

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

*[April 11, 2024]*

The Board of Directors of the San Francisco Bay Area Water Emergency Transportation Authority met in regular session at Port of San Francisco at Pier 1, San Francisco, CA and via videoconference.

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair James Wunderman called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

**2. ROLL CALL**

Chair Wunderman, Vice Chair Monique Moyer, Director Jessica Alba, Director Jeffrey DelBono, and Director Pippin Dew were in attendance.

Chair Wunderman led the Pledge of Allegiance. He welcomed directors, staff, and meeting guests and noted that the meeting was being conducted in person and by videoconference and was being recorded. He advised guests about offering public comment and how guests could sign up to speak throughout the meeting.

**3. REPORT OF BOARD CHAIR**

Chair Wunderman said that the Port of San Francisco was always a great host for meetings but suggested holding Board meetings at other locations that WETA serves to enable local stakeholders the opportunity to participate and weigh in on WETA activities.

Chair Wunderman reported that he recently spent two days in Vancouver, Canada and was amazed by the city's determination to develop the waterfront resulting in a vibrant economy with vacancy rates for downtown office space at under ten percent. He said that Vancouver turned almost all future development over to the Squamish people and other First Nations there. He added that water transit was a major part of the mix.

**4. REPORTS OF DIRECTORS**

Vice Chair Moyer concurred that Vancouver had a perfect master plan and said the city receives a lot of federal money in advance which they then repay.

Director Alba said that she recently spent the day that started in Redwood City and ended in Davis using several modes of transit which included a stop in Vallejo to christen the MV *Delphinus*. She remarked that the trip was memorable and hoped for a more seamless experience when moving between transit systems.

Director Dew said that the MV *Delphinus* event was well attended and had received positive feedback from the community about the event. She expressed her concerns about comments she received relating to backup plans for left behinds, boarding process for same-day ticket buyers, and the mobile app issues.

Director Dew stated that she is on the Sub-Regional committee of the Napa Solano California Jobs First Committee and had submitted the Working Waterfront Coalition project for funding consideration. She added that figuring out a way to bring manufacturers and jobs to California and the Bay Area was important and needed.

Before receiving reports from staff, Chair Wunderman adjusted the agenda and moved Item 9 – Draft 2050 Service Vision and Expansion Policy immediately following the Consent Calendar.

## **5. REPORTS OF STAFF**

Executive Director Seamus Murphy began by thanking Government and Regulatory Affairs Manager Lauren Gularte and Public Information and Marketing Manager Thomas Hall for their work in organizing and rescheduling the MV *Delphinus* christening event. He thanked staff for listening to riders by making adjustments to the design of the MV *Delphinus* to improve the customer experience.

Mr. Murphy thanked the Board for raising the concerns about the boarding process and said that WETA would work with Blue & Gold Fleet (Blue & Gold) to maintain the turnaround time and that WETA was aware of the issue with the mobile application. He added that WETA had received similar complaints about the mobile app. Mr. Murphy noted that WETA offered bus transportation before the pandemic and that he would at the costs of providing a bus option for the Board to consider.

Mr. Murphy said that discussions with City of Richmond (Richmond) staff about parking at the Craneway Pavilion have been limited and said that WETA alerted the Richmond staff that parking could negatively affect ridership and possibly reduce the level of service. He said that with limited bike and pedestrian accessibility and transit connections, it was important that parking be available for the service to be successful. He noted that WETA would be monitoring the parking issue in real time to determine its impact on service.

Mr. Murphy indicated that Richmond might be waiting for a decision from the State Lands Commission, which has jurisdiction over the Craneway Pavilion about permitted uses of the building. Vice Chair Moyer suggested reaching out to Orton Development and Eddie Orton directly.

Mr. Murphy said that two grants that would go towards funding Phase 2 of the Rapid Electric Emission-Free (REEF) Ferry Program are pending. He thanked the Port of San Francisco for collaborating with WETA on a \$50 million application from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Clean Ports Program to include funding for the Mission Bay Ferry Landing, shoreside electrification at the Downtown San Francisco Ferry Terminal, and the vessel replacement projects. He said that the application would be filed at the end of May.

Mr. Murphy stated that an application was submitted to the Zero-Emission Freight and Marine (ZEFM) Program funded by the Volkswagen (VW) Environmental Mitigation Trust to convert WETA's high-risk class vessels from diesel to electric and for an emergency \$25 million charging barge to support WETA's emergency response obligations. He said that other fuel alternatives might be needed to create electricity for the charging barge.

Mr. Murphy said that he would follow up on opportunities to partner with other ports that may be in need of similar barges with floating batteries in response to Director Alba.

In response to Vice Chair Moyer, Planning and Development Manager Michael Gougherty explained that WETA was adopting two crew sign-up periods to advance regional efforts to ensure better schedule coordination and integration with other Bay Area transit operators.

Mr. Murphy invited Operations Analyst Joe Ramey and Transportation Planner Gabriel Chan to provide the operations and ridership report.

