

JPB CAC
CORRESPONDENCE
AS OF
April 15, 2025

From: [Roland Lebrun](#)
To: info@bayareametro.gov
Cc: [Board \(@caltrain.com\)](#); [cacsecretary \(@caltrain.com\)](#); [SFCTA Board Secretary](#); [SFCTA CAC](#); [TJPA DTX](#); [TJPA CAC](#)
Subject: Item7a MTC Resolution No. 4537, Revised.
Date: Tuesday, March 25, 2025 4:41:18 PM
Attachments: [Item7a MTC Resolution No. 4537, Revised..pdf](#)
[Attachment 1 Zabaneh 2017.pdf](#)
[Attachment 2 December 2015 DTX SEIR comments.pdf](#)

ATTENTION: This email came from an external source. Do not open attachments or click on links from unknown senders.

Dear Chair Noack and Commissioners,

Please find attached my comments and a recommendation that the Commission approve the advancement of the Portal to the next MAP level with conditions.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of these recommendations.

Respectfully,

Roland Lebrun

March 26, 2025 MTC Commission Board meeting

Item 7a MTC Resolution No. 4537, Revised.

Major Project Advancement Policy: Stage Gate Evaluation and Recommendations for Transbay Joint Powers Authority - the Portal Project

Dear Chair Noack and Commissioners,

Please allow me to start by reiterating that the advancement of this project to MAP Level 1 is long overdue and I urge the Commission to unanimously support resolution 4537 as amended with conditions as recommended below.

The intent of this letter is to substantiate and elaborate on the comments I made at the March 12, Programming & Allocations Committee that **“the alignment as currently proposed will never be able to accommodate full-length 400 meter (1,312 feet) high speed trains”** as contemplated by Brightline West on the future LA to Las Vegas high speed line.

<https://www.google.com/search?q=brightline+west+%221350%22+feet+platforms>

The root cause of the problem is located on page 11 of the 2018 FSEIR Addendum

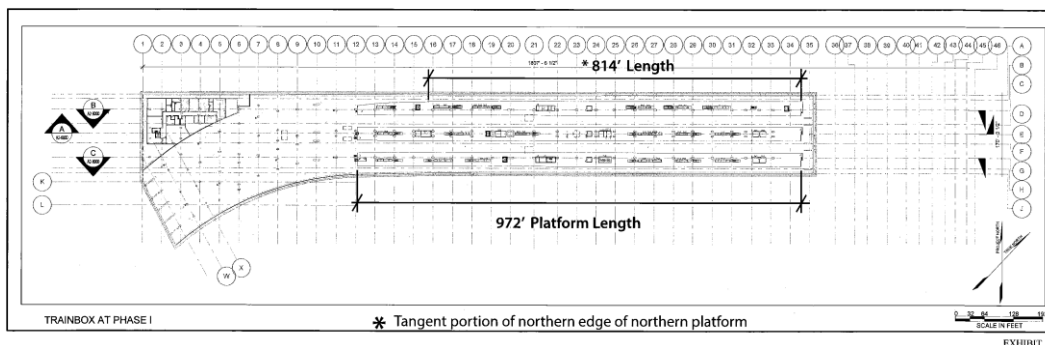
(<https://www.tjpa.org/media/35957/download?inline>) which reads as follows:

“Description and Objective of Proposed Revision

Updated guidance from the CHSRA would allow reduced platform lengths, with several cars of the double-consist trains extending beyond the platform face, as long as the double-consists do not affect adjacent track movements (Zabaneh 2017)”

“Zabaneh 2017” is the last document listed in the References Section of the FSEIR on page 114 which reads as follows: “Zabaneh, Mark. 2017 (December 15). Letter to Frank Vacca, Chief of Rail Operations at California High-Speed Rail Authority **discussing the removal Transit Center train box extension from the Transbay Program.**” (attached for your convenience).

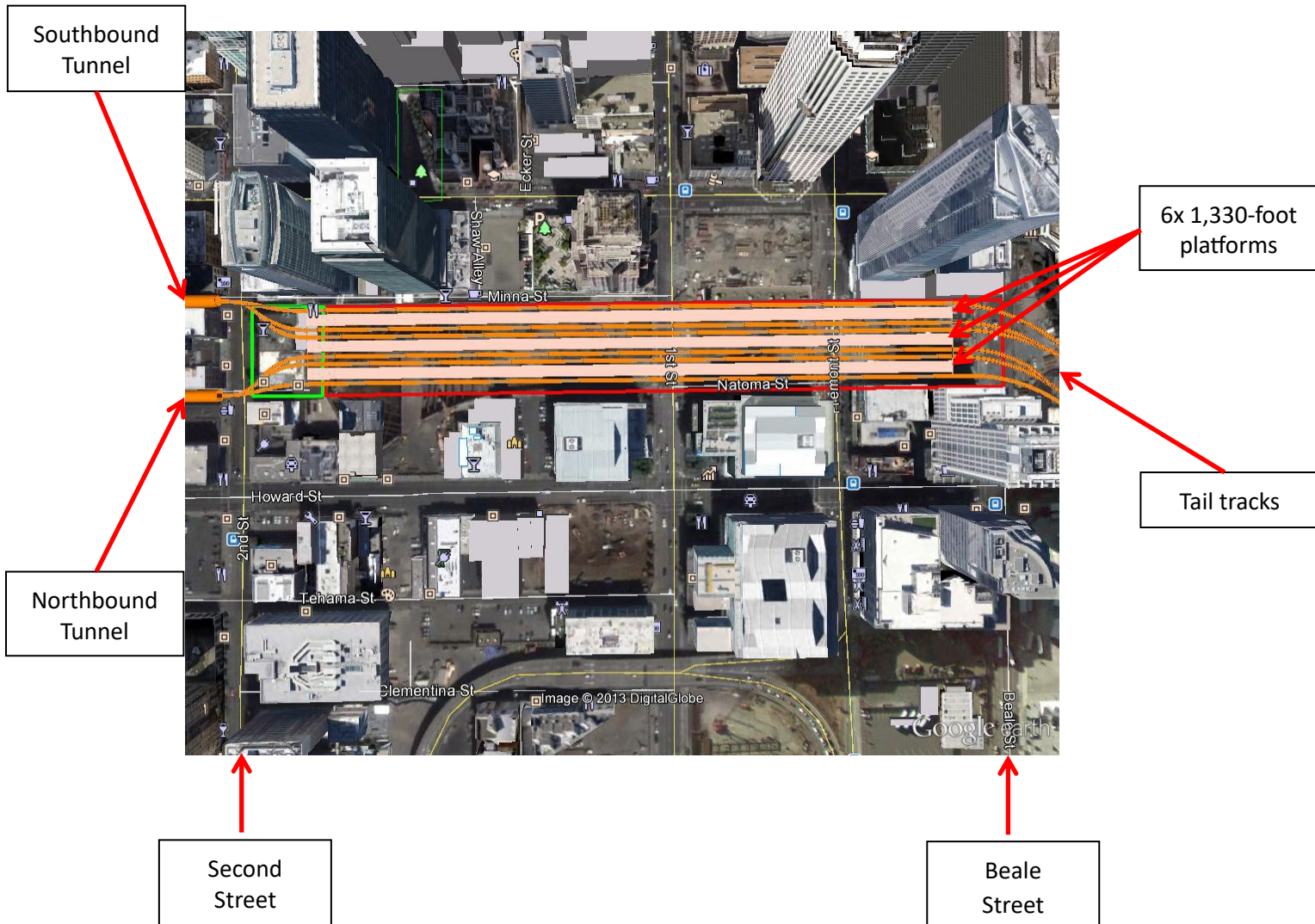
The last diagram in the letter shows that **the shortened platforms cannot possibly accommodate a 1,350-foot long Brightline West double-consist** even though the box as currently constructed is 1,530 feet long.



Conclusion

I respectfully urge the commission to consider approving the advancement of the Portal (formerly known as the Downtown Extension or DTX for short) project to the next MAP Level with conditions and recommendations along the lines suggested in the 2015 SEIR which introduced a twin-bore alignment designed to resolve the above fatal flaw while enabling a future connection to the East Bay (LINK21) as mandated by SB916. [https://hsr.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Final EIRS FJ V4-09 Ch 24 IndividualComments.pdf](https://hsr.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Final_EIRS_FJ_V4-09_Ch_24_IndividualComments.pdf) (page 94) attached for your convenience.

“The SEIR should consider an alternate DTX alignment which would enable platform lengthening by extending the train box one block west (towards 2nd Street) while simultaneously providing a viable connection to a Transbay tunnel. This alignment would also eliminate conflicts with the 201 Mission building and enable a 6th full-length through platform (total 3 eastbound and 3 westbound platforms).”



Respectfully submitted for your consideration.

Roland Lebrun



TRANSBAY JOINT POWERS AUTHORITY

Mark Zabaneh • Executive Director

December 15, 2017

Frank Vacca
Chief of Rail Operations
California High-Speed Rail Authority
770 L Street, Suite 620
Sacramento, California 95814

Subject: Transbay Program
Removal of the Transit Center Train Box Extension from the Transbay Program

Dear Mr. Vacca:

The Transbay Joint Powers Authority (TJPA) appreciates recent discussions with the California High-Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) regarding the reevaluation of the CHSRA's train platform length needs within the train box at the Transit Center. It is our understanding that the train box as it is currently constructed (about 1492 feet in length) will provide the platform length that is needed for the CHSRA and no extension is required.

