



# SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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## San Francisco Railyard Alternatives and I-280 Boulevard Feasibility Study (RAB) Citizen Working Group (CWG) – Meeting #6 Summary Notes

**MEETING DATE:** Wednesday, March 28, 2018  
**MEETING TIME:** 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm  
**VENUE:** Old Firehouse Station 30 Community Room, 1275 3rd Street

### ATTENDEES:

**Members:** Ron Miguel (Chair), Adina Levin, Corinne Woods, Rick Hall, J. R. Eppler, Jim Haas, Jackson Fahnestock, Daniel Murphy

**Citizens:** Roland Lebrun, Gerald Cauthen (representing Bay Area Transportation Working Group), John Hamiga (representing UCSF Bike Committee), Melissa Jones, Bob Feinbaum, Audrey Kislyuk, Alan D'Souza, Andy Branscomb, Mark Roest, Nicole Soutanov, Daniel Filipkowski, Bryan Klofos, Tom Huening, Peter Straus (representing SF Transit Riders), Luis Zurinaga (representing SFCTA), Biu Stern

**Study Team:** John Rahaim, Director, Planning Department; Susan Gygi, RAB Study Manager; Joe Speaks, CH2M Project Manager; AnMarie Rodgers, Director of Citywide Planning; Jeremy Shaw, Planner, Planning Department; Adam Van de Water, Office of Economic and Workforce Development; Lisbet Sunshine and Anouk Versavel, Civic Edge Consulting

**Makeup sessions CWG attendees** 4/2/18: Brian Shaw, Howard Strassner  
4/4/18: Tammy Chan, Bruce Agid

**MEETING PURPOSE: RAB study overview continued and review of rail on state, regional, city, and neighborhood perspectives**

### WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Ron Miguel, CWG Chair, welcomed the CWG Meeting #6 attendees and shared the evening's goals and agenda. The purpose of the meeting was informational only to review the concept of bringing underground rail to downtown San Francisco and to share project updates. No decisions would be made as a result of the meeting.

The RAB Study team would be available for questions from CWG members and other members of the public following a presentation.

The Study team is considering May 2018 as a tentative date for hosting a second public workshop. Format for the workshop would be reviewed as part of this CWG meeting.

### RAIL: CONNECTING THE STATE, REGION, CITY, AND NEIGHBORHOODS

Mr. Rahaim, Director, Planning Department, introduced members of the RAB Study team: AnMarie Rodgers, Director of Citywide Planning; Susan Gygi, RAB Study Manager; Adam Van de Water, Office of Economic and Workforce Development; and Jeremy Shaw, Planner, Planning Department.

Ms. Rodgers was named head of policy for the Planning Department six months ago. She is in charge of the interface between the Planning Commission and the Board and responsible for overseeing over 100 projects within the Planning Department, including the RAB Study. The RAB Study was identified as one of seven priorities under Ms. Rodgers, and she was noted as committed to making sure resources are available for the Study.

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The question of why there has been a hiatus in the Study's development was addressed. The three alignments that the Study has been considering are continuing to be examined. As part of that examination, additional quantitative and qualitative analysis was completed. The Study team has brought its analysis to the Mayor's office and is working with City partners to review the analysis. There has been a lot of interagency work in the past months, including detailed conversations with elected officials. The unexpected passing of Mayor Lee in December created some delays as the City responded to changes and determined priorities. But, the Study is moving forward.

Director Rahaim noted that as the Study team prepares for a public meeting and communications, it is looking at how to present and discuss the bigger picture of high speed rail to be able to address and answer why the RAB Study is important and what it is achieving. The CWG was asked to provide feedback on how to discuss the subject of high speed rail, and why it is important for the future.

Director Rahaim explained that I-280 freeway will not be affected by the Study. The freeway was looked at with the purpose of understanding whether there was a rail alignment option that worked better with the removal of the freeway. For that reason, the component was examined, but it was determined that removal or changing the freeway did not provide a better alignment. The final answer, Director Rahaim said, is that I-280 will remain as is going forward.

