

**SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA WATER EMERGENCY TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY**  
**MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

(June 4, 2020)

The Board of Directors of the San Francisco Bay Area Water Emergency Transportation Authority met in regular session via videoconference consistent with California Governor Gavin Newsom's Executive Order N-25-20 to ensure social distancing and help mitigate the transmission of COVID-19.

**1. CALL TO ORDER – BOARD CHAIR**

Chair James Wunderman called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. He welcomed guests and advised that the meeting was being recorded. Chair Wunderman also advised how guests could sign up to speak to Directors during the meeting.

**2. ROLL CALL**

Chair Wunderman, Director Anthony Intintoli, and Director Jeffrey DelBono were in attendance.

**3. REPORT OF BOARD CHAIR**

Chair Wunderman acknowledged the unprecedented challenges the Bay Area was experiencing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. He said the Bay Area region has been profoundly affected and businesses were just beginning to gradually reopen after three months of sheltering in place.

Chair Wunderman said he had been named to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's (MTC) Blue Ribbon Transit Recovery Task Force (Task Force). He explained that the three primary objectives of the Task Force over the course of what is expected to be a year or so, in order of priority, were to divvy up the remaining funds from the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, to help all agencies manage the myriad challenges of reopening in this difficult environment, and evaluating the region's transit system to see how its 29 transit agencies can be more collaborative in their fares and schedules and consider if and how consolidation might be possible and advantageous. Chair Wunderman said the Task Force Chair was Solano County Supervisor Jim Spring, a water transit supporter and one of the most respected transit leaders in Bay Area history.

**4. REPORTS OF DIRECTORS**

There were no reports from Directors.

**5. REPORTS OF STAFF**

Executive Director Nina Rannells provided her written report to Directors and welcomed questions. She said that she and other staff had been participating in staff level working groups related to MTC's Task Force.

Ms. Rannells said oral arguments related to Regional Measure 3 (RM3) had been heard by the Court of Appeal on May 26, had reportedly gone very well, and that it could be up to 90 days before a decision was issued.

Ms. Rannells reported that the House Transportation & Infrastructure (T&I) Committee had released text of the *Investing in a New Vision for the Environment and Surface Transportation in America (INVEST in America) Act*, a key component of the Moving Forward Framework that House Democrats, led by Chair

Peter A. DeFazio, released earlier this year. She said it included a doubling of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds for the Discretionary Passenger Ferry Grant program, from \$30 million to \$60 million, and an increase in the Federal Highway Administration formula program. Ms. Rannells said this was very good news and reflected the hard work of WETA's federal representatives' lobbying of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, T&I Chair DeFazio, and other Washington leaders.

Ms. Rannells reminded Directors that prior to the pandemic crisis, the Board had planned to hold a meeting in Vallejo to hear from the Solano Transportation Authority and the City of Vallejo about a parking project they wanted WETA to consider partially funding. She said staff had received one comment from the City of Vallejo on WETA's Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP) related to parking in Vallejo and that she expected to be able to revisit the parking project again as soon as things have quieted down a bit. In response to a question from the Chair, she said a correction to the number of Vallejo parking spaces brought to light by the City's comment had been made to the SRTP.

## **6. CONSENT CALENDAR**

Director Intintoli made a motion to approve the consent calendar:

- a. Board Meeting Minutes – May 7, 2020
- b. Board Meeting Minutes - May 21, 2020
- c. Approve Amendment to Agreement with Nematode Media, LLC for Ferry Ticket Sales and Information Services for Fiscal Year 2020/21
- d. Adopt 2020 Short Range Transit Plan for Fiscal Year 2019-20 to Fiscal Year 2028-29
- e. Approve On-Call Planning Professional Services List and Contracts

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Jerry Bellows said he was pleased to see that many excellent companies had responded to WETA's Request for Qualifications to support its on-call contract needs.

Director DelBono seconded the motion and the consent calendar carried unanimously.

Yeas: DelBono, Intintoli, Wunderman. Nays: None. Absent: None.

