

High Speed Rail rejects options

California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) officials said they will only consider building an aerial structure with train tracks 72 feet high through downtown San Jose.

CHSRA engineers have dismissed an underground option in San Jose for years, citing “unsuitable soil conditions” – even though BART is building a tunnel and station at the same location near Diridon Station.

What surprised community members at a meeting Aug. 2 was CHSRA also rejected the at-grade option – despite its plans to run in a shared at-grade alignment with Caltrain down San Francisco Peninsula – with aerial tracks starting in the city of Santa Clara that must soar above the I-880 and I-280 freeways – with downtown San Jose in between.

However, the City of San Jose Department of Transportation has hired its own engineering experts to independently study the feasibility of the two alignments rejected by CHSRA.

Exeltech Engineers of Seattle and geotechnical and tunneling firms Shannon & Wilson and HartCrowser will look into the underground option, and HDR Engineering of Walnut Creek will take a closer look at the at-grade alignments from south San Jose through Diridon Station to Santa Clara.

The consultants have been retained to “effectively represent the City’s interests on the project and to respond to questions and concerns that have been raised by City staff, elected officials, members of the community and the community working group on the various alignments for the project,” said **Jim Ortbal**, city director of transportation.

Though many community groups, including SJDA, believe high-speed rail would present an economic opportunity for San Jose, they are concerned that CHSRA is giving San Jose short-shrift by building massive aerial viaducts, with support towers every 100



Aerial structure under construction in Fresno. High Speed Rail plans a similar viaduct through San Jose.

feet, thereby saving money for other expensive aspects of the project, most notably grade separations along the peninsula and underground into downtown San Francisco.

California voters in 2008 approved \$40 billion for a train system that would take riders from San Francisco to Los Angeles in about three hours. The estimated cost has increased more than 50 percent to \$64 billion.

SJDA and other groups want to ensure the project through San Jose makes sense functionally, aesthetically and financially.

Reactions to High-Speed Rail’s alignment presentation Aug. 2, which featured a video cartoon of a construction worker calling for help as an underground cavity filled with water, ranged from disgust to outrage.

“It was expected that CHSRA staff would use the meeting to reinforce their preferred aerial alignment through Diridon Station, but the manner in which they did it was dismissive and at times insulting,” said **Scott Knies**, SJDA executive director.

“Gutless and uninspired” is what Salas O’Brien founding partner **Carl Salas** called the CHSRA approach to San Jose. “The whole thing had been set up to throw a couple uncreative engineers in front of the crowd to eventually say: ‘That’s why an underground tunnel and station is not feasible,’” Salas said.

No timing yet on when the city will be ready to present their consultants’ conclusions. CHSRA’s published schedule shows formal selection of a “preferred alignment” this month and the completion of the Merced-to-San Jose Environmental Impact Report in August 2018.



This cartoon is High Speed Rail’s interpretation of what would happen if it tries to go underground beneath BART and Diridon Station.

Plaza Hotel: back in business supporting homeless



James Stagi views an almost-finished room.

The three-story cinder-block Plaza Hotel built in 1961 is back in business as new homeless housing after closing eight years ago.

The City of San Jose acquired the building last year from the Successor Agency to the Redevelopment Agency for \$740,000 and used \$1.8 million in Community Development Block Grant funds to get the 47 rooms ready for new tenants near the corner of San Fernando Street and Almaden Avenue.

“This will be interim housing – a stopping point for homeless individuals with jobs or in process of getting jobs – until more permanent housing becomes available,” said **Jon White**, director of real estate development for Abode Services, which oversaw the rehabilitation and is contracted for five years to manage the facility.

The first tenants expected to move in next month are being screened, White said. The plan is to move about 10 people in per week, taking a couple of

months to reach 100 percent occupancy.

Each room can accommodate one person. Most of the rooms have private sinks. Rooms on the north-facing wall have sweeping views of downtown. Those on the southern side have obstructed views of the adjacent Caravan Club.

