

NEWS for the CREWS

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WATER EMERGENCY TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

www.watertransit.org

CAN FERRIES MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN EMERGENCY RESPONSE COORDINATION? *This edition of News for the Crews looks at what lies ahead for our new agency, the Water Emergency Transportation Authority (WETA). We revisit SB976, the legislation that created WETA, and look at the key constraints to improving our ability to respond in an emergency as well as recommendations for addressing these constraints. This issue also focuses on our early efforts at developing the Emergency Transportation System Management Plan (the Plan). In future issues we will focus on additional recommended actions.*



Meeting the Intent of SB 976 When WETA was established seven years ago, the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake was fresh in policymakers' minds. Emergency ferry service provided transbay connections while the Bay Bridge was closed. From that experience the value of ferries in the aftermath of a natural disaster was firmly established in the Bay Area.

The new state law - SB 976 - again put the spotlight on the role of ferries in the event of an emergency. The intent of the bill is to improve the ability of ferries to respond in the event of an emergency.

Where do we start?

Understand Existing Conditions

Our study to date has yielded a number of findings:

- On a normal commute, approximately 6,000 daily passengers return home via ferry. **If the Bay Area's bridges and BART are inaccessible, the Ferry Building in San Francisco could see over 300,000 passengers looking for ferry service.**
- In the first hours after an emergency, vessels that are in service should likely continue to provide service on the same routes. That way, passengers and emergency responders can access ferry service in "expected" locations.
- While the Golden Gate Bridge traffic is significant, **disruptions to the Bay Bridge create a much larger demand for emergency evacuation** and will require the most supplemental ferry service.
- **Docks at the Ferry Building limit the number of supplemental private vessels that can serve that facility.** In an evacuation, the existing public vessels plus the private vessels that are currently contracted for public service will likely use up all the available dock capacity.



Source: *Commuter Use of Bay Area Bridges 1990-2000, MTC June 2005, and Sketch Planning Estimates of 2006 Bay Bridge Person Trips*

- **In an emergency evacuation, East Bay service should focus on short trips with the fastest turnaround time in order to maximize the number of people transported with a fixed number of vessels.**
- **Limited dock space in the Easy Bay limits the number of vessels that can be in service at that location.**

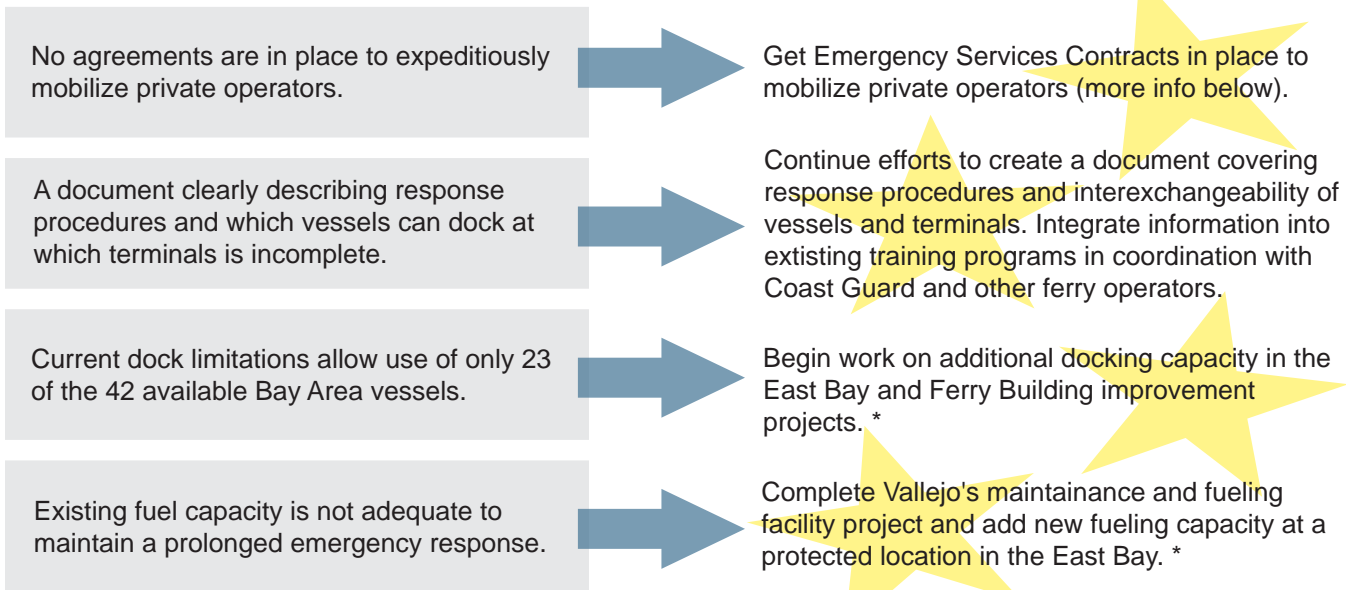
What are our responses to the constraints to optimizing our emergency response capacity? (over)

