

## Summary of Public Comment – Community Meeting #1

January 21st, 2021 – 6:30-9:00 pm – Via Zoom

The City of Berkeley and San Francisco Water Emergency Transportation Authority (WETA) jointly hosted a public meeting to introduce the *Berkeley Pier and Ferry Feasibility Study* and solicit community feedback on the presentation. This was the first of a planned series of community meetings that are a part of the feasibility project. The project is a joint effort by the City of Berkeley's Parks, Recreation, and Waterfront Department and WETA.

The summary below presents key themes, questions, and considerations that meeting participants articulated during four breakout sessions (of about 15-20 people per group). The sessions were facilitated by City and WETA staff and consisted of several general questions. The meeting agenda and breakout session questions are attached.

### Notes:

- *Breakout sessions were facilitated as informal discussions, hence this summary is not intended to suggest any frequency nor level of support of any particular point expressed.*
- *Quoted snippets represent an approximate verbatim statement by a participant.*

## **Topic 1 – General comments on project viability, benefits, and impacts.**

### **A. Viability and practicality of creating ferry service at the Berkeley Marina.**

- Many participants welcomed the potential ferry service for several key reasons:
  - As BART and roads become more crowded, ferry demand has increased and become a viable alternative.
  - The ferry is an *alternative mobility option* and should not be viewed as a competing transport mode to BART. “A ferry offers more comfortable, pleasant travel than BART. It gives you a chance to sit, relax, read a book, enjoy fresh air and the outdoors and do things that aren’t possible on BART.”
  - Seamless, stable, reliable, and convenient transportation connections are important.
  - Providing multi-modal transit will result in less cars.
  - “A straight-shot to San Francisco will be a great amenity.”
  - “Moving people from Cal and Berkeley Downtown straight onto the ferry is good thing.”
  - “In part, if you build it, they will come” [as one way to create demand].
- Participants questioned the long-term financial viability of new ferry service to the City [and other destinations] given how regional economic conditions change over time:

- Have ridership levels been studied; and will ridership be sufficient post-COVID?
  - Ferry could face a similar fate as the Berkeley-SF ferry established after the Loma Prieta Earthquake where ridership dropped after the bridge and BART reopened.
  - Assessing the first/last mile commute connection is important to avoid creating a parking lot full of cars and in determining ferry viability.
- Some participants suggested that adequate demand and the future of work-from-home are uncertain, therefore the service may likely be more a recreational than commuter service

## **B. Environmental impacts and Climate Change.**

- Some participants asked if ferry service is appropriate at the Marina given potential impacts to shoreline and marine habitat. Questions posed and issues identified:
  - Evaluate and mitigate the ferry’s impact on marine life, shorebird habitat, and birdlife; assess the cumulative environmental impact. Noise and acoustic energy stress marine life.
  - Avoid adding impermeable surfaces (e.g. concrete); work with what is in place now.
  - “Will ferries affect water clarity for fisherman and swimmers?”
  - “We are too focused on human needs versus nature’s needs.”
- Several participants questioned the cost/benefit of a ferry service in the context of achieving Climate Change mitigation objectives [reducing GHG emissions]. Questions and comments:
  - “In the face of climate change, it’s unethical not to think about and prioritize that.”
  - “Getting people out of cars should be paramount: does this ferry do this? A ferry may not be a good allocation of money if it serves only 1,600 people per day.”
  - Ferries have a high carbon footprint, though some hydrogen or electric-fueled ferries are on the horizon. A pilot with small electric vessels would be a good start
  - Investments should be made in other transportation modes first.
  - “A fully-loaded BART train carries 5 ferries of people; is a ferry the most viable alternative transport mode?”

## **C. Appropriateness of the Berkeley Marina as a site for new ferry service.**

- Some participants asked if ferry service is appropriate at the Berkeley Waterfront given the community’s value of it being a large park and open space?
  - Some participants stated that the Marina is loved by the community for its open space, so the future should reflect this value. The Marina is not an industrial/commercial center. Its purpose is water, wind, sun, and recreation and should not be jeopardized by overdevelopment or excess car trips. “We shouldn’t be turning a park into a transit hub.”
  - Keep existing uses and user communities at the Marina if the Pier/Ferry is developed.
  - “Transportation seems to be driving the rationale for the pier, rather than improving access and recreation in the Marina.”

- “The placemaking aspect of the pier/ferry project is exciting, but could that be achieved without the ferry service?”
- “Are we putting transportation uses here at the expense of recreation.”
- Participants also commented that commercial uses should be considered for the financial benefit of the Marina and local area. As one participant stated, “This is a huge opportunity as there is a nexus here between financial need and next-generation transportation.”

**D. Benefits and considerations for pier restoration.**

- There was strong support for restoring [or replacing] the Berkeley Pier. It is missed as a place to walk, recreation, and family and take out-of-town visitors.
- Though there was near-unanimous support for pier restoration, a few people asked if ferry service is a good idea and if it should be the driver for pier restoration. Perhaps other funding strategies should be explored for pier restoration.