The proposed train box extension (Beale Street to the east side of Main Street) that has not been constructed was introduced to the Transbay Program in the draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report in 2015 at the request of the CHSRA in order to provide fully-tangent platform tracks for double-length 400-meter-long high-speed trains. The CHSRA subsequently issued a directive to designers for the CHSRA system dated September 7, 2016, that platform faces need only have 800 feet of tangent length. In correspondence with CHSRA on October 4, 2017, and October 24, 2017, it was stated that the following conditions must be met at the transit center:

- All platform tracks must allow 1,400 feet clear track from the fouling point of adjacent tracks
- Platforms must be provided at their longest constructible length, but no less than 800 feet

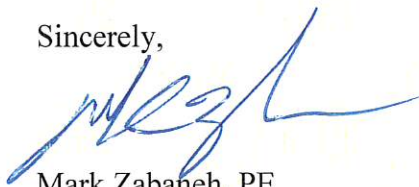
However, nothing being constructed would preclude the extension of the trainbox in the future should it be required.

The TJPA has studied the track layouts in the transit center and determined that the layouts in the existing train box (without the extension) meet these requirements. The platform lengths under the existing train box are 972 feet (814 feet for the northernmost platform due to platform taper).

These platform lengths are the longest constructible lengths within the existing train box, which terminates at Beale Street (see Exhibit 1). The TJPA has determined that under these platform lengths (without the train box extension) a double-length 400-meter-long CHSRA train can access any of the six platform faces in the transit center without fouling an adjacent platform track under normal operating conditions. A CHSRA train stopped on platform face T-25 will foul the emergency crossover to access platform face T-26 in an emergency scenario where the turnout near Station 156+00 is out of service (see Exhibit 2); however, CHSRA has confirmed and understands this limitation and accepts this condition.

We thank you again for the effort spent in performing this reevaluation effort to ensure the platform lengths provided is what is needed for CHSRA.

Sincerely,



Mark Zabanah, PE
Executive Director

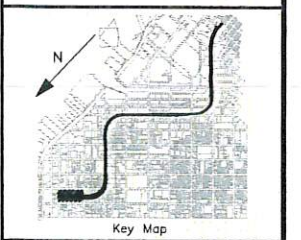
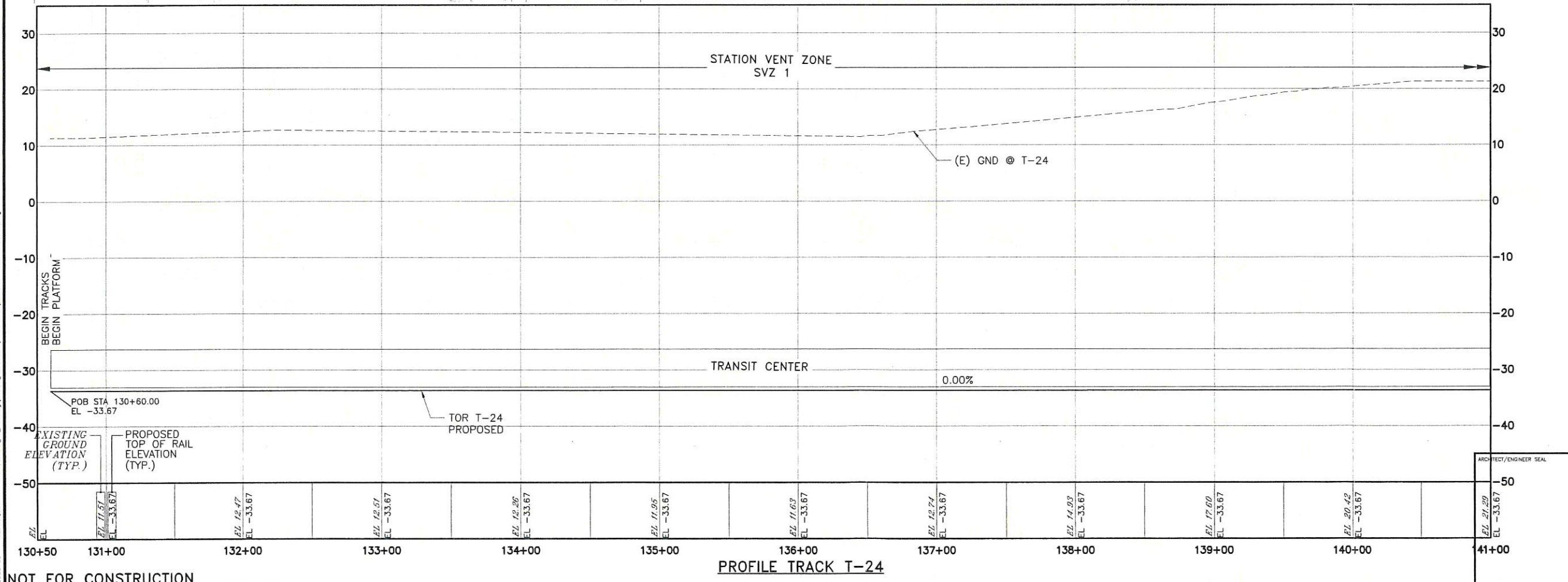
CHSRA accepts and agrees that the description herein and the attached exhibits meet the CHSRA's requirements and conditions for eliminating the need for constructing the train box extension.


Frank Vacca - Chief of Rail Operations

1/4/2018
Date

Enclosures

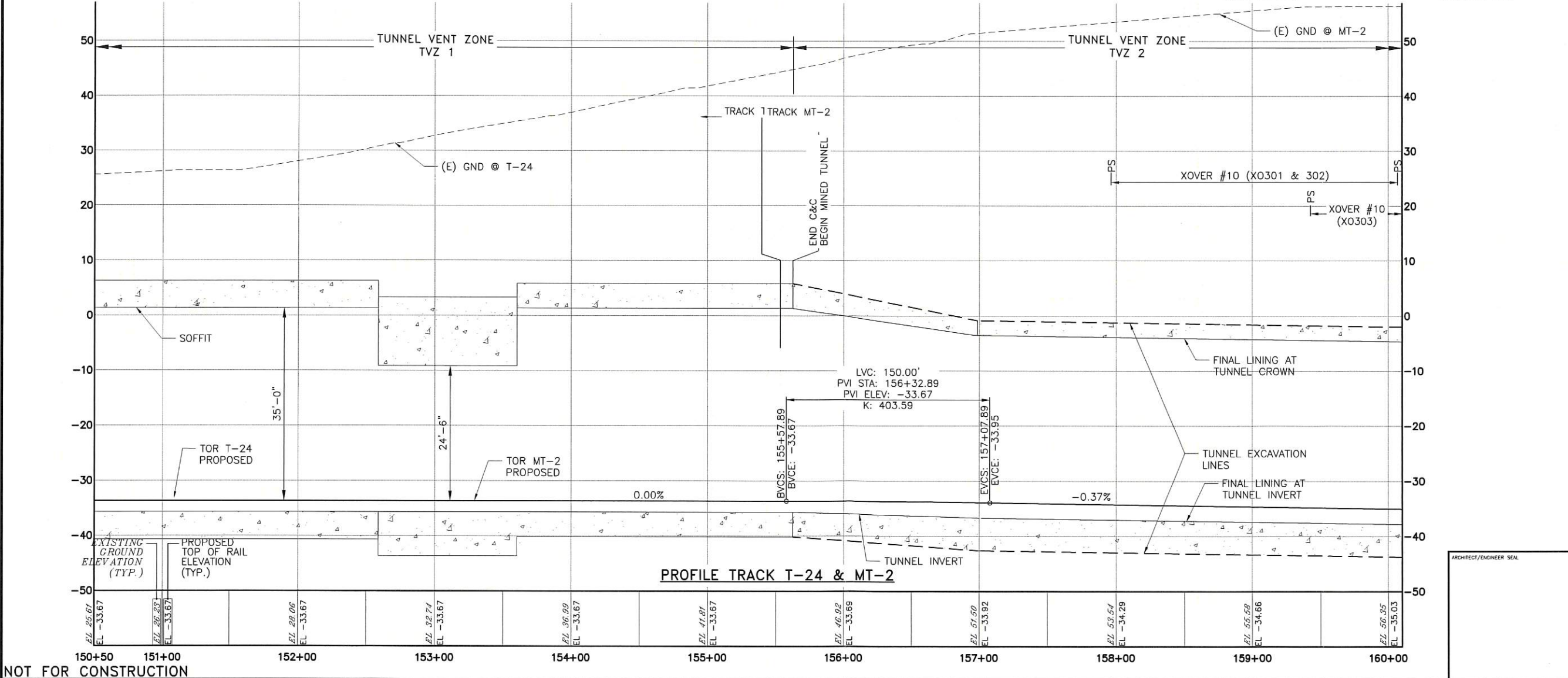
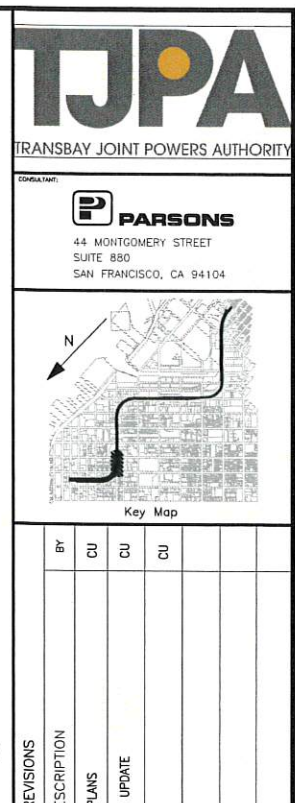
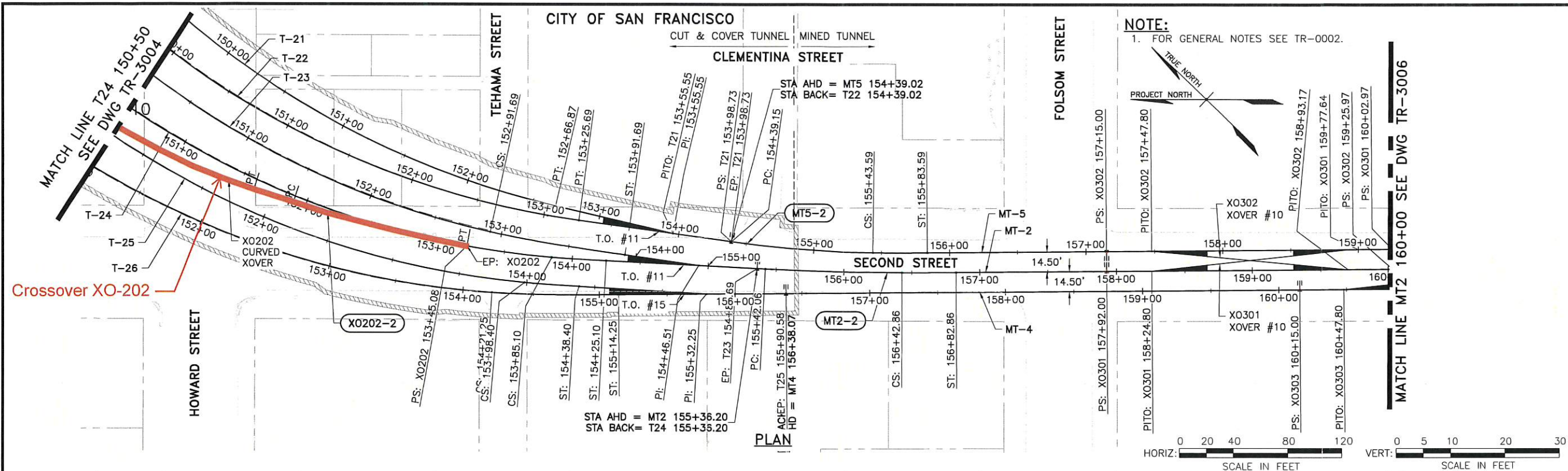
cc: Ben Tripousis, Bruce Armistead, Melvin Thomas – CHSRA
William Gimpel – CHSRA Program Management
Skip Sowko – TJPA
Derek Penrice, Meghan Murphy, Joyce Oishi – PMPC



