

August 26, 2005
(For Board: September 9, 2005)



REPORT OF THE GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
AND PUBLIC INFORMATION COMMITTEE/
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Honorable Board of Directors
Golden Gate Bridge, Highway
and Transportation District

Honorable Members:

A meeting of the Governmental Affairs and Public Information Committee/Committee of the Whole was held in the Board Room, Administration Building, Toll Plaza, San Francisco, California, on Friday, August 26, 2005, at 9:30 a.m., Chair Boro presiding.

Committee Members Present (4): Chair Boro; Vice Chair Martini; Director Kerns; President Middlebrook (Ex Officio)

Committee Members Absent (3): Directors Dufty McGoldrick and Sandoval

Other Members Present (8): Directors Brown, Cochran, Eddie, Hernández, Moylan, Pahre, Shahum and Stroeh

Committee of the Whole Members Present (12): Directors Brown, Cochran, Eddie, Hernández, Kerns, Martini, Pahre, Shahum and Stroeh; Second Vice President Boro; First Vice President Moylan; President Middlebrook

Committee of the Whole Members Absent (6): Directors Ammiano, Dufty, McGoldrick, Murray, Reilly and Sandoval

[On this date, there was one vacancy on the Board of Directors.]

Staff Present: Acting General Manager and Deputy General Manager/Bridge Division Kary H. Witt; District Engineer Denis J. Mulligan; Auditor-Controller Joseph M. Wire; Secretary of the District Janet S. Tarantino; Attorney David J. Miller; Deputy General Manager/Bus Division Susan C. Chiaroni; Deputy General Manager/Administration and Development Teri W. Mantony; Public Affairs Director Mary C. Currie; Marketing and Communications Director Kellee Hopper; Executive Assistant to the General Manager Amorette Ko; Assistant Clerk of the Board Karen B. Engbretson

Visitors Present: None

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1. Status Report on State/Federal Legislation

Acting General Manager Kary Witt reported on the status of the following federal legislation:

- Federal Transportation Funding Bill – Mr. Witt reported that on August 10, 2005, President Bush signed H.R. 3, the federal transportation funding bill known as Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). SAFETEA-LU is the reauthorization of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), which had been extended twelve times since the original bill expired on September 30, 2003. Mr. Witt stated that the \$58.8 million in funding earmarked for the Golden Gate Bridge Seismic Retrofit project remained intact in the final version of the bill.
- Hybrid Vehicles – Mr. Witt stated that the enactment of SAFETEA-LU allowed the State of California to fully implement Assembly Bill 2628, (AB 2628) a law which allows single-occupant use of High-Occupancy-Vehicle (HOV) lanes by high-mileage vehicles. He further stated that AB 2628 only applies to alternative fuel, hybrid and full-electric vehicles that get more than 45 miles per gallon, and that such vehicles must apply for an identification sticker issued by the Department of Motor Vehicles in order to travel in HOV lanes. He noted that there has been some confusion on the part of the public as to whether AB 2628 also provided for toll-free passage for qualifying vehicles. Mr. Witt stated that District staff worked closely with the Bay Area Toll Authority and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission to clarify the benefits of AB 2628 to the public. He noted that single-occupant drivers of hybrid vehicles would still be required to pay tolls when crossing any of the Bay Area's eight toll bridges, including the Golden Gate Bridge. A provision of AB 2628 requires that owners of hybrid vehicles in the nine-county Bay Area are required to sign up for FasTrak™ before they will be issued an HOV lane access decal, so that they would be able to pay their tolls electronically and remain in dedicated HOV lanes while crossing on the four state-owned Bay Area bridges that have such lanes (the Bay Bridge and the Carquinez, Dumbarton, San Mateo bridges).

