



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

San Francisco Railyard Alternatives and I-280 Boulevard Feasibility Study (RAB) Citizen Working Group (CWG) – Meeting #3 Summary Notes

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

MEETING DATE: Tuesday, October 18, 2016
MEETING TIME: 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm
VENUE: Old Fire Station 30 Community Room, 1275 Third Street

Reception:
415.558.6378

Fax:
415.558.6409

ATTENDEES:

Members: Ron Miguel (Chair), Bruce Agid, Brian Shaw, James Haas, Nathan Mee, Alice Light, David Brentlinger, Ted Olsson, Jackson Fahnestock, Arielle Fleisher (for Ratna Amin), Devanshu Patel, Jennifer Stein, Corinne Woods, Rick Hall and J.R. Eppler

Planning
Information:
415.558.6377

Citizens: Michael Gimbel and Roland LeBrun

Study Team: Susan Gygi, RAB Study Manager; Joe Speaks, CH2M PM; Peter Lauterborn (facilitator), Alia Al-Sharif and Lisbet Sunshine from Barbary Coast Consulting; and Marsha Maloof from Al Williams Consultancy

Makeup session CWG attendees: Held 10/20/2016: Howard Strassner, Tammy Chan and Adina Levin; Dan Murphy was briefed on 10/24/2016 via phone

PURPOSE: RAB STUDY OVERVIEW CONTINUED AND DETERMINE AREA CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

SUMMARY: INCLUDING QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS FROM THE MEETING

Ron Miguel started the meeting by thanking everyone for coming. He reminded the group that their task as the CWG for this Study is to understand what it is about, help the Planning Department to assess the existing conditions of the area, and to provide input on the future possibilities, desired outcomes and potential compromises required related to future projects. Ron reminded the CWG members that they are not charged with arriving at a single solution, but will help inform the recommendations for the next phase of the RAB Study. He stated that CWG members have also been asked to share what they learn with others, enlist stakeholder feedback, and to publicize what is happening with the public. Ron communicated cost information for the Study will be provided by the Planning Department to the CWG in the coming months. A CWG member asked if a central place for Study exhibits could be created and shared with the CWG. Ron said that a place to learn more about the Study is a good idea, and suggested for it to be housed online.

Susan Gygi, Study Manager, guided the CWG members through a prepared PowerPoint presentation. She started by providing a recap of the last CWG meeting that included a discussion of the Study’s challenges (component elements have been studied for decades; knitting together the multitude of projects and options happening in the Southeast quadrant of the City; ensuring outcomes reflect San Francisco’s sense of place and community, etc.) and a review of the analysis and options for a Downtown Rail Extension Alignment (DTX) (Component 1) and a Transbay Transit Center (TTC) Loop (Component 2). The CWG members were reminded that the options for the DTX component included: the baseline (including the DTX and grade separating 16th & Mission Bay Drive), tunneling under the existing alignment (removed from further consideration due to structural considerations), tunneling under Pennsylvania Avenue, or tunneling under Third Street (Mission Bay). She also reviewed the list of issues expressed by CWG members at the last meeting.

Susan continued her presentation by reviewing the topic areas that would be covered at the meeting: Railyard Reconfiguration/Relocation (Component 3); Boulevard 1-280 (Component 4); and Opportunities for Public Benefit (Component 5). In addition, she expressed that there would be time set aside to discuss key Study questions and begin addressing the challenges and opportunities for each of the five components after the presentation.

UPDATES SINCE LAST MEETING

Susan shared new information regarding the California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) operations including how a recent announcement regarding shortening the length of train sets will impact the required length of future platforms and storage tracks at the 4th/King Railyard. One CWG member commented that they believed this was a significant change and asked why the decision was made. Susan stated that she did not know, but did mention that HSR's Environmental Impact Statement (not yet released) may provide more insight.

Susan also noted that the Transbay Joint Powers Authority (TJPA) had requested \$6.8 million from the San Francisco County Transportation Authority (SFCTA) to complete additional DTX engineering. Bruce Agid, the Chair of TJPA Citizen Advisory Committee, added his understanding that the action was delayed for several reasons, including the desire to have more information on possible alignment implications based on an integrated plan. Susan communicated that the transportation decisions being made in the next three years are decisions that will impact the area for the next 100 years. Given the financial investments made by the TJPA and others, the SFCTA board has decided to take this time to gather more information.

