

WETA System Expansion Policy

The WETA expansion policy is intended to provide a framework for evaluating the feasibility of new ferry projects. The framework consists of policy statements that provide guidance for developing candidate project elements such as landside and waterside facilities, vessels and service plans. In addition, a set of evaluation measures defines a range of productivity and efficiency metrics that inform the WETA Board and funding partners regarding a project's financial feasibility and sustainability.

There is no pre-determined level of evaluation that determines whether a project is feasible. There are many factors that contribute to whether a project is developed and becomes part of the WETA system. Instead, the System Expansion Policy provides policy makers with an agreed-upon framework, bringing objective measures and predictability to the project development process.

I. System Expansion Policy Statements

System Expansion Overview	WETA will expand ferry service throughout San Francisco Bay, working with local and regional partners to increase ferry ridership and relieve traffic congestion and transit crowding. New ferry services will be financially sustainable, contribute to the ferry system and enhance WETA's emergency response capabilities.
Minimum Service Period	New services will need to be in service for a minimum of 10 years to allow adequate time to build a ridership base. Services will be evaluated after a 10-year initial period to determine their continued operation.
New Service Project Evaluation	The WETA System Expansion Policy establishes a range of evaluation measures that help the WETA Board determine whether a candidate project will be successful and meet WETA's strategic goals. The new service evaluation is typically performed prior to entering environmental clearance, during the feasibility study phase of a project.
New Service Ongoing Evaluation	Once in operation, new ferry services will be evaluated on regular quarterly and yearly intervals to ensure performance is meeting expectations. Adjustments to the service plan, fare program or access conditions may be warranted.
Service Design	New ferry services typically begin as origin terminals offering commute-period service to San Francisco's Ferry Building. However, they can act as a destination terminal or offer non-commute period service, depending on local transportation goals and funding availability. WETA will work with project partners to develop a concept service design that meets travelling needs while offering a competitive, sustainable service. For commute-only origin terminals, a minimum level of service would be defined as three peak-direction trips in both the AM and PM commute periods.

WETA System Integration	New projects will enhance the WETA ferry system by adding terminals and vessels while attracting new riders to ferry service. Required system elements such as capacity at maintenance facilities and destination terminals or spare vessels will be estimated and incorporated into a project’s capital cost.
Emergency Response	New projects will enhance WETA’s emergency response capabilities by providing terminals and vessels for use in the response and recovery phases after a natural event. The benefits of interoperable ferry assets such as vessels, floats and terminals mean that new projects must be compatible with WETA facilities. The deployment of WETA vessels and use of ferry terminals will be a decision of state and regional authorities and not necessarily WETA or its local partner.
Vessels, Infrastructure	WETA owns and operates a network of ferry vessels along with landside and waterside facilities that are economically and operationally efficient because they are interchangeable. Therefore, candidate WETA projects must be consistent with this established infrastructure. New projects will utilize WETA catamaran-style vessels powered by marine diesel engines and ranging in capacity from 149 to over 500 passengers. Infrastructure such as maintenance facilities and terminals will be consistent with existing WETA facilities. Alternative vessel technologies or non-compliant terminals will not be considered as WETA facilities.
Public-private partnership opportunities	Ferry terminals and vessels are complex and expensive investments that require a variety of funding sources. Operational expenses can also be significant and require long-term dedicated funding streams. WETA encourages partnerships with public or private entities interested in ferry service as a means of financing both capital and operational needs.
Capital Funding	Ferry project capital funding can come through a variety of local, regional, state and federal sources and even private contributions. Candidate expansion projects must demonstrate that there is full capital funding prior to entering the Final Design phase of a project.
Operating Subsidy	The operating subsidy is defined as the portion of the operating expense not covered by fare revenue. New ferry projects must demonstrate that there is a stable, dedicated source for an operating subsidy for a minimum period of ten years.
Terminal Access	WETA supports the use of alternative modes such as walking, biking and transit as a means of accessing origin ferry terminals. At the same time, minimum parking levels are required to ensure a service will be well utilized and accessible to all users. The ideal access environment provides customers with a choice of safe, convenient and attractive access options.

Project Agreement	A Project Agreement will be required for candidate projects prior to entering into the environmental clearance phase of a project. The Project Agreement establishes a project service plan, identifies likely funding sources and defines partner roles and responsibilities. Both the WETA Board and the policy body from the project partner must adopt the Project Agreement.

II. System Expansion Evaluation Measures

The following measures are intended to evaluate the competitiveness and financial feasibility of candidate WETA ferry projects. The measures are expressed in three ways: minimum, target and maximum (as applicable). Minimum levels are what will be required after the initial 10 years of operation. Target levels are consistent with expected performance of mature services such as Alameda/Oakland, Vallejo and Harbor Bay.

Passengers per Revenue Hour (Commute-only service)

Passengers per revenue hour measures the number of boardings in a given hour of service. Services that have high two-way ridership along with a short travel time, enabling vessels to offer multiple runs in a given commute period will be strong performers. This measure provides an evaluation of ridership and the efficiency of operating resources.

Minimum	Target	Maximum
100	150	250

Passengers per Revenue Hour (All-day service)

All-day services typically operate seven days per week and generally from 6 AM up to 8 PM. Today, only Alameda-Oakland and Vallejo are all day services. The target for Passengers per Revenue Hour is slightly lower, given lower volumes in the midday and off-peak periods.

Minimum	Target	Maximum
100	125	250

Farebox Recovery

Farebox recovery is defined as the portion of operating expenses covered by fare revenues. Farebox recovery measures ridership, operating expense and financial sustainability.

Minimum	Target	Maximum
40%	50% – 70%	100%

Peak Hour Occupancy

Peak hour occupancy – defined as the combined peak direction occupancy level during the highest ridership hour of a commute service – indicates ridership demand and provides guidance for vessel deployment and service planning. High levels of peak hour occupancy indicate the possibility of leave-behinds or standees and would require corrective action.

Minimum	Target	Maximum
50%	60% -- 75%	80%