

BART to Downtown: Light at the end of the tunnel

After 25 years of lobbying, advocating and campaigning for three different local sales tax measures, sitting through countless meetings to look at proposed station locations and designs, tunnel configurations (single bore versus double bore), and facilitating stakeholder meetings with impacted businesses, Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) through downtown San Jose is on track.

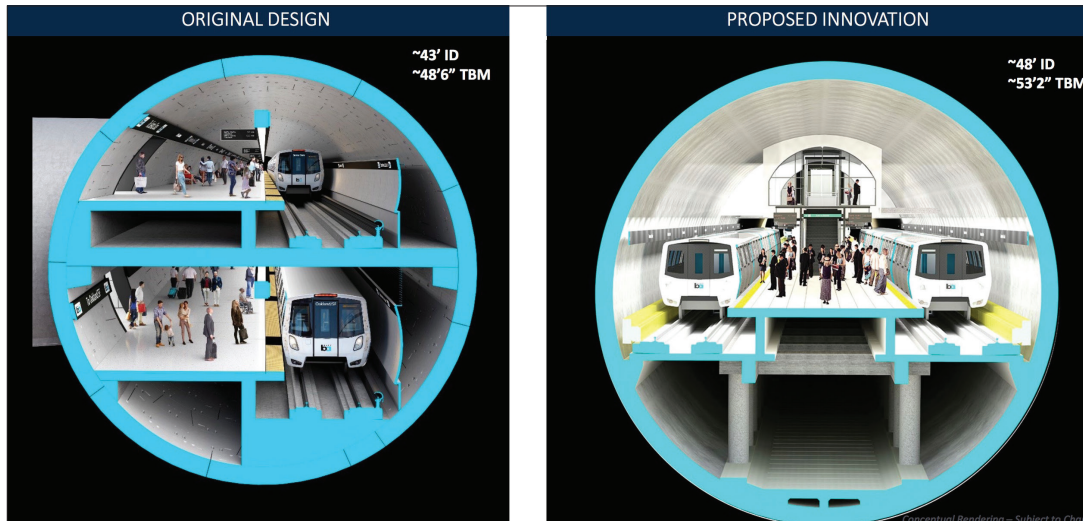
By the end of this year, Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) is expected to reach crucial planning, engineering and real estate milestones, which is where SJDA has been most involved. The BART Phase Two project would connect the current end of the line at Berryessa to the City of Santa Clara with the subway running beneath Santa Clara Street in downtown.

Dramatic design revisions have been recently revealed by BART and VTA staff and shared with their respective boards. The “innovations” to the design surfaced after tunneling contractor KST was brought on board by VTA.

Larger tunnel

On Aug. 26, a new single bore tunnel design was unveiled with a 20 percent larger diameter tunnel that allows a center boarding platform for all three underground stations, rather than stacked platforms under the previous plan. The center boarding platform is standard in all BART stations. The new design allows for:

- ◆ side-by-side tracks for the entire 6-mile extension;
- ◆ a shallower descent to the platform from the street level;



The proposed side-by-side tracks simplify station operations and offer more convenient access for riders.

- ◆ improved vertical circulation with less switchback escalators;
- ◆ a two-thirds smaller station box, resulting in less digging from the surface;
- ◆ improved ventilation and emergency egress;
- ◆ potential access to the boarding platforms from both sides of Santa Clara Street.

“What’s not to like with the new BART design?” asked **Scott Knies**, outgoing CEO of SJDA. “The changes provide expanded station access, improved passenger experience and reduces operational risks and project cost.”

A main objective of SJDA, SPUR and other transit advocates is to have access to the main downtown subway station from the south side of Santa Clara Street. Although the center boarding platforms now make this a possibility, the original single bore tunnel only cleared north side subway portals in its 2017 plan.

“It is worth getting this project right and VTA has shown it can move quickly on environmental work, which will be required for the south side station,” Knies added.

While a main reason the large-diameter single-bore tunnel was selected — to avoid surface level impacts associated with cut-and-cover construction — the station boxes and portals to the subway still have to be excavated.

VTA revealed the potential south side station portal could be at the corner of Second and Santa Clara streets. If the new site is approved, it would eliminate the need for a similar north side portal currently planned mid-block between First and Second streets.