Director Rahaim reviewed the goals of the RAB Study, which looks at how to connect Los Angeles with the San Francisco region, the state's two largest job and population centers. In the next 50 years, California's population is expected to increase by 52 million (33%). The transportation options to continue to serve the state population are to expand highways and airports or to build rail. It is important to consider the environmental and cost implications of expanded highways and airports over rail, Director Rahaim noted.

In looking specifically at the Bay Area, Director Rahaim noted that it is expected the region will see a 41 percent increase in population in the next 50 years, with comparable increases in employment (44%). The Bay Area currently anticipates that there will be 57,000 new residents a year. There are few discussions, Director Rahaim said, about building or widening highways to accommodate an increased regional population, so without rail we'll need to move people around differently.

For the City of San Francisco, the RAB Study is an opportunity to consider how to serve residents, bring people downtown, and ensure plans moving forward are whole picture plans. San Francisco is expected to grow by an average of 12,000 new residents every single year for the next 50 years. Based on 2015 data, Muni Metro demand is at 124 percent capacity during peak commute times. Mission Bay, a previously industrial area, has developed in part to meet population and job increases, and the southeast quadrant of the City will be the fastest growing section of the city carrying over 50% of the growth and closer to 75% of the growth anticipated.

The RAB Study grew around five major land use and transportation questions including a concern by the City that the construction of the Downtown Rail Extension (DTX) as proposed would exacerbate traffic flow and further divide Mission Bay from downtown. The purpose of the Study was to examine those five components, with the goals of determining the best move forward with all components for all agencies and the City at large.

Looking specifically at the first component, which is the most time sensitive, Alignments under consideration by the RAB Study are the existing future with surface rail (which includes the DTX, which runs out of ground south of the 4<sup>th</sup>/King railyard, as well as trenching the two at-grade intersections to 45-feet below where they are today), a Pennsylvania Avenue alignment, which continues the tunneled portion of the DTX farther south, and a Mission Bay alignment, which moves the trains underground under 3rd Street). All options look at physically separating trains and cars/bikes/pedestrians at the two at-grade intersections today (16<sup>th</sup> Street and 7<sup>th</sup>/Mission Bay Drive) and all alignments connect with the Salesforce Transit Center at the SW corner. Alignment options have been analyzed based on costs, disruption, land value, and benefits. The Study team is at the point of finalizing and vetting that information with our partners.

## **STUDY RECAP**

Ms. Gygi proceeded with a Study recap. The Study was based on examining five different components – Rail Alignment to the Salesforce Traffic Center (SFTC), SFTC Loop/Extension, Railyard Reconfiguration/Relocation, Boulevard I-280, and opportunities for public benefit. The Study reviewed the specifics of each component and considered each alignment option under each component.

In CWG #5, a CWG questionnaire and tradeoff matrix helped guide a discussion around tradeoffs of the different alignments. From the questionnaire and matrix, it was understood that there was a range of opinions in determining the importance of (1) neighborhood connectivity and (2) some of the individual Study components. Discussions at CWG#5 also included value capture, the process of retaining some percentage of the value provided in every transaction, as a rare opportunity to fund public benefits.

Ms. Gygi reviewed the proposed work around preparation of the public workshop. Particular points of discussion included information the CWG wants the public to know, what the CWG would hope to learn from the public, what a successful workshop would look like, and what conversations the CWG hopes the workshop will spark.

Based on this conversation, five goals for the workshop were developed:

- Inform the public of the differences between options under consideration
- Help the public understand the existing and future problems that need to be solved
- Inform the public of preliminary findings and recommendations
- Provide the public with a timeline for decision making around the Study
- Provide an opportunity to hear from the public about its priorities for the Study area

These goals are being framed into a larger conversation being taken on by the City, which is considering how to move forward in the Study area, how to work with all of our partners, and what the preferred alternatives are for the area.

Ms. Gygi shared the proposed layout for the public workshop, which would include table stations for Study partners (e.g., the Transbay Joint Powers Authority (TJPA), High Speed Rail (CHSRA), Caltrain, City agencies, etc). The plan is to have someone available from each agency to answer the public's specific and technical questions about related projects.