Mr. Witt reported on the status of the following state legislation:

- Senate Bill 238 (SB 238) – Mr. Witt stated that SB 238, the bill that will re-instate a Safety Enhancement-Double Fine Zone (DFZ) on the Golden Gate Bridge, has passed in both houses of the state legislature, and is ready for signature by the Governor within the next twelve days. He noted that at this late stage of the process, the State of California, Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has expressed opposition to SB 238 by stating that there is no evidence that DFZs are effective, despite the fact that the District has statistical evidence that the DFZ has been effective in reducing both prevailing speeds and accidents on the Golden Gate Bridge. In addition, Caltrans noted that the Golden Gate Bridge does not meet any criteria for a DFZ because of its already low accident rate. Mr. Witt pointed out that one of the reasons the accident rate is low on the Bridge is

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because of the DFZ, as well as other safety measures, implemented on the Bridge during the last several years. He stated that staff has requested a meeting with the Secretary of Business, Housing and Transportation, the state agency that oversees Caltrans, in order to discuss the unique nature of the Golden Gate Bridge and to urge Caltrans to modify or abandon its opposition to SB 238.

- Assembly Bill 748 – Mr. Witt reported on Assembly Bill 748 (AB 748), which proposes a statutory ban on tolls for the passage of a pedestrian or bicyclist over any toll bridge in California that allows pedestrian and bicycle access, including the Golden Gate Bridge. He stated that AB 748 was amended in the Senate Committee on Appropriations to include a three-year sunset clause, and that the bill will now go the Senate floor, then back to the Assembly for concurrence on the amendment, and then on to the Governor for signature.

Discussion ensued, including the following:

- In response to an inquiry from Director Shahum as to whether there had been bipartisan support for SB 238 in the state legislature, Mr. Witt replied that the votes had been along party lines.
- Attorney David Miller explained that Caltrans regards DFZs as temporary, remedial measures, whereas the District views its DFZ as a preventative measure and one part of a combination of measures that has allowed the District to maintain, and even improve, its excellent safety record on the Bridge.
- Director Cochran inquired as to whether the Golden Gate Bridge was the only roadway affected by SB 238, and Mr. Witt answered in the affirmative. He further stated that there is another bill in the state legislature that would implement a DFZ on 19th Avenue in San Francisco.

Action by the Board – None Required

2. Update on Public Outreach Activities

Customer Relations Supervisor Helen Haas, Public Affairs Director Mary Currie, Marketing and Communications Director Kellee J. Hopper, Deputy General Manager/Administration and Development Teri Mantony and Acting General Manager Kary Witt provided an update on the public outreach activities of the District. The report stated that this update is provided in response to a request by the *2004/2005 Public Education Campaign Advisory Committee*, formed in August 2004, to assist staff in developing a comprehensive public education and public relations campaign. The report outlined strategic public outreach initiatives and activities that have been accomplished since January 2005 through the Public Affairs, Customer Service, and Marketing and Communications (Marketing) Departments, including web site activities; new customer materials; and, improvements made to the District customer service telephone system.

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The report described the changes and upgrades made to the District's web site, including the following accomplishments:

- Expanded and more accessible section for District news and events, including an archive of past news releases;
- New Multimedia Gallery featuring a virtual Bridge tour and eight short video vignettes featuring Golden Gate Bridge employees, from the *Bay Area Backroads* television program;
- A consolidated FasTrak™ web site (www.bayareafastrak.org), created in collaboration with Metropolitan Transportation Commission staff; and,
- Expanded Online Store, which has generated over \$280,000 in sales of Ride Value tickets, Golden Gate Bridge memorabilia and gifts, including the commemorative ornament collection.

The report also described a new bilingual *New Riders* booklet (copy of which was attached to the staff report), which was created to minimize rider apprehension and promote better understanding of the Golden Gate Transit bus and ferry system for potential transit customers. This booklet will be distributed through the Customer Relations Department, in quarterly mailings to hotels and libraries and through continued transit information requests. The report stated that staff is currently updating a new edition of *Highlights, Facts and Figures*, an overview of District history and current operations. The report noted that District staff routinely makes presentations on a wide range of topics to various community and industry stakeholder groups, and that a listing of these speaking engagements are now provided monthly in the General Manger's report to the Board of Directors.

The report stated that in September 2004, the District upgraded the Automatic Call Distribution Software (ACDS) in order to provide current technological advances to telephone services management, including real-time statistical information regarding call distribution and operator performance. The report noted that since January 2005, an average of 15,300 calls per month were answered by the Customer Service Representatives, with a low abandoned call rate.

