

Contact: John Grubb
Bay Area Council
Office: 415-981-6600
Cell: 415-847-6320
jgrubb@bayareacouncil.org



Senator Don Perata Requests Bay Area Council Develop Recommendations to Revamp Bay Area Ferry System as a Primary Disaster Recovery Service

Council Forms "Blue Ribbon Task Force" To Develop Recommendations - Work Must Be Done April 15

SAN FRANCISCO, February 15, 2006 – Today the Bay Area Council announced its has received a letter from Senator Don Perata, President pro Tempore, requesting that by April 15 the public policy group evaluate and provide recommendations to make ferries on the Bay a primary disaster recovery service. The Bay Area Council has immediately formed a "Blue Ribbon Task Force" of experts to respond to Senator Perata's request. The end result could reinstate a regional high-speed ferry network on the Bay, available for recovery efforts following a disaster.

The Blue Ribbon Task Force will be asked to assess for a revised ferry system: what infrastructure is needed (ships, terminals, routes); what legislative changes are needed to make it happen; and what capital outlay and operating funding are needed.

The task force will be co-chaired by Ron Cowan, the Chairman and CEO of Doric Development, and Bruce Spaulding, the Vice Chancellor of the University of California at San Francisco, both of whom previously chaired other water transit initiatives for the Bay Area Council. The other members of the Task Force will be:

- Jerry Bridges, Executive Director, Port of Oakland;
- Carney Campion, General Manager (retired), Golden Gate Transit;
- Russell Hancock, President and CEO, Joint Venture: Silicon Valley Network;
- John Martin, Airport Director, San Francisco International Airport;
- Jim Wunderman, President and CEO, Bay Area Council (ex officio).

The panel will be supported by Bay Area Council Vice President of Transportation, Michael Cunningham, and Zane Gresham, a partner at Morrison & Foerster LLP.

Eight years ago, in a bill authored by Senator Perata, and signed into law by the governor, the Bay Area Council conceived a comprehensive water transit system that – in addition to significantly improving daily traffic – would provide a highly flexible disaster recovery transportation system. Ferries would shuttle supplies, responders, and victims around the region, even while roads, bridges, and trains would still be closed for inspection and repairs. It would have terminals ringing the Bay – from Alviso and Moffett Field close to San Jose, to Port Sonoma and Benicia in the North Bay, to Oakland and San Francisco. Yet the system has never received the funding nor authority required to build more than a modest system with three or four new routes, the first scheduled to start in 2009.

Senator Perata's letter follows a written request by Jim Wunderman, President and CEO of the Bay Area Council, to Senator Perata – and an Op Ed by Wunderman published by the *San Francisco Chronicle* on Sunday, February 5, 2006 – that alerted the Senator and the public to the dangerous ramifications of an unfulfilled ferry system on the Bay.

Following recent major disasters, ferries have played a decisive role in recovery. On September 11, 2001, the New York Waterway ferry service responded to the destruction of the World Trade Center towers within 15 minutes of the attack. Ferries helped evacuate more than 160,000 people from Manhattan on September 11, including over 2,000 injured persons within the first hour.

“The Bay Area is not prepared for its next major disaster,” said Wunderman. “The painful lessons that emerged from recent disasters in the United States drive our passion to protect the Bay Area. The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina revealed the unthinkable cost in terms of lives and money of haphazard planning and irresolute leadership. Not putting ferries on the Bay for disaster recovery is like New Orleans not strengthening its levees, knowing a hurricane was coming. The threats to the Bay Area are well known and we must act urgently to avoid repeating this tragedy.”

Many recent reports delineate the severity of major threats facing the Bay Area. According to the national Terrorism Risk Insurance Act of 2002 – reauthorized in December 2005 – Washington, D.C., New York City, San Francisco and Chicago are the areas most likely to attract terrorist attacks. Regarding earthquakes, an authoritative analysis by the U.S. Geological Survey found that there is a 2 in 3 chance of a major 6.7 earthquake or worse in the Bay Area in the next 30 years. In 2001, a FEMA report ranked hurricane damage to New Orleans, a terrorist attack on New York City, and an earthquake in the Bay Area as the three most likely catastrophes facing the country. Two of those have now struck.

“The advent of global terrorism, the ongoing scientific advisories about the Big One, the ongoing population and economic growth of the region, and our experiences from Loma Prieta, all militate for greater disaster preparedness and relief preparedness using the water,” said Senator Perata in his letter.

“In the event of a disaster ferries will transform the waters of the bay from a transportation obstacle into a transportation asset, especially with bridges and roads down for repair or inspection” said Wunderman. “Both cost effective and environmentally friendly, no other transportation investment can match ferries in the Bay Area to both relieve day-to-day traffic and prepare us for the next nearly inevitable disaster. While water transit is not the only answer, it is the most glaringly missing element of our infrastructure in a region defined by such a magnificent body of water.”

Since 1979, a number of events have disrupted travel in the region, resulting in significant use of ferry use, even though the system is currently considered modest:

- 1979 BART Transbay tube fire
- 1982 Marin County mudslides that blocked access to the Golden Gate Bridge
- 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake that blocked access to and damaged the Bay Bridge
- 1997 BART strike
- 1998 power outage that shut down BART
- 2001 terrorism warnings for the Bay and Golden Gate bridges

These past events underscore the critical role ferries can and do play following disasters, primarily because they are less likely to be disrupted.

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Bay Area Council

Founded in 1945, the Bay Area Council (www.bayareacouncil.org) develops and drives regional public policy initiatives and researches critical infrastructure issues. Led by CEOs, the Bay Area Council presents a strong, united voice for hundreds of major employers throughout the Bay Area region whom employ more than 490,000 workers, or 1 of every six private sector employees in the Bay Area. Jim Wunderman has served as president and CEO of the Bay Area Council since April of 2004.