In addition to the different agency stations, the proposed layout includes a Welcome Station to provide an overall orientation to the meeting setup with a map, takeaway materials, and information on presentation times, an individual station for each of the five Study components, and some room for the presentation and question/answer period.

## **KEY STUDY UPDATES**

Ms. Gygi shared key study updates from other agencies including:

- Comments on the California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) draft Business Plan are due on May 5. There is a new timeline for connecting the Central Valley to San Francisco. Originally set for 2025, the new target is 2027.
- It is anticipated that Caltrain will have a draft business plan developed at the end of 2018. Needs being examined by Caltrain include growing its fleet and ridership and making sure the necessary infrastructure is in place. Additionally, Caltrain is examining how tracks also used by HSR can be used to the highest ability. Results from the RAB Study will hopefully inform this draft business plan.
- San Francisco County Transportation Authority (SFCTA) is scheduled to present a peer review at the April 10 board meeting, 10 am to noon, San Francisco City Hall, room 250. The board requested that the SFCTA conduct a peer review of three studies that looked at DTX and analyzed whether two or three tracks are needed. The RAB Study was one of the three reviewed. In response to a member

question, Ms. Gygi noted that the SFCTA peer review does not look at rail alignment outside of the DTX but only the number of tracks.

Ms. Gygi reviewed the objectives for CWG meeting #7. This next, upcoming meeting would include full alternatives analysis, including cost assessment, schedule implications, and timelines. It is anticipated that this meeting would be held in May, prior to the public meeting. Two or three potential dates will be shared with CWG members via a Doodle poll, with final scheduling based on the date with most member availability.

### **QUESTIONS AND FEEDBACK**

In preparing to answer questions from meeting members, the Study team noted that it is looking for feedback on the Study's status, input on the larger communications message, and thoughts on the public meeting and its structure. Costs and alignments are being finalized by the Study team and it is expected that they will be shared at the next CWG meeting.

In addition to costs and alignments, the next meeting will also review some of the issues of railyards and disposition of land including:

- The railyard is owned by a private entity, with Caltrain having an operational easement on top of the land. The RAB Study has examined alternative locations and whether parts of the railyard could be used for other purposes.
- Caltrain is understandably concerned about the railyard, and the RAB Study is not interested in hurting the operation of Caltrain.
- Determination of a final disposition is still a long way off and will be reviewed in more detail at the next CWG meeting.

It was suggested that it would be helpful before the public meeting to develop (1) a wall-mounted graphic that shows the interactions of the various projects/studies to each other and (2) a 3-D or axiomatic graphic showing the anticipated density of population and jobs in the Study area. Both will help people understand the interactions of various agencies, projects, and development moving forward.

A CWG member raised an issue that could occur at the public workshop to clarify the projections being used. It was asked if projections would be presented. The Study team replied that it was presenting projections as used throughout the City to commissions and boards and noted that big transportation projects require thinking beyond the next 20 to 30 years.

It was suggested that the public presentation also include space to talk about the second transbay tube. It was noted that there seems to be a misunderstanding of how operation will take place and whether it will be BART only, Conventional rail only, or both. Mr. Rahaim answered that the full HSR plan does not reach Oakland as part of Phase II. He noted that if the tube under the bay could accommodate at least conventional rail (HSR and Caltrain), it would offer a shorter way to Sacramento. He added that the question will be discussed in more detail at the next meeting.

A CWG member noted hearing at a state rail plan presentation hosted by SPUR that the Bay Area will qualify for more state funds if a second transbay tube is planned to provide regional and state connections, beyond just local connections.

A CWG member brought up a previous study of Pier 32 that included a look at densities and service lanes. It was noted that when the pier was closed; it pushed more development to the southern Bayfront. It was further noted that waterfront assessments, which look at growth and development patterns in hyper localized parts of the city should be taken into account. With the development of the Chase Center in Mission Bay and other projects that have reached maturity, there was a shift in development activity to the south, from Mission Rock to the shipyard, an area called the Southern Bayfront. It is expected that this area will see 25,000 housing units over the next 25 years and 75 percent of the growth in San Francisco. As a result, an area that used to be isolated will need to be connected to the rest of the city. In planning for the next 100 years, this growth and

surrounding uses needs to be considered. The Study team further replied that work done in the Study expanded out of awareness of the growth to Mission Bay and the difficulties in traversing the area.

