

MEMORANDUM

TO: Board Members

**FROM: Seamus Murphy, Executive Director
Michael Gougherty, Director of Planning
Thomas Hall, Director of Operations & Customer Experience
Alexis Matsui, Manager of Public Information & Marketing
Gabriel Chan, Transportation Planner
Dorry Funaki, Transportation Planner**

SUBJECT: South San Francisco Service Study

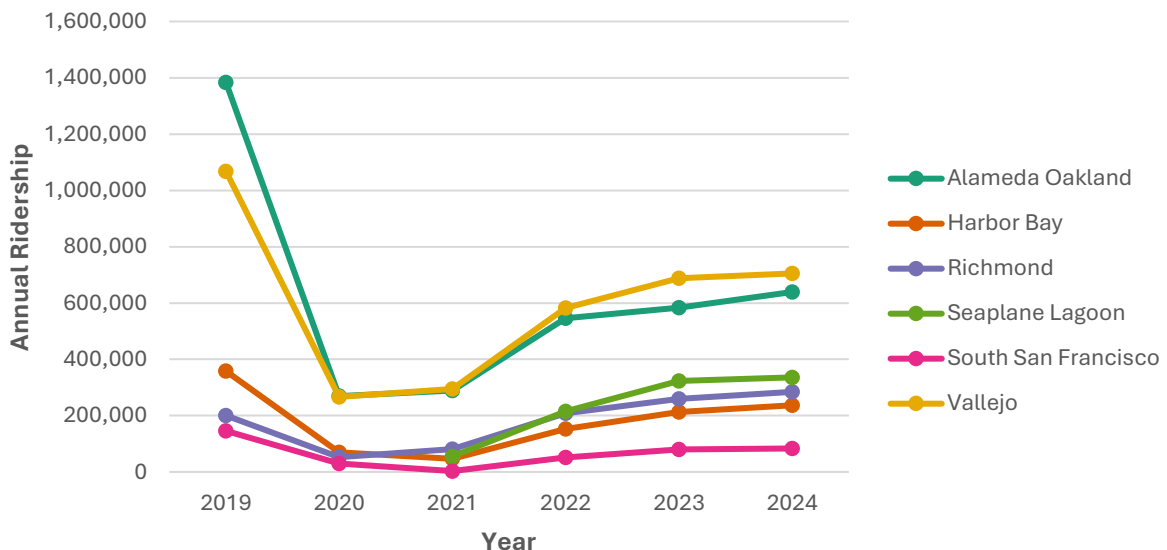
Recommendation

There is no recommendation associated with this informational item.

Background

The proposed South San Francisco Service Study seeks to identify a preferred service and funding plan to ensure the financial feasibility of water transit serving South San Francisco, increase service productivity, and establish a sustainable runway of operating funds. The Study will be undertaken through a collaborative process involving identified Working Group partners and public outreach. The results of the Study may include a potential service change implementation plan to restructure the South San Francisco service.

Since 2019, the South San Francisco service has had the lowest ridership out of all SF Bay Ferry routes accounting for only 4% of the system's ridership.



Declines in revenue and ridership occurred in FY2020 and FY2021 due to the COVID-19 shutdowns. From FY2019 to FY2024 there was a 44% increase in expenses and a 43% decrease in revenues. However, since FY2022, there has been a steady increase in revenues

and ridership with Vallejo and Alameda/Oakland showing stronger recoveries, and South San Francisco showing the weakest recovery. Following the pandemic, the South San Francisco route averages under 15% farebox recovery compared to the current system average of approximately 25%. The route also has the highest cost per rider of \$69, which is over 2.5 times higher than the system average of \$27.

Staff conducted a survey of riders and non-riders to collect information about the South San Francisco route. The survey was hosted online and promoted on SF Bay Ferry's website, promoted on social media, onboard digital screens, and in person on two regular commute trips. Nearly 250 riders and non-riders submitted responses. Key findings included:

- Nearly 60% of respondents ride the ferry to South SF 3-5 times per week
- Nearly 60% drive alone to their starting terminal and would drive alone to South San Francisco if they did not take ferry
- 55% pay their own fares, 45% have their fares covered by their employer
- Nearly 60% said their main reason for taking the ferry is for the relaxing commute
- More than 60% heard about the ferry from word-of-mouth
- More than 80% of those who have not ridden the ferry live more than 10 miles from a terminal

In additional target efforts to increase ridership in recent months, staff developed several avenues of outreach marketing the South San Francisco route. These efforts began with engagement with South San Francisco city staff members, who helped promote the ferry through their newsletter and social media channels. Staff developed social media posts promoting key features of the service, including its price, frequency, reliability and connection to local transit. The city of South San Francisco helped amplify these posts.

Staff also hosted two free lunches in South San Francisco to tour the ferry and learn more about the service. The lunches, held on March 26 and April 1, each had over 50 attendees. Attendees included a mix of employees in the area and local residents, most of whom had heard of the ferry but never taken it. Those attending the lunch were very interested in the current service and potential new options for the route, including a stop in Downtown San Francisco.

Discussion

The South San Francisco Service Study will incorporate a robust stakeholder and public process to identify and recommend a service restructuring to ensure the financial sustainability of the service. Staff will form a Working Group comprising local government staff, business leaders, and community organizations to assist in the development and identification of a preferred option for the South San Francisco service restructuring. Over the next six to nine months, the Working Group will meet four times with the option of additional meetings if needed. The Working Group meetings will involve analysis of various service alternatives as well as feedback from members. In addition, staff will conduct an open house both in-person and online to inform the Working Group's process and to gather the public's feedback on the potential service options. This process will culminate in the development of a draft report and potential recommendations that will be presented to the Board of Directors by the end of 2025. See below for a timeline of the service study.

- **May 2025:** WETA Board Informational Item
- **June 2025:** Working Group Meeting #1

- Introduction, Purpose, Need
- **July 2025:** Working Group Meeting #2
 - Service options and preliminary alternatives analysis
- **Aug. 2025:** Public Open House and Online Public Outreach
- **Sept. 2025:** Working Group Meeting #3
 - Analysis and discussion of public feedback
 - Identification of preferred options
- **Oct. 2025:** Working Group Meeting #4
 - Working group final recommendation
- **Nov. 2025:** Draft SSF Service Study
- **Jan 2026:** Final SSF Service Study

Any potential recommendation that would constitute a Major Service change per SF Bay Ferry's Administrative Code would be subject to a separate public outreach and Public Hearing process.

Fiscal Impact

No fiscal impact is associated with this informational item.

END