## **7. APPROVE AMENDMENTS TO AGREEMENTS FOR THE DOWNTOWN SAN FRANCISCO FERRY TERMINAL EXPANSION PROJECT**

Senior Planner/Project Manager Mike Gougherty presented this item to approve amendments to agreements for the Downtown Ferry Terminal Expansion Project (FTX). He said incredible progress had been made on the project since it began in May 2017 and that it was nearly complete. He said new Gates F and G, and refurbished Gate E, were all available for WETA use, and the plaza and amphitheater seating were also complete. Mr. Gougherty explained that once an executed lease agreement from the Port of San Francisco (Port) was received then the fence around the project could be removed and that he expected it within the next week. He said staff hoped to be able to open the project to the public later this month.

Mr. Gougherty explained that WETA had chosen Power Engineering Construction Company (Power Engineering) from Alameda to do the work on this project. He said they have been very easy to work with and have provided high quality, excellent work. Mr. Gougherty said the project had gone very smoothly under an innovative Construction Manager at Risk agreement and noted that this type of project delivery was common in the private sector but had only been approved by the FTA for public projects twice prior to WETA's FTX project.

Mr. Gougherty said one substantial item of work remained to connect the project to full capacity permanent electrical connection that will replace a temporary connection currently in place. He said the permanent connection had not been included in the initial scope of the project three years ago because a permanent solution had not been solidified at the time. Mr. Gougherty explained that this was a common factor in construction projects in San Francisco and most especially along the San Francisco waterfront. He said the power challenges were related to interactions between the City of San Francisco, the Port of San Francisco, the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission and Pacific Gas & Electric and because of these challenges, it had taken WETA longer than anticipated to identify a permanent power solution.

Mr. Gougherty explained that a bit more work than was anticipated will need to be done to support the permanent power connection. He said the power will draw from the Port's Pier 1 facility through a conduit in The Embarcadero roadway that will be connected to the FTX infrastructure. Mr. Gougherty explained that the conduit was damaged and WETA would need to repair it to support the connection. He said the work would require shutting traffic down at night for approximately 6 to 8 weeks to access the 20 feet of conduit that was damaged.

Mr. Gougherty said the total cost to complete this final work would be \$1.25 million, some of which would be offset by the project's remaining owner's contingency funds. He said the Power Engineering contract would need to be increased by \$750,000, and the construction management services contract with CH2M Hill Engineering, since acquired by Jacobs Engineering, would need to be increased by \$250,000 to oversee the project. He noted that as a result, the overall capital budget for the FTX project would need to be increased by \$1 million.

Chair Wunderman congratulated Mr. Gougherty and staff on the project's progress and near completion. He said this was a really big and important facility addition to WETA, to the Port, and to the City of San Francisco. Chair Wunderman said he hoped staff would be able to get the word out despite pandemic restrictions and challenges so that the public will be made aware and can share in the celebration of this exciting WETA achievement. Public Information & Marketing Manager Thomas Hall said staff was working on a video press release to publicize the completion of the project in lieu of holding a large public gathering at the site.

In response to a question from Chair Wunderman, Mr. Gougherty said that about \$800,000 was still in the owner's contingency, with \$500,000 of that being earmarked for the electrical work. He explained that the remaining \$300,000 was expected to be ample to pay for any final, smaller needs, and he noted that he did not anticipate a need to return to the Board in the future to increase the budget any further for this project.

Ms. Rannells thanked Chair Wunderman for his work on securing State of California Proposition 1B funds which were being utilized to close out this project.

Director Intintoli made a motion to approve the item.

Chair Wunderman called for public comments on the FTX project agreement amendments and there were none.

Director DelBono seconded the motion and the item passed unanimously.

Yeas: DelBono, Intintoli, Wunderman. Nays: None. Absent: None.