It was requested that feedback from the CWG be shared on the big-picture slides describing the Study and that other transportation options within the area be included (e.g., Central Subway, 16<sup>th</sup> Street BRT, known road improvement projects, etc.).

It was noted that in showing the area as it exists, it will demonstrate how people currently move around and illustrate the importance of coming up with a viable solution that connects the eastern and western portions of the city.

It was suggested by a CWG member to emphasize what happens if the City does nothing and to stress that this is more than a local transportation project.

A CWG member recommended including ferries as part of the discussion about changing density and transportation in the Study area.

The high-level slides outlining the project were described as good, and it was recommended to give more information on the existing transit infrastructure to demonstrate how the RAB Study relates to transportation people already know and understand. It will also connect the Study to other improvements and service changes people are already hearing about. Specifically, it was recommended to include information about:

- Options the Study is not pursuing
- The percentage of 16th Street that will be closed during rush hour
- What intersections will look like
- How 16th Street would have to be closed to allow for trains passing

It was asked if the economic analysis of the Study shows investment already made toward developing the southeast Mission Bay, Dogpatch, and Potrero Hill neighborhoods and what the current alignment would do to economic growth in the area. The economic effects may not be directly connected to the costs of trains but would be significant in terms of investment already made in the neighborhoods.

The Study team replied that it looked specifically at locales directly related. For example, on 16th Street there are more than 50 properties identified as affected if this intersection is depressed as needed under the Future with Surface Rail alignment option.

It was raised that people are hearing about a seawall repair project and acknowledged that Mission Creek is one of the most vulnerable places in the city for sea level rise.

A CWG member suggested that the public will be interested in the comparative benefits of the three alignment options and recommended that visuals about each option's influence on the city would be helpful information. It was noted that Elon Musk has offered to undertake the project.

While the current visuals are helpful for CWG members who are already familiar with the Study, it was noted that general members of the public may be confused by the current graphics. As an example, the arrows on the maps show the east-west connection to the city but make it difficult for the individual to understand how the results of the Study will have a personal effect on the ability to navigate the city. It was also suggested to clarify the Study's relevancy and connection to other projects, such as the BART tunnel and Salesforce Transit Center.

It was asked if the analysis will include an overall financial analysis that measures the cost and benefits. A figure of \$4 billion had been heard from other sources for the DTX alone, and the RAB Study includes longer tunneling options. Related questions included:

- What is the comparative potential pool of jobs for each alignment options based on projected ridership?
- What are the different costs per rider?

The Study team answered that Caltrain and HSR is in the process of updating ridership projections and the Study team is awaiting additional information based on HSR's blended service operations plan with Caltrain. The Study team used an average time to run a train under each alignment and available ridership data to help determine some of the projected benefits. The Study team acknowledged that there is still a lot of work and unknowns but the material that will be made available has always been anticipated to be used as "comparative" and not absolute.

It was asked if the comparison of costs includes costs of grade separations at 16th and 7th Streets if the tunnel isn't extended. It was noted that yes, these costs are included and will be shared at the next meeting.

A CWG member recommended that in thinking about the big picture, it is important to present the idea of getting people across the state rather than saving minutes off a commute within the city. It requires a different mindset from thinking about other day-to-day transit such as BART. It was further suggested to emphasize value, focusing on the surrounding area and connecting it to the rest of the city, as had already been discussed.

A CWG member noted that completing HSR between Los Angeles and San Francisco would be the equivalent of operating another runway out of SFO airport. The situation is more complicated, however, because the area also needs to consider travel connections within the city and connection to the East Bay, in addition to such issues as sea level rise.

A CWG member asked what the Study team has been looking into in regard to the Salesforce Transit Center. The terminal had been described before as a dead end without an extension that will slow down operation.

The Study team noted Component #2 as examining the Salesforce Transit Center and loop/extension as well as the possibility of connecting across the bay at various locations. The issue is a long-term situation and will require additional work. BART is currently completing a preliminary study on this topic. A cost estimate for a loop/extension has not been included because it is unknown what year it will be. The system has to be designed to be able to accommodate a future crossing.