RAILYARD RECONFIGURATION/RELOCATION (COMPONENT 3)

The presentation continued with an explanation of the possible reconfiguration and relocation of some or all of the current activities occurring at the 4th/King Railyard (slides 11-13). In December 2013, Caltrain in conjunction with the City and County of San Francisco determined that it was possible to operate, maintain, and store the anticipated fleet of electrified Caltrain trains (anticipated in December 2020) on a smaller footprint than is currently in use at the railyard. Further, if maintenance and storage were provided elsewhere, Caltrain could possibly make do with a smaller footprint at the 4th/King Railyard.

Susan communicated that looking at the space needs for rail operations, maintenance, and storage is serving as the starting point of the RAB Study. She further elaborated that in both proposed alternative tunnel alignments for the DTX (Pennsylvania Ave and Mission Bay), it could be probable for the entire 4th/King Railyard surface area to be available for development as the at-grade tracks would be removed after the tunnel was built. She discussed the requirements for re-tracking at 4th/King due to the addition of HSR and the electrification of Caltrain. It was explained that various changes would be needed at the Railyard to accommodate some special event "load and go" service that is currently being accomplished at 4th/King. Susan communicated that a blended service operation plan indicating how much service will need to be accommodated in the future (anticipated sometime in 2017) is still needed, but that for now the RAB Study assumes a requirement of 10 trains per hour per direction (6 Caltrain and 4 HSR). One member commented that given the configuration as outlined, they felt there had been no real increase to Caltrain's capacity as planned and that they felt disheartened by this. Susan stated that this is actually incorrect. Caltrain currently provides up to 5 trains per peak hour per direction. After electrification it will be 6 trains per peak hour per direction and HSR will add another 4. In all scenarios the bottleneck is in San Mateo County. With a loop track (Component #2) the Transbay Transit Center would operate well within the anticipated number of trains with room to grow service.

Susan shared that the original plan for HSR was to go past 4th/King and stop only at TTC. With the change to the California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) Business Plan in February 2016, HSR is planning to stop at the 4th/King Railyard in the interim from 2025 until the TTC Trainbox is fitted out. In addition, we have discussed moving storage and maintenance from the 4th/King Railyard to an alternate site within 10 minutes of the Railyard and may include locations outside of the City. All identified sites include some property not owned by the City and County of San Francisco; the exact locations of these sites are confidential and were not shared with the CWG. Susan communicated that moving maintenance and storage away from the 4th/King would shrink the operations footprint requirements at the railyard.

BOULEVARD I-280 (COMPONENT 4)

Susan continued her presentation by describing the next component of the RAB Study, Boulevard I-280, referring to slides 14-15. She stated that all of the components of the Study are independent of each other and represent "Big Moves" in transportation for the City to at least consider. This fourth component of the

Study considers whether there is value to the neighborhood in removing 1.2 miles of the freeway north of Mariposa Street. Originally I-280 was built to provide a connection to the I-80 freeway and to provide a circular route to connect to Golden Gate Park. Due to several circumstances including the Loma Prieta earthquake, I-280 in this portion of the City operates as a very long off ramp and is congested at the freeways exit ramps. A portion of this freeway was pulled back to create the Embarcadero as we know it today. Northbound traffic on I-280 is regularly congested as it pours into the City grid; southbound traffic on I-280 is essentially free flowing since it's regulated by the City street grid at its start.

Susan expressed that the Study is considering whether a boulevard could possibly better address the challenges of the area and replace a section of the I-280 freeway. In considering the requirements of a boulevard, for this component the RAB Study started with a traffic analysis. If the goal of the Boulevard is to handle projected 2030 traffic, the RAB Study estimates that five travel lanes in the northbound direction (4 general purpose and 1 HOV) and three travel lanes in the southbound direction (2 general purpose + 1 HOV) will be needed to connect the roadway grid. For this approach, some changes in the access of intersecting streets (some converted to right-in/right-out only) would be needed. If the goal is to support mode shift and reduce traffic along this corridor in favor of a more neighborhood oriented complete streets approach, then fewer lanes would be required (northbound and southbound: 2 general purpose + 1 HOV). The impacts on the entire road network is being analyzed for both approaches. The two approaches (more travel lanes vs. fewer travel lanes) are being referred to as the “bookends” for boulevard analysis.

