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HOME > NEWS > LOCAL NEWS > OFFICIALS APPROVE FUNDS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF FERRY SYSTEM

Officials approve funds for development of ferry system

By Martinez News-Gazette

Monday January 21, 2013

Local News



By GERARDO RECINOS
Martinez News-Gazette

The Water Emergency Transportation Authority (WETA) recently approved a financial influx for Antioch, Hercules and Martinez.

The WETA will provide \$27 million over the next 10 years for the development of the three terminals that may be built in the three Contra Costa County cities.

The \$27 million was part of the \$422 million that the Bay Area allocated to revamp the ferry systems and make various improvements throughout the Bay Area. The previous 10-year plan only accounted for \$2 million.

Originally, Mark DeSaulnier (D-Concord) brought the matter to the attention of the board and was essential in raising concerns when the initial plan wasn't what he had hoped for.

The WETA sees these new ferry terminals as optimal for any city involved. For Martinez, a new terminal could include an increased economic development to the downtown neighborhood, as well as a new county recorder building, several downtown office buildings and new residential units, according to the WETA website.

Another facet of the plan is the decreased flow of traffic on Highway 4 for riders who live in any of the three respective cities in the county. The decreased traffic would assist the more than 60 percent of Antioch riders who commute to work every day.

Emergency actions can also hinge on water travel. The WETA was established on that very basis by SB976, and as such is primed to be able to assist in the event of an emergency that would require citizens to evacuate a city.

In a letter to Charlene Haught Johnson, chair of the WETA, DeSaulnier said, "the public interest requires swift action and steadfast resolve to prepare for the coming earthquakes, as well as other emergencies, with the speed and determination that is due for a threat of this magnitude. The water transit emergency response and recovery system must be fully implemented as quickly as possible, as if the lives of Bay Area residents depend on it, because they do."

A new terminal can cost anywhere from \$10 million to \$50 million, according to a Contra Costa Times report.

No WETA officials were available for comment as of Gazette deadline.



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Weather in Martinez

Current Forecast

Tue, 22 Jan 2013 12:53 pm PST



Fair
56°F
High: 60°F
Low: 44°F

Tomorrow:
PM Rain



Sunrise 7:18 am
 Sunset 5:19 pm
 Wind: 7 mph
 Humidity: 53 %
 Visibility: 10 mi
 Barometer: 30.08 in
FALLING

57°F / 42°F



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