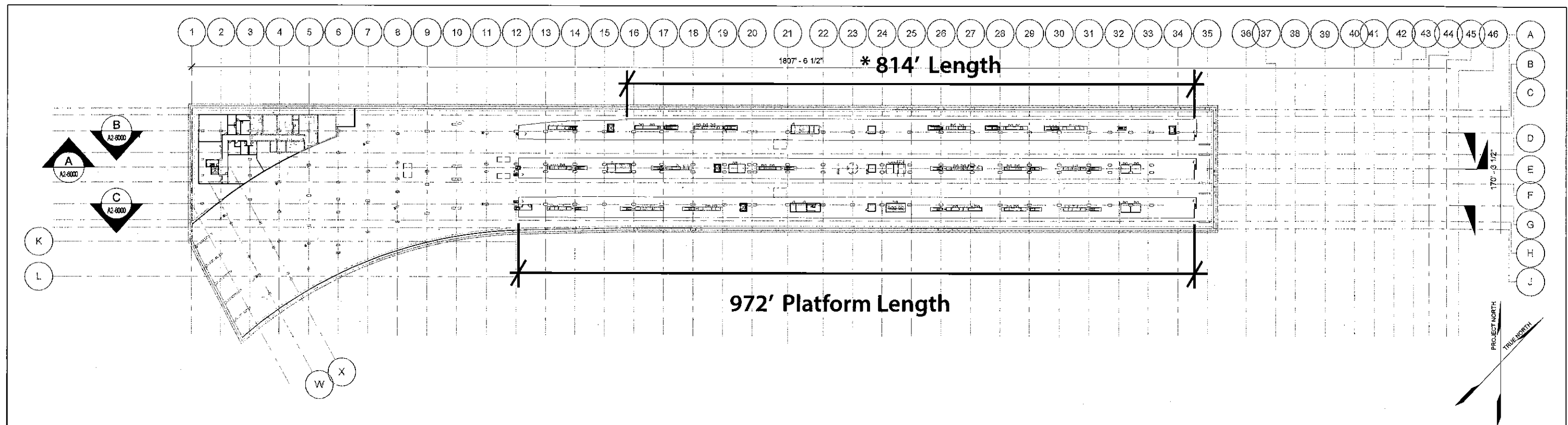
REVISIONS			
NO.	DATE	DESCRIPTION	BY
△	07-16-10	PRELIMINARY ENGINEERING PLANS	CU
△	09-30-16	TRACK ALIGNMENT CONCEPT UPDATE	CU
△	09-28-17	FINAL PE TRACK PLANS	CU

CONTRACT NO.	03-02-DTX ENGR-002
PROJECT TITLE	TRANSBAY PROGRAM DOWNTOWN RAIL EXTENSION SAN FRANCISCO, CA
SHEET TITLE	TRACK PLAN AND PROFILE STA T-24 130+60 TO STA T-24 141+00 SHEET 1 OF 16

APPROVED: G. ORSOLINI PRINCIPAL ENGINEER	
APPROVED: G. ORSOLINI PROJECT MANAGER	
APPROVED: C. UMOLU PROJECT ENGINEER	
DESIGNED BY: E. CASTELINO	CHECKED BY: J. PEREZ
DRAWN BY: D. LIU	DATE: 09-28-2017
SCALE: 1"=40'H; 1"=10'V	FACILITY NO 300
SHEET NUMBER TR-3003	SEQUENCE NUMBER XX of XXX



CONTRACT NO.		03-02-DTX ENGR-002	
PROJECT TITLE		TRANSBAY PROGRAM DOWNTOWN RAIL EXTENSION SAN FRANCISCO, CA	
SHEET TITLE		TRACK PLAN AND PROFILE STA T-24 150+50 TO STA MT2 160+00 SHEET 3 OF 16	
APPROVED: G. ORSOLINI PRINCIPAL ENGINEER			
APPROVED: G. ORSOLINI PROJECT MANAGER			
APPROVED: C. UMOLU PROJECT ENGINEER			
DESIGNED BY: E. CASTELINO		CHECKED BY: J. PEREZ	
DRAWN BY: D. LIU		DATE: 09-28-2017	
SCALE: 1"=40'H; 1"=10'V		FACILITY NO. 300	REVISION
TR-SEQUENCE NUMBER TR-3005		SEQUENCE NUMBER XX of XXX	



TRAINBOX AT PHASE I

EXHIBIT 1

Roland Lebrun
ccss@msn.com
February 29, 2016

2015 DTX draft SEIR

Dear Mr. Boule,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the 2015 Caltrain Downtown Extension draft SEIR.

My comments pertain to the following aspects of the project:

- Train box extension design conflict with SB916 (no Transbay connection to the East Bay)
- Widened throat structure impacts and costs
- Lengthy, risky and prohibitively expensive sequential mining tunnel construction
- Fourth and Townsend underground station location
- Unnecessary 7th Street tunnel stub box proposal
- Turnback track impacts on 16th Street grade crossing gate down time
- Alignment conflict with AB3034 (Diridon to Transbay in 30 minutes)

Each comment is followed by a recommendation for an alternative to be studied in the final SEIR.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.


Roland Lebrun

CC

Metropolitan Transportation Commission Board of Directors
SFCTA Board of Directors
Caltrain Board of Directors
California High Speed Rail Authority Board of Directors
SFCTA Citizens Advisory Committee
Caltrain Citizens Advisory Committee

1) Train Box Extension

- The train box extension design violates SB916 (2003) codified in Streets & Highways Codes section 30914(22) (<http://law.justia.com/codes/california/2011/shc/division-17/30910-30922/30914>) by failing to provide any kind of engineering solution for a future East Bay extension