Mr. Chan noted that Saturdays performed better than Mondays though there was more Monday service. He said that ridership recovery since the pandemic for regional transit operators was at or near an all-time high with WETA ridership holding about 79 percent of pre-pandemic levels.

Mr. Murphy highlighted that WETA ridership exceeded 2018 ridership and thanks to the Giants service during the first week of April, exceeded 100 percent of 2019 ridership.

Mr. Ramey stated that performance and service reliability for the first quarter of 2024 outperformed the same period for 2023. He said that cancelled trips were weather and mechanical related and that WETA has been working with dispatch to provide timely updates. Mr. Murphy stated that he had received notifications on the San Francisco Bay Ferry app before staff has been notified by Blue & Gold staff.

Mr. Murphy provided five written reports and offered to answer questions.

Chair Wunderman called for public comments, and there were none.

Chair Wunderman thanked staff for the reports.

## **6. CONSENT CALENDAR**

Director DelBono made a motion to approve the consent calendar:

- a. Approve Board Meeting Minutes – March 21, 2024
- b. Authorize Submission of an Allocation Request to the California Department of Transportation for FY 2023/24 Low Carbon Transit Operations Program Grant Funds

Chair Wunderman called for public comments, and there were none.

Director Dew seconded the motion, and the consent calendar carried unanimously.

Yeas: Alba, DelBono, Dew, Moyer, Wunderman. Nays: None. Absent: None.

## **7. DRAFT 2050 SERVICE VISION AND EXPANSION POLICY**

Mr. Gougherty began by acknowledging the work and contributions from Mr. Chan, Mr. Murphy, Fehr & Peers Principal Nathan Conable and subcommittee members Vice Chair Moyer and Director Alba for their time and guidance. He said the goal of the service vision was to serve as a blueprint for the WETA to execute the vision of the Board and as an advocacy document.

Mr. Gougherty shared his presentation on the service vision overview stating that the goal of the informational item was to incorporate feedback received into the final version that would be brought back next month for consideration and potential adoption.

Mr. Gougherty walked through some highlights of the proposed expansion policy and approach and noted that a full version of the proposed text was attached to the staff report. He said that a few service themes were established – electrify, enhance, expand, and emergency response. He provided the process and criteria for advancing routes into project development.

Mr. Gougherty invited Mr. Chan to provide a summary of feedback received from stakeholder outreach. Mr. Chan stated that outreach with local jurisdictions and business and community advisory groups had occurred over the past six months. He noted that stakeholders voiced their concerns about the funding challenges. He said that the advisory groups were supportive of public transit, committed to the environment, and making certain that transit is accessible to all demographics.

Mr. Gougherty followed up with the next steps to receive comments and noted that the final adoption of the service vision would serve as the key input to developing the rest of the business plan. He projected that it would take approximately nine to ten months to complete the business plan.

Chair Wunderman thanked staff for their work and their report and Vice Chair Moyer and Director Alba for leading the Board effort on the plan.

Chair Wunderman inquired if thought had been considered for access to the San Francisco and Oakland airports. Mr. Murphy said that he had reached out to both airports to discuss the viability and desirability of the services, and neither were interested in expanding service to operate closer to their facilities. He indicated that he thought that there were opportunities to provide access to the airports through some of WETA's nearby terminals and improved first and last mile connections.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Michael S Bernick, representing the City of Martinez, Alameda Chamber & Economic Alliance President and CEO Madlen Saddik, University of California, Berkeley Transportation Demand Management Administrator David Sorrell, San Mateo County Economic Development Association Don Cecil, Potrero Power Station Sara Li, Chamber San Mateo County Greg Greenway spoke in support of the draft service vision and expressed appreciation for being part of the stakeholder engagement process.

Chair Wunderman noted Port of Redwood City Executive Director Kristine Zortman, City of Berkeley Parks, Recreation & Waterfront Department Capital Improvement Program Manager Liza McNulty, and Bay Area Council Vice President of Public Policy sent letters of support.

Director DelBono said that he wanted to include greater emphasis on terminal access.

Mr. Gougherty said that staff WETA was partnering with the Contra Costa Transportation Authority on a ferry expansion study identifying constraints at various sites and considering different technologies in response to Director Dew.

Vice Chair Moyer began by complimenting everyone involved for their time spent and engagement in ensuring that the vision is comprehensive and advocating for their own perspectives. She stated that the vision is very transparent and important in managing expectations. She thanked Mr. Gougherty and staff for their work and looked forward to its implementation.

Director Alba expressed her appreciation for the diversity, sincerity, and transparency of the stakeholder engagement process. She added that infrastructure should be included as part of the emergency response theme.

Chair Wunderman stated that this effort was going to affect San Francisco and the Bay Area and eventually globally.

The Directors thanked staff for the report.

#### **8. AUTHORIZE RELEASE OF A REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FOR DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF THREE NEW 149-PASSENGER BATTERY-ELECTRIC VESSELS**

Operations & Maintenance Manager Timothy Hanners presented this item recommending authorizing the release for a request for proposal (RFP) for design and construction of three new 149- passenger battery-electric vessels. He shared his presentation on the project overview.