One CWG member asked why this component is connected to the RAB study, particularly given that they felt that it wasn't an urgent issue. Another CWG member commented that this option does increase the land that could be available for housing and development. Susan suggested that this component will be on a different timeline than some of the other components and may not move forward, but stressed that it was important for it to be included as part of the Study. Another CWG member suggested that the RAB Study be put on the back burner and not discussed as a component in conversations with the public. Another CWG member commented that we would be shortsighted to not keep it in the Study, even if on a different timeline. Susan conveyed that the “usable life” of the I-280 freeway in this area would need to be discussed with Caltrans and would most likely include some associated cost. The other two boulevarded freeways in San Francisco (Embarcadero and Octavia) were damaged to the point of zero “usable life” prior to becoming boulevards.

The presentation continued with an assessment of one of the big questions surrounding available land and land use: how much value could be captured to help fund the DTX? Susan explained that the different alignments will need to take the complete financial benefit picture into consideration as recommendations are moved through the Study process. One CWG member asked: why, if we have something like I-280 that doesn't affect the rail, we don't consider an additional Transbay tunnel connecting HSR to the Eastbay as a priority right now? Susan reminded the group that there is another Study currently underway, the Core Capacity Transit Study (led by MTC), looking at this element. The RAB study is tracking that project closely to make sure the Study is informed by MTC's work and also informs other projects in the larger region so that future Transbay options are not precluded. At present, there is no single direction coming out of the Core Capacity Study. MTC sets our region's transportation priorities. Number one on the list of regional priorities is shared by DTX (getting trains into the TTC) and BART to San Jose. A second Transbay crossing would likely also share a top ranked priority but there is additional work that needs to be completed to be ready to enter that phase of development. A CWG member encouraged that the group keep these thoughts in their minds as they think of the 100-year plan for the area and the components of the RAB Study.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT (COMPONENT 5)

Susan continued presenting on the next component of the Study, Opportunities for the Urban Environment referring to slides 16-18. This began the group's thinking around the land use options for the area and Susan encouraged the group to consider thinking about the bigger picture when considering land use scenarios. One CWG member suggested that we use Pier 70 as a comparable project. Another CWG member stated that before we consider more housing and development in the Townsend area that we must address the current traffic congestion and transportation impacts.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES DISCUSSION

The group was asked to provide comments regarding what priorities should be used in decision making for the RAB Study, what opportunities are most important to individuals specifically or the group as a whole, and what the CWG sees as the component challenges. The group was provided with a slide reminding them of the priorities communicated by CWG members at the last meeting. CWG comments and questions during this discussion included:

Priorities in decision making

- Maximize train capacity
 - Timeliness
 - Flow within neighborhoods
 - Ease for ridership
 - Efficiency of service
 - Integration
 - DTX/BART/Subway – each tunnel must stabilize land around it (pay attention to liquefaction)
 - Future connectivity
 - What’s realistic in terms of funding
 - Don’t be tied to past decisions
 - Integration, compatibility and cooperation
 - City should take over the coordination
 - Don’t limit Caltrain’s ability to function
 - Neighborhood impact – how to make it better
 - Integration of studies about transportation – phasing implementation
 - Consider this as a moving project and provide flexibility to make changes later
 - Consider the impact of more trains on the surrounding neighborhoods
 - SOMA is congested already
 - Need to get larger framework right and avoid bifurcating the City
 - No deep trenches along 16th Street or 7th Street areas
 - Look at this confluence of projects as an opportunity to set the stage for an improved City, one that can continually grow and develop
- Is it really critical for HSR to serve 4th/King?
 - HSR is regional and people should be fine with accessing it at Transbay Terminal over 4th and King
 - Relocate Caltrain and HSR storage and maintenance away from core of the City – land is limited
 - I-280 does not need to be elevated north of Mariposa
 - An at grade version of I-280 north of Mariposa needs to be studied

Opportunities most important to CWG –

- Minimizing impact to travelers and neighborhoods
- Opportunities for improving urban environment – removing psychological barriers from one side of the tracks to the other
- 4th/Townsend is a mess because everything is centralized, we must have a better plan
- Need to talk about how the train tracks divide the community
- More open space (integrating space for people and workers)
- Have a Caltrain stop to serve the Bayview

NEXT STEPS:

- The next meeting (CWG Mtg #4) will focus on the benefits and tradeoffs of the individual options for each component (excluding costs). The fifth CWG meeting will take place before the public meeting and will include preliminary estimates of probable costs, a combined matrix of the various options for each component as part of alternatives, potential schedule implications, and the material that will be shared at the public workshop. A Doodle poll with possible dates for CWG meeting #4 will be sent out to the members and finalized as soon as possible.