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## Lee Shore Hazard at the Proposed Berkeley Ferry Dock

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**To** BCDC Public Comment <publiccomment@bcdca.gov>

 2 attachments (864 KB)

Lee Shore Hazard at the Proposed Berkeley Ferry Dock.pdf; Harbor Safety Committee reports of Loss of Propulsion Jan and Feb 2025 (2).pdf;

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The proposed location of Berkeley's WETA Ferry Dock is in a normally very windy area where a loss of control or propulsion could result in a ferry running aground or hitting the Skates restaurant.

On 05 May 2025 I submitted an earlier draft of these documents for the EIR scoping. I do still think that the EIR must consider the issues raised here.

Gordon Stout

## Lee Shore Hazard at the Proposed Berkeley Ferry Dock



On November 23, 2018 a Golden Gate Ferry rammed a dock at the San Francisco Ferry building, check out the bow damage in the picture above and this [video](#). Fortunately, there were no serious injuries and damage was relatively minor. The [cause](#) of the accident appears to have been the captain's unfamiliarity with a recently upgraded control system.

Consider the possibility of a loss of control incident occurring in a ferry approaching the dock proposed for the Berkeley WETA ferry (see below). An inbound ferry will normally arrive downwind roughly along the “Ferry Approach” arrow, then make a 180° turn in the “Ferry Turning Basin” so the ferry ends up pointed upwind when it arrives at the dock. The summer afternoon winds are often well above 20 mph, the chop is significant, and most of the marina’s boat traffic leaves and arrives through this area. The 180° turn and docking will be demanding even with perfectly functioning equipment.



FINAL\_Ferry Terminal Facility Feasibility Study - Berkeley Municipal Pier

See Page 34 (arrows added)

Zoomed-in image showing Dorado-sized (~300 passenger) ferry halfway through a 180° turn.



This is a very tight situation in which to suffer a control or propulsion loss. The inshore end of the ferry’s dock is only 200 feet upwind of the rocky shore, and a 20- or 25-mph wind would soon push a disabled ferry downwind onto the rocks or the Skates restaurant. Skates is built on

tall, slender pilings (see next page) and might not survive wind and waves pushing a 135-foot-long ferry against and perhaps underneath it. Injuries and damage in such an accident would be very likely.

Information with some bearing on how likely a control loss event might be:

1. The meeting minutes of the Harbor Safety Committee of the San Francisco Bay Region for January and February 2025 described seven instances of loss of propulsion or steering in passenger vessels on the Bay. (see Harbor Safety Committee Reports of Loss of Propulsion Jan and Feb 2025.pdf, attached with this document).
2. Hyundai, Kia, and Genesis are [recalling](#) over 146,000 electric vehicles because a faulty part may cause them to lose power while driving. What will be the reliability of the new WETA electric ferries?
3. After the Baltimore bridge collapse caused by a power loss in a big container ship, [USA Today](#) summarized US Coast Guard data showing that at least 6,000 times in the past 22 years – an average of more than five times a week – crews on board large cargo ships, oil tankers, container barges and even cruise vessels have reported what befell the Dali, a loss of propulsion and/or steering.

Docking Maneuvers:

- The ferry battery will be at a low state of charge when the ferry arrives at Berkeley, which may exacerbate some system failure modes.
- To the extent that the docking maneuvers involve dramatic steering or propulsion inputs, they may stress the control system and cause an incipient control failure to manifest as a hard failure during the docking.
- The 180° turn requires the skipper to shift attention from starboard to port, which adds to the skipper's workload. A Dorado's beam is 34.5 feet.
- If the final approach requires the ferry to drop backwards into position, the helmsman must look backwards to the dock, again adding to workload.
- Marina traffic needs to use the South entrance when the tide is low, and even if the ferry has the right of way, someone aboard will need to watch for approaching vessels. Boats leaving the marina will not be visible until they are close to the turning basin.
- If the loss of control occurs before the ferry slows for the 180° turn, the ferry's downwind speed will greatly reduce the available time to respond.

Anchoring:

The best response to a loss of control event would probably be to drop an anchor, though better solutions might be found. An anchor would need to be dropped very quickly or the ferry will not stop before it hits the restaurant or shore.

- What kind of anchor should be used, and how much scope will the anchor need?
- Will the anchor be dropped off the stern or bow? There might need to be two protocols, one for a loss of control (LOC) event before the 180° turn and another for a (LOC) after the turn.
- Will the seabed be free of debris that might keep the anchor from biting into the mud?

- Is there anything on the underside of the ferry (e.g. rudder, skeg, propellor) that the anchor line could foul?
- Will additional crew be needed to deploy the anchor quickly?
- When the anchor line comes tight, is there potential for injury to people near it, on the ferry or the docking float?

The approach of the ferry to the dock and the dropping of the anchor would need carefully thought-out protocols, which ferry personnel would need to be well-trained to execute rapidly if a loss of control event occurs.

In my opinion, the dock should be positioned in a less exposed site, for example inside the Marina or in a purpose-designed facility on the Golden Gate Fields shoreline.

This is a matter that should be carefully considered in the ferry project EIR.

