

Bayshore Station envisioned as vibrant transit hub

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The forlorn Caltrain Bayshore Station, straddling the shabby border between San Francisco and Brisbane, could be refashioned into a vibrant transit hub in coming years as the vacant lands around it bloom with new construction.

But nothing happens quickly in the development business, especially when hosts of dueling cities, builders, planners and regional agencies all need to have their say.

Many of those groups have conflicting priorities and rules, but they typically cooperate when development concerns and effects don't respect city and county lines, said Richard Napier, executive director of the City/County Association of Governments of San Mateo County.

"I've yet to see a dotted line as I drive down the street saying this is Brisbane or Daly City, and that is San Francisco," he added.

The new Bayshore Station plan is an example of that cooperation. The 69-page report on the station's future was written by San Francisco transit planners, with input from Caltrain and other San Mateo County transit agencies.

"There are a lot of moving parts," said Chester Fung, principle transportation planner for the San Francisco County Transportation Authority, which requested the plan for a new and expanded station. "But this is early enough so that (the plan) can really affect what's done in the future."

Keeping options open

By design, the plan makes no recommendations. Instead, it presents options for the station that may change as development plans around it evolve.

The modern-looking station, renovated just eight years ago, sits at the edge of the San Francisco neighborhoods of Visitacion Valley and Little Hollywood, across Tunnel Avenue from the modern equivalent of the city dump, Recology's transfer station.

Surrounded on three sides by acres of vacant land, the Bayshore Station is one of the least-used stops on the Caltrain system.

"It's isolated," Fung told a panel of city supervisors, sitting as part of the transportation authority last

month. "It's a little bit scary to be there late at night, because there's not much around."

That will change.

Immediately northwest of the station is the site of the former Schlage Lock Factory, a now-vacant piece of land that's been approved for 1,250 new housing units and about 120,000 square feet of commercial space.

Less than a mile east, on the other side of Highway 101, is Executive Park, where plans call for replacing three office buildings with 1,600 [apartments](#) and condominiums.

But the real game changer is Brisbane's huge Baylands project, which is set to rise on 684 acres of the former Southern Pacific Railroad yard to the west and south of the station.

The developer hopes to build about 4,400 residential units and 6.9 million square feet for office, retail, research and development, and other commercial uses, and Brisbane planners expect to hear the case this summer. A competing citizens' plan would dump the housing and boost the commercial development to 8.3 million square feet.

Transit hub envisioned

This explosion of development, which will take place over decades, will produce a huge demand for transit that needs to be considered now, Napier said.

"All too often, transportation lags development, and that doesn't work," he said.

The report focuses on transit projects already in the pipeline.

The T-Third light-rail line, which now ends at Sunnydale Avenue, could serve the Bayshore Station with a half-mile loop of new track. Early plans for the Baylands project call for extending Geneva Avenue from its current dead end at Bayshore Boulevard through the new development to Highway 101.

There's a planned bus rapid transit line that would run from the proposed Hunters Point Shipyard Transit Center to BART's Balboa Station. The Bayshore Station would be an ideal spot for riders to transfer to Caltrain and Muni.

With plans for dense residential development in the neighborhoods around the station, efforts also need to be made to provide safe and easy access to the station for pedestrians and bicycle riders.

"We need to ensure we have sufficient transportation solutions" for the future developments, Brian Fitzpatrick, Caltrain's property development manager, said at the authority hearing earlier this month.

Conflicting priorities

Even with the early start, nothing will be easy, transit planners admitted.

The planned bus rapid transit route that takes it to the Bayshore Station, for example, conflicts with Recology's tentative plan to close Brisbane's Beatty Road and expand its facility south. While the city's

preferred plan is an elevated route over Beatty Road into the station, Recology officials want a more expensive tunnel under their property.

Money is also a problem. While the station improvements alone would cost about \$60 million, the price tag for all the planned transit upgrades would be close to \$400 million, a sum that's not going to be available anytime soon, Fung said.

When Gov. **Jerry Brown** shuttered California redevelopment agencies Feb. 1, he eliminated an important source of money for urban transit projects. Cities are now scrambling to find funding to ensure that the new development plans don't bring gridlock along with them.

But those concerns can't stop planning for the future.

"It's inevitable we're going to see that part of San Francisco and Brisbane developed, so we need a (Bayshore) station that's usable," Supervisor **John Avalos** said at the transportation authority. "Right now, it's not."

Station information

Plans for Caltrain's Bayshore Station, as well as a link to the new study, can be found at the San Francisco County Transportation Authority: www.sfcta.org/content/view/807/408

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<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2012/04/02/MNAH1NRITB.DTL>

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