



February 24, 2016

Kevin Connolly
Manager of Planning and Development
c/o WETA
Pier 9, Suite 111
San Francisco, CA 94111

Via Email (contactus@watertransit.org)


Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments to the Water Emergency Transportation Authority (EA) on the draft Strategic Plan. On behalf of the City of Alameda, I am providing the following comments:

1. The City of Alameda supports that WETA has embarked upon a long-term vision for ferry service in the San Francisco Bay Area with the goal of making ferries the “first-choice travel option for thousands of people every day”. This vision is significant for Alameda, especially for Western Alameda because of the growth of over a thousand households and 9,000 jobs planned at the former Naval Air Station (Alameda Point). According to data in WETA’s Short Range Transit Plan (2016), Alameda’s Main Street Ferry Terminal is reaching capacity and overall ridership rose 14% per year from July 2012 to July 2015. The City of Alameda strongly supports the continued investment in expanded service to meet the current and anticipated demand and is in agreement with the importance of strategic partnerships with public and private sections to improve the stability and funding for the ferry system.
2. We recommend creating a chapter/section that creates an ambitious vision and goals for long-term expansion of public ferry service in the Bay Area, especially in light of the fast-approaching capacity limitations of other transbay transit service. The City of Alameda believes that this is a unique opportunity for well-planned and visionary water transit and WETA should be at the forefront of this movement. Alameda looks forward to being an integral contributing partner in that effort.
3. We are appreciative that the Seaplane Lagoon Ferry Terminal is included in your list of future expansion terminals, as we begin to take the first steps toward design and permitting. For WETA the new ferry terminal locates service within walking distance of a major development, which will maximize demand for their services from the residents and employees located at Alameda Point. It creates new parking facilities (currently a 400-space parking lot is planned at Alameda Point) for existing residents since available parking at the Main Street Terminal is close to reaching capacity. And it allows WETA to easily coordinate the Main Street and Seaplane Lagoon services as one West End service (i.e., boats can be moved in and out of both terminals) to meet shifting demands from each terminal and from Oakland, creating long-term flexibility for WETA.

4. The City of Alameda encourages WETA to address more directly the impact of greenhouse gas emissions of ferry service in the Strategic Plan's long term vision and take a stronger stance in concert with ferry operators around the country to require vessel builders to innovate and find ways to reduce GHG emission. In addition, the City of Alameda agrees with locating terminals where alternative modes are accommodated by bicycles, transit and pedestrians as is the case with the proposed Seaplane Lagoon.
5. The City of Alameda believes that WETA's Strategic Priority 1.5 - Provide safe, clean, and attractive terminal facilities- is critical to the achievement of many of the other priorities. With two older ferry terminals – Main Street and Harbor Bay – on-going maintenance and improvement of the terminal, parking and surrounding facilities is necessary to continue to meet the needs of riders and must be balanced with funding for expansion.

The foregoing comments are representative of staff's initial comments on the Draft Strategic Plan. Due to the timeline for comments and the fact that our Transportation Commission meets only every other month, we would like to reserve the right to offer additional comments from our Commissioners and members of the community once they have had a chance to meet and discuss it.

The City of Alameda is supportive and actively promotes the value of WETA as a commuting transit option and as a critical emergency transportation provider. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your Strategic Plan and we look forward to more opportunities to partner with the Board and your staff on enhancing ferry service in Alameda.

Regards,

Jennifer Ott,
City of Alameda,
Chief Operating Officer, Alameda Point

Cc: (via email): Liz Warmerdam, Interim City Manager
Amy Wooldridge, Interim Assistant City Manager
Bob Haun, Interim Assistant City Manager
Liam Garland, Interim Public Works Director