



Office of the City Manager

December 10, 2020

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: *Dee* Dee Williams-Ridley, City Manager

Subject: Public process for two Waterfront planning projects:
Berkeley Marina Area Specific Plan (BMASP) and
Pier Renovation / Potential New Ferry Service

INTRODUCTION

During the public process for T1 Phase 2, City staff received a variety of public comments and questions about the Berkeley Pier and potential ferry, and the Berkeley Marina Area Specific Plan (BMASP). Staff realizes that there is a lot of public interest in these projects, and the purpose of this memo is to provide Council and the public with an update. Staff have been working on both these projects and are now beginning an intensive and simultaneous public process for them. This memo provides Council with a timeline for the public processes associated with these two projects:

- The Berkeley Marina Area Specific Plan and
- The Berkeley Pier Renovation with Potential Large Scale Ferry Service (Pier/Ferry)

The BMASP project is an overall programmatic planning document to help guide the City in optimizing the operations of the Waterfront and land-based activities for the next 25-50 years. The Berkeley Pier Renovation with Potential Ferry Service Project is a specific project at the Marina that will be integrated into the BMASP. The background and next steps for both projects and how they are integrated is presented below.

BACKGROUND

The BMASP

In recent years, the infrastructure at the Berkeley Marina has begun to experience significant failures such as failing dock systems, the closing of the Berkeley Pier, crumbling roadways and parking lots, and more. A capital replacement fund for this infrastructure does not exist. Infrastructure replacement has been funded through a collection of grants, loans, the Marina Fund when possible and most recently, General Fund and the T1 Bond Measure. Additionally, the Marina Fund is designed to support all aspects of the waterfront including recreational activities at Cesar Chavez Park, Shorebird Nature Center and Park, Adventure Playground and at the South Cove area.

The financial feasibility of this fund supporting these elements with its current revenues is unrealistic. Furthermore, recent problems involving encampments, increased crime, and larger economic problems connected to the pandemic have contributed to a decline in customers and revenues at the businesses at the Waterfront (restaurants, hotel, dock slip rentals). As a result, the Marina Fund is currently running at a deficit (annual expenditures are larger than annual revenues), and is projected to have a negative fund balance by the end of 2021. To address this problem over the longer term, the City Council funded the BMASP project in 2019 to achieve the following mission statement:

To provide a vision and plan for achieving a financially self-sustainable, publicly-owned marina area with infrastructure and amenities to support current and future community needs, while adapting to climate changes and promoting recreation and environmental stewardship.

The BMASP project also involves the preparation of an Environmental Impact report (EIR) to ensure the BMASP meets the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Over the next two years (2020-2022), the BMASP project will involve an extensive public process to ensure that the vision of the Plan equitably reflects the community's needs for the next 25 to 50 years. In addition, two current studies at the Marina – the Sea Level Rise Study and the Berkeley Pier / Ferry feasibility studies – will be integrated into the BMASP.

In 2019, with Council approval after conducting a competitive Request-For-Proposal Process (RFP), the City contracted with Hargreaves Jones Landscape Architects, Inc. to conduct the two-year planning project (Resolution No. 68,917) in the amount of \$1.049M (General Fund), and a Notice-To-Proceed was issued in March of 2020. The Scope of Work for the BMASP includes the following:

- Evaluation of existing infrastructure amenities and operations;
- Evaluation of potential new revenue opportunities and programs in the context of existing land-use, zoning and regulatory frameworks;
- A financial analysis of the operations of the Berkeley Waterfront (revenues and expenses, programs and services);
- Recommendations for a range of optimal models of operation.

The end result, with all of the community and consultant input, will be a comprehensive specific plan for a vibrant, ecologically and financially viable Waterfront for the use and enjoyment of generations to come. It will include implementation tools and policies to address future demand for land use, public access / circulation and parking, utilities, public services, recreational facilities / programs / special events, commercial facilities, and shoreline protection, as well as a 5-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) plan.

