



# SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

## San Francisco Railyard Alternatives and I-280 Boulevard Feasibility Study (RAB) Citizen Working Group (CWG) – Meeting #4 Summary Notes

1650 Mission St.  
Suite 400  
San Francisco,  
CA 94103-2479

**MEETING DATE:** Tuesday, December 6, 2016  
**MEETING TIME:** 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm  
**VENUE:** Old Fire Station 30 Community Room, 1275 Third Street

Reception:  
**415.558.6378**

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### ATTENDEES:

**Members:** Ron Miguel (Chair), Brian Shaw, Bruce Agid, Corinne Woods, Dan Murphy, David Brentlinger, Devanshu Patel, Howard Strassner, J.R. Eppler, Jackson Fahnestock, James Haas, Jennifer Stein, Nathan Mee, Ratna Amin, Rick Hall, and Ted Olsson

**Citizens:** Roland LeBrun, Justin Sacco, Nazar Elwazir, Jim Patrick, T. Nemeth

**Study Team:** John Rahaim, Director Planning Department; Susan Gygi, RAB Study Manager; Joe Speaks, CH2M PM; Alia Al-Sharif, Sarita Williams and Lisbet Sunshine from Barbary Coast Consulting; and Marsha Maloof from Al Williams Consultancy

**Makeup Session CWG Attendees** (held on Monday, December 12): Adina Levin, Tammy Chan and Tina Chang; Sophie Maxwell will receive a briefing by phone

### MEETING PURPOSE: RAB STUDY CONTINUED DEEP DIVE AND REVIEW METRIC MATRIX OF OPTIONS

### SUMMARY: INCLUDING QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS FROM THE MEETING

John Rahaim started the meeting by thanking everyone for coming. He expressed his appreciation for the work being done at this meeting, noting that it will inform the upcoming public meeting. Ron Miguel walked the group through the packet of handouts. He highlighted the 17-page Document Library, noting that the group should contact Susan Gygi if they are interested in reviewing any of the documents listed. Next, he reviewed the meeting agenda and stressed the importance of the upcoming discussion on the tradeoffs for components and options.

### A LOOK AT GRADE SEPARATION

Susan Gygi, Study Manager, guided the CWG members through a prepared PowerPoint presentation. She started by giving an overview of grade separation. She explained that the alignment component of the study asks the question, “How should we get the rail from the CCSF line into the Transbay Transit Center (TTC)?” She reminded the CWG members that the study considers three options. The first option (Baseline Alignment) includes the environmentally cleared Downtown Rail Extension (DTX). She noted that to truly consider the DTX, the study must consider the train’s impact on the at grade crossings with the streets south of the DTX – 16<sup>th</sup> Street and Mission Bay Drive.

Ms. Gygi noted that the number of trains using the corridor and the amount of time the gates would be down as the trains are going by (10 trains in each direction per peak hour at 60 – 100 seconds per down time) equates to almost half of the peak hour being closed to traffic at the intersection (refer to slide 8). She noted that 16<sup>th</sup> Street serves a significant amount of vehicles (cars, buses and bikes), is the major connection point between Mission Bay and the west side of the city, and is an ambulance route to the UCSF hospital.

Ms. Gygi communicated that to accommodate the number of trains that will be utilizing the corridor, the City would need to grade separate the intersection of 16<sup>th</sup> Street/Mississippi/7<sup>th</sup> Street, and Mission Bay Drive/7<sup>th</sup> Street. Ms. Gygi noted that the Pennsylvania Avenue Alignment and the Mission Bay Alignment both move all rail tracks underground to eliminate the rail conflict.

Ms. Gygi presented graphics to help the CWG members visualize the scale and potential impact of these grade separations. She noted that the City has looked at the alignment options independently (refer to slide 10). With

input from the Department of Public Works (DWP) and the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA), the City has determined that 16<sup>th</sup> Street would be more difficult to grade separate because the buildings along the street require “fire-life-safety” considerations. She noted that this requirement includes two access points to and from each building within a certain distance and time. Ms. Gygi referred to the specifics outlined on slide 9 (and visuals on slide 11) and highlighted that grade-separating these two intersections creates another barrier within the city, making it more difficult for people to get to and through the area.

In considering the Mission Bay Drive grade separation (referring to slide 10), the graphic indicated that grade separation would have to start before Townsend Street in order to get under the tracks and back up at Hubbel Street, going underground for approximately ¼ mile. With the fire-life-safety requirement, this makes for an elaborate piece of construction.