## **8. ADOPT PROPOSED FARE STRUCTURE FOR NEW SEAPLANE LAGOON FERRY SERVICE**

Transportation Planner Arthi Krubanandh presented this item to adopt fares for WETA's new Seaplane Lagoon ferry service. She said as part of the draft multi-year fare program presented to the Board earlier this year, staff conducted a comprehensive outreach process including the concept that Seaplane Lagoon fares should match fares for Oakland and Alameda given the geographic proximity of the three locations. Ms. Krubanandh noted in the outreach process that no comments had been received about Seaplane Lagoon fares. She explained that while the adoption of the new fares for all other services had been postponed due to the pandemic crisis, staff recommended adopting the new Seaplane Lagoon service fares since the service was expected to commence in WETA's new fiscal year. Ms. Krubanandh added that the fares adoption process for all other services would begin again in WETA's next fiscal year.

Chair Wunderman asked if it made sense to offer Seaplane Lagoon riders a discounted, introductory fare to promote the new service and help assure its success. Ms. Rannells said it made sense to set the fare and then offer promotions such as ticket giveaways as was done when the new Richmond service started. She noted that it was expected that most riders on the new Seaplane Lagoon service would be shifting from riding WETA ferries from the Alameda Main Street terminal and that they would already be used to paying the comparable fares on that existing service.

Director DelBono said the development at Alameda Point where the new Seaplane Lagoon service will be running was going to have a large percentage of affordable housing. He said he would like to see fares for the new Seaplane Lagoon service that will help the residents of those units trying to get back on their feet. Director DelBono noted that a \$14.40 round trip ticket was the equivalent of a full hour's wage for many people working in the service industry. He said that while he was aware that Clipper and MTC were working to address accessibility in fares for the region, he feels the need to reiterate this equity concern again. He added that if the matter was not resolved soon, the WETA Board would need to find a solution for WETA service.

Ms. Rannells explained that WETA does not currently have the program infrastructure required to support a means-based fare program and that this is why Clipper and MTC have taken up the matter as a regional concern. She said it made sense for the new MTC Task Force to address this concern and Chair Wunderman said he would be raising the issue with the group.

Director Intintoli made a motion to approve the item.

Chair Wunderman called for public comments and there were none.

Director DelBono seconded the motion and the item passed unanimously.

Yeas: DelBono, Intintoli, Wunderman. Nays: None. Absent: None.

## **9. FERRY SERVICE RECOVERY UPDATE**

Ms. Rannells introduced this informational item on WETA's ferry service recovery update. She said demand had increased slightly on the Vallejo route and that as those numbers rise, staff was looking to add a second vessel to the service in mid-June. She said staff was also working responsively on the requests of the City of Richmond and the Contra Costa Transportation Authority (CCTA) to restart the Richmond commute service.

In response to a question from the Chair about promoting the return of the Richmond service, Ms. Rannells said she and other staff had met with the Mayor and Richmond staff a few days prior and the

Mayor and his team will be working in tandem with WETA to let people know about the service restart. She said those communications were set to begin on Monday in anticipation of the restart of the service.

Ms. Rannells introduced Planning & Development Manager Kevin Connolly who provided a PowerPoint presentation for Directors.

Mr. Connolly said that after weeks of falling ridership from March through early April, the Vallejo ridership began to tick up and has been increasing by 12 to 13 percent every week. Given the current restricted vessel capacity to support social distancing, about 100 passengers versus 445, he said that the single vessel serving Vallejo right now would exceed capacity by about mid-June if the trend continued. Because of this, Mr. Connolly explained that staff recommended adding a second vessel to the Vallejo service now to support the additional riders and help assure no one gets left behind on the service.

Mr. Connolly said that the Alameda/Oakland's ridership growth was about a week behind Vallejo's, with maximum capacity on the Alameda/Oakland service route vessel expected in mid-July. Mr. Connolly said the service was definitely expected to exceed capacity with the current single vessel by the opening date for the new Seaplane Lagoon service on or around August 3. Because of this, he said staff will potentially be enhancing the Alameda/Oakland service as well a few weeks after the Vallejo enhancement.

