

SUBJECT

This memo presents the Staff Recommendation of a spatial layout for the San José Diridon Station.

BACKGROUND

When BART, commuter rail, high-speed rail, light rail, and supporting bus services converge, Diridon Station will support more high-capacity transit connections than any other place in the Bay Area. In order to plan for the substantial growth of Diridon Station, the City of San José, the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board (PCJPB), Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA), and the California High-Speed Rail Authority (the “Partner Agencies”) formed a public agency partnership via a Cooperative Agreement in July 2018. The Partner Agencies hired a consultant team led by Arcadis and Bentham Crowell Architects (“Team ABC”) to aid in preparing of the Diridon Integrated Station Concept Plan (“Concept Plan”).

The eventual outcome of the Concept Plan process will be a project description for the future intermodal hub and an organizational framework for carrying the project forward toward implementation. Over the past year, the Partner Agencies worked to develop the spatial layout for the future station that included completing supporting analyses. Staff is presenting a recommended spatial layout to the Diridon Joint Policy Advisory Board for input and advice. Staff is recommending that the policy boards and/or executive management of the four Partner Agencies accept the Concept Layout for further development in coordination with the related Partner Agency planning processes and projects.

The Concept Layout is preliminary and subject to further station design development and rail operations analysis. This memo summarizes the Layout Development Report prepared by the Partner Agencies that describes the process for developing the staff-recommended Concept Layout. For the Layout Development Report and additional background information, please refer to the project website: www.diridonsj.org/disc.

INTEGRATED CONCEPT PLAN TOPICS

The Concept Plan spatial layout planning process thus far addresses the following topics:

- Alignment and vertical profile of the heavy rail tracks at the station, as well as track approaches into the station from the north and the south.
- Location of passenger rail concourse(s) and heavy rail passenger platforms.
- Integration of all high-capacity modes at the station, including commuter and intercity rail, BART, light rail, local bus, and a future airport connector.
- Pedestrian and bicycle access to and through the station, as well as facilities for emerging modes of “micro-mobility” such as e-scooters.
- Facilities for other access modes and private vehicles, including long-distance bus, private shuttles, taxi, transportation network companies (TNC), kiss-and-ride, and park-and-ride.

- Urban integration (i.e., the connection between the station, track infrastructure, and surrounding neighborhoods and potential for amenities, such as plazas and community gathering space).

SUMMARY OF THE PROCESS

Team ABC began work on the Concept Plan with a series of interviews with the Partner Agencies. In these interviews, ABC learned about the existing context, history related to the Diridon Station area (including many years of public involvement), and each agency's project goals, design criteria, and operational requirements. This information set an important foundation in the concept planning process. Based on work, the Partner Agencies developed eight key objectives:

- A Multi-Modal, Integrated, and Human-centered Station
- The Station as Catalyst for the Urban Environment
- The Station as a Destination
- A Futureproof, Flexible, Adaptive, and Innovative Station
- Organizational Partnership
- Internal & External Stakeholder engagement
- Funding Objectives and Risk Management

Subsequently, Team ABC facilitated a series of interdisciplinary, interactive workshops with technical experts from each Partner Agency. The workshops occurred on a monthly basis. During this process, Team ABC and the Partner Agencies developed an iterative series of work products - going from a wide range of ideas for each of the station elements to ultimately the staff-recommended layout. Along the way there were many potential combinations of station elements, three possible layouts, and a fourth layout that was based on optimizing the design to maximize benefits and reduce impacts to the community and developable land based on the feedback received from engaged stakeholders and the public.

An important component of this process focused on the Big Moves of the station layout: a) vertical configurations for the heavy rail corridor and station platforms; b) the location of the future station concourse; and c) the track approaches from the north and the south into the future station. These three Big Moves have been the focus because they are the least flexible and the way in which these heavy infrastructure elements are configured will have profound effects on urban integration. These moves create an infrastructure solution to support the next 100 years of rail service.

Community Engagement

Concurrent with the workshops led by Team ABC, the Partner Agencies conducted four rounds of public outreach to share information and gather community input for consideration as part of the technical process. Community engagement is of utmost importance to the Partner Agencies to ensure that the future station realizes the ambitions of the community members and station

users while also meeting regional and statewide transportation goals. The outreach rounds corresponded to major milestones in the process. The purpose of each outreach round was as follows:

1. **Introduce** the project and gather feedback on the initial vision for the station and key objectives for the process.
2. **Present and obtain feedback** on preliminary concepts related to the vertical position of the platforms and station location as well as a draft evaluation framework for assessing design options under development.
3. **Present and obtain feedback** on three possible layouts for the station.
4. **Further explore** the Big Moves and present a fourth possible, optimized layout.

