

**CITY OF ALBANY
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA
STAFF REPORT**

Agenda date: 12/15/08
Reviewed by: BP

Subject: Comment Letter on Draft Environmental Impact/Report Statement (DEIR/S) for the proposed Berkeley/Albany Ferry Terminal to San Francisco Bay Area Water Emergency Transportation Authority (WETA)

From: Ann Chaney, Community Development Director
Jeff Bond, Planning and Building Manager

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Forward the attached comment letter to the San Francisco Bay Area Water Emergency Transportation Authority (WETA) regarding the Berkeley/Albany Ferry Terminal Draft Environmental Impact Report.

BACKGROUND & DISCUSSION

The San Francisco Bay Area Water Emergency Transportation Authority (WETA) has been working in partnership with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to operate new ferry service between the San Francisco Ferry Building and the Berkeley/Albany waterfront. The goal of the project is to provide another mode of transportation to San Francisco.

A Draft Environmental Impact Report has been prepared to evaluate four potential ferry terminal site alternatives in Berkeley and Albany. The full EIR, which includes an executive summary, can be downloaded at <http://www.watertransit.org/newsInformation/publicnotices.aspx>

The ferry terminal, with associated facilities for berthing ferryboats and access for ferry patrons, are being considered at:

- Alternative A: located at the Berkeley Marina, adjacent to the Hornblower dock
- Alternative B: located between the landside end of the Berkeley Fishing Pier and Hs Lordships Restaurant
- Alternative C: located immediately north of the foot of Gilman Street, on land partially occupied by the Golden Gate Fields horse stables
- Alternative D: located on the old pier site near the foot of Buchanan Street adjacent to Golden Gate Fields

Alternative D is located in Albany, while the other three sites are located in Berkeley. The Albany site would require extensive dredging, an extension of the pier to 389', and 400 parking spaces located south of the Albany Beach on land owned by Golden Gate Fields. The EIR identifies "unavoidable significant impacts" for the Alternative D site in the areas of land use, traffic, parklands and recreational facilities, biological resources, and water resources.

Due to the potential impacts identified in the EIR, and projected financial costs, it appears that option A or B would be most appropriate for further discussion on location the project (see Table ES-3).

Comments on the EIR are due to WETA by December 16, 2008. The Waterfront Committee, Traffic and Safety Commission, and Planning and Zoning Commission have reviewed the document. The Waterfront Committee recommends Alternative B, and the Planning and Zoning Commission favored either Alternatives A or B. The Traffic and Safety Commission was neutral on the site location, but favored the concept of a ferry terminal being located in the Berkeley/Albany area.

ANALYSIS

The letter, as written, supports Alternative B. At the request of the Waterfront Committee, the letter also includes reasons for not supporting Alternatives C and D.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT

The City's comments regarding the siting of a ferry terminal in the Berkeley/Albany area favor the environmentally preferable alternatives. The draft EIR also addresses the environmental benefits to air quality and traffic congestion that could result from a ferry terminal by providing another transit option to motorists, thereby promoting a sustainable community.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The comments letter on the EIR does not result in any financial impact.

Attachments

Comment Letter to WETA re: EIS/EIR for Berkeley/Albany Ferry Terminal Study
Table ES-3