Tenants will share bathrooms and showers on each floor. ADA units are located on the ground floor because the hotel does not have an elevator, only a staircase to the upper floors.

“It’s going to be safe and dignified – a comfortable place to live for a short time,” White said.

In addition to on-site property management, security and round-the-clock front-desk staffing, two on-site service coordinators and off-site city and county case managers will also assist tenants in securing permanent housing and connecting them to community resources.

“To take some of the pressure off those people just moving in after being homeless, we have a no-visitor policy for the first 30 days,” said **Georgette Brown**, Abode property manager, who will manage the facility on-site the first few months of its operation. “This gives everyone a chance to stabilize in their new surroundings.”

The Abode team expects the average stay to be between three and six months, though tenants can stay as long as needed to secure long-term housing.

Restoration improvements included new roof, paint, flooring and furnace and renovated bathrooms. The city also improved life safety, adding fire alarms, fire/carbon monoxide monitoring devices, and upgraded hallway lighting.

“The building was in good shape after all those years,” said **James Stagi**, grants & neighborhood programs administrator for the City of San Jose, who served as project manager for the city.

Downtown Facts: Comparison of Monthly Rental Prices

Name / Address	Bed	Bath	Sq.Ft..	Aug. 2017	Aug. 2016	June 2015
101 E. San Fernando	Studio	1	429	\$2,040	\$2,021	\$2,080
The Pierce, 60 Pierce St.	Studio	1	482	\$2,528	\$2,300	NA
Twohy Lofts, 210 S. First St.	Studio	1	600	\$2,100	\$2,000	\$2,100
Centerra, 77 N. Almaden Ave.	1	1	561	\$2,309	\$2,514	NA
Ste. Claire Apts., 311 S. First St.	1	1	607	\$2,495	\$2,595	NA
101 E. San Fernando St.	1	1	704	\$2,259	\$2,558	\$2,410
1 S. Market St.	1	1	750	\$2,666	\$3,004	\$2,750
The Pierce, 60 Pierce St.	1	1	769	\$2,729	\$2,675 (720sf)	NA
88 E. San Fernando St.	1	1	830	\$3,400	\$2,450 (673sf)	\$2,600 (824 sf)
Villa Torino, 29 W. Julian St.	1	1	845	\$2,507	\$2,329 (786sf)	\$2,200
Axis, 38 N. Almaden Blvd	1	1	872	\$2,995	\$2,950 (975sf)	\$3200 (studio)
33 South Third Apartments	1	1	939	\$2,595	\$2,651	NA
Three Sixty Residences, Market St.	1	1	984	\$2,936	\$2,669 (859 sf)	\$2,200 (795 sf)
Villa Torino, 29 W. Julian St.	2	1	1,031	\$2,536	\$2,975	\$2,476
1 S. Market St.	2	1	1,034	\$3,177	\$3,657	\$2,963
101 E. San Fernando St.	2	2	1,077	\$3,004	\$3,720	\$3,098
The Pierce, 60 Pierce St.	2	2	1,090	\$3,410	\$3,200 (1035sf)	NA
City Heights, 175 W. St. James St.	2	2	1,161	\$3,100	\$2,795 (1100sf)	\$2,800
Axis, 38 N. Almaden Blvd.	2	2	1,250	\$3,650	\$3,650	NA
Three Sixty Residences, Market St.	2	2	1,240	\$3,365	NA	\$3,050
Centerra, 77 N. Almaden Ave.	2	2	1,321	\$3,917	\$3,871 (1224sf)	NA
88 E. San Fernando St.	2	2.5	1,347	\$3,900	\$3,495 (1165sf)	\$3,400
Three Sixty Residences, Market St.	2	2.5	1,550PH	\$4,690	\$9,017 (3b, 2902sf)	\$4,417 (3b, 1778 sf)
1 S. Market St.	3	2	1,359	\$4,188	\$4,028	\$4,337
101 E. San Fernando St.	3	2	1,395	\$3,861	\$3,953	\$3,683
Centerra, 77 N. Almaden Ave.	3	2	1,526	\$4,412	\$5,580	NA

Sources: Property sites preferred; otherwise Apartments.com, Zillow.com and Craigslist.org

Notes: Lowest price of range listed. Prices likely increase on higher floors.