Ms. Rannells said the City of Richmond requested resumption of the Richmond ferry service and that Contra Costa County (County) controls the funding for the service. She said the County was on board with the restart of service. Ms. Rannells said everyone recognized that it will likely take some time for the service ridership to rebuild, and there will be close monitoring and frequent check-ins with the Board and stakeholders to rigorously track the status of the Richmond service ridership as it ramps back up. She said this would be needed for all services and that more details about a service recovery plan and a budget item would be brought to Directors at the next meeting.

Director DelBono said that Richmond, Alameda, and Vallejo all had many open-air eating and drinking establishments that might attract people from San Francisco and other parts of the Bay Area. He said he was in favor of this plan for recovery and he looked forward to WETA's service ramping back up and keeping people employed.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

City of Richmond Mayor Tom Butt's Chief of Staff Christopher Whitmore thanked Directors and WETA staff for working with Richmond and the Mayor's office to coordinate reopening of the Richmond ferry service. He said he utilized WETA's ferry service when he worked in San Francisco and he looked forward to Richmond and West Contra Costa County residents being able to take advantage of this wonderful resource again soon. He said the City of Richmond is grateful and always looks forward to the opportunity to work with WETA.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

City of Richmond Deputy City Manager of Economic Development Shasa Curl thanked Ms. Rannells and her staff for the coordination and restart of the ferry service in Richmond. Ms. Curl said everyone was very optimistic about the service restart and that she and her staff were looking forward to promoting the service as the preferred way to return to work in concert with Mr. Hall and WETA staff.

### **10. ADOPT PASSENGER AND CREW SAFETY PLAN AND REVIEW COMMUNICATIONS CAMPAIGN**

Chair Wunderman said staff had done a great job adjusting its program and implementing good, solid safety measures very early. He said it was his hope that Directors will review staff's formal plan and adopt it.



Ms. Rannells introduced this item to adopt WETA's Passenger and Crew Safety Plan (Plan) and review the corresponding communications campaign. She said staff had worked closely with WETA's contract operator, the Blue & Gold Fleet (Blue & Gold), and everyone had put forth excellent efforts to come up with this important plan. Ms. Rannells noted that Blue & Gold crews had been especially diligent in their efforts to assure that passengers were able to travel in a safe and comfortable environment on WETA's ferries. She introduced Mr. Hall to present further details on the item.

Mr. Hall provided Directors with a PowerPoint presentation on the Plan and the communications campaign (Campaign). He said WETA and Blue & Gold had begun efforts to implement crew and passenger safety measures in late February. Mr. Hall said WETA communicated the safety measures being instituted and encouraged passengers to follow the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) recommended guidelines, such as handwashing, to assure safety.

Mr. Hall said staff has been in regular close contact with other Bay Area transit agencies and MTC to plan safety measures and joint marketing. He said staff is closely monitoring the various county health measures and state and federal guidance and updating measures as needed to help assure people are protected. Mr. Hall said the City and County of San Francisco has mandated face masks for all when in public which aligns with WETA's policy for crews and passengers aboard vessels and at terminals. He reminded Directors that WETA's Passenger Code of Conduct approved by the Board in 2018 requires all passengers to follow policies posted on vessels so as things change, policies can be updated on WETA vessels. Mr. Hall reviewed each of the six steps in the Plan; enhanced cleaning, social distancing, face coverings, hand sanitizer, healthy crews, and touchless payment.

Mr. Hall said the Plan is the core of WETA's Campaign, called "the best way back to work" that will roll out over the next few months as WETA begins to reinstate and enhance service. Mr. Hall said the objective of the Campaign will be to inform the public of schedules and service details and allay any health and safety concerns people may have about using WETA's public transit service. He said staff wants to communicate to the public that WETA's ferries provide controlled, clean environments with open air options and plenty of space. He added that staff understands that getting commuters back on public transit is a critical step in helping the Bay Area's economy recover from the pandemic crisis devastation.

Mr. Hall shared details on WETA's plans for increased passenger communication, public relations, passenger appreciation, paid advertising, and social media components and said these were the five primary pillars of the Campaign.