**Topic 2 – Comments on the five Example configurations.**

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**A. General comments.**

- Concerns or questions for further consideration in feasibility planning:
  - Costs presented were for a 3,000 LF pier; what about shorter pier options?
  - Option to extend the pier in the future is good.
  - A shared pier may result in commercial use squeezing out recreation use.
  - Important to make the connection to the ferry vessels seamless as shown in ‘C’ and ‘D’, which are the most direct.
- No recreational use may be possible past the ferry terminal on several of the options; moving the pier south takes away from an area used by windsurfers.
- A northerly configuration is best as it separates recreation users (on south side) from ferry.
- It would be helpful to see an Example “F” that shows development of the waterfront without the ferry service; could work as a “control scenario” for the study.
- The best scheme is one that least impacts recreation, the environment, and that requires the least amount of dredging.
- Would be helpful to have the costs associated with the options to comment effectively.

**B. Comments on Examples A-E**

**Example A — Detached Breakwater** [No comments noted]

**Example B — Fishhook**

- Key comments:

- Given increased storm intensity in the future, this option deflects waves and may hence prolong the project’s longevity.
- Allows for more recreation use, particularly as recreational users may also want to be in the calm harbor area.
- Since it curves away from Skates, it preserves the view from Skates, an important amenity.
- Too many uses may be in close contact with each other; consider shifting westward more into the Bay.
- Considerations or suggested modifications to test for this scheme:
  - Provide a split pathway for security for the general public and ferry passengers.
  - Emphasis should be on recreation and the public pier.
  - Explore coupling fishhook with the anchor option, and angle dock more southwards.
  - Evaluate option of orienting the “hook” the opposite way.

**Example C — Northside Berthing with Extension**

- Key comments:
  - Provides flexibility and minimal impacts to the southwest quadrant.
  - Concentrates activity and noise in an area used by boats; allows southwest section to remain free for other uses.
  - Requires reduced dredging, has minimal breakwater issues, and has no impact on the southwest quadrant. A, B, D lack breakwater protection from southerly storms.
  - Could have conflicts with recreational boaters.

**Example D — Southside Berthing**

- May impact southwest quadrant.
- May need better protection from winter storms from the south.

**Example E — Anchor with North Berthing** [None recorded.]

**Topic 3 – Location and Siting Considerations**

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**A. Marine considerations.**

- Issues to consider:
  - Minimize dredging.
  - Southern swells need to be anticipated.
  - Given increased intensity of storms in future, schemes that deflect waves would be good.
  - Winter storms come in straight broadside to the pier; breakwater may not adequately mitigate this.

- There is an advantage to dredging within the existing (federal) channel versus outside of it.
- Sailors with keel boats need access to the southern harbor entrance at low tide.
- Breakwaters change everything in the Bay. Any breakwater will need a high level of analysis for reflected waves, as it will affect the entire area.

**B. Environmental considerations.**

- Key considerations:
  - Consider incorporating space on a pier for cormorants.
  - Protect wildlife from construction and operation impacts.
  - Monitor, limit, and mitigate any potential pollution.
  - Consult with the Audubon Society.

**C. General siting, planning, and (non-marine) design topics.**

- Consider locating service in the existing marina basin rather than at a new [pier] location.
- It is important to get specific about recreational uses to develop the pier design further.
- Consider removal of the derelict portion of the pier, a key navigational hazard to watercraft and other recreational users.

## **Topic 4 – New insights or planning, design, use considerations?**

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**A. Pier design ideas, opportunities and considerations.**

- Provide an experience that matches that of commercial ferries with recreational activities.
- Ensure that the pier is wide enough for recreational use and commuters. One side of pier can be used for views and fishing, the other for ferries
- Consider installing a wind turbine to power the pier.
- Stage an artist’s competition to enliven the pier.
- Integrate living, growing seaweed to protect the pier from sea level rise impacts.
- Consider the needs of people who fish along Seawall Drive in addition to commuters.
- Consider a “greenway” on the pier.
- Public docks can be considered for kayaks and other uses
- “The existing pier is an amazing cultural walking space: can it be preserved so it could be reconstructed someday and build a new one adjacent to it?”

**B. Users, User conflict management, programming**

- Bring users to the parks around the Adventure Playground.
- Ensure that current users of the Waterfront are not displaced by the ferry service.
- Encourage more bikes to the south side of waterfront:

- Sailing clubs in area are heavily used and offer sailing instruction accessible to low-income residents; ensure that pier/ferry plans respect these uses.

### **C. Parking and Transit**

- Key topics identified:
  - Consider how parking for water sports takes time for loading/unloading gear.
  - Provide a shuttle to limit parking demand.
  - Concentrate parking in a parking structure to preserve open space.
  - Make parking multifunctional so it can be reused in the future as private vehicles are phased out.
  - Consider solar panels above parking spaces; use the energy to charge the ferries.