



L-0035

SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

MEMO

DATE: September 26, 2014

TO: Peter Gabancho, Project Manager, MTA

CC: Historic Preservation Commission
Paul Chasan, Planning Department
Jill Manton, Arts Commission
Will Kwan, DPW
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Sheldon Eaton, DPW
Paul De Freitas, DPW
Michael Schwartz, SF CTA

FROM: Shelley Caltagirone, (415) 558-6625

REVIEWED BY: Architectural Review Committee

RE: Meeting Notes from the September 17, 2014 ARC Hearing
Van Ness BRT Station Design for Civic Center Landmark District
Case No. 2009.0634U

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The Planning Department is working with the MTA to refine a proposed design for the BRT station and associated public realm improvements proposed for the Civic Center Landmark District. The proposed project was brought before the Architectural Review Committee (ARC) for review and comment on September 17, 2014. At the ARC meeting, the Planning Department requested review and comment regarding compatibility of the proposed design with the Civic Center Landmark District. Planning Department Preservation Staff has prepared a summary of the ARC comments from that meeting. Commissioners Hyland, Pearlman, and Wolfram were in attendance.

ARC COMMENTS

Plan

Commissioner Hyland requested that an alternative location be explored for the station currently proposed immediately south of McAllister Street to reduce infrastructure in front of City Hall.

BRT Station

Platform: Overall, the ARC recommended that the Civic Center platform have a different and elevated design that marks the importance of the district. For example, this location appears to be a good place for a prototype panel structure that could replace the "Clear Channel" panels over time. Overall, the appearance of the station should be simple, elegant, and gracious.

Plantings: The ARC recommends that the tree species is consistent throughout the Van Ness corridor for the median and platform plantings. They did not find that retaining the Red Flowering or Silver Dollar gum species would be important.

The ARC was not opposed to increasing the number of planting beds along the corridor as part of the storm water treatment upgrades.

Fencing: Commissioners Pearlman and Wolfram preferred the vertical fin fencing, which they found related to the fluting of the columns of City Hall. They found the tube fencing to appear dated. Commissioner Hyland preferred the tube fencing. Hyland stated that the station needs a very clean look and that the tube fence would most easily disappear from view. He found the more kinetic energy of the vertical fin design to be distracting. Pearlman and Wolfram suggested experimenting with the orientation and color of the fins so that greater transparency is achieved when viewed from City Hall. The ARC recommended that patina'd metal finishes be used for the fencing rather than painted finishes.

Shelter Panels: The ARC recommended reducing the number of panels to a minimum in front of City Hall. They also recommended that the panels be better integrated with the fencing so that there is not a gap between the two structures. One solution may be to stop the fence at the panels so that they can be placed in the same alignment. However, Commissioner Pearlman pointed out that interrupting the fence would detract from the dynamic experience of the vertical fins.

A totally integrated design is preferred in which the "Clear Channel" panels are replaced with a custom designed panel. The ARC preferred the use of a better panel design if feasible to reflect the stature of the City Hall stop.

The ARC recommended that some panels be dedicated to interpretation of the Civic Center Landmark District. They also suggested that similar interpretive displays would be appropriate for all stations along the corridor.

Lighting: The ARC requested more information concerning proposed lighting for the platforms.

Sidewalk Improvements

Traffic Buffer: The ARC did not recommend either of the buffer treatments shown in the preliminary design. However, the Project Team made it clear that these would not be necessary for the Civic Center Landmark District.

Paving: The ARC recommended that the ADA-compliant textured paving at crosswalks be of a dark grey or brown color. They also recommended the use of granite curbs throughout the district.

Streetlights/Wire Support Poles

The ARC found that the removal of the historic trolley poles may be appropriate in order to reduce clutter in the public realm. However, they recommended that a "gateway" alternative in which pairs of trolley poles are retained at the northern and southern boundaries of the district along Van Ness Avenue should be explored. Reference to the trolley poles should be included in any interpretive displays installed at the BRT station.

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