The Partner Agencies have conducted five community meetings, including a Spanish-language meeting, three presentations to the City's Station Area Advisory Group (SAAG), three pop-up booths at Diridon Station and community events, an online survey, and additional meetings with stakeholder groups and neighborhood associations. In addition, the Partner Agencies have presented and received important feedback from the JPAB at four meetings.

Based on this outreach, the top priority voiced by community members is designing the station to foster easy, convenient, well-timed connections between modes, particularly a short, direct, and intuitive connection between the BART platforms and the platforms for the other heavy rail services. Other general themes that are important to the community relate to:

- Identity as a local and regional destination
- Station access, both easy connections within the station as well as getting to the station from around San Jose
- Transit service improvements
- Street, pedestrian, and bicycle connectivity
- Activity center oriented near Santa Clara Street
- Create neighborhood quality of life
- Vibrant indoor and outdoor public spaces
- Effects on the historic depot building
- Concerns around the use of the existing southern corridor
- Potential for future transit-oriented development
- Parking and traffic
- Environmental sustainability
- Social equity
- Fiscal responsibility

These themes and the specific community input informed the Partner Agencies' work throughout the concept design process and have been reflected in the staff-recommended Concept Layout. The following section describes the Concept Layout that staff is recommending for advancement. For additional information about the community engagement process and the themes from input received, please refer to Chapter 6 of the Layout Development Report.

THE CONCEPT LAYOUT

Stakeholder and community input and ongoing technical work led to the creation of an optimized fourth layout that attempted to take some of the best features of each of the other layouts and respond to much of the feedback received. The recommended Concept Layout creates two concourses – one facing Santa Clara Street and one facing San Fernando Street. The platforms and tracks are elevated, and it utilizes the existing northern and southern track alignments.

Decision #1: Elevated Station Platforms

The Partner Agencies included an elevated station concept in the Concept Layout. Elevating the tracks and platforms brings significant benefits in the station area in terms of urban integration and allows pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles to pass underneath the tracks at street-level. This will knit together the neighborhoods to the east and west of the tracks. It also creates a significant amount of street-level space that can be used to house station facilities as well as storefronts and workspace to enliven the street in the station area. Elevating the tracks may present construction and phasing challenges and also requires complex trackwork both north and south of the station to reconnect to the rail network. While complicated, the Partner Agencies believe elevating the station will be worth the benefits derived from connecting neighborhoods, improving the streetscapes around the station, and improving safety through new grade separations. The Layout Development Report offers further details regarding the technical analysis and conclusions for the vertical configuration of tracks and platforms.

Decision #2: Station Entrances at Santa Clara Street and San Fernando Street

The Partner Agencies recommend two main concourses with four station entrance locations in the Concept Layout. One concourse is oriented toward Santa Clara Street with entrances both on the east and west sides of the station, and one concourse is oriented toward San Fernando Street with entrances both on the east and west sides of the station. It is estimated that more than 60 percent of passengers will use the northern entrance, while as many as 40 percent will use the southern entrance. The northern station hall will create a center of gravity that would promote pedestrian activity and reinforce Santa Clara Street's role as the main route to and through downtown San José. The southern station hall will allow for easy connections to the bike network and creeks and trails. This layout places BART, light rail, and VTA buses close to each other near the core of the station, which allows for efficient transfers between modes. Finally, both station halls are envisioned to feature iconic design and outdoor public space to provide increased visibility, intuitive wayfinding, and a dynamic public realm. The Layout Development Report offers further details regarding the technical analysis and preliminary conclusions for station entrances, plazas, and intermodal hub elements.

Decision #3: Existing Track Approaches into the Future Station

The Partner Agencies recommend maintaining the track approaches that generally stay within the existing northern and southern corridors. This will leverage existing rail corridor infrastructure, minimize overall community impact, and minimize the need to acquire significant land. However, in making this recommendation, the Partner Agencies want to maintain the quality of life in the neighborhoods along the tracks. Specifically, the Partner Agencies commit to work to develop a design that results in noise, vibration, and visual conditions that are no worse and

ideally better than today, even with higher future train volumes. The Layout Development Report provides additional technical analysis that underpins this recommendation.

Northern Track Approach

Layout configurations explored early in the concept plan process showed significant property impacts to land intended for transit-oriented development north of Santa Clara Street. In response, the Partner Agencies asked Team ABC to develop an alignment north of the station that would support expanded future rail service while minimizing the need to acquire land. In order to accomplish these goals, ABC shifted the station platforms to the south and developed a northern track approach that impacts less property. The resulting alignment supports related Partner Agency planning projects, including the Caltrain Business Plan and implementation of the Diridon Station Area Plan (DSAP).