Three San Jose stations

The locations of stations along the 6-mile BART extension into downtown are: 28th Street/Little Portugal; Downtown San Jose (Santa Clara Street, between Market and Third streets); and Diridon along West Santa Clara Street facing SAP Center. A fourth station will be above ground at the end of the line in the city of Santa Clara.

Although designs are still preliminary, with many more stakeholder meetings scheduled, the downtown station is envisioned as a gateway to a modern multicultural destination with special focus on SJSU students. Diridon Station will be integrated with its surroundings, including Google’s Downtown West, other nearby transit-oriented development and SAP Center.

When complete, BART to downtown is estimated to eliminate over 3.9 million automobile trips per year, reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 60.2 tons.

Caltrain development at front of line

Caltrain is moving forward with plans to build two office buildings totaling 1.1 million square feet in front of Diridon Station before other potential developers might submit their proposals.

“We wanted to make sure to get our place in the line and capture the square footage so it wouldn’t be eaten up by other developments,” said **Aaron Aknin**, project manager and land-use advisor for Caltrain. “We wanted to be first out of the gate, and we also wanted to wait and follow a plan that has already been adopted so that there would be some certainty of what the city wants to see.”



Proposed buildings frame a plaza with direct line of sight to historic station.

The City Council approved the amended Diridon Station Area Plan (DSAP) along with Google’s Downtown West development in May 2021. The available 13.7 million square feet office capacity cleared in the DSAP includes 7.3 million square feet for Downtown West — leaving 6.4 million for other commercial development.

The three-acre Caltrain parcel between Cahill and Montgomery

streets was originally within Google’s initial scope, but the timing for Google and Caltrain didn’t mesh, so it was removed, Aknin said, adding the two entities retain good relations and meet monthly.

Plans by design firm Perkins and Will call for two office buildings on current parking lots (totaling 270 spaces). The slightly larger South building (546,809 square feet) would be 15 stories and 250 feet tall; the North building (532,325 square feet) would be 16 floors and 265 feet high. Both buildings will top out well above the nearby arena, which at 117 feet was once the tallest building in the area before the City worked with the airport, airlines and downtown stakeholders led by SJDA to raise maximum height limits.

The buildings will be separated by a plaza directly above the VTA light-rail tunnel that bisects the site and makes building difficult.

Continued on Back Page

Attend SJDA Annual Meeting on Oct. 14

San Jose Downtown Association will introduce new CEO **Alex Stettinski** and hear outgoing CEO **Scott Knies’** final “State of the Downtown” at the SJDA Annual Meeting Oct. 14.

The meeting also includes financial reports on SJDA’s assessment districts and the popular lightning-round two-minute committee presentations.

Attend in person at the Hammer Theatre Center or watch online from your electronic device. Both ways, the meeting begins at 8:15 a.m.

Register at sjdowntown.com/sjda-public-meeting.

Please participate in the election of SJDA’s Board of Directors for the 2023-2025 term by [submitting your ballot](https://survey-monkey.com/r/SJDAmembersurvey2022) at survey-monkey.com/r/SJDAmembersurvey2022. Members located within the Business Improvement District are eligible to vote. All ballots received by Oct. 13 will be eligible for a drawing for one of three prize packages,

Face masks are recommended. Bridge Bank and Hammer Theatre Center sponsor the Annual Meeting.

Business News

SJ Marriott part of major property deal: San Jose Marriott is one of 25 properties acquired by Brookfield Real Estate Funds in its \$3.8 billion purchase of Watermark Lodging Trust.

San Jose Marriott, Ritz Carlton San Francisco and Fairmont Sonoma Mission Inn and Spa, plus three Southern California properties are part of the roster of eight resorts, 16 full-service and one select-service hotels totaling 8,163 rooms involved in the nationwide deal.

The average price per room key is \$481,300, meaning the 510-room Marriott's value ranges between \$200 million and \$245 million. CBRE paid \$83 million for the hotel in 2013 and Watermark acquired it for \$154 million in 2016.

In contrast, the Westin San Jose, formerly the Sainte Claire located across the Market-San Carlos streets intersection from the Marriott was purchased by Irvine-based Khanna Enterprises in December, with previous owner Aju Hotels and Resorts taking a loss. Aju paid \$64 million in 2017, and county records show Khanna paid \$44.9 million for the land and building.

Check watermarklodging.com for the list of properties acquired by Brookfield REIT.