**Skates Restaurant**      Would Skates survive being hit by a 135-foot, 169-ton ferry?



## Harbor Safety Committee Reports of Loss of Propulsion Jan and Feb 2025

G. Stout 1/30/2026

What will be the reliability of the WETA electric ferry? We don't have data—perhaps referring to experience with other ferries on the bay may give some insight. Check out the HSC minutes, [Marine Exchange of the San Francisco Bay Region](#)

**Draft Minutes Harbor Safety Committee of the San Francisco Bay Region February 13, 2025**  
[https://www.sfmex.org/wp-content/uploads/2025-02\\_HSCMinutes\\_DRAFT.pdf](https://www.sfmex.org/wp-content/uploads/2025-02_HSCMinutes_DRAFT.pdf)

### **Total of 29 entries, the four below were LOP for passenger vessels**

Loss of Propulsion (17DEC2024): A U.S. flag passenger vessel experienced a Loss of Propulsion on the port engine. Vessel moored safely at San Francisco Gate B and received permission for a one-time transit from San Francisco to Larkspur for repairs. Coast Guard issued the vessel an Operational Control, rectify Prior to Carriage of Passengers (Code 701). On 07JAN2025, vessel operator reported the root cause of the loss of propulsion as a failed fuel injector. On 21JAN2025, Coast Guard received a report that the vessel propulsion system operated as intended following satisfactory sea trials. Deficiency Cleared. Case pends.

Loss of Propulsion (23DEC2024): A U.S. flag passenger vessel experienced a reduction in propulsion on the starboard engine due to a low fuel oil pressure alarm. Vessel received permission from the Coast Guard for one time transit to Alameda facility to identify root cause, provide tech report, and conduct sea trials. Coast Guard issued an Operational Control, rectify Prior to Carriage of Passengers (Code 701). On 01JAN2025, Coast Guard received an email outlining the root cause of the reduction in propulsion to be from an issue with the ECU connecting to the starboard main engine. Vessel replaced the ECU and completed satisfactory sea trials. Operational Control Cleared. Case Pends.

Loss of Propulsion (27DEC2024): A U.S. flag passenger vessel experienced an engine stall while transiting in the San Francisco Bay. Vessel returned to Pier 3 in Alameda and determined the engine stall occurred due to a leaky fuel fitting. Vessel crew also found a loose connection at a fuel hardline which caused air intrusion into the fuel system. Coast Guard issued an operational control, rectify Prior to Carriage of Passengers (Code 701). Crew repaired the faulty connection and engine reached full RPM during satisfactory sea trials. Operational Control Cleared. Case Pends.

Operational Control (23DEC2024): A U.S. flag passenger vessel received an operational control, rectify Prior to Carriage of Passengers (Code 701). Vessel reported loss of throttle control to port and starboard propulsion drives while mooring at Pier 41. On 26DEC2024, operator submitted a tech report that no abnormalities were found, sea trials conducted satisfactorily, and all systems operational. Operational Control Cleared. On 27DEC2024, during transit, the vessel experienced loss of throttle control to the port and starboard propulsion drives. Vessel moored at Pier 41. Coast Guard issued an operational control, rectify Prior to Carriage of Passengers (Code 701). Vessel received authorization for one-time transit to Pier 9 for maintenance and repairs. On 10JAN2025, the vessel conducted sea trials. While underway the operator completed several propulsion tests, including full ahead followed by full astern. On 14JAN2025, technicians reported that the throttles were calibrated to disable themselves until RPMs reduced below 70 when going from ahead to astern. Vessel installed new throttle controls. Operational control Cleared. Case Closed.

## Harbor Safety Committee Reports of Loss of Propulsion Jan and Feb 2025

G. Stout 1/30/2026

Draft Minutes Harbor Safety Committee of the San Francisco Bay Region January 9, 2024

[https://www.sfmex.org/wp-content/uploads/2025-01\\_HSCMinutes\\_DRAFT.pdf](https://www.sfmex.org/wp-content/uploads/2025-01_HSCMinutes_DRAFT.pdf)

**Total of 19 entries, the three below were LOP for passenger vessels**

Loss of Propulsion (10NOV2024): A U.S. flag passenger vessel experienced a loss of propulsion on their STBD engine due to loss of propeller while transiting to Richmond. The vessel returned to the pier and offloaded all passengers. Coast Guard issued the vessel an operational control (Code 60, Prior to Movement), with a one-time transit to Alameda for drydock. At drydock damage was found to have occurred to the strut, shaft, rudder, and cutless (sic) bearing. On 17NOV2024, Coast Guard attended vessel for sea trials, sea trials conducted satisfactorily. Operational Control Cleared. Case Closed.

Loss of Steering (22NOV2024): A U.S. flag passenger vessel experienced a loss of steering; vessel operator reported issues with the STBD steering system while underway, with alternate jet propulsion available. Vessel returned to the pier. Coast Guard issued an operational control (Code 701, Prior to Carriage of Passengers). On 24NOV2024, vessel operator submitted tech report attesting to satisfactory repairs. Vessel conducted satisfactory sea trial. Operational Control Cleared. Case Pends.

Operational Control (02NOV2024): A U.S. flag passenger vessel was issued an Operational Control (Code 70, Prior to Carriage of Passengers). While departing the pier, the vessel lost power from one of two generators, reducing propulsion to approximately 66% power. Vessel safely moored and was issued the operational control. On 03NOV2024, operator notified Coast Guard that the issue had been resolved. Identified a failure of two electrical relays that send the key switch signal to the control system. Both relays were replaced, and sea trials conducted. Coast Guard received satisfactory tech report. Operational Control Cleared. Case Closed.