



675 Seaport Boulevard, Redwood City, CA 94063

July 18, 2024

Regional Network Management Council
Metropolitan Transportation Commission
Bay Area Metro Center
375 Beale Street, Suite 800
San Francisco, CA 94105

Subject: Inclusion of Redwood City Ferry Service in Plan Bay Area 2050+

Dear Members of the Regional Network Management Council:

I am writing on behalf of Seaport Industrial Association (SIA) to express our concern regarding the exclusion of the Redwood City Ferry Service from the current draft of the Regional Transportation Plan, Plan Bay Area 2050+. SIA is a membership organization that represents industrial businesses in the Redwood City port area. We have advocated and worked closely with transportation planners for two decades to bring water transit service to Redwood City.

It has come to our attention that the current draft of Plan Bay Area 2050 does not include the Redwood City Ferry Service project which has historically been included in previous versions of Plan Bay Area, has secured tens of millions of dollars in funding, and is currently under environmental review. Projects can be excluded from Plan Bay Area if they are duplicative of other transit projects or are not cost effective. Neither of these applies to the Redwood City project. The exclusion of this project is an oversight, and we urge the Council to include it in the next draft Plan.

The Redwood City Ferry project is not duplicative of other transit service. Both the Redwood Ferry Service Business and Feasibility Plans evaluated two versions of service, including a route between Oakland and Redwood City which provides a new transit link between the East Bay and the Peninsula. No other transit agency currently operates or has plans to develop a direct transit link between these two locations. Current transit connections (e.g., BART to Caltrain to Redwood City) require multiple mode changes and take so long as to be entirely impractical.

From a cost-efficiency standpoint, SF Bay Ferry operates at a cost per passenger mile like other transit modes carrying passengers along important long-distance trips, many of which would otherwise be completed in cars, adding to congestion and greenhouse gas emissions. In fact, it has the sixth lowest cost per passenger mile among the region's 20-plus transit operators.

We understand that Plan Bay Area 2050+ is fiscally constrained. However, the Redwood City Ferry Service will be funded with sources that can only be used for ferry transit projects and will not compete with funding from other projects in the region. These specific funding sources include (a) \$15 million from San Mateo County Measure A designated for the Redwood City Ferry Service project, (b) an allocation of SF Bay Ferry's Regional Measure 3 capital funds, (c) and potential funding from federal ferry programs including the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Passenger Ferry Grant Program, the FTA Electric/Low Emission Ferry Program, and the Federal Highway Administration Ferry Boat Program. All these federal ferry programs, which can only be used on eligible public ferry projects, require that proposed projects are included in the Metropolitan Planning Organization's Regional Transportation Plan.

Excluding the Redwood City Ferry service from Plan Bay Area 2050+ reduces the amount of funding coming to the region and creates a barrier to transit expansion. SF Bay Ferry will not be able to apply for "ferry only" funding to support the Redwood City ferry service if it is not included in the region's transportation plan. This includes federal funds that can be leveraged for the region. Given how close the project is to implementation, and the opportunity to secure federal funding, the failure to list the project in Plan Bay Area would amount to eliminating a transit mode that meets a demonstrated need with no corresponding benefit for other projects.

In terms of mode shift, SF Bay Ferry was the fastest-growing transit system in the region prior to the pandemic and has been the fastest to recover. As of July 2024, SF Bay Ferry is carrying nearly 90% of its pre-pandemic riders. People are choosing to ride the ferry for a variety of reasons. SF Bay Ferry has aligned its fares with other transit modes, becoming a travel mode of choice for riders from all income categories. It also has the highest customer satisfaction rating of any transit system in the country and was the first transit operator in the region to fully restore service following the pandemic, making equity-focused, ridership-incentivizing changes that many other operators have since adopted.

Finally, there is currently no passenger ferry service anywhere in the South Bay. Establishing a ferry service in this area is critical to ensure the equitable distribution of emergency services. The Redwood City Ferry service enhances emergency preparedness by enabling the movement of first responders and supplies by water after a catastrophic event. It is a perfect complement for the Port of Redwood City's role as a FEMA-designated emergency response site for the Peninsula and Silicon Valley.

The Redwood City Ferry Service project will be a vital component of our regional transportation infrastructure, providing essential transit links, enhancing emergency response capabilities, and leveraging dedicated funding sources that benefit the entire Bay Area. We urge you to include the Redwood City Ferry Service in the next draft of Plan Bay Area 2050+.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Greenway". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Greg Greenway
Executive Director