Chair Wunderman thanked Mr. Hall for the well-thought-out and thorough presentation. He said he liked the messaging in the Campaign and that it was critical to get this messaging out right away. Chair Wunderman said the Bay Area Council (BAC) would be happy to help and he encouraged staff to partner with the BAC and other groups to assist in getting this vital information out.

Director DeBono thanked Mr. Hall for the clear and direct Campaign and said it was better than any he had seen thus far at other agencies. He said he would like Mr. Hall to get on city council agendas in the Bay Area - especially in cities served by WETA like Alameda, Richmond, and Vallejo - to speak about the Campaign and partner with community development leaders to share the information.

Chair Wunderman said when BART released their plan, it appeared on the front page of the *San Francisco Chronicle* and he would like to see WETA's Plan publicized well also.

Ms. Rannells said media attention about the Plan will also include information about the restart of Richmond service and the enhancement of the Vallejo service. She added that this communications

process was critical to all transportation agencies and noted that a dialogue had begun at the MTC Task Force meeting about doing a regional campaign and outreach.

Director Intintoli made a motion to approve the item.

Chair Wunderman called for public comments on the Plan and Campaign and there were none.

Director DelBono seconded the motion and the item passed unanimously.

Yeas: DelBono, Intintoli, Wunderman. Nays: None. Absent: None.

#### **11. STATUS REPORT ON WETA HOVERCRAFT FEASIBILITY STUDY**

Transportation Planner Taylor Rutsch introduced this informational item and asked Krystle McBride from AECOM to present the status report on WETA's Hovercraft Feasibility Study (Study) for Directors.

Ms. McBride provided a PowerPoint presentation for Directors on the Study's status. She said AECOM had completed the general investigations of Phase I of the Study and was entering Phase II, to investigate detailed route considerations. She said study findings thus far had identified some of the key technical challenges associated with starting a hovercraft service including complex infrastructure requirements to access existing facilities and navigational challenges in the San Francisco Bay, especially in Oakland and downtown San Francisco. Ms. McBride explained that many routes initially under consideration had been eliminated, including the South Bay past the Dumbarton Bridge due to high environmental sensitivity, poor cost-effectiveness, and the risk of losing access should the Dumbarton Rail Bridge service restart.

Ms. McBride said the Study's objective was not to consider replacing existing WETA ferries but instead investigate routes that will make new connections to create faster services that connect housing and employers. She said terminals without speed-restricted waterways were appealing and that the primary goal was to identify feasible routes that will provide for San Francisco to North Bay and San Francisco to South Bay linkages. Ms. McBride emphasized that these routes were desirable to Study Stakeholders, had appealing fare and operating expenses, and would be prioritized for closer looks.

Ms. McBride explained that another primary consideration when looking at routes was the fare threshold for feasibility. She noted that WETA's current highest fare was \$15 for the Vallejo/San Francisco route. She said hovercraft were smaller vessels and it may be possible to charge more and retain adequate ridership, especially in the Bay Area's technology hubs. She noted that corporate partnerships may be able to help subsidize fares and said AECOM expected that routes requiring fares that exceed \$25 were likely to be unfeasible. Ms. McBride said that WETA would need to be cognizant of potential social justice issues related to implementing new, high-priced diesel-powered public transit that could be perceived as geared to the wealthy.

Ms. McBride said the routes that will likely be more feasible will be those that meet WETA's requirement of three departures in the two peak-commute periods of 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. with a single hovercraft because the need for a second hovercraft per shift would increase capital expenses substantially. She added that in all likelihood, utilization per hovercraft would decline with two hovercraft per route, per shift, and fare requirements would increase and further depress ridership.