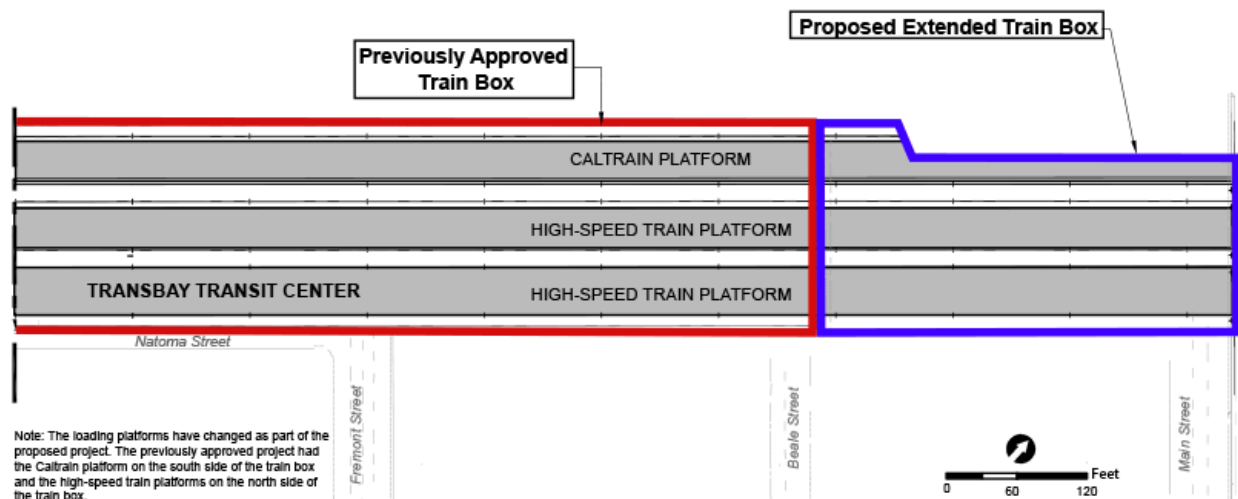


Transbay Transit Center

TJPA Mandates

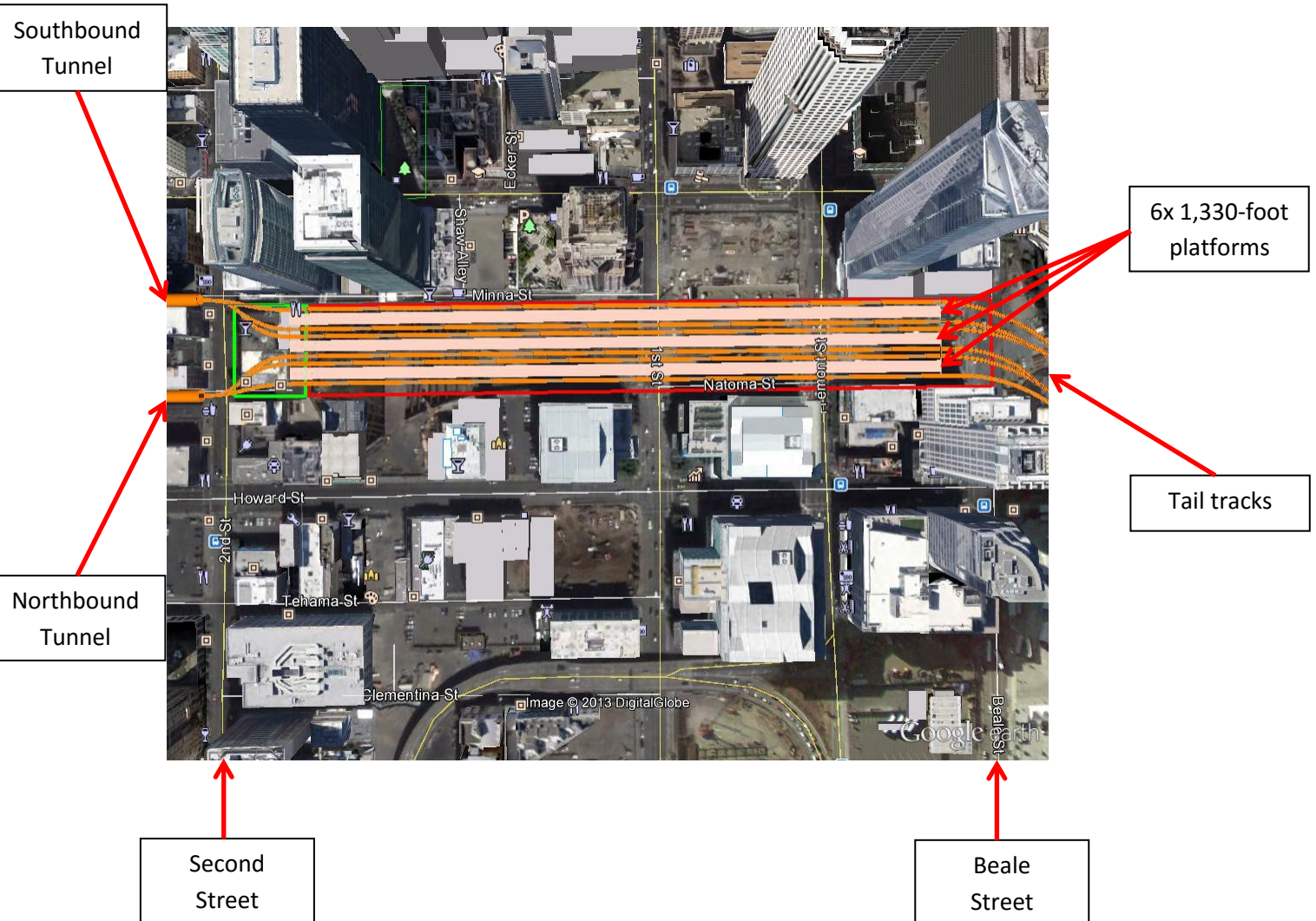
- Regional Measure 2 - Senate Bill 916 : Oct. 03
 - Regional, Local & Intercity Bus
 - Caltrain Downtown Extension
 - Accommodate Future HSR
 - Accommodate Eventual East Bay Extension
- Assembly Bill 812: July 03
(Public Resources Code – Addresses National Register of Historic Places)
 - Allows Demolition of Transbay Terminal for construction of TTC to serve Caltrain & HSR

- The proposed Caltrain storage is insufficient to enable Caltrain to vacate the 4th & King railyard until after relocation to Oakland.

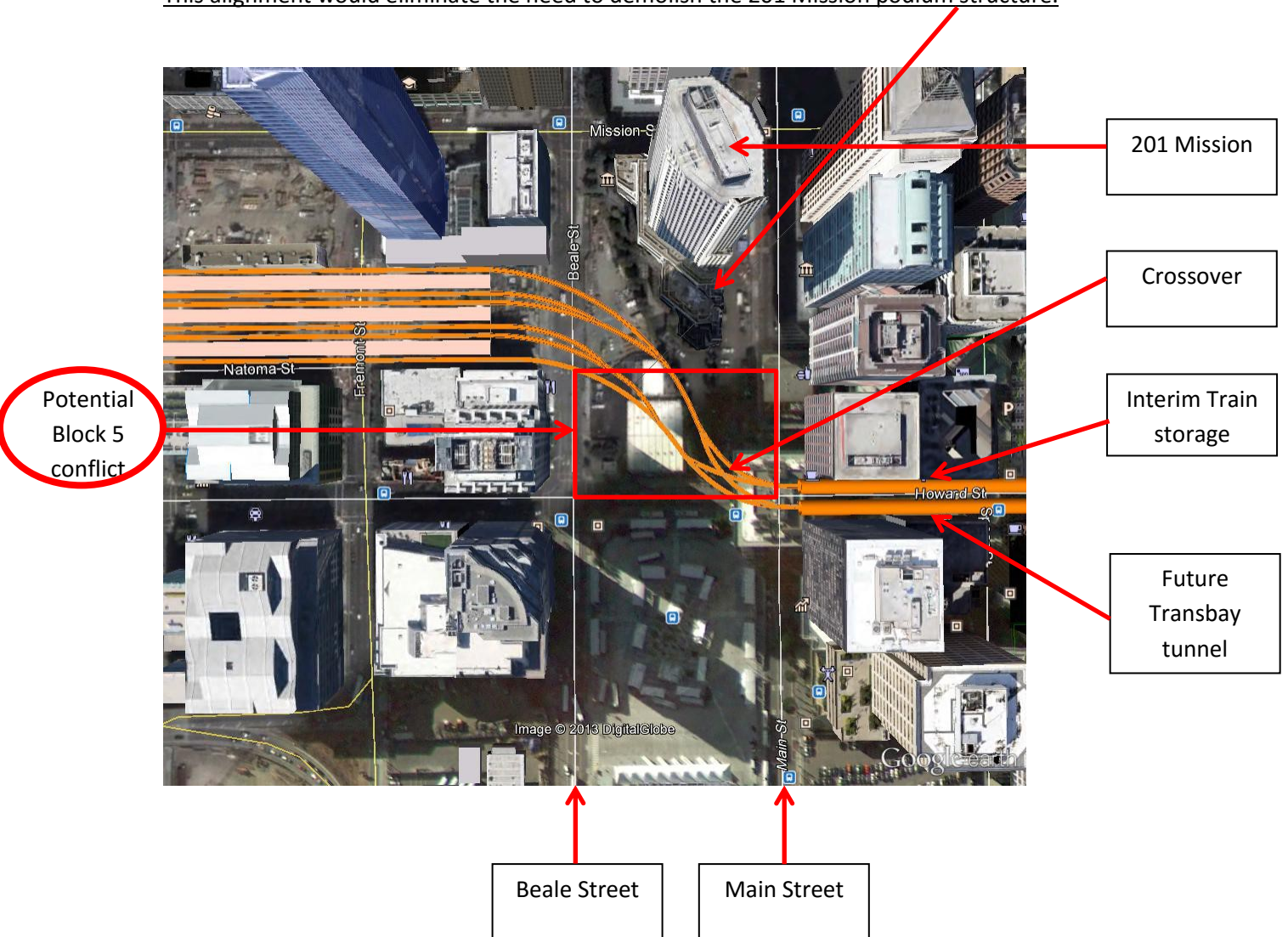


Recommendation #1

The SEIR should consider an alternate DTX alignment which would enable platform lengthening by extending the train box one block west (towards 2nd Street) while simultaneously providing a viable connection to a Transbay tunnel. This alignment would also eliminate conflicts with the 201 Mission building and enable a 6th full-length through platform (total 3 eastbound and 3 westbound platforms).

