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BAY AREA COUNCIL CELEBRATES GOVERNOR'S APPOINTMENTS TO WATER EMERGENCY TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY BOARD

BRINGS NEW AUTHORITY TO LIFE TO BUILD ROBUST FERRY NETWORK

SAN FRANCISCO, March 20, 2008 – Today, the Bay Area Council applauded Governor Schwarzenegger's appointment of three Bay Area residents to the new Water Emergency Transportation Authority: Charlene Haught Johnson as chair, Anthony Intintoli Jr. as vice chair and Gerald Bellows as a member. Their appointment brings WETA to life. The three appointed board members – of the five total – now establish a quorum for WETA, allowing the authority to exercise all of the powers it has been granted.

"We urge WETA to move as quickly as possible to get new boats in the water and new terminals on the shore," said Jim Wunderman, President and CEO of the Bay Area Council. "They need to act with sincere urgency, as if people's lives depend on their actions, because they do. We also urge WETA to look closely at building the new boats here in the Bay Area, taking advantage of many existing – if perhaps mothballed facilities – we have in the region and creating a new industry our economy needs."

WETA is the result of Bay Area Council-sponsored Senate Bill 976 (Torlakson, D-Antioch). SB 976 created the Bay Area's first new transportation authority of the 21st Century. WETA's mission is to plan and build one of the most comprehensive water transit services in the world, connecting all parts of the Bay Area, that can also respond to an earthquake or other disaster. SB 976 and SB 88 identified WETA as the agency to receive \$250 million from the infrastructure bonds passed in November, 2006 to start building the system. In addition, WETA qualifies for numerous possible federal funding categories, and has greater flexibility to leverage existing Bay Area regional funding sources. SB 976 also consolidated all existing state-funded ferry service in the Bay Area under the authority and control of WETA, including the Alameda/Oakland Ferry, the Vallejo Baylink Ferry and the Harbor Bay Ferry.

"SB 976 was the product of two years of work by the Bay Area Council," said Wunderman. "Hurricane Katrina's aftermath – where desperate residents waited days for any state or federal help – spurred the Bay Area Council to act to create WETA. When our big disaster comes, which will most likely be a 1906-sized earthquake, the only way to move people, emergency supplies and goods around the region would be on the water. Now we will be able to do so."

At the request of Senate President Don Perata, the Bay Area Council explored how to better prepare the region for a disaster with a Blue Ribbon Task Force that extensively consulted with agencies responsible for planning, operating and coordinating transportation; with experts on earthquake risk and vulnerability; and with vessel suppliers and operators. Experts advised the Task Force that the Bay Area faces a two-thirds chance of a major earthquake in next 25 years and that the regional transportation system will not survive intact, necessitating an alternate water-based system. The recommendations and analysis were summarized in the report *The Bay – The Transportation Spine for Disaster*, delivered to Senator Perata on April 12, 2006.

The report found that the need for WETA is great. In addition to the FEMA-predicted 5,000 deaths, 18,000 hospitalizations and 165,000 people made homeless by a major quake, the region will also face a transportation cataclysm. An Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) study found that more than 1,700 roads will be closed by a major earthquake on the Hayward Fault. Despite all of the completed and ongoing transportation seismic safety efforts, ABAG and the U.S. Geological Survey warn that all transbay bridges will be closed, either by bridge damage or access-road failure. Soil liquefaction will render many key roads – such as bridge approaches, Highway 101 and I-80 and 880 – impassable. Violent ground movement and fault slip will cause large fractures and landslides to block roadways. The BART Berkeley hills tunnel, which passes directly through the Hayward Fault, will likely be closed for years. In short, those that survive a major quake will be stuck in their location for a long time.

Current water-based infrastructure and equipment capabilities are grossly inadequate to the physical task. Ferry terminals exist in only a few spots on the Bay, and the vessel fleet lacks the capacity to make up for even one out-of-service bridge. Prior to the creation of WETA, the few vessels that existed were in the hands of many different public and private owners and operators, and with no detailed plan or identified leader to activate and coordinate them. Due to a shortage of docking facilities, only half of the current fleet could be deployed in an emergency. In addition, the shortage of fueling facilities would mean that vessels would likely run out of fuel during a major evacuation.

“The Bay Area Council drove the creation of BART 50 years ago to unite our region on the land, now we hope WETA can unite our region on the water,” said Wunderman. “The Bay Area Council joins with current and future ferry riders across the Bay to express heartfelt gratitude to Senator Tom Torlakson, Assembly Member Mark DeSaulnier, Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez, Senator Don Perata and Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger for their hard work to create WETA.”

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Bay Area Council

Founded in 1945, the Bay Area Council (www.bayareacouncil.org) is business-backed public policy organization for more than 275 of the largest Bay Area employers. Led by its CEO members, the Bay Area Council presents a strong, united voice for hundreds of major employers throughout the Bay Area region who employ more than 500,000 workers, or 1 of every six private sector employees in the Bay Area.