Southern Track Approach

Early in the Concept Plan process, the Partner Agencies asked Team ABC to develop a track alignment south of the station that would include a rail viaduct structure over the I-280/87 interchange. Team ABC designed a viaduct option determined to be constructible and operationally viable. However, upon further study, it became clear that this option would not address as many issues as the Partner Agencies and community hoped and would actually create new concerns. First, the viaduct would create a second rail corridor in the Gardner area without reducing the overall volume of train traffic along the existing rail corridor. This would spread visual and noise impacts over a larger area and affect many more people. It would also introduce substantial track infrastructure to previously unaffected neighborhoods, particularly those on the east side of SR-87. Second, the I-280 viaduct infrastructure would have a sizable footprint, decrease the amount of developable land available within the station area, and would affect the Guadalupe River corridor.

The Partner Agencies believe that community concerns relating to safety, noise, vibration, and visual impacts, among others, would be better addressed through tangible improvements to the existing southern corridor rather than by creating an additional new rail corridor that would be expensive to build and maintain. With these tangible improvements, the Partner Agencies believe that with proper design and investment the rail corridor can coexist with the communities along the corridor, including Gregory, Gardner, and North Willow Glen, and accommodate increasing train traffic without having a negative impact on the quality of life in those neighborhoods. To this end, the Partner Agencies recommend working on and evaluating the following strategies, plans and associated measurements, in close consultation with the affected communities, in the next phases of planning:

- Grade separations keeping people and vehicles away from train traffic while maintaining good local connectivity and access;
- Sound and vibration dampening treatments for tracks;
- Aesthetic and functional treatments like sound walls with added landscaping (“green walls”) or other attractive, maintainable coverings;

- Optimize design to minimize the need to demolish existing buildings and/or acquire land; and
- Fuller Park as a permanent, city-owned park with high-quality landscaping and other amenities to be determined through a community-based process.

In addition, the Partner Agencies will work to develop appropriate metrics that will enable tracking and monitoring of these goals and conditions over time.

DECISION SUMMARY

In summary, the Concept Layout reflects overall community preferences for elevated platforms, major station entrances near Santa Clara Street as well as easy access to the south via San Fernando Street, and short transfer times between transit modes (including BART). It also creates the opportunity for grade-separated light rail through the station area and conveniently located bus stops. The layout prioritizes pedestrian, bicyclist, light rail, and local bus access, while accommodating intercity bus and vehicle drop-off and pick-up zones adjacent to the core station area. These elements will continue to be studied and refined in the next phases of the process. The layout places entrances in visible locations to support an iconic station design and “natural” wayfinding, and also includes space for a future airport connection. The Concept Layout optimizes future transit needs, while supporting future development potential. The Partner Agencies believe that this Concept Layout combines the station elements with the most promise to meet the project objectives and should be advanced to the next stage of analysis and definition.

NEXT STEPS OF THE CONCEPT PLAN

A key focus of this phase of work was to organize the necessary elements for an iconic, integrated intermodal transit center into a spatial layout. The Partner Agencies first had to organize the elements physically to understand potential impacts to the functionality of the station. This is a foundation for the Partner Agencies to now build on. The next step to advance the Concept Layout is to continue planning, analysis of rail operations, and conceptual design work on the rail corridor and station facilities to better understand and refine the benefits and tradeoffs of each component of the layout. Some elements, including but not limited to, the bus and VTA light rail layouts, may evolve during the continued planning and design process. The Partner Agencies recognize that the development of the future Diridon Station is a long-term, multi-year program.

Over the next year, a critical planning focus will be on studying the best options to organize the Partner Agencies and technical expert teams, building a viable financial plan, developing environmental strategies, and designing an implementation path to build and govern the future station. The conceptual design work will result in updated conceptual engineering drawings to define the Concept Layout, capital cost estimates, conceptual construction sequencing passenger flow analysis, and refined station footprint. There are many critical decisions ahead and the next course of work will focus on how to take the spatial vision of the Concept Layout forward through project development sufficient for environmental evaluation, and eventually implementation.

In addition to the technical work on the layout, the Partner Agencies plan to continue community and stakeholder engagement. The design and implementation strategy work will be conducted in close coordination with interdependent project efforts happening around the station area, including the Diridon Station Area Plan (DSAP) and Google’s proposed “Downtown West” mixed-use development project.

The Partner Agencies continue to be committed to the partnership set forth by the Cooperative Agreement.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Additional information on the Concept Plan, including the Layout Development Report and Frequently Asked Questions, can be found on the project website at www.diridonsj.org.