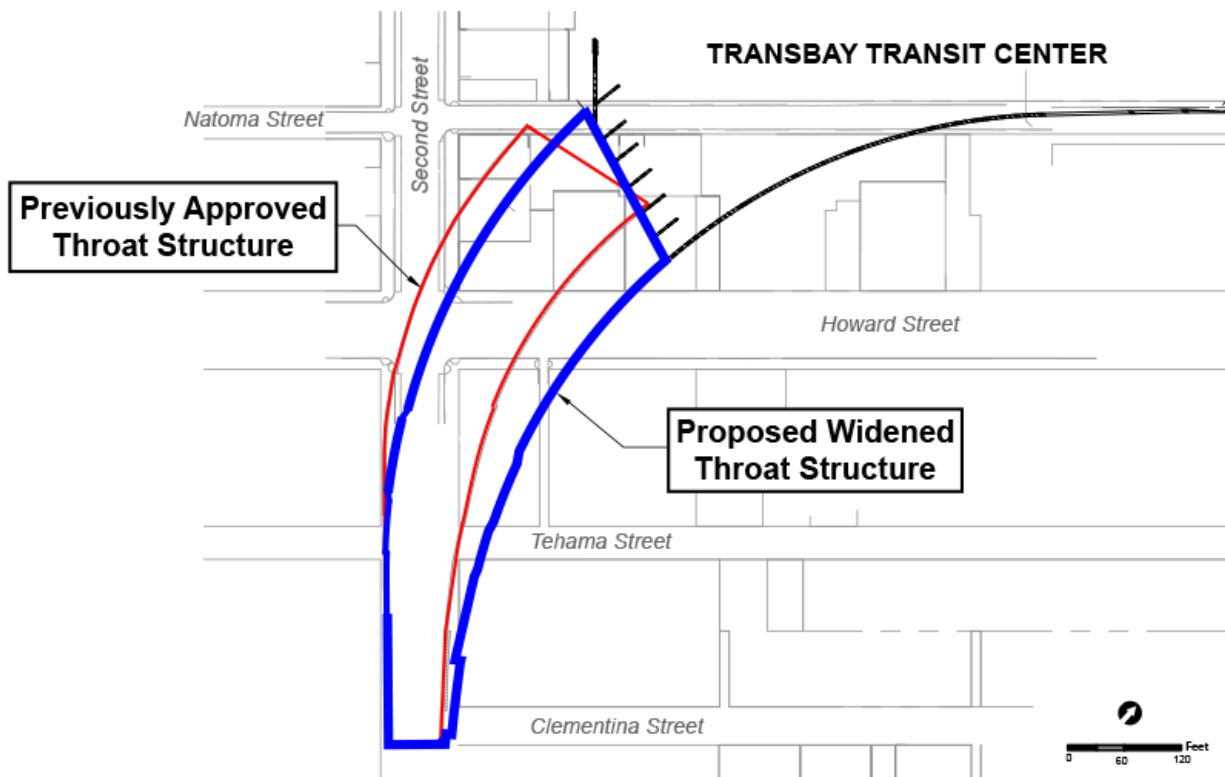


This alignment would eliminate the need to demolish the 201 Mission podium structure.



2) Widened throat structure

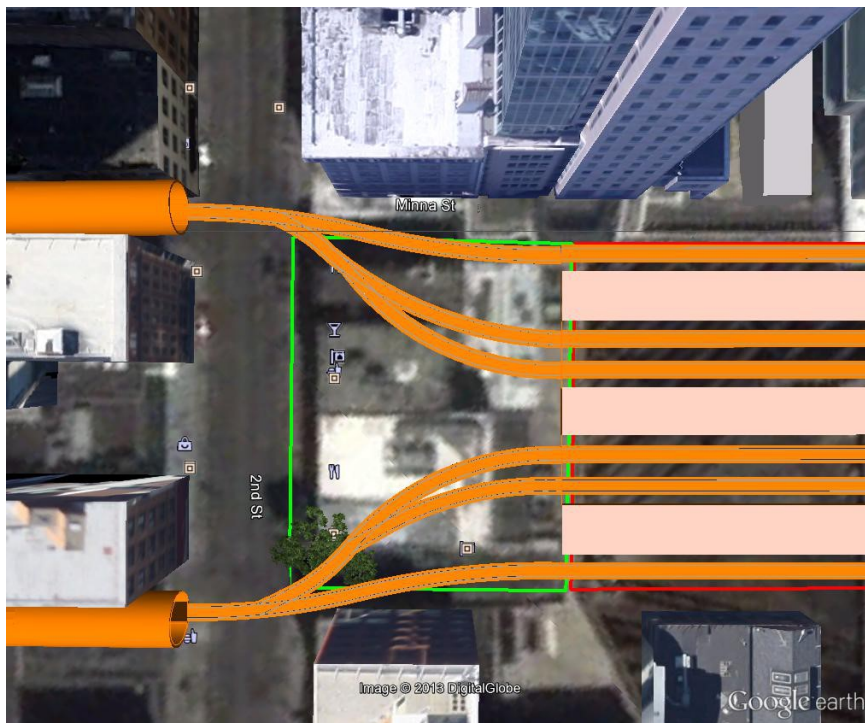
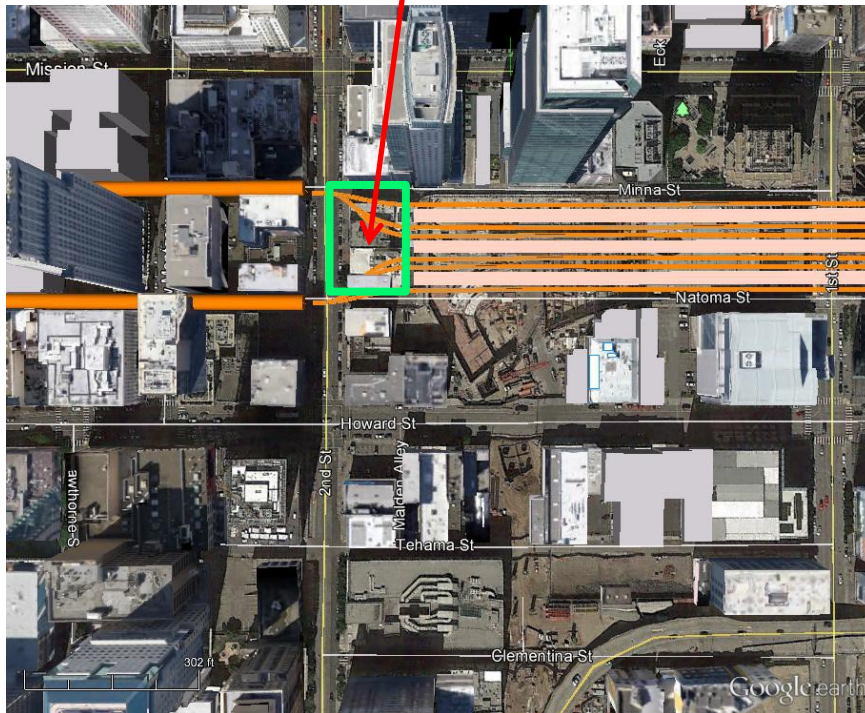
The SEIR proposes a widened approach to the Transbay Center train box via a massive cut & cover structure that will impact numerous properties as far south as Clementina Street. Construction costs are expected to run into the hundreds of millions and will result in massive circulation and noise impacts on the adjacent neighborhoods for many years.



Recommendation #2

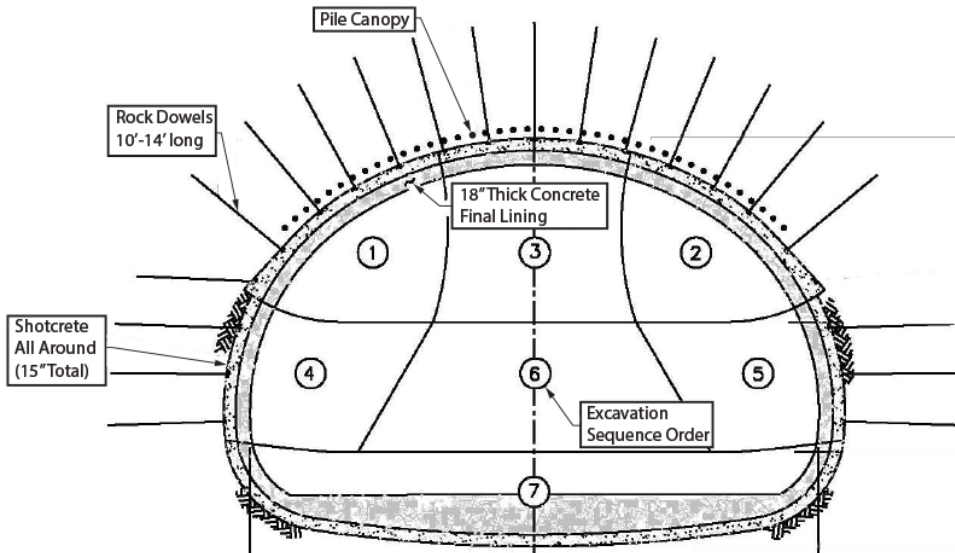
The SEIR should consider an alternate DTX alignment and construction technique that would limit impacts to a small number of buildings on 2nd Street between Minna and Natoma.

There would be no additional surface impacts in SOMA north of Townsend.



3) Tunnel design

The current DTX design contemplates the construction of a 3-track sequentially excavated tunnel without any apparent plans for the evacuation of a train travelling on the middle track. This is of particular concern with High Speed trains which have a single door per carriage.