BMASP Public Process Timeline

Date	Milestone
Sept-Oct, 2020	(4) Focus Group Meetings
January 28, 2021	Community Zoom Meeting #1: 6:30pm - 8:30pm: https://zoom.us/j/93373467062
February 16, 2021	Council Worksession
February 2021	Draft 5-Year CIP Plan
April 2021	1 st Draft of Specific Plan
May-June 2021	Large Community Engagement Meeting #2
August 2021	2 nd Draft Specific Plan
Sept-Oct 2021	Large Community Engagement Meeting #3
Feb-March 2022	Large Community Engagement Meeting #4 (Draft EIR Scoping Meeting)
April 2022	Final Draft Specific Plan, and Final Draft EIR
June 2022	Council to Adopt Specific Plan, and Final EIR

The Berkeley Pier and Potential Large Scale Ferry Service

In July of 2015, after serving as a major recreational amenity for the entire Bay Area since 1937, the Berkeley Municipal Pier was closed to the public indefinitely due to structural safety issues. On June 21, 2017, after conducting a competitive RFP process, the City contracted with GHD, Inc. to perform a structural engineering assessment to identify feasible options and costs for fixing the Pier (Contract No. 10632, Resolution No. 67,856). The draft study identified twelve options ranging in cost from \$17 million to \$55 million. A second component of the study looked at the feasibility of small-scale ferry service at the potentially renovated pier. (Small-scale ferry service is currently offered by two independent providers at K-dock at the main basin at the Marina).

In February of 2016, the Water Emergency Transportation Authority (WETA) updated their [Strategic Plan](#)¹, which identified a network of sixteen ideal locations for expanded ferry service throughout the Bay Area region, including the Berkeley Marina, to help provide alternative transportation for passengers and emergency response. The Plan projects that by year 2035, ferry service at the Berkeley Marina could see a daily ridership of up to 1,589 trips (795 unique individuals) for a total annual ridership of 203,000 trips.

¹ <https://weta.sanfranciscobayferry.com/sites/default/files/weta/strategicplan/WETAstrategicPlanFinal.pdf>

On June 5, 2018, Bay Area voters approved Regional Measure Three (RM3) toll bridge increase to finance \$4.5 billion in highway and transit projects, and provide \$60 million each year to operate new bus and ferry services in congested bridge corridors. WETA is expected to receive up to \$300 million for one-time capital construction projects and up to \$35 million per year to operate an expanded region-wide ferry system.

In 2019, based on these two developments (the WETA Strategic Plan and approval of RM3), WETA and City staff initiated a dialogue for a potential partnership to study the feasibility of ferry service at the Berkeley Marina. During initial meetings, WETA and City staff realized that it would be cost-effective to investigate a single pier that would provide two uses – ferry service and public recreation. In order to evaluate the viability of this dual-purpose concept, WETA and the City entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to conduct engineering feasibility studies on the proposed improvements and impacts (Resolution 68,792, executed 7-29-2019). The waterside improvements would look at the following: fixing the existing or building a new pier, ocean wave dynamics and breakwaters, dredging, etc. The landside improvements would include renovations to existing parking lots, public access paths, and public amenities (e.g., restrooms). If the project is deemed viable in terms of costs, public benefits, and minimized impacts at the Berkeley Waterfront, the project would move to subsequent phases (design, construction, and operations) in the form of additional MOU amendments, each of which would be subject to approvals by the City Council and WETA Board.

In terms of project financing, it is anticipated that WETA would provide the capital funds for the design, permitting, environmental review, and construction of the waterside and landside improvements associated with ferry service, as well as the annual operating costs associated with ferry service; the City would cover only those additional costs to build and maintain the public recreation portion of the pier, as well as the costs to operate the landside parking facilities. These costs are currently not known, and would be identified as part of the Planning Phase feasibility study.

The Planning Phase includes a robust public engagement process that will review the findings of the studies and help the City decide if there is a preferred project alternative that is viable enough to move forward to the Design Phase.

Rationale

With access to the voter-approved RM3 transportation funds (June 2018), the concept of a dual-purpose public pier at the Berkeley Marina is currently the most effective way to bring back the public recreation opportunities of the beloved Berkeley Pier, as well as provide alternative public transportation in the form of new ferry service to an already overburdened Bay Area transportation system. In addition, the potential ferry service could bring more visitors to Berkeley, which could help the financial viability of the Berkeley Waterfront.

