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Subject: BWTPF EIR scoping comments

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All,

I am the current President of the San Francisco Boardsailing Association (SFBA) that represents the access interests of thousands of board sailors throughout the Bay. I have attended various city planning meetings, Waterfront Commission meetings and a recent BCDC DRB meeting. The South Basin and His Lord Ships have been critical launch sites since the mid '70s. The increase in shoreline access among kayakers, SUPers, open water swimmers and anglers is evident to recreational users throughout the East Bay as we increasingly struggle to find parking at our limited shoreline access points. We have deep concerns about the direction the city has continued to pursue with its shoreline planning and would like to be part of a collaborative effort to address both the challenges and opportunities at the Waterfront Park and marina.

I would like to say that this note is not intended to be an official EIR scoping comment, but rather a recommendation for how we can all move forward to create a model for civic engagement around shoreline development.

The city has an opportunity to shift course, engage current Waterfront Park users and build not only a better shoreline model, but broader support for its efforts. To affect this positive change with the existing community, however, the city must revisit its approach to a number of important issues:

Parking

The SFBA is involved in a number of shoreline development efforts around the bay and we are working with data in other areas that is incredibly detailed and designed to answer the very questions at the heart of the city's planning model. Companies like *placer.ai* are used by municipalities around the country, but particularly in the Bay Area, to understand user behavior in granular detail to inform their planning decisions. Data like this can be used to evaluate how many people are visiting the marina every day, at what times, in which lot they park, how long they stay, what they do while there, where they come from and by what means they arrive. This data can also be used to study existing ferry terminals around the bay to understand if, for instance, it's reasonable to expect a significant portion of riders to commute by bike, how weather affects communicating decisions and how other means of public transport in the area are affected by the introduction of a ferry. The parking study the city is presenting is, by comparison, technically outdated, extremely limited in scope and results in findings that are in dramatic conflict with the lived-experience of everyday users. Engaging *placer.ai* or a similar service will improve public trust by demonstrating that the city is committed to using accurate data-sets that provide historical and present use behavioral analysis.

Existing Use, Demand Baselines and Latent Demand

The use of tools like *placer.ai* will largely address this issue and most likely confirm the common experience of existing users: that regular users face increasing difficulty parking. In addition to creating an accurate account of current demand, however, the city must not only recognize how the current state of neglect has throttled demand, but account for what access would look like if facilities were well-maintained and forecast future demand.

To this end, the case study of Albany Beach is critical if the city wishes to understand local demand for shoreline access in considering its plan for the Waterfront Park. Albany has some key similarities to the Waterfront, but the primary similarity is the degraded state of existing facilities due to a lack of maintenance. The collapse of facilities throughout the Waterfront and marina is painfully obvious: the Berkeley pier, His Lord Ships, various walking trails throughout the park, docks in the marina and now East Dock in the South Basin. These are all totally avoidable outcomes resulting from neglect. The degraded state of facilities at the Waterfront Park and marina has not only damaged the Waterfront's brand in the public's mind but has resulted in lost access for hundreds of regular users. Albany clearly demonstrates what happens when our shoreline facilities are upgraded and maintained: there were only 187 average visitors to Albany beach prior to the bay trail extension (this statistic comes from the EBRPD). We now see the park at capacity nearly every day, throughout the day. By assessing demand at the waterfront while the pier has been closed for ten years, while His Lord Ships has been closed for nearly seven years, while crime has escalated, while the marina is in disrepair and, with the closer of East Dock, while the primary launch in the South Basin for swimmers and boardsport users is closed amounts to using the nadir of use as the baseline. An accurate accounting for demand must account for the damage done by poor facilities management. The Albany case-study, along with historical data available through cell-phone user behaviour analysis, will craft a very different and fact-based narrative about past, present and future demand.

The Albany case-study reveals what we at the SFBA call 'latent demand'--or the strong response we see from the public to improved shoreline access. This dynamic is also evident at the Great Highway in SF--now called Sunset Dunes--where traffic increased 25% **immediately** and is growing rapidly in popularity, despite very minimal upgrades to the environment.