Mr. Hanners introduced Aurora Marine Design President Shaun Green to present the challenges due to the complexities of service and regulations. Mr. Green walked through the contract design process. He said that WETA was standardizing the fleet, increasing front-end design, integrating design ramps, and standardizing the propulsion power package.

Mr. Hanners presented the next steps and current timeline noting that WETA intended to release the RFP in July. He said that the RFP criteria included qualifications and experience, vessel design, delivery schedule, vessel metrics, and pricing.

Mr. Murphy addressed the complexities and constraints of local maritime industry and workforce development but stated WETA would work to include the Working Waterfront Coalition partnership in its grant applications to create a larger maritime workforce.

Chair Wunderman asked if there was a way to recapture power without placing more stress on the grid.

WETA Attorney Steven Miller of Hanson Bridgett LLP reminded the Board that the item presented was background for the recommended action to release an RFP and that other discussions be reserved for a Board workshop.

Mr. Miller stated that providing the actual RFP to the Board has not been past practice in response to Chair Wunderman. Chair Wunderman expressed his concerns and that this RFP, in his view, was an opportunity to rebirth the maritime industry in the Bay Area as no Bay Area shipyard has ever built a WETA vessel and no American shipyard has ever built an electric ferry. He commented that training may exist but that a workforce won't be generated without the work.

Chair Wunderman suggested importing workforce for a local manufacturer. Mr. Miller reminded the Board that unfair restrictions, including geographic restrictions, are prohibited on a federally-funded procurement. Mr. Miller said that WETA could ask questions that could elicit responses from proposers without violating geographic preference restrictions.

Chair Wunderman said WETA should try harder and be creative and do anything and everything to overcome the hurdles. Director DelBono asked if it was possible for the Board to have more input on the RFP.

Even without the constraints of federal law, Mr. Murphy noted that qualified proposals may not be received from Bay Area facilities. Mr. Miller stated that a Board workshop on the workings of the RFP process would be a more productive way for staff to receive input. Mr. Murphy asked Mr. Hanners to explain the process to receive qualified proposals from industry.

Chair Wunderman stated that the Bay Area was highly concentrated in high technology and needed to think about ways to become more competitive. He suggested that Board policy be to do everything it can to attract and develop the maritime industry. Director Dew suggested creating a local industry workforce development initiative for the Bay Area. She noted the existence of Bay Area assets that were underutilized or underperforming and educational assets.

Director Alba said that regional organizations such as the Bay Area Council put more effort into workforce development. Chair Wunderman commented that the Bay Area Council makes public organizations do things well.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

City of Vallejo Commissioner Helen-Marie Gordon spoke in supporting the local economy.

Blue & Gold President Patrick Murphy thanked WETA for including Blue & Gold crews in its working groups.

Mr. Hanners said that café service and bike capacity would be on a smaller scale with a higher ratio but actual details had not been finalized in response to Director Alba.

Mr. Hanners explained the procurement process and advantages of building vessels concurrently.

Vice Chair Moyer asked if funds could be moved around enabling one vessel to be purchased solely with local funds. Mr. Hanners said that it was a complicated question but that funds did exist to fully fund one vessel.

Mr. Miller stated that federal funding could not be used for any vessels even if the project were to be split into multiple contracts, adding that the federal government would require compliance on all parts of the project.

Mr. Murphy said that it may be possible to split up the project in such a way that would not require federal funding thus enabling a preference for local hire but anticipated that no proposals would be received. Vice Chair Moyer thought that the local workforce may be included as apprentices.

Chief Financial Officer Erin McGrath explained the complexities of splitting up the procurement that would include a target delivery date of 2026 and the expiration of unspent funds.

Mr. Hanners said that there was a lot of money and opportunity in repairing and maintaining the vessels.

Mr. Murphy stated that the workshop topic would include agency goals to create a more robust maritime industry in the Bay Area, identify challenges associated with these goals, and settle on some clear strategies to achieve these goals.

Mr. Miller said that the action did not require a resolution due to the administrative nature of the action.

Director Dew expressed her appreciation to staff for their hard work.

Director Dew made a motion to approve this item and include a workshop as previously discussed.

Director Alba seconded the motion, and the item passed unanimously.

Yeas: Alba, DelBono, Dew, Moyer, Wunderman. Nays: None. Absent: None.

## **9. ADOPT RESERVE POLICY**

Ms. McGrath presented this item recommending adopting a reserve policy. She shared her presentation on the goals of the policy, the challenges of building reserves, the solutions to increase the use of external reserves, the process to adopt the policy, and the result.

Vice Chair Moyer made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2024-11 approving this item.

Chair Wunderman called for public comments, and there were none.

Director DelBono seconded the motion, and the item passed unanimously.

Yeas: Alba, DelBono, Dew, Moyer, Wunderman. Nays: None. Absent: None.

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

Commissioner Gordon thanked WETA for hosting the christening of the MV *Delphinus* in Vallejo.

With all business concluded, Chair Wunderman adjourned the meeting at 4:22 p.m.

- Board Secretary

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