Memorandum

U.S. Department
of Transportation
Federal Transit
Administration

Subject: Environmental Clearance for advance construction of "train box" portion of Transbay Transit Center

Date: August 13, 2009

From: Leslie T. Rogers
Regional Administrator

Reply to Attn of: Eric Eidlin, Community Planner

To: Paula Schwach
TIFIA JPO Counsel

You have asked the FTA Region IX office to determine whether the accelerated construction of the "train box" portion of the Transbay Transit Center would require additional environmental review. After careful review of the March 2004 FEIS and associated ROD for the Transbay Terminal / Caltrain Downtown Extension / Redevelopment Project, dated February 5, 2005, Region IX concludes that building the Transit Center in one single longer phase, as opposed to two phases, was already analyzed in the FEIS. As such, no additional environmental review should be required, unless new information surfaces that new or more severe impacts on the environment would result from the advance construction of the train box.

We should also note that major actions to advance the project, such as the demolition of the old terminal, have been underway since the ROD was signed in 2005, so a re-evaluation of the FEIS due to the passage of time is not required.

There has been some confusion about whether the analysis conducted for the March 2004 FEIS would cover the advance construction of the train box because of two primary reasons:

1. **Project Phasing and the Removal of Excavation Spoils**
   The Transbay Joint Powers Authority (TJPA) made changes to the construction phasing plan that was proposed in the FEIS for the project, changes that TJPA has since reconsidered.

2. **California High Speed Rail Authority's New Design Criteria**
   The California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) and the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board (Caltrain) announced new design requirements for the Transit Center in January 2009 that could have significantly increased the size, scope and cost of the project. However, since that time, technical staff of TJPA, CHSRA, and Caltrain have agreed that the current design of the train box will meet near-term ridership demand and operating requirements. Overflow from the Transbay Transit Center, which is not expected, if at all, until many years in the future, would be accommodated by a redesigned 4th and King Streets Station.

These issues are discussed in greater detail below.

Project Phasing and the Removal of Excavation Spoils
The TJPA Board of Directors approved a two-step phasing plan for the project in February 2006, one year after the FTA issued the ROD for the project. In that phasing plan, TJPA envisioned constructing the train box portion of the Transit Center after the Caltrain Downtown Extension Tunnel. By completing the tunnel prior to construction of the train box, the tunnel could have been used to convey excavation spoils from the Transit Center underground to the Caltrain Yard at 4th and King, the transfer point where all spoils from the project will be loaded onto trains for disposal out of the area. Phasing construction in this way would have significantly reduced the volume of construction-related truck traffic on roadways surrounding the Transit Center.

However, at the time of the publication of the FEIS, TJPA assumed that construction of the Transit Center would occur in a single phase, and the project alternative analyzed in the FEIS represented the "worst case" scenario in terms of construction impacts. In this "worst case" scenario, the FEIS assumed that all construction-related debris from the Transit Center would be hauled by truck to the Caltrain Yard on local streets (see FEIS, pp. 192-193). In light of the above, Region IX believes that advance construction of the train box would not result in environmental impacts beyond those already analyzed in the FEIS, and that no additional environmental review should be required.

California High Speed Rail Authority's New Design Criteria
In January 2009, CHSRA and Caltrain raised concerns about the ability of the train box to meet the physical requirements and operating needs of their systems. Specifically, CHSRA asserted that the Transit Center would need to be designed to accommodate 12 trains per hour. This level of service would require 8-10 tracks, rather than the 6 tracks analyzed in the FEIS/EIR, and would necessitate the construction of one additional underground platform level. Including the train mezzanine, this would mean a total of three levels below ground rather than the two levels analyzed in the FEIS/EIR.

As currently designed, the train box will have 4 tracks and platforms dedicated to high speed rail, accommodating 6-8 trains per hour. After thorough review and discussion, TJPA, CHSRA and Caltrain staff agreed that the current design of the train box will meet near-term ridership demand and operating requirements. Overflow from the Transbay Transit Center, which is not expected, if at all, until many years in the future, would be accommodated by a redesigned 4th and King Streets Station. Since TJPA is not planning to alter the design of the Transit Center in response to the recent CHSRA/Caltrain request, no additional environmental review is warranted.

If you have any questions or comments regarding this memo, please contact Eric Eidlin, FTA Community Planner, at (415) 744-2502 or Eric.Eidlin@dot.gov.

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