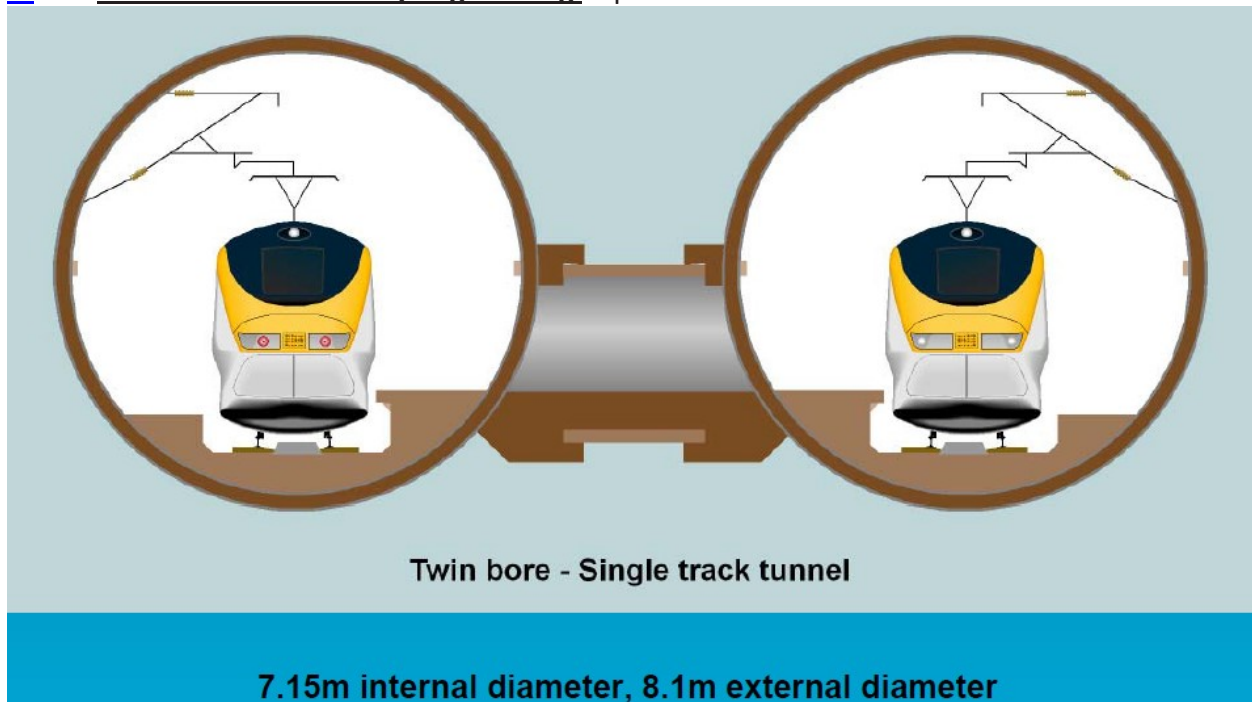


Recommendation #3

The SEIR should consider a twin-bore tunnel design with cross-passages for emergency evacuation (similar to the Central Subway) and a ventilation system designed to eliminate any requirement for vent/evacuation structures north of Townsend.

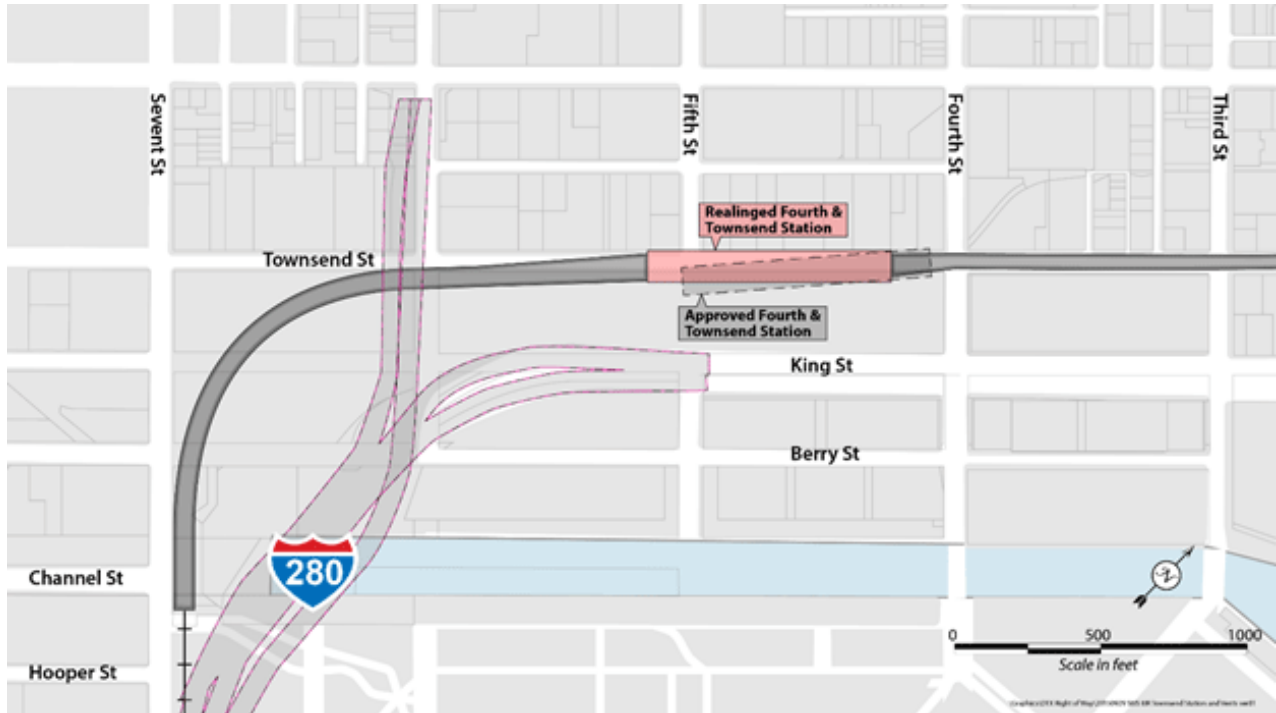
Please refer to Appendix A (Tunneling Studies) in the HS2 Final Report

http://www.railwaysarchive.co.uk/documents/HS2_RouteEngineeringStudyAppendices_2010.pdf and **Section A1.4 Fire Safety Engineering** in particular for additional information.



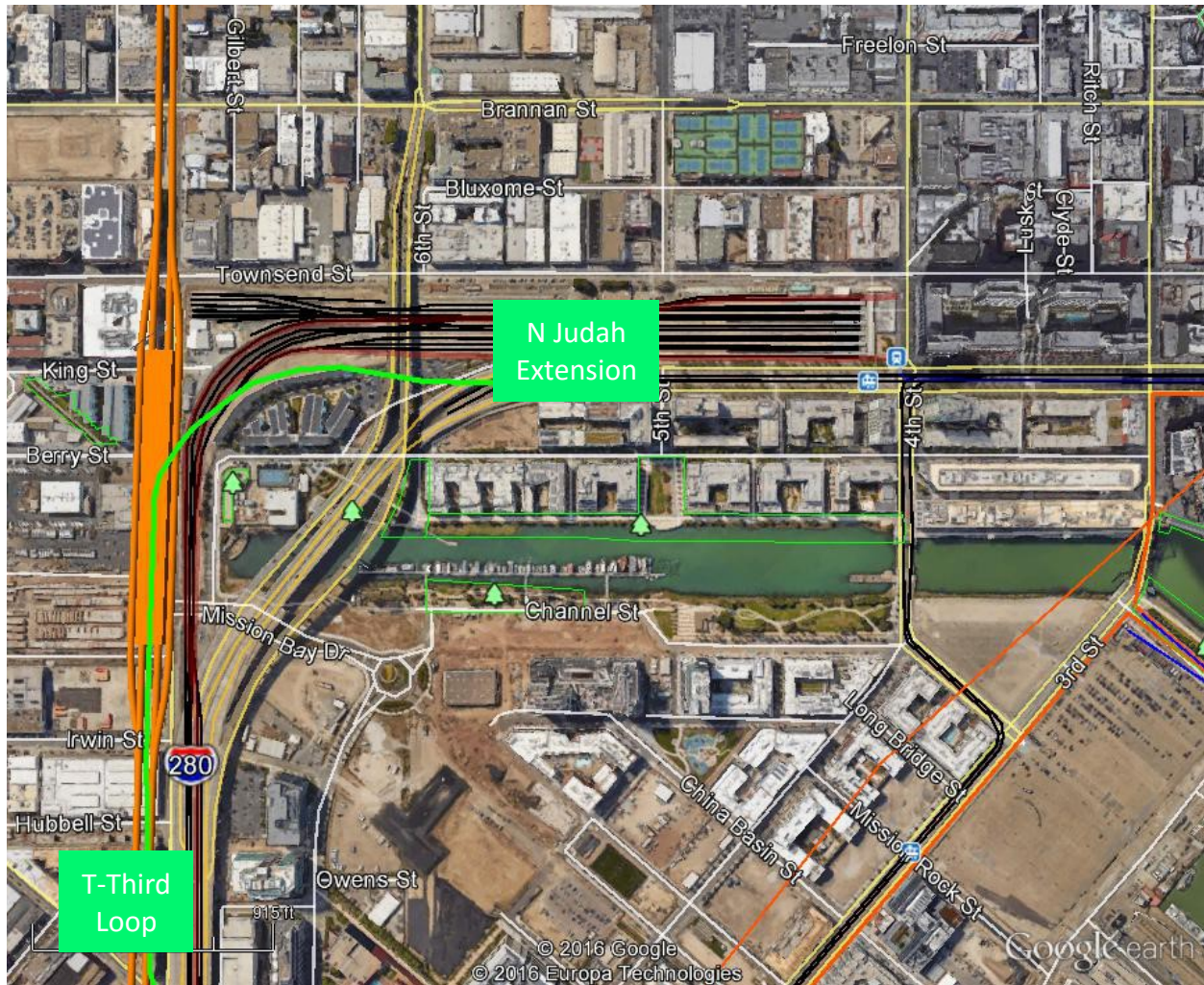
4) Fourth and Townsend Underground Station location

It is unclear how a relocated Caltrain station on Townsend could possibly accommodate the ridership demand from Mission Bay including UCSF, AT&T Park and the proposed Warriors Arena.