A meeting attendee described that is not part of a HSR plan to connect San Francisco to Sacramento but a state vision. He noted pieces missing from the presentation included a fourth alignment option, a mandate to connect LA to San Francisco, and the impacts to the 22nd Street Station. He noted that BART could connect from Alameda. He noted that Elon Musk has proposed handling the tunneling. He also suggested that MTC will now consider projects that don't go through public transportation agencies but instead through private companies. <sup>1</sup>

A meeting attendee described that BART carries double the people that Caltrain does between SFO airport and San Mateo. It was guessed that HSR is being relied on to reach 110,000 Caltrain passenger projection by 2030 number. Without HSR, this meeting attendee proposed that Caltrain ridership would be 80,000. The meeting attendee asked how much San Francisco is willing to pay to get another body to the Salesforce Transit Center. It was answered that such a figure is outside the scope of the RAB Study, and that Caltrain ridership numbers while available are only part of the conversation. HSR will have ridership as well all the transit agencies using SFTC.

Another attendee noted that within the central SOMA plan, growth along the corridor seems to be within five or six miles. It was asked if it is fair to suggest that shared ridership will go up in the next 20 years.

It was asked and confirmed that the electrification of Caltrain was assumed in all alignments.

It was then asked if there would be space to run group rapid transit, an automated transit system with exclusive right of way that typically serves between six and 30 passengers. In reply, it was noted that Caltrain is running blended service to help determine this year as part of the Caltrain Business Plan just how many

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<sup>1</sup> When Study team members contacted MTC, there were two things they were looking at: One is a pilot project totaling \$1 million under one grant administered by MTC that could go to local organizations. The second option is with the update to the Plan Bay Area plan, anyone can put forth projects that should be considered in the analysis. Much like a scoping meeting for the environmental process of any project is handled now. This is a different way than MTC has collected projects in previous Plan Bay Area versions. While it should be noted that MTC is doing things slightly differently this round, and allowing for a more robust collection of potential projects. All projects will still be vetted by various criteria and will need to meet those criteria to move forward.

slots are available on the Caltrain alignment for any use. Currently, slots only exist for Caltrain, HSR, and freight (where appropriate).

Pedestrian and bicycle elevated crossing options were asked about. It was noted that there are materials available that are making the construction of these less expensive and that could lead to an opportunity for east-west crossing and could feed into the Bayshore.

It was replied that the Study is most concerned right now with which alignment is preferred to get to SFTC. It was noted by the Study team that in future work, there should be an evaluation of what can be done at grade to improve movement for pedestrians and bicyclists.

A first-time attendee shared that in the context of framing the discussion for a public meeting, something that stood out about the presentation was that it didn't include what open space would look like, current east-west transit, and what people living in the area would face as an impact. The attendee agreed with other feedback given at the meeting.

An attendee asked for clarification on the I-280 discussion and why it was initially part of the conversation but no longer part of the study.

The Study team replied that initially it looked at whether moving, or removing, a piece of the freeway would facilitate the connection for trains. The study found that the answer is no, and there is no rethinking of I-280 that would facilitate trains. That was the limitation of the scope under this phase of the project. The focus of the Study is how to get trains underground south of 16th Street. Looking long term, and understanding that the two freeway sections that have been removed in San Francisco were both damaged significantly by earthquakes to a point where significant resources to fix them or their removal were the only two options. That is not the case with this segment. Much more analysis and continued conversations with Caltrans and others would be necessary before any determination of whether or not I-280 would remain or be removed is required.

Movement of stations and railyards and the options for railyard relocation will be part of the subject for the next CWG meeting. Options need to be worked through with HSR and Caltrain.

It was asked if a four-track station was being considered at all venues. It was noted that would need to be a Caltrain conversation. The stations being looked at by the Study are at 22nd, 4th and King, Salesforce Transit Center, and DTX. Currently, all but 4<sup>th</sup>/King are less than 4 tracks.

Attendees were thanked for coming to the meeting and it concluded.