Downtown Events



SoFA Farmers' Market: SoFA businesses have collaborated to start a weekend Farmers' Market for downtown residents. The SoFA Farmers' Market is Sunday, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at 350 S. First St., in the parking lot across from the California Theatre.

The West Coast Farmers' Market Association is bringing the farmers to San Jose with their fresh fruits and vegetables, plus gourmet and baked foods artisans. The event also includes live entertainment and a kids' play area. Visit facebook.com/events/462524764116929.

Coming up in September and early October

Sept. 1: South First Fridays and STREET MRKT, SoFA District, southfirstfridays.com

Sept. 1, 8, 15, 22, 29: Downtown Farmers' Market at San Pedro Square, sjdowntown.com/farmers-market-presented-by-kaiser-permanente

Sept. 16: Bark in the Park, William Street Park, barksanjose.org

Sept. 7: City Dance – Hip Hop. Instruction 6 p.m., dancing 7-9 p.m. Plaza de Cesar Chavez, facebook.com/citydancesj

Sept. 8, 15, 22 and 29: Fountain Alley Fridays – Musical acts, games open mic comedy and table tennis each Friday, 6-10 p.m.

Sept. 14: City Dance – Bollywood, facebook.com/citydancesj

Sept. 17: Viva Calle SJ, city streets, vivacallesj.org

Sept. 17: SoFA Sunday Series, Parque de los Pobladores, facebook.com/sofasundaysanjose

Sept. 24: SoFA Street Fair; SoFA District; facebook.com/sofastreetfair

Sept. 21: City Dance – Disco, facebook.com/citydancesj

Sept. 23: Conscious San Jose Festival, St. James Park, consciousanjosefestival.com

Sept. 28: City Dance – East Coast Swing, facebook.com/citydancesj

Sept. 30: Sharks Fitness Faceoff, Arena Green, nhl.com/sharks/sharksfoundation/fitness-faceoff

Oct. 2: Little Italy Festival, Little Italy, facebook.com/events/1118330198213650

Oct. 6: South First Fridays and STREET MRKT, SoFA

District, southfirstfridays.com

Oct. 7-8: Rock 'n' Roll Half Marathon, Plaza de Cesar Chavez, runrocknroll.com/san-jose

Oct. 14: Pumpkins in the Park, Guadalupe River Park, grpg.org/events/pumpkins-in-the-park

Downtown News

Safety barriers at library: After two incidents involving the upper floors, the city and San Jose State University had seven-foot-tall safety barriers installed on the third through seventh floors of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library.

Scaffolding in the atrium is expected to be removed mid-month and the project is to be completed soon after, said Librarian **Jill Bourne**. Design expectations are for the light and openness of the atrium to remain, and the safety enhanced, Bourne said. Project cost is \$3 million.



Designing better bikeways

The City of San Jose hosted transportation experts from Chicago, Atlanta and Vancouver and asked the community to participate in a two-day conference to improve bikeways and expand the San Jose bike network. The August event included a pop-up protected bike lane along Fourth Street. SJDA and the Knight Foundation are among the local groups working for longer-term bikeway solutions.

Burning from both ends: Four pieces of Burning Man will make their way from "Black Rock City" in Nevada to downtown San Jose as part of a new "Playa to Paseo" initiative involving the City Office of Cultural Affairs and the Burning Man Project, which hosts the annual cultural event over Labor Day weekend. The first temporary art installation should be introduced to downtown San Jose in October. Ultimately, the partnership will encourage more San Jose artist participation in Burning Man, creating a playa-to-paseo-to-playa effect.

