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## New Richmond ferry gets rousing welcome

January 10, 2019



Passengers board the ferry via the new Richmond terminal during the launch party and ribbon-cutting ceremony on Thursday, Jan. 10, 2019.

The excitement on the Richmond waterfront Thursday was palpable, as hundreds gathered to celebrate the launch of brand new ferry service to downtown San Francisco.

The first ferry left at 6:10 a.m. from the new \$20 million terminal located next to The Craneway Pavilion at 1414 Harbour Way South. The ferry continued on

to the San Francisco Ferry Building, a roughly 35-minute trip that was depicted in a flurry of photographs and video posted to social media. Richmond Mayor Tom Butt, credited as one of the ferry terminal's champions, filmed what he called a smooth ride on a beautiful morning.

"This is the first time in 61 years that we have sustainable ferry service back in Richmond," Contra Costa County Supervisor John Gioia said. "It's really a great day."

To start, San Francisco Bay Ferry Service is making four runs from Richmond to San Francisco during morning commute hours, and four runs from San Francisco to Richmond in the evening commute hours. High demand could expand service in the future, officials said.



Richmond Mayor Tom Butt holds the scissors as fellow elected officials await the ribbon cutting event for the Richmond Ferry Terminal on Thursday, Jan. 10, 2019

The ferries are launching from a terminal that features a new ADA-compliant gangway and ramping system, passenger shelter, 362 spaces of free parking and a new ADA-compliant kayak launch ramp.

The adult cash fare for the ferry is \$9, with Clipper Card users receiving a discounted adult fare of \$6.75. For disabled, youth and seniors it is \$4.50.

Elected officials lauded the ferry as one of many solutions needed to address excessive traffic along the Interstate Highway 80 corridor.

Assemblymember Buffy Wicks said it recently took her 90 minutes during rush hour to drive from South Berkeley to Hercules.

“When people are out on the water, they are not on Interstate 80,” Wicks said. “We need an all-the-above approach when it comes to our transportation needs.”

More than the highways, local officials view ferry service as economically game-changing for Richmond’s waterfront. As plans for the new terminal were taking shape, a flurry of new housing and businesses popped up in the area, including breweries, restaurants and coffee shops. With help from Rosie the Riveter/WWII Home Front National Historical Park, including its popular Visitors Center, as well as an expanded Bay Trail, officials say more people, and economic activity, are coming to the Richmond waterfront.

The Richmond High School Marching Band performed at the Richmond Ferry launch party and ribbon-cutting ceremony on Thursday, Jan. 10, 2019.

“We hope we can contribute to the vibrant economic environment here in Richmond,” said Jody Breckenridge, chair of the Water Emergency Transportation Authority, which operates San Francisco Bay Ferry. “We hope to get more people to come into Richmond and see the history, to do the beautiful walk along the waterway, and see the tributes to the [WWII-era] shipyard workers who made such a big difference in this country.”

The ferry terminal project was funded through various sources, including state Proposition 1B, U.S. Department of Transportation funds, and \$12 million in Regional Measure 2 bridge toll revenue. Operating costs for the next 10 years will come from both fare revenue as well as Contra Costa County Measure J funds.

So far, reviews of the new ferry service have been positive. Cesar Zepeda, president of the Hilltop District Neighborhood Council, called his ride clean, safe, and relaxing. Others echoed Mayor Butt's sentiment, saying their ferry trip provided a front-row seat to a stunning sun rise.