More than Basic: ABVE the Basics prepares modern Mexican food and applies a very modern business model. Established in 2020 as a food truck service, ABVE the Basics is located inside the brick-and-mortar Rec Room, 1 E. San Fernando St. "in our kitchen take-over location," according to abvethebasics.com.

Plates are a combination of Mexican and American with a street food twist, all made from scratch. Tacos and bowls feature steak, carnitas, fish, chicken, pork belly and shrimp, plus a vegetarian option with "tator tots."

The Rec Room location is open for dinner Thursday, Friday and Saturday, 6-9:30 p.m. Follow them on Instagram [@abvethebasics](https://www.instagram.com/abvethebasics) for their food truck location.



Post Street Al Fresco returns

Outdoor food, beverage and social activities have returned to a closed Post Street Thursday-through Sunday nights and business has picked up on both ends of the block between Market and First streets. Splash and Labyrinth anchor the Market Street side of the block, while Macs and newest street addition The Club (open for now with a taco stand) occupy the middle of the block. That leaves Fifty-Five South and its Airstream bar-modified trailer plus a number of adjacent First Street businesses – Cream, Insomnia, Nomikai, Fuze, Good Karma, Temple, Original Gravity and Paper Plane – on the active east end of the street. Post Street daytime businesses are served by normal vehicle traffic between 9 a.m. Monday and 4 p.m. Thursday.

Downtown News

Reimbursable transit passes for employees: The City of San Jose's Department of Transportation has started a pilot program that provides reimbursement to businesses that enroll in VTAs SmartPass Program.

Using the Parking Fund, the City (DOT) will reimburse companies on a first-come-first-served basis, with a total of \$100,000 available this fiscal year and another \$100,000 next fiscal year.

Large and small companies in any metered district including downtown, Japantown and East Santa Clara Street can qualify. Businesses must get passes for every employee – not just some employees – by signing up at VTA.org/go/fares/smartpass. Once businesses get their passes they will need to go to DOT with proof that they purchased passes.

The downtown passes range from \$165 for non-profits to \$180. Links off the VTA SmartPass Web page help

to determine the SmartPass categories, desired service level and annual rate per participant.

The transportation department's goal is to help get people out of their cars and into public transit. To receive reimbursement for VTA SmartPass enrollment, email DOT at parking@sanjoseca.gov.



The Taft now open

Constructed during the pandemic, The Taft at 477 S. Market St. in SoFA opened Aug. 8 for immediate move-ins. Less than 100 units of 135 total apartments remain for rent in the building which includes a roof-top lounge and courtyard garden, clubhouse, fitness center, bike repair, and dog wash and grooming center. Acquity Really built the six-story building. Have a look at thetaftapts.com.

Front of line

From Front Page

One-third of the site will be devoted to the plaza and open to the general public.

"For those enjoying the plaza, there's a direct view of the station framed like a picture," Aknin said.

The plaza is designed to be flush with the station entrance on one end and Montgomery Street on the other. Four floors above on the north building will be an outdoor area with more amenities from which the public could look down upon the plaza or east toward downtown.

Most of the 46,000-square feet of retail space is located along the plaza and an atrium in the north tower that are accessible to the general public as well as employees.

Per the DSAP, four floors of underground parking in both buildings totaling 792 spaces will be 24-hours accessible to the public, including for arena events. In addition, 352 bike parking spaces are planned for the development.

The project is currently under the entitlement and review process, with a community meeting planned for November-December time frame and continual communication and outreach to stakeholders, said **Nadine Fogarty**, Caltrain deputy director with real estate oversight.

"We feel like we're well-positioned because we're going through this entitlement process now and set up to move forward as we emerge out of the pandemic," Fogarty added.

Project approval could happen as early as summer 2023. With an eye on the economy, the process to put out a request for proposal for a developer would follow, Fogarty said. Caltrain would retain ownership of the land and work out a long-term lease with the developer, who would be responsible for managing all improvements including plaza, buildings and landscaping.

The earliest construction could start is in two-and-a-half years, she said.

Foundation News

Downtown Doors: Ten more artworks from San Jose-area high school students have been selected to enhance the center city's public landscape as part of San Jose Downtown Foundation's Downtown Doors program. Downtown Doors starts as a pure artwork competition among students from local high schools. The latest class of artworks submitted their entries in spring and were celebrated Sept. 29 in the new school year.