Emergency Response Constraints and Responses

CONSTRAINTS

and

RESPONSES

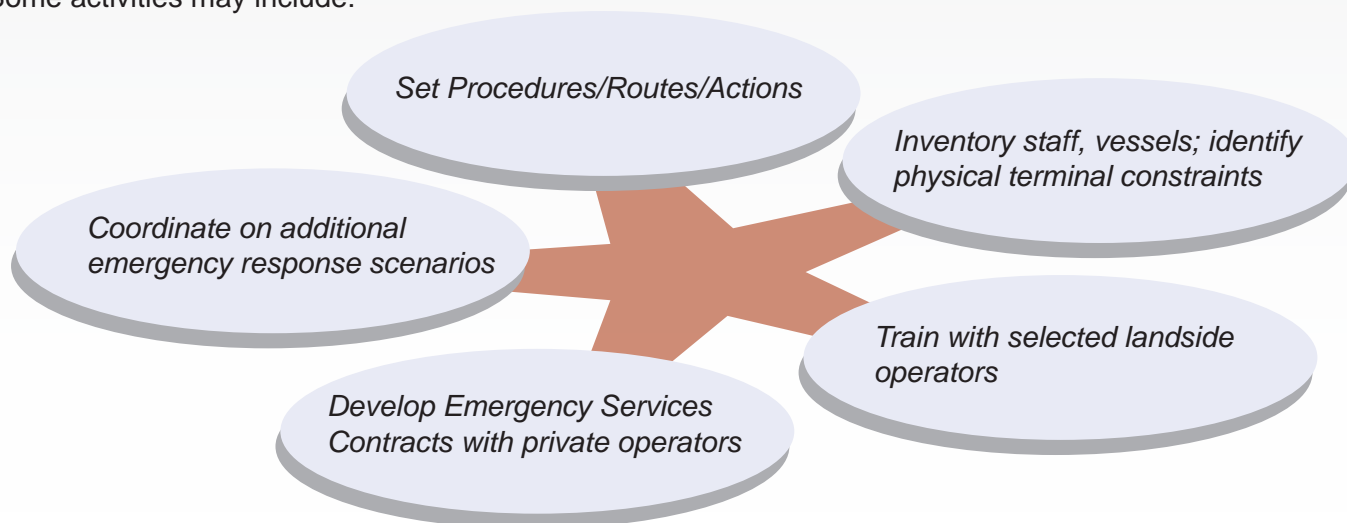


* Requires funding source.

Getting Started: Training on Response Procedures and Emergency Services Contracts

Over the next year WETA will be developing the Water Emergency Transportation System Management Plan (the Plan) required by SB 976. The Plan will include developing Emergency Services Contracts with private ferry operators and agreements with Golden Gate Bridge Highway and Transportation District (the District) to strengthen our coordination efforts. We will also participate in upcoming training exercises with the District and look at ways to integrate disaster response training into the incident response training already underway with existing operators.

In the next several months we will begin working with existing ferry operators to get input on Plan content. Some activities may include:



Stay tuned as these efforts unfold.

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We'd like to hear from you! Please let us know if you have questions, comments or suggestions. Contact Shirley Douglas at douglas@watertransit.org or 415-291-3377, or write to us c/o Water Emergency Transportation Authority, Pier 9, Suite 111, The Embarcadero, San Francisco CA 94111