talk to the riders. We have already done some outreach and we're open to looking at this again. It's not set in stone. It was suggested and we certainly plan on consulting with riders.

Casey Casaes: Do you have suggestions for those of us who are interested in that service?

Mr. Sindzinski: Maybe we can talk afterward.

Casey Casaes: Thank you.

Eric Schatmeier: I am Eric Schatmeier. I am a member of the Alameda Transportation Commission; and until last year I was a daily commuter on the Harbor Bay ferry. And so I have been very interested in this issue both on the commission and from a personal standpoint. I was a strong participant in the discussion that took place during the formulation of the legislation. I think I was probably also representative of a body of opinion that was expressed there about -- I don't want to rehash the debate that took place here -- but there was a lot of discussion and interest in knowing what the future of services to Alameda would be. That was the main tenor of the discussion. Are we going to preserve a level of service? Are we going to preserve fares? What happens when this new agency takes over and what happens to our service?

You know, a regional agency -- there's a lot of publicity about the fiefdoms in Bay Area transit and all the division that takes place in Bay Area transit; and that's certainly of concern to people who like efficiency. But for people who use a service, they do not care about efficiency of a lot of different services; they care about the efficiency of their service. And when fares and schedules are perhaps threatened, they want to know where they can go and who they can talk to about it. We were glad to have our mayor on the board of the newly constituted board of directors. But we were hoping that that position for Alameda would be permanent and part of the -- in any case that's all sort of a lead-up to say and to echo my colleague John Knox White's comments about we hate to see our service jeopardized in favor of some other service, because we got used to a level of service that the City subsidized and the City supported. And that needs to be preserved in whatever plans are proposed. Now, I read the plan. I think it's a good plan certainly. And a seamless transition is a desirable thing to have. But if it's a five-year plan, the life of transit in five years is not even an eye blink. So I'm very interested in seeing what happens in the long-term and preserving the service to our town in the long term; and that's certainly something we'll be watching very closely, I'm sure. As I said, I read the plan. I think it's a good plan. But I was struck by the financial section that taking the right approach -- the prudent approach -- I think in not assuming any state operating assistance from SDA or TDA. And the plan is prudent and includes some expansion. But it's occurring at a time when all over the Bay Area transit systems are cutting back on service and raising fares. And there's a huge crisis in operating subsidies and operating assistance. I'd kind of like to see the plan say something about that rather just being an exception to that and having a prudent plan that can be implemented that includes preservation of service and future expansion of service. I'd like to see some explicit mention in the plan of, you know, we're one of many operators who are facing a crisis at the national, state, and local level at securing operating subsidy. And our future like theirs depends on a secure source -- a permanent source -- of operating assistance. I wish we would say that and say it clearly in the plan.

One last thing -- a minor thing. I'm glad to see that there's an emergency plan, but I think it's kind of twisted. It's almost as if we have an agency whose main purpose is to have an emergency plan instead of to enhance transit opportunities for people. Transit to me is something that justifies itself as an alternative to single-occupant automobile use and expansion. It's kind of exciting to have a service that's maintaining and promoting transit opportunities for people. It doesn't need to be emergency transportation to be a thing that

justifies itself. So that's sort of a minor comment I had and I think it's generally a good plan. Thanks.

Bill Shamek: Yes. Bill Shamek. Actually, my wife and I are just in the process of moving to Alameda. So we will be Alameda residents next month. The significant issue there for us personally is that the transportation is a real attractive thing of being a resident of Alameda. The transportation link between Alameda and San Francisco is just great for weekend activities. Stay out of our car. Seems to be a really good transportation connection between bus service and the ferry terminals in Alameda. That's great. And then another just another comment: As I was listening here tonight -- I'm an employee at Bay Ship and Yacht in the Alameda Point area. The emergency transportation thing -- the link will certainly be an important point for the emergency services if the bridges or tube are damaged for Bay Ship and Yacht employees to get to work. That will be a very important thing for us to function there. And that's it. Thank you.

Unidentified Speaker: I live in Alameda and I've taken the ferry lots of times. But I'm just wondering why Larkspur, Sausalito, and Tiburon are not part of this. If there's a real emergency, what's going to happen?

Mr. Stahnke: We are working closely with the agency that provides service to Sausalito and Larkspur. And are also working closely with the private operator that provides service to Tiburon. We meet with them regularly and we discuss planning activities. So we work very carefully and coordinate with those other services.

Unidentified Speaker: Why were they not included in this?

Chair Johnson: The wisdom of the legislature. They are not a part of new agency. That's what happened. It was the wisdom of the legislature that excluded us -- divided us -- kept us divided from the Golden Gate Bridge District. It is a part of the statute that changed us from WTA to WETA.

6. ADJOURNMENT

All business having concluded, the meeting was adjourned at 8:28 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Board Secretary