This year's selections are from Del Mar, Mt. Pleasant, Westmont, Independence, Andrew Hill, Willow Glen, Leigh and Notre Dame high schools, plus Bellarmine College Prep. Since the program began, 319 works from students at 23 different schools have been added to the downtown streetscape to make the environment more enjoyable and vibrant. The works are enlarged and transferred onto a vinyl coating affixed to doors and utility boxes. The student artists not only learn about the business and challenges of creating art for the general public, they receive a \$300 honorarium and a one-year subscription to Adobe Creative Cloud software, plus they earn a \$650 donation to their school's art program.

Since 2020 and the start of the pandemic, SJDF – along with the teachers and students – kept the Downtown



A sampling of Downtown Doors artworks from the Class of 2022.

Doors going forward. It was one more positive for people returning to work to see the new Downtown Doors in place. The Foundation celebrates the 20th year of Downtown Doors in 2023.

The Downtown Foundation is a charitable organization supporting arts and educational programming. Adobe, the San Jose Office of Cultural Affairs, SV Creates, Silicon Valley Community Foundation – Donor Circle for the Arts and Republic Services have been longtime supporters of Downtown Doors.

Downtown property owners and site hosts have also been quick to approve the "Doors" on their buildings. This year, thanks go to Hines capital market company, Signia by Hilton, San Jose Marriott, 360 Residences, The 88, **Mike Messenger** of Meacham/Oppeneheimer and the City of San Jose.

Groundwerx Employee of the Month — Christina Ruiz

Christina Ruiz did a little of everything in the month of August, filling in for vacationing staffers and those out sick. Her "pitch-in-and-get-it done" attitude made an impression on her peers and managers who nominated her for Groundwerx Employee of the Month.

Normally an office administrator, Ruiz filled in as dispatcher, cleaning ambassador and Groundwerx Supervisor – which meant collecting 200 pounds of trash, making 48 business contacts, cleaning an entire block face, removing 10 graffiti tags and moving the Post Street barricades. Much of this was done during the late-August heat wave.

Ruiz started her Groundwerx career as a cleaning ambassador in 2013 before moving to an administrative role. Her day-to-day responsibilities including dispatching, filing, answering calls, assigning tasks and keeping inventory. She communicates with every employee, knows all the cleaning routes, assists every team, fills in as needed and helps train new hires.

Although born and raised in Morgan Hill, Ruiz loves downtown San Jose and is particularly excited for the BART station to open so close to work. Her favorite places to eat downtown are City Fish, The Old Spaghetti Factory and Con Azucar.

She tries to spend most weekends with her three grandchildren who live in Live Oak in Sutter County but takes a break from being "Grandma" when the San Jose Jazz SummerFest rolls around.

Like many Groundwerx team members, Ruiz is most proud of the work she does with the unhoused individuals in the downtown. She once helped someone get connected to People Assisting the Homeless (PATH), and later learned that person was one of the first to move into the permanent supportive housing project on Second Street.

In terms of staying on task, Ruiz simply knows what needs to be done and doesn't wait to be told. She is proud to serve with Groundwerx and represent SJDA, the PBID and the downtown community.

Use the Groundwerx app or call (408) 287-1520 to report a mess.

 sjdowntown.com/groundwerx



Christina Ruiz

DOWNTOWN



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From the Archives

10 years ago – October 2012 – Parque de los Pobladores in SoFA reopened after extensive renovation. The park includes new plazas and granite spheres recycled from the Convention Center.

20 years ago – October 2002 – Notre Dame High School students returned to class with the new Manley Hall at its center. The three-story structure includes library, fully wired computer lab, science labs and 11 classrooms. It also incorporates two fireplaces from the hall that was razed to make way for the new building. Sunflower tiles painted by all 600 students lined the courtyard at the building's entrance.

25 years ago – October 1997 – "Wow! I haven't seen so much activity in downtown San Jose since the '80s," gushed **Abi Maghamfar** in his president's column. His highlights included the nearly complete Repertory Theater (now the Hammer), new Zanotto's, a dome on the Tech Museum, the second Adobe tower and ground breaking on Paseo Villas.

30 years ago – October 1992 – The highlight of the first SoFA Street Fair was the DJ dance area, where "hundreds danced elbow-to-elbow on San Salvador Street." Thousands attended the fair featuring local club bands and flamenco and belly dancers. Businesses reported positive sales from the turnout.