One CWG member asked about the viability of electric buses continuing on 16<sup>th</sup> Street. Ms. Gygi responded, noting that the depth would be sufficient to accommodate the necessary overhead wires for continued electric bus operations.

Another CWG member asked whether this work was considered in the current High Speed Rail (HSR) EIR/EIS. Ms. Gygi noted that HSR will share the same tracks with Caltrain. HSR project limits include Blended Service considerations. She continued by noting that a grade-separation is not in their plan; however, HSR is willing to work with local jurisdictions as they decide what to do. She noted that there are over forty at-grade intersections between San Jose and San Francisco along the Caltrain corridor – two of which are in San Francisco.

Ms. Gygi further clarified that Caltrain has an EIS/R for electrification of the tracks (2016) and TJPA is currently updating their Downtown Rail Extension (DTX) supplemental EIS/R. These grade separations at 16<sup>th</sup> Street and Mission Bay Drive are not included in the scope of any of the current EIS/R studies.

One CWG member asked Ms. Gygi if closing 16<sup>th</sup> Street, extending 7<sup>th</sup> to Pennsylvania, and using the Mariposa crossing is an option. Ms. Gygi explained that there were a lot of ways to evaluate the area. The RAB study team, working with City departments and regional agencies, focused on one possible way to understand the potential impacts and provide rough cost estimates. She explained that the analysis presented is the first attempt at considering what the concept of grade separation would require. Should the idea of grade separation continue to be considered, the City and the rail operating partners will look more closely at a variety of options.

One CWG member commented that it would be good for the engineering minds to open up to how we can have an enhanced grade separation. They continued by suggested the engineering team consider something like putting a “lid” on the grade separation to provide a park that could serve as fire access, while providing public amenities, and lessening the impacts of grade separation. Ms. Gygi stressed that we can have those conversations, but with the realization that additions will increase costs. She said that as we get more information, we have more considerations to take into account.

In this initial exploration of grade separation and specific to Mission Bay Drive/7<sup>th</sup> Street, King, Berry and Townsend streets are shown to be cul-de-sac'd due to gravity driven utility conflicts. Ms. Gygi noted that the City would not actually want to cul-de-sac any streets, but providing through access would necessarily increase costs. Joe Speaks added that this is just a first cut at what trenching might require. Ron Miguel underscored that we are discussing options and trade-offs, not specific proposals.

It was noted during the discussion that when CHSRA originally identified potential renderings of grade separations in San Francisco in 2010, many of the buildings in the area did not exist. Since then, hundreds of millions of dollars have been invested into buildings surrounding both of these intersections and cutting them off would devalue these investments. How would this loss of access be quantified? Ms. Gygi explained that this is a challenge that we may not be able to answer in the RAB study, but that it should be studied to fully understand the impacts to the area if the Baseline alignment moves forward. Ms. Gygi reiterated that it is imperative to remember that the costs of any project are not just the construction costs, but associated costs such as property value, social impact, etc.

A member offered this perspective: we have other major intersections in San Francisco that are closed 50% of the time to directional traffic, such as where Geary crosses Park Presidio, so maybe this shouldn't be a criterion

in the design factor. It seems that when cars impede cars this it is more acceptable than when trains impede cars. They emphasized that traffic impedes each other constantly.

Ms. Gygi responded that the comment is correct – every intersection provides for certain closure of directional traffic. At the specific at-grade intersections under the Baseline alignment options, the City would be prioritizing trains over any other mode. Prioritization will continue to affect more and more people (in all modes) as more trains are utilizing the corridor.

A member asked why these grade separations aren't included in the HSR EIS/R. Ms. Gygi noted that CHSRA is only looking at the Blended Service Operations along the Caltrain tracks. HSR legally does not have to automatically grade separate below certain speeds. Grade separation is being considered under the RAB study as part of the Baseline alignment option because of the need to provide life-safety access at 16<sup>th</sup> Street, to address safety concerns at these at-grade crossings, and to provide needed mobility through the area for all modes.

Ms. Gygi, referring to slide 13, said that a grade separation at 7<sup>th</sup>/Mission Bay shows an existing gravity outfall at 28 feet below the surface into Mission Creek. She then explained that the road would need to be below this outfall, resulting in an intersection located approximately 50 feet below where it is now. We would also need to depress Berry Street to maintain access and would be working in areas that already have a very high water table. There are flooding concerns to be addressed even without rainfall. Ms. Gygi concluded that due to this depth, the impact area would be north of Townsend Street on 7<sup>th</sup> Street impacting access to Townsend, King, and other streets in the area.