Ms. McBride said the Study team just finished the second workshop and that Stakeholders and Technical Advisory Committee members had provided robust and valuable feedback resulting in many routes identified for further, refined analysis in Phase II. She said these routes included Richmond, Berkeley, West Alameda, San Leandro, Hercules, Martinez, and Antioch. She noted that many of the

routes that will be analyzed could connect riders to the San Francisco and Oakland airports utilizing connector services like shuttles. Ms. McBride added that of the three West Contra Costa County cities, Hercules was likely the most appealing given its lower operating costs to support three peak-commute period departures with a single hovercraft.

Ms. McBride explained that using the routes identified in the Study's Phase I work, the Phase II steps would include ridership modeling, air quality comparisons, further environmental analysis, and analysis of capital costs to develop terminals and purchase hovercraft. She said the Study would also include two more Stakeholder and Technical Advisory Committee Workshops.

In response to a question from the Chair, Ms. McBride confirmed that none of the routes that will be further analyzed can be served by deep water vessels. Chair Wunderman asked if it made sense to consider shorter rather than longer routes and suggested connecting Antioch, Martinez, and Hercules with a hovercraft. He said this would provide the opportunity for further transit to be developed from a northern Contra Costa County waterfront transit network and said he believed the Contra Costa Transportation Authority was discussing this idea. Ms. McBride said the Study to date had not included routes in BART service corridors.

Director Intintoli said he was looking forward to Phase II of the Study, and especially to learning more about ridership potential for the various routes. He said he was concerned about the smaller size of the hovercraft vessels with 75-passenger capacities that could result in higher operating costs, but he wanted to reserve further concerns until he had all of the information at the Study's conclusion. Ms. McBride said a WETA hovercraft service would certainly be a boutique transit service for a wealthier ridership and not a mass public transit service for the average rider. She reiterated that this was absolutely something WETA will need to consider in terms of hovercraft service feasibility. She said this was a matter that AECOM would be very clear about in their deliverables and final Study report.

Director DelBono said he was also concerned that a hovercraft service would be a boutique service for a small number of people, and he felt this went against WETA's core values. He added that he was willing to continue to support the Study going forward and, like Director Intintoli, would reserve his final judgement until the Board was fully informed by the Study's final report. Chair Wunderman explained that his hope at the start of the Study had been that hovercraft might offer a way to reach places WETA can't reach using its traditional ferry vessels. He said it may turn out that hovercraft service is more suited to be run by the private than the public sector given the considerable issues involved with the service. Ms. Rannells said the final report may reveal opportunities to forge partnerships that could support viable hovercraft service in places unreachable by WETA vessels. Chair Wunderman said a company like Facebook may be willing to help support a connection out to the Dumbarton Bridge area as a public service that would also serve some of its many employees.

Ms. McBride said Facebook was one of the reasons the Study will be looking at West Dumbarton. She said another upcoming component of the Study will include an economic analysis and will investigate potential partnerships and funding for hovercraft service. Ms. McBride assured Directors that all feedback received from the Board would be taken into consideration.

Chair Wunderman thanked Ms. McBride and staff for the Study update. He called for public comments on the WETA Hovercraft Feasibility Study and there were none.

## **12. PUBLIC COMMENTS FOR NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

Chair Wunderman called for public comments for non-agenda items and there were none.



Directors and Ms. Rannells scheduled a special meeting for June 18 at 1:30 p.m. Ms. Rannells said she expected that this special meeting agenda would include a service recovery plan discussion and a FY 2020/21 budget revision discussion. Chair Wunderman said he would like his fellow Directors to form a budget committee group to work on the WETA budget with Ms. Rannells and her team and that he would like Directors Intintoli and DeBono to make up this Budget Advisory Committee. He emphasized that it was critical for the Board to be closely involved in this important work especially as WETA moves into its new fiscal year in these uncertain and challenging times. Chair Wunderman said it was especially important to have conversations with the people who would be affected by WETA's new budget and that there would likely be many more conversations about the budget going forward as new information becomes available.

Chair Wunderman adjourned the meeting at 3:22 p.m. to closed session and indicated prior to adjournment that report of any actions taken during the closed session would be reported at the next meeting.

- Board Secretary

\*\*\*END\*\*\*