"The dynamic art installations will not only enhance the downtown urban experience, but connect people to San Jose and its sense of place," said Mayor **Sam Liccardo**.

At the Convention Center

Sept. 20 – Infra Summit (3,000)

Sept. 23-24 – Alternative Press Expo (4,330) alternativepressexpo.com

Sept. 25-27 – API World (3,000) apiworld.co

Sept. 27 – AdvMed MedTech Conference (1,875) advmed.org

Groundwerx / PBID News



Welcome additions

Groundwerx summer hires and promotions include: Back row from left - Ruperto Garza, Adam Stanislawek and Jimmy Yamamoto; Front - Elizabeth Lopez and Angelina Lopez. All are involved in keeping downtown clean.

My San Jose app available: The My San Jose app allows residents to report potholes, graffiti, abandoned vehicles, streetlight outages and illegal dumping to the city.

"It's great for reporting those things that we don't do at Groundwerx like code violations or traffic lights out," said

Chloe Verrey, operations manager for the downtown Property-Based Improvement District.

But downtown residents should still use the Groundwerx app, available free for Apple and Android devices, to report sidewalk messes, tree and plant issues, for safety escorts and other maintenance issues, Verrey added.

Business News

New watering holes: Labyrinth Bar & Kitchen has opened at 45 Post St. in the former Peking House, serving a combination of Asian fusion and New American favorites from the kitchen and popular cocktails from the bar. Food served from 5 p.m. until closing time. Check facebook.com/LabyrinthSJ.

Jorge Sanchez has expanded his downtown operations, opening Los San Patricios Cantina at 81 W. San Fernando St., next to his Chacho's Restaurant.

The name is Spanish for Saint Patrick. The new bar has an Irish-Latin theme.

Intense calorie burning: Orangetheory Fitness is expected to open this month in the Community Towers building at 111 W. St. John St. To enjoy the benefits of the "Orange Effect," take the 60-minute workout sessions resulting in increased energy, visible changes to your body and the burning of calories even after the workout has ended. Check sanjose-downtown.orangetheoryfitness.com.



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From the Archives

10 years ago – September 2007 – A handful of landmark buildings came back to life as the result of small- and large-scale renovations, including: the Western Union building at 124-126 E. Santa Clara, 17 S. Fourth, Alliance Land Building at 101-115 E. Santa Clara, Storm Property at 73-75 N. San Pedro, Porter Stock Building at 83-91 S. First, Crescent Jewelers at 93-95 S. First, Fountain Alley Buildings 28-40 E. Santa Clara and the Bassler Haynes and Beach buildings at 35 and 49 E. Santa Clara.

15 years ago – September 2002 – The Valley Transportation Authority Board made "critical" decisions to align future BART tracks along Santa Clara Street and have three stations downtown – at City Hall, Market Street and the arena.

20 years ago – September 1997 – SJDA held its 10th anniversary party in a tiki-torched area of St. James Park. The 200 guests in attendance "stayed in the park well past sunset – a first-time experience for most."

25 years ago – September 1992 – The "Big Eight" San Jose arts groups produced the San Jose Arts Card and Your Guide to San Jose for 35,000 arts patrons, just as the curtain rose on the fall season. This is one of SJDA's longest traditions, and a version of the promotion still serves as a gift for patrons, who can get \$10 off meals at some of downtown's best restaurants.

SJDA Annual Meeting

Save the Date - Oct. 13: San Jose Downtown Association's Annual Meeting will be Oct. 13 at San Jose First United Methodist Church, 24 N. Fifth St., from 8-9:30 a.m.

The meeting agenda includes:

- ◆ "State of Downtown" speech by Executive Director **Scott Knies**;
- ◆ Summary of the organization's financial statements;
- ◆ Recaps by chairs of the many SJDA committees;
- ◆ Election of SJDA board members for 2018.

Coffee and continental breakfast will be available. RSVP at sjdarsvp@sjdowntown.com.

DOWNTOWN DIMENSION

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