Ms. Gygi reminded the group that retaining access to certain streets (e.g., Townsend, King) would require additional money and design to fully understand the impacts and costs. What is presented in the meeting is a first cut due to the need for information with limited time and data.

One person commented that this grade separating does the opposite of “knitting” the City back together, it deepens the divide. There was consensus from the group that since many of the existing plans are over 15 years old, the conditions have changed and the results are questionable. It is imperative for the City as a whole to flesh out these options, their impacts, and costs, so a full understanding of options and impacts are known.

John Rahaim reminded the group that the current plan is to put the tracks at-grade. He furthered the discussion by saying that if we don't want trains to cross streets or cause traffic delays, the question is: do we put the train under the cars or the cars under the train?

Another suggestion was offered from a member of the public: close the intersections in question and divert traffic around. Ms. Gygi responded that cutting off streets is never a good idea. John Rahaim denoted that closing 16<sup>th</sup> Street to future use is not something he could imagine the City would consider doing given the lack of alternatives in the area and the importance of 16<sup>th</sup> Street to many modes. Ron Miguel reminded the group to keep in mind that we are planning for the next 100 years and that other projects in the pipeline will cause our City to be massively different.

## **TECHNICAL FEASIBILITY AND OPPORTUNITIES**

Susan Gygi stated that the study team has assessed the technical feasibility and opportunities associated with the five study components and options. The study team has prepared an options matrix to help the group understand the potential tradeoffs between individual options and components. The RAB Decision Criteria Matrix includes the study components and grouped metrics/goals for feasibility, as well as metrics/goals that the CWG members and public have stated are important to consider. The study team highlighted in yellow the columns that may offer the biggest delineation of differences between the options and would be most important for the community, agency representatives, and elected. Ms. Gygi walked the CWG members through the matrix–metric by metric–using the Rail Alignments as an example. She noted that cost estimates will be provided at the next meeting.

What follows are the comments and questions expressed by CWG members in response to the RAB Decision Criteria Matrix and associated responses:

- There was a question about the South Railyard options, why are they not shown on the plans? Ms. Gygi responded that the City does not currently own all of the land in either option. When questioned about

individual location, she confirmed that one is inside the City and one is outside the City, and that they both fall within the 10-minute requirement from 4<sup>th</sup>/King Railyard. She noted that additional coordination with Caltrain and potentially CHSRA is needed for either location, and we would be able to share the location(s) when the project enters into environmental review. Until then, the study addresses the issue by providing a generic but defensible cost estimate for a new railyard. The sites as identified by the RAB study are planned for Caltrain operations, but could also provide some HSR storage, if desired, and reflects the blended service thinking.

- One person commented that working to ensure that Caltrain's work to electrify current tracks is not wasted if a different rail alignment is put forward.
- One person flagged that ADA considerations are largely missing from the matrix.
- One CWG member commented that this area (Mission Bay) will be the densest part of the City. In terms of tunneling, this is also where we have the greatest seismic vulnerability and liquefaction. Tunneling could help to make the infrastructure underground more resilient and could include interactions with seawalls or other improvements to help protect against sea level rise. The study team, to answer a question posed earlier in the process, also identified that it is possible to include the MUNI subway underground in the Mission Bay alignment (T-3<sup>rd</sup> line above Caltrain/HSR much like Market Street).
- There was a suggestion to consolidate some of the elements in the matrix. Study team members were in agreement, but in this iteration, wanted to reflect all information developed up to this point. The study team requested that individual CWG members provide their thoughts on consolidation.
- One CWG member suggested that we add some type of prioritization. Ron Miguel indicated that prioritization and ranking of various metrics could be completed as part of the CWG and should be looked at.
- There was agreement that this is a "fantastic framework and tool" as the study moves forward to fully understand the benefits and impacts. One person noted that it helps them to digest the work of the last two to three years. It was suggested to add a companion map for reference.
- One column not currently highlighted that should be is efficiency of operations. Understanding which options improve operations, versus those that hinder operations, is very important. Study team members understand that there is value created with both alternative alignments to the current DTX alignment. These alternatives liberate property that helps offset costs. It is important to consider that some value is not just financial, but social as well which can be more difficult to quantify.
- Mr. Speaks underscored that we need the group to help us understand which benefits the community views as priorities for this neighborhood. What is the vision for your community and how might various study components support that vision?
- One CWG member commented that with a \$70 billion CHSRA investment in the state, there is a significant opportunity to improve operational and passenger capacity. We don't want to start cutting corners that will create a huge constraint and that will not knit the neighborhoods back together.
- With respects to the issue "neighborhood connectivity and integration," – this means connectivity for all modes of transportation within the neighborhood.
- Members expressed opposing views on the need to connect neighborhoods to each other. One member expressed his view is that these urban barriers (the freeway) allow neighborhoods to maintain their own unique character. The opposing view is that connectivity brings life to a neighborhood. There was a comment that development will happen regardless and that barriers are permeable to dollars and must be permeable to people as well.
- One person noted that land use is a big opportunity. The land value around 4<sup>th</sup>/King creates a rare opportunity to fund not only an infrastructure project, but potentially ongoing operations of Caltrain.
- One person suggested that we leave the discussion on I-280 "up in the air" in the working group report. They noted that this can be left to the future, but we need to tell people what we are doing within this Study. The SPUR report (2012) was referenced. Ms. Gygi said that she agreed that a decision on I-280 is not the top priority for the RAB study, yet some decisions need to be made relatively soon. She referred