Future demand is also poorly represented in this study and needs to reflect the interplay of how the combinations of improved access, population growth and increasing use of our shoreline parks for climate relief affect demand models. We have seen nothing that reflects this in Berkeley's models.

A critical step in rebuilding public trust is using accurate data available through existing commercial services designed to address the question most central to this project: what is the REAL demand for access at the park and is there enough parking available to

accommodate current and FUTURE public demand while servicing parking demands for a commuter hub?

It's a basic question, and we can answer it.

Equity

The communities that are the heaviest users of our shoreline parks are absent from nearly all design meetings. The city of Berkeley is not unique in its struggles to engage these user groups, however, but claims that the city is doing effective outreach does not resonate with those who regularly use our shoreline parks. People who simply relax on our shorelines are difficult to reach--they have no organization or point of contact and are generally too busy and out-of-the-loop to attend public meetings. But anyone who regularly uses these parks knows how important these spaces are to and how heavily used they are by our underserved communities. A more genuine equity model would prioritize providing ample space for people to relax by the shore and wade and pic-nic at the beach for the day while also returning access to our anglers.

A pier for professionals commuting to work with massive engines churning sediment is not an access model we've heard any angler advocate for. What made the pier unique was the way it extended far into the bay. It was both tranquil and active. It offered a serene, romantic stroll deep over bay waters. It was a completely unique shoreline experience--unique to Berkeley. A massive boat churning sediment as it docks and turns was not part of the allure. No one goes to Jack London Square to fish by the ferry or watch the boat dock.

More importantly, fishing and shoreline respite are magnets for diversity. You see this at Keller beach, Barbara & Jay Vincent, Albany Beach, Crown beach and previously at Toll Plaza/Radio Beach. The SFBA has forged strong community alliances at Treasure Island and Bayview Hunters Point with the communities there that value public access to their shoreline and, through these alliances, we understand that access is not only an important equity issue, it is an *increasingly important* equity issue. And Berkeley is uniquely positioned to elegantly incorporate and address these complex needs. Paid parking, however, or requiring users to obtain permits for use are in clear contrast to genuine equity in access.

Alternative Designs

Placing an appropriately-scaled ferry service inside the existing marina addresses most of the issues that are creating friction. A ferry inside the marina protects the terminal from the massive storm, tidal and wind energy that the seawall and breakwaters are there to defend against (there's a very good reason boats are in a marina with breakwaters and not docked on the pier). A location inside the marina will also benefit the existing commercial interests there, which are already struggling to survive. A ferry that docks at the hotel is more likely to increase demand for and value of rooms there, increase traffic to the restaurant and bar services and activate the marina more than a terminal at the pier will. This location also dovetails with the city's shoreline development

rights and dramatically mitigates the core issue of parking while retaining the historic and unique recreational value of the western boundary of the park.

The Truth About Ferries

While we are not anti-ferry, we are pro-truth. Ferries, while romantic forms of travel, do not scale as mass transportation resources. They don't move many people (running at peak capacity the Berkeley ferry's passengers will fill only 2/3 of the SF Opera House); they require large parking lots; they have not demonstrated a clear ability to create economic lift to surrounding businesses in other local terminals; they are heavily subsidized to support a wealthier ridership and the proposal the city of Berkeley is considering will likely straddle the city with significant maintenance costs. More rigorous and transparent analysis of economic impact would also help bridge the growing gap in public trust.

We urge the city of Berkeley to explore ways to support the Waterfront Park as a park and we are eager to support the city aggressively in its efforts to do so. The city has a unique opportunity to engage an energized base of users and expand access with thoughtful design while complying with the regulatory guidelines governing this land. The city can not only diffuse the tension with existing users of the park but also craft better designs and build broader support by engaging the domain experts who currently use and care for this resource. We hope the city considers a path of collaboration with the community of existing users moving forward.

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