



METROPOLITAN
TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION



Supplemental Fact Sheet - Ferry Building Flap Sign

Contacts:

John Goodwin 510.817.5862 (office), 510.384.7291 (cell)
Brenda Kahn 510.817.5773 (office), 510.207.4294 (cell)

Purpose:

- The flap sign shows departure times at-a-glance for the ferry routes to Vallejo, Alameda, Oakland, Larkspur, Sausalito, Tiburon, and Angel Island, operated by Golden Gate Transit, San Francisco Bay Ferry, and Blue and Gold Ferry. Although historically styled, the flap sign is embedded with a high-tech processor that displays departure times from MTC's 511 database.
- The new sign offers thousands of daily ferry passengers the ability to determine if they should rush to catch their ride or if they have more time to shop or eat in the Ferry Building — an important and iconic Bay Area transportation hub.
- The flap sign is a joint project of MTC, 511, the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, the Port of San Francisco, and Equity Office Properties, the Ferry Building's property management firm.

History:

- Flap signs, aka split-flap displays, are signs or display layouts that provide alpha-numeric information on rotating flaps. The displays have had widespread use throughout the world in transit stations and airports. A prelude to digital displays and monitors, flap signs have provided departure and arrival information in transportation hubs since the 1940s.
- Flap signs are still used today at several U.S. railway stations, including Philadelphia, Newark and Providence, and in airports around the globe, including Paris, Melbourne, Frankfurt, Singapore and Milan. See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Split-flap_display
- Symbols and characters are painted on flaps, and the flaps are rotated to display a specific piece of information, e.g., train departing times and destinations.
- The new sign is designed to honor and harmonize with the classic aesthetics of the San Francisco Ferry Building, known for its Beaux Arts architecture, food purveyors and scenic location.

Manufacturing, Operation and Dimensions:

- The company that manufactured the sign is Solari di Udine located in Udine, Italy. Solari di Udine is world renowned as a flap sign maker, has been manufacturing flap signs since the 1940s and is the only company currently manufacturing split-flap displays. More information about Solari di

Udine is available at: www.solari.it/eng/solari_usa/solari_usa.html.

- 511's ferry schedule data is fed to the sign's embedded central processing unit (CPU) via the Internet and the mechanical flaps rotate automatically to reflect the appropriate information. Symbols and characters are painted on flaps, and the flaps are rotated to display a specific piece of information, e.g., ferry departing times and destinations.
- The flap sign housed in the San Francisco Ferry Building took approximately six months to manufacture and assemble, and was transported to the Bay Area via airfreight.
- Dimensions: The metal flap sign is eight feet wide by five feet high and weighs 700 pounds.

Design and Location:

- This distinctive sign harkens back to the glory days of travel, when similar signs were located in famous transit stations throughout the world, including Grand Central Station in New York.
- The flap sign is located in the Great Nave of the Ferry Building, slightly east of the clock tower court. The display will face west to greet visitors in the main flow of pedestrian traffic heading to ferry departure locations. Travelers can determine at a glance when their ferry is departing.
- The Ferry Building serves approximately 11,000 people daily.
- This is one of two known flap signs in the Bay Area. The other flap sign is located in a San Francisco restaurant.

About the Regional Hub Signage Program

- The new flap sign is part of MTC's 511 Traveler Information Program and MTC's Hub Signage Program, which is improving transit signage, maps and schedule information in and around 24 Bay Area transit hubs to make navigating easier for transit customers and to complement information available on the phone, the web and with a smartphone app.

About 511:

511 is a one-stop phone and web source for up-to-the-minute Bay Area traffic, transit, rideshare, bicycling and parking information. It's free of charge and available 24 hours a day, seven days a week from anywhere in the nine-county Bay Area. Call 511 or visit 511.org. 511 is led by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission in partnership with the California Highway Patrol, the California Department of Transportation and Bay Area transit agencies.

About MTC:

MTC is the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area's transportation planning, coordinating and financing agency.

###