The report also noted the positive outcome of an audit performed by the Government Accounting Office of the District's outreach activities to populations with limited English proficiency. Following the audit, the Government Accounting Office found that the District was more responsive to its non-English speaking populations than many other agencies across the nation.

The report listed other general outreach activities, including additional accomplishments by the Public Affairs, the Marketing and the Customer Relations Departments. A copy of the report, including a copy of the *New Riders* booklet, is available in the Office of the Secretary of the District and on the District's web site.

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At the meeting, Teri Mantony summarized the staff report and highlighted the high priority public outreach efforts that the *2004/2005 Public Education Campaign Advisory Committee* had recommended for staff to undertake. Color copies of the Home page and the Multimedia Gallery page of the web site were distributed to the Committee. Mary Currie also briefly described the efforts she undertook during some of the recent newsworthy events that generated high interest in the District, including the shooting of the Golden Gate Bridge toll collector in April 2005.

Discussion ensued, including the following:

- Director Kerns inquired regarding the condition of the toll collector that was involved in the shooting, and Mr. Witt stated that the toll collector is recovering well and expects to return to work in the next few months.
- Director Hernández commended staff on the positive outcome of the Government Accounting Office audit, noting that staff has worked effectively on bilingual outreach for the District.
- President Middlebrook expressed her appreciation for the following public outreach accomplishments:
 - The sensitivity with which staff has undertaken its bilingual outreach;
 - The improvements made to the District's web site;
 - The publication of an updated edition of the *Highlights, Facts and Figures* booklet.
 - The respect that Public Affairs Director Mary Currie has earned from the media, which often results in more positive media coverage of the District.
- Director Shahum inquired as to whether the District had experienced an increase in transit ridership during the recent *Spare the Air Day Free Morning Transit* program, in which free bus and ferry rides were offered to morning commuters. In response, Kellee Hopper stated that ferry ridership increased significantly on that day, but that there was no noticeable increase in bus ridership. She stated that with increased public awareness, hopefully more commuters will take advantage of this program.
- Director Boro made the following comments and suggestions:
 - He commented that Mary Currie and Auditor-Controller Joseph Wire were interviewed on KCBS radio on the morning of August 25, 2005, and he commended staff for such creative outreach efforts.
 - He recognized the efforts of Customer Service Representative Glen Woods, who effectively provided translation services for Spanish-speaking members of the public at a recent public hearing held on August 11, 2005.
 - He noted that there are several different populations with limited English proficiency in Marin County, including a sizeable Vietnamese community in San Rafael, and he suggested that the District consider using real-time translation headsets for other non-English speaking members of the public who may attend the District's meetings or public hearings.

Action by the Board – None Required

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3. Status Report from the Board Appointee on the San Francisco Bay Area Water Transit Authority (WTA)

Chair Boro, the San Francisco Bay Area Water Transit Authority (WTA) Board Appointee, provided a status report on recent activities of the WTA. The following items were provided to the Committee: Notice of Cancellation for the August 25, 2005, and August 11, 2005, and July 28, 2005, meetings of the Board of Directors; and, Minutes of the May 26, 2005, meeting of the WTA Board of Directors. Copies are available in the Office of the District Secretary and on the District's web site.

Chair Boro stated that the next meeting of the WTA Board of Directors will be held on September 22, 2005. He reported on federal funding earmarked for the WTA as part of SAFETEA-LU, the recently enacted federal transportation funding bill. This funding was described in detail in a document provided to WTA Board members by the WTA's legislative representative, a copy of which he requested the Secretary of the District to provide to the members of the Board of Directors. Chair Boro noted that the \$20 million was earmarked for Port Sonoma ferry service in SAFETEA-LU independent of both the WTA and the District, and that both agencies should meet together with the private developer of Port Sonoma regarding the allocation of the funding and the potential development of ferry service at the Port Sonoma site.

Discussion ensued, including the following:

- Director Kerns noted that during the development of the final version of the federal transportation funding bill, many legislative staffers were under the impression that the owner of the Port Sonoma Marina was a public entity, rather than a private developer.

Action by the Board – None Required

4. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

5. Adjournment

All business having been concluded, the meeting was declared adjourned at 10:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Albert J. Boro, Chair
Governmental Affairs and
Public Information Committee