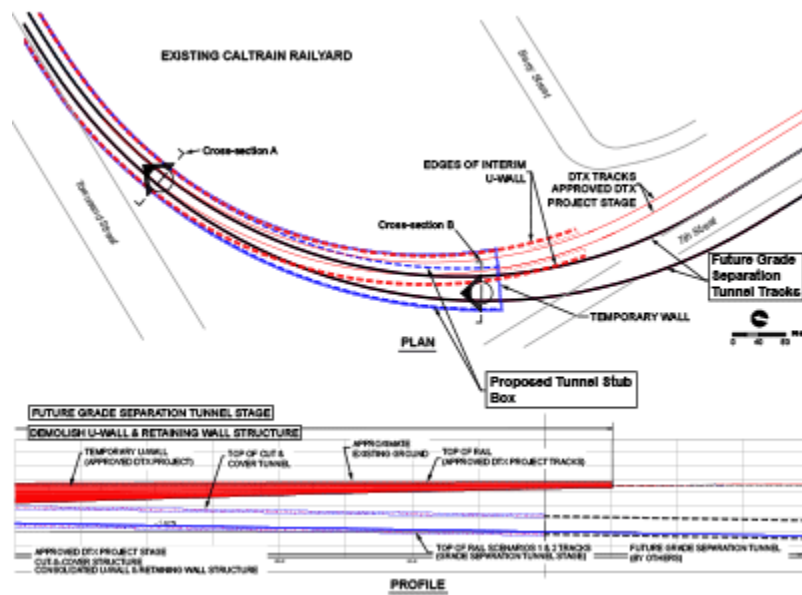
Recommendation #4

The SEIR should consider relocating the Townsend station to 7th Street and providing connectivity to the Central Subway via an extension of the N line connecting to the Mission Bay loop via 16th Street. This station should be designed to accommodate the Grand Boulevard at a later date.

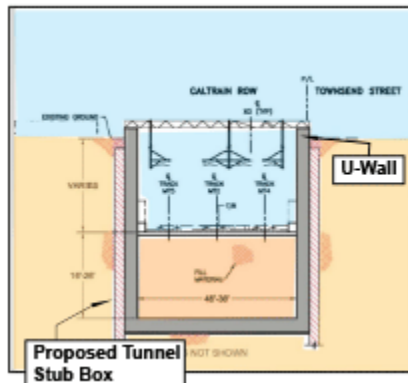


5) 7th Street Tunnel Stub Box

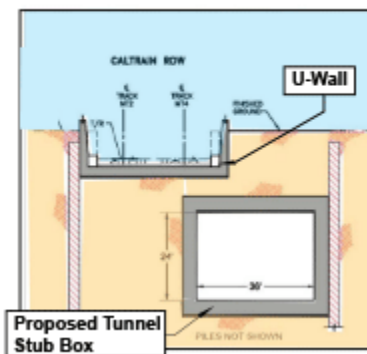
The SEIR proposes to terminate the DTX on 7th Street with a “tunnel stub box” designed to accommodate a future 16th Street grade separation.



Cross-Section A

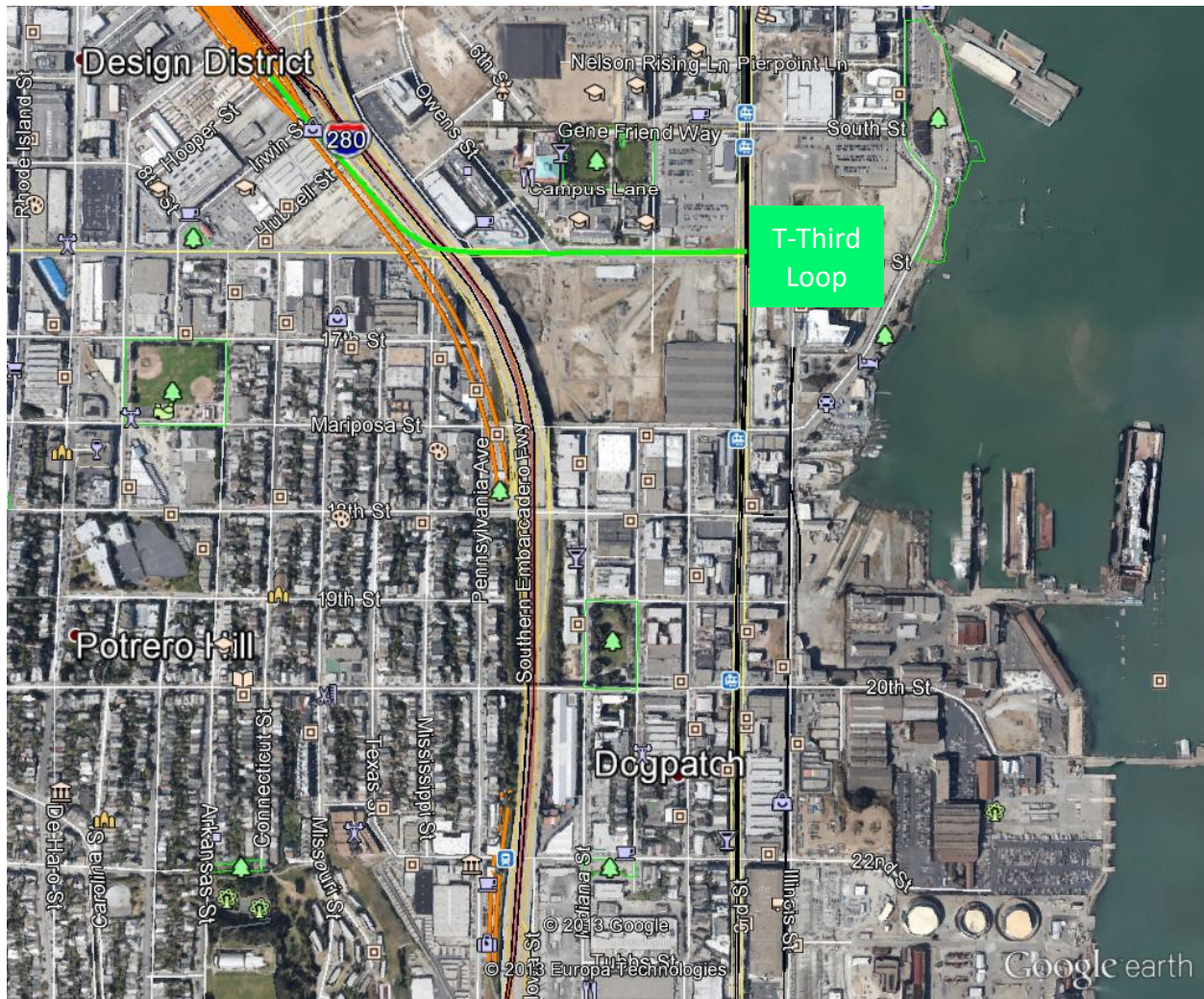


Cross-Section B



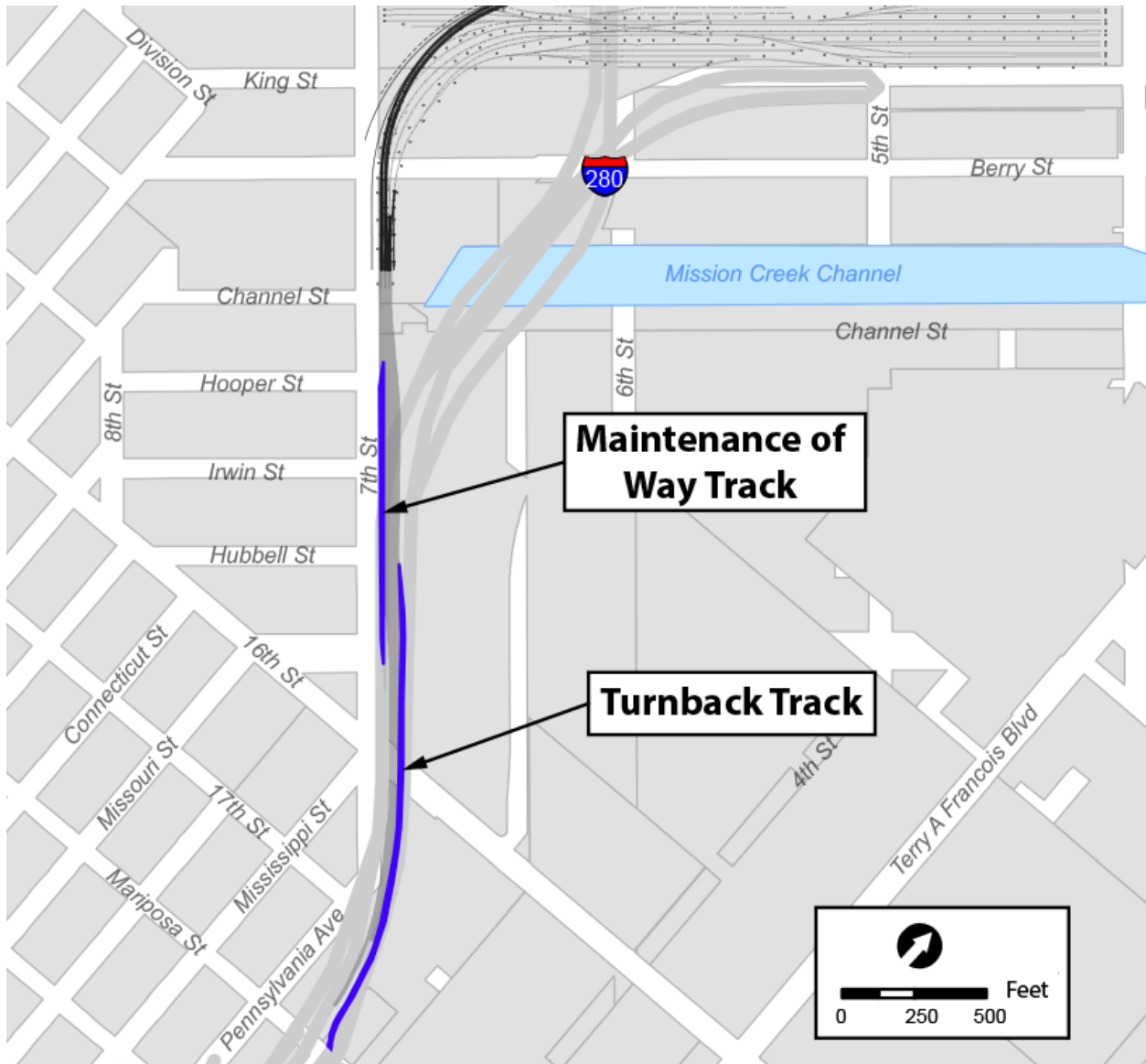
Recommendation #5

The SEIR should consider a direct connection to the Planning Department's Pennsylvania Avenue RAB study alternative. This would achieve 16th Street Grade separation as soon as Caltrain operations are relocated to the Transbay terminal and would save hundreds of millions by eliminating cut & cover structures @ 7th & Townsend



6) Turnback Track impacts on 16th Street grade crossing

The SEIR proposes the addition of two additional tracks on 7th Street, including a turnback track across 16th Street, thereby increasing gate downtime for each train crossing by an additional 10 seconds (10 minutes per day).



