BAY AREA AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS

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Wind assisted ferry demonstration project cruises the bay

Using advanced technology to reduce air pollution and fuel usage

SAN FRANCISCO – Since February 1, Bay Area residents may have noticed an unusual vessel plying the waters of San Francisco Bay. A catamaran boat outfitted with a 40 foot tall rigid WingSail has been sailing Bay Area ferry routes to test the novel idea of using wind assistance to help propel ferry vessels of the future – reducing fuel use and air pollution.

"The concept of this project is similar to hybrid vehicles that are now so common on Bay Area Roads," said Jack Broadbent, executive officer of the Bay Area Air District. "Using wind assistance to supplement engine power could produce dramatic reductions in fuel use, air pollution and greenhouse gases while continuing to provide safe, reliable service."

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District, working with the California Air Resources Board, Wind + Wing Technologies and other partners, have secured $355,000 in funding to test the idea of harnessing the Bay's seasonally-reliable winds. The WingSail was designed by Richard Jenkins, CEO and co-founder of the Saildrone project.

Sail design and technology have changed dramatically in recent years as evidenced by last year's Americas Cup race. The WingSail is a different and altogether safer design for non-racing boats. The Saildrone is powered by a solid, freely rotating wing that is controlled by a tail, which by its very nature is always correctly angled into the wind. It combines state-of-the-art carbon fiber composites, computer control and ultra-efficient wind dynamics to produce dramatic advances in safety and efficiency.

The concept of this project is to use wind assistance together with conventional engine propulsion to reduce fuel use and air pollution. An engineering study concluded that WingSail technology could cut fuel costs on retrofitted ferries by 30 to 40 percent annually. Over the life of a ferry air pollution reduction estimates could be as high as 95 tons with reductions of 50,000 tons of greenhouse gases.

The three month study ends in April, and the data which has been gathered during this time will be analyzed by the UC Berkeley Transportation Sustainability Research Center. A draft report of the findings will be issued by mid-year.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District (www.baaqmd.gov) is the regional agency responsible for protecting air quality in the Bay Area.

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