



January 8, 2021

Mayor Diane Howard
Council Members
City Council, Redwood City
Via email: council@redwoodcity.org

RE: Council Meeting Agenda Item 8.B Accept Redwood City Ferry Financial Feasibility Study and Cost-Benefit & Economic Impact Analyses, January 11, 2021

Dear Mayor Howard and Council Members,

Redwood City Neighbors United, Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter, Green Foothills and Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge have reviewed the *Redwood City Ferry Financial Feasibility Study*. Our organizations are not opposed to the proposed ferry terminal, but we have serious concerns about specific language in the Economic Impacts section of the Study related to building “Transit-Oriented Development” in the vicinity of the ferry.

The Ferry Feasibility Study concluded that the terminal is economically feasible based on in-commute ridership to the existing large employers in the area, and the commercial businesses and offices in Redwood City’s Downtown district. Ferry riders would be transported the “last mile” using shuttles to Downtown and nearby workplaces.

Although clearly not essential for the economic viability of the ferry, the Study advocates for “proactive planning efforts and strategic land use designations” to “incentivize” Transit-Oriented Development within walking distance of the new ferry terminal. The Study references a current Metropolitan Transportation Commission policy (MTC Resolution 3434 Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Policy for Regional Transit Expansion Projects) that requires a minimum of 750 housing units within a half-mile of a ferry terminal in order to qualify for certain sources of transit expansion funding. The Study also suggests that the *Redwood City Housing Element Update* could be used as a planning initiative to increase development in the terminal area.

Our City’s current General Plan Land Use and Zoning designations preclude residential development in this area to avoid potential land use conflicts from placing housing next to the Port and Port-related industries, and to protect Open Space lands. When the Port Commissioners accepted the Ferry Feasibility Study on December 9th, Port Executive Director Kristine Zortman stated, “I think the Port has always taken the position that we are cognizant of incompatible land uses, and we are opposed to housing in adjacent areas to the Port.”

The consultant's TOD recommendation in the Study is inappropriate for the ferry terminal location in Redwood City. Since Council determines land use and zoning for our city, Council should assure residents that the ferry terminal is not going to be a driver for irresponsible growth that would compromise the viability of the Port and allow for the placement of homes in an isolated location vulnerable to flooding from sea level rise.

We contacted MTC to obtain more information on the TOD Policy, and were told that the Commission can approve an exception to the policy for specific transit terminal locations where TOD would be infeasible or inappropriate, providing it has been shown that strong ridership will make the proposed terminal financially feasible.

For all of the reasons outlined above, **we respectfully request that the council Motion to accept the Study also include direction for staff to send correspondence to WETA**, informing the agency that:

- 1) TOD is incompatible with the City's current land use and zoning put in place to protect the adjacent Port and heavy industries, and the City has no intention of changing current land use and zoning to allow housing near the terminal;
- 2) TOD in the vicinity of the ferry terminal is not necessary for the economic viability of the ferry, because the Ferry Financial Feasibility Study determined that ridership will be strong based on workers commuting to the area's large employers and to businesses in Downtown Redwood City, and Redwood City's commitment to an efficient "last mile" shuttle system; and
- 3) The City will work with WETA to secure MTC approval of an exemption to the TOD Policy to ensure that the Redwood City Terminal can be considered for regional and other transit expansion funding.

By accepting the findings of the feasibility study, Council will be advancing the ferry project on to the next step in the planning process - the required Business Plan. The City must ensure that the Business Plan does not include any projected fare box revenues or funding sources for capital expenditures that are associated with having TOD in the terminal area, or any requirement that Redwood City change General Plan Land Use and Zoning.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns.

Best regards,

Gail Raabe
Board Member, Redwood City Neighbors United
Co-Chair, Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge

Susan Lessin, Environmental Legislative Action Committee
Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter

Alice Kaufman, Legislative Advocacy Director
Green Foothills