Recommendation #6

The SEIR should consider a direct connection to the planning department's Pennsylvania Avenue alternative (see recommendation #5 above) and turn trains around further south. The SEIR should also consider the abandoned tunnel #1 for storage.

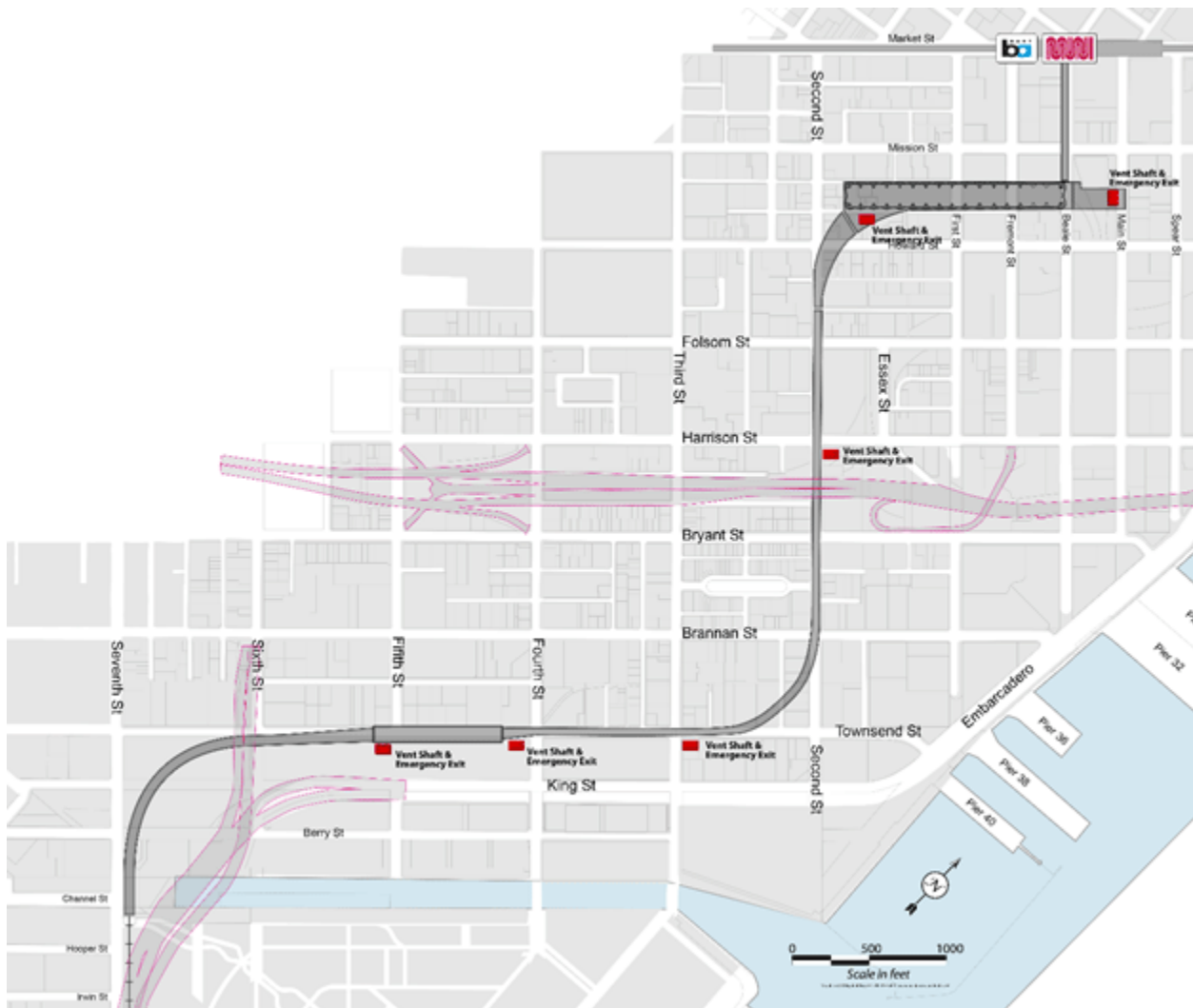
7) Alignment conflict with AB3034 (San Jose to Transbay in 30 minutes)

The current DTX alignment consists of 3 sharp curves each with a maximum speed of 25 MPH which extend the travel time between 7th Street and the Transbay Terminal by an additional 3 minutes.

This alignment conflicts with AB3034 (2007) codified in Streets & Highways code section 2704.09(b) <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/displaycode?section=shc&group=02001-03000&file=2704.04-2704.095>

“Maximum nonstop service travel times for each corridor that shall not exceed the following:

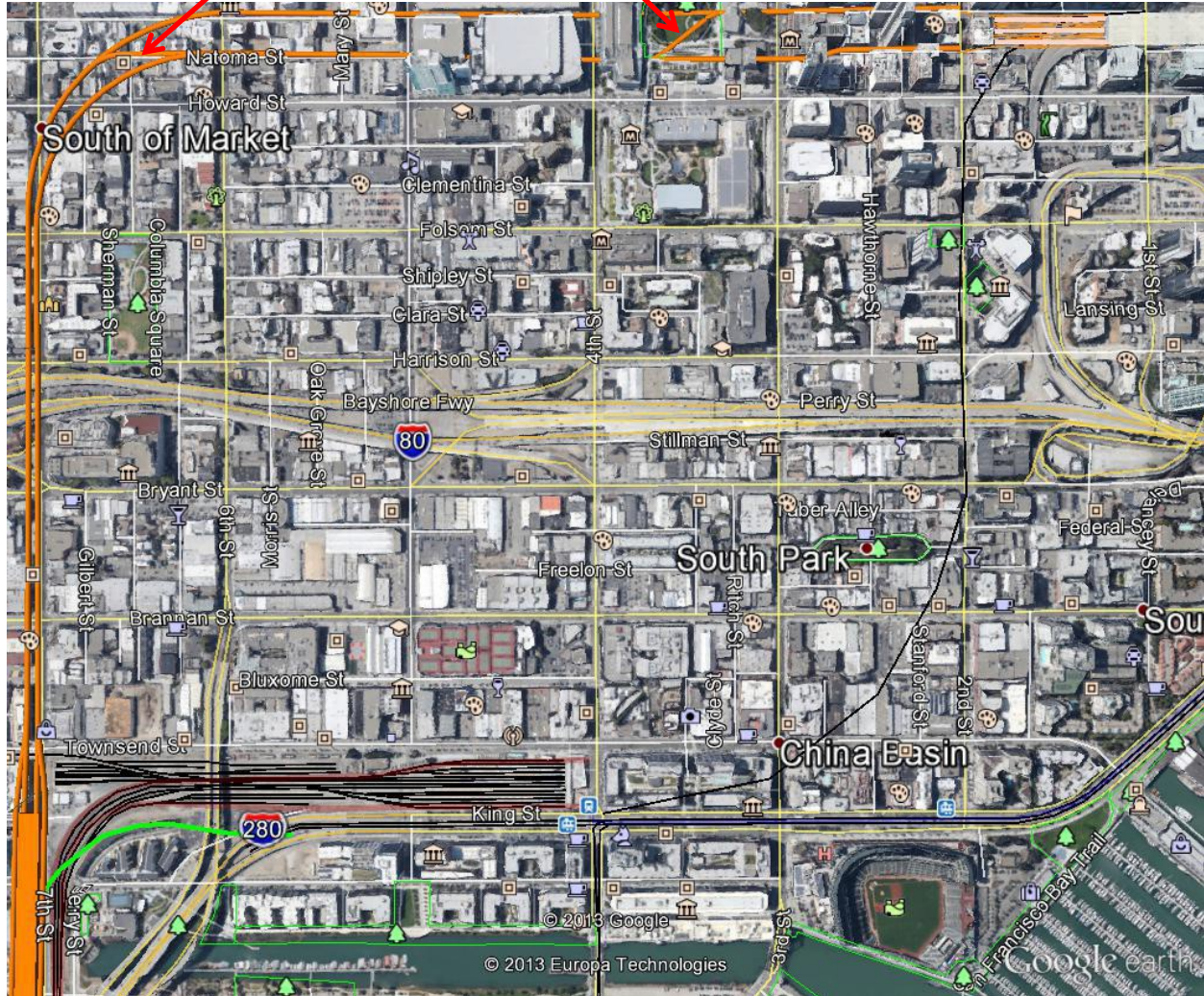
(3) San Francisco-San Jose: 30 minutes.”



Mined
crossovers

Recommendation #7

The SEIR should consider an alternate alignment designed to enable an 80 MPH approach to the Transbay Transit Center.



Respectfully submitted for your consideration

Sincerely,

Roland Lebrun