To date, ferries have already come to play a vital role in the Bay Area by providing high-volume service during peak congestion periods, efficiently moving people across the Bay. The vast majority of WETA ferry trips occur in the heavily traveled I-80 corridor; in addition, there is a growing need for ferries to connect people and locations that do not currently have good public transit options, such as residents of West Berkeley.

Pre-COVID-19, the demand for ferry service in the Bay Area was at an all-time high; data from 2012 to 2016 shows that WETA ferry ridership increased by 94%. Ridership is expected to increase significantly with the newly-opened Richmond Ferry Terminal (January 10, 2019), and with the now-completed expansion of the downtown San Francisco Ferry Terminal.

In addition, the City's Local Hazard Mitigation Plan of 2018 (LHMP) has identified developing a partnership with ferry service as a High Priority Action that would play an important role in the City's emergency response and recovery after a major disaster.

Throughout this project, the City always can decide that a new ferry service at the Berkeley Marina is not in the City's best interest at this time, and the MOU with WETA allows the City to opt out of the project at any time. It should be noted that the estimated cost to restore or rebuild the existing municipal pier ranges from \$17 million to \$55 million, and funding of this magnitude could be difficult to obtain solely for a public recreation pier.

As of December 2020, the following activities have been completed related to the Berkeley Pier / Potential Large Scale Ferry Service:

- 2019 - Structural engineering assessment draft report was completed.
- 2019 - Executed MOU with WETA for Planning Phase, including feasibility study.
- 2019 - Small-scale ferry assessment draft report was completed.
- 2019 - Traffic and Circulation assessment draft report was completed.
- 2019 - Presentation of draft initial findings was provided to the Parks and Waterfront Commission.
- 2019 - Developed draft water-side conceptual alternatives for Pier / ferry location.
- 2020 - Developed draft land-side conceptual alternatives for parking and land-side amenities that would support the potential ferry terminal.

The Berkeley Pier / Potential Large Scale Ferry Service Public Process Timeline

Date	Milestone
Dec-Jan 2021	(3) Focus Group Meetings
January 21, 2021	Large Community Zoom Meeting #1: 6:30pm - 8:30pm: https://zoom.us/j/93212728437

Date	Milestone
February 16, 2021	City Council Worksession re: BMASP and Pier-Ferry Project
March 2021	WETA Board Worksession
May-June 2021	Large Community Meeting #2: Review design concepts
August-Sept 2021	Large Community Meeting #3: Finalize design concepts
Nov-Dec 2021	City / WETA Board approvals on preferred conceptual alternative design, and approve an amendment to the MOU to proceed to the Design Phase, if deemed to be feasible.

CONCLUSION

The community process for both projects is underway, as detailed in the above report. Staff is looking forward to hearing community input and feedback on the broader visions for the Berkeley Waterfront through the BMASP and the potential project to rebuild the Berkeley Pier with large-scale ferry service. Multiple studies have been completed and staff have developed numerous alternatives for both land-side and water-side improvements. These will be posted to the City's website by January 8, 2021 and presented in January at the first community meetings for each project. Residents will have multiple opportunities for public participation over the coming months to ensure that these significant projects reflect our community's interests and needs.

The first opportunities for feedback will be next month, on January 21, 2021, for a potential Pier / Ferry project, and on January 28, 2021 for the BMASP.

In addition, the public can send feedback via email at any time for both of these projects to bmasp@cityofberkeley.info.

There will be a Council worksession on both of these projects on February 16, 2021, and we will return to Council in November–December of 2021 with further updates and to seek needed approvals.

Attachment: Public Process Timeline

cc: Paul Buddenhagen, Deputy City Manager
 David White, Deputy City Manager
 Scott Ferris, Director, Parks, Recreation & Waterfront
 Jenny Wong, City Auditor
 Mark Numainville, City Clerk
 Matthai Chakko, Assistant to the City Manager / Public Information Officer

Attachment: Public Process Timeline