the group to the “RAB Study: Options and Benefits” handout. We have been focused on getting the trains from the County border to the TTC. She highlighted that we are not discounting the boulevarding I-280, but it is on a different timeline.

- One member asked “Shouldn’t we have a “sky blue” option of having lots of people coming from the peninsula to San Francisco? There is the ability to increase capacity.” Ms. Gygi said that Caltrain/CHSRA are responsible for ridership analyses and new ridership projections are not part of the RAB study. There was a further suggestion that the City complete a capacity study and give Caltrain and CHSRA some direction.
- One member asked that a column denoting “access for public/health options” be included in the mobility section to highlight the potential fire-life-safety impacts/benefits of some of the options.
- One person asked why we would need to consider Level of Service (LOS) if California no longer uses it. Ms. Gygi responded by noting that LOS is still required when federal funding is involved. She suggested adding a column to the matrix for Vehicle Miles Traveled as well.
- One member asked how Pennsylvania Avenue Alignment is less adaptable to sea level rise versus Mission Bay Alignment. Ms. Gygi cited that Pennsylvania Avenue Alignment is located further from the shoreline and utilized DTX where the Mission Bay Alignment is very near the shoreline and can more easily influence SLR or include items related to SLR adaptability in its design/construction.
- One member asked how the alignments impact capacity. Ms. Gygi noted that because Mission Bay allows for more tracks (up to 4) that the Mission Bay alignment has more capacity. She agreed that capacity is a 100-year decision and the capacity should be able to handle future demand following a loop or second Transbay tube.
- One member asked about value of land with and without freeway. Ms. Gygi shared that studies as recent as 2014 have shown that you get more value of the potentially available land without the freeway.
- One member noted that place making is a major consideration, including access to the hospital.
- One member noted that there wasn’t enough information to make a compelling case between alignments, noting that they see a value in tunneling, but is less clear on which one would be best. They noted that they are comfortable scarfing I-280, but noted that conversation has already happened.

In closing, John Rahaim provided an analogy of the decisions we are making soon to those that were made by Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) in the 1960’s. Because it was determined in the 1960’s that Bart would only have two tracks in the Transbay Tunnel, BART must shut down every night at 1 a.m. to do maintenance and can’t provide additional trains within the system as a whole during peak hour. BART is at capacity, and because of decisions made back in the early 1960’s, the only way to increase capacity is to build another tunnel under the Bay. Recognizing that we can’t build everything at once, we must keep the future in mind. It was also noted that the Embarcadero station was not in the original BART plan because the Embarcadero was not built. Now the Embarcadero station is the busiest in the system.

#### **NEXT STEPS:**

The next meeting (CWG Meeting #5) is tentatively scheduled for March 2, 2017. Various coordination meetings with agencies will occur prior to the next CWG meeting. CWG #5 will take place prior to the public meeting and will include preliminary estimates of probable costs, a combined matrix of the various options for each component, potential schedule implications, and the material that will be shared at the public workshop. The tentative date for the Public Workshop is March 6, 2017

- CWG members were asked to provide their feedback on the Matrix by 12/16/2016 by answering the following questions:
  - What combination of options best achieves our goals for the Study?
  - Which components and options are less important to you?
  - Which matrix items (columns) are most important to you?
  - Which matrix items (columns) are you willing to compromise on?
- CWG members were asked to recommend groups to present to and engage with after the public meeting.