

SAN FRANCISCO BAY CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

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December 28, 2009

TO: All Design Review Board Members

FROM: Will Travis, Executive Director [415/352-3653 travis@bcdc.ca.gov]
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SUBJECT: Hercules Intermodal Transit Center, City of Hercules, Contra Costa County; First Review
(For Board consideration on January 11, 2010)

Project Summary

Project Applicants. City of Hercules

Project Representatives. Jesse Harder and Lisa Hammon, City of Hercules; David McCrossan, HDR; Richard Thompson, RTA; John Gibbs, WRT

Project Site. The proposed project would be located on an approximately 16.9-acre site on the shoreline of San Pablo Bay, southeast of Hercules Point, north of Bayfront Boulevard and near Refugio Creek, approximately one mile northwest of Interstate 80, in the City of Hercules, Contra Costa County (see Exhibit 2, "Vicinity Map"). Currently, the undeveloped parcels west of Bayfront Boulevard and Hercules Point are under the ownership of Hercules Bayfront, LLC. To the east are parcels under the ownership of Bio-Rad Laboratories, and along the entire waterfront are existing railroad tracks that are under the ownership of the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR). The railroad tracks are bounded on the waterside by riprap except where Hercules Point extends north of the tracks. The East Bay Regional Parks District (EBRPD) retains an easement for a proposed Bay Trail segment along the hillside within the Bio-Rad property and a narrow utility easement for Shell Pipeline Co. exists along the railroad west of Refugio Creek. (See Exhibits 3, 4 and 6).

Proposed Project. The proposed project involves the construction of an Intermodal Transit Center to accommodate train, bus, and future ferry terminal services, considered Phase I of a larger multi-phased project to develop the waterfront into a traditional mixed-use area with residential, business commercial and extensive recreational and preserved open spaces (see Exhibits 3, 5 and 6).

Initial Project Phase

Phase I of the project would include the following:

- Constructing an approximately 11,075-square-foot station building, providing grade-separated pedestrian access to an approximately 25,100-square-foot center island station platform and access to the UPRR tracks (see Exhibits 7 - 12B);
- Reconfiguring and relocating the UPRR mainline line tracks, including replacing the UPRR bridge (2-span structure, approximately 70-foot-long) over the restored Refugio Creek (see Exhibit 13);



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- Constructing retaining walls along the UPRR-right-of-way to provide an elevated trail and promenade with extended views of the Bay (see Exhibits 14 - 18);
- Completing an approximately 5,300-foot-long segment of the Bay Trail connecting the existing trail from Pinole to the south with Victoria-by-the-Bay to the north with a 12-foot-wide Class I trail for biking and walking (see Exhibits 13 - 18, 19);
- Constructing, as part of the Bay Trail segment, an approximately 500-foot-long and 15- to 26-foot-wide Bay Trail Promenade along Transit Loop Drive with integrated benches and Bay viewing areas (see Exhibits 13 - 18, 19);
- Realigning, widening and restoring Refugio Creek to create an improved channel with enhancements for local species and area habitat (see Exhibit 20);
- Extending John Muir Parkway approximately 700 feet north across the North Channel and extending Bayfront Boulevard and proposed Transit Loop Drive across Refugio Creek to the east from its existing terminus (see Exhibit 13);
- Constructing Transit Loop Drive and Bridge (single-span structure, approximately 72 feet long) over restored Refugio Creek to provide a direct bus route and bus bays for the Intermodal Transit Center (see Exhibits 20C and 21);
- Constructing Bayfront Boulevard Bridge (2-span structure, approximately 160 feet long) over restored Refugio Creek (see Exhibits 20C and 22);
- Constructing Creekside Park and Plaza, an approximately 20,000-square-foot green space located above the east bank of Refugio Creek between Bayfront Boulevard and Transit Loop Drive (see Exhibits 20A - 20B); and
- Constructing Creekside Trail, an approximately 960-foot-long and 8- to 20-foot-wide pathway along the east bank of restored Refugio Creek to connect users from John Muir Parkway near the North Channel, crossing Bayfront Boulevard and Creekside Park to connect with the Bay Trail (see Exhibit 20).

Later Project Phases. The later phases of the project would include the following (see Exhibit 5 “Phasing Plan”):

- Phase 2 - The construction of a café/retail building at Bayfront Boulevard with a covered transit waiting area adjacent to the Transit Loop and public restrooms, and an approximately 12,273-square-foot Transit/Civic Plaza in front of the Intermodal Transit Center (see Exhibits 9, 10);
- Phase 3 - The construction of the Hercules Point Pedestrian Bridge and landside ramp to connect the community to Hercules Point with a 130-foot bridge spanning over the railroad to a viewing platform at Hercules Point; and the construction of Railroad Plaza, an approximately 15,000-square-foot public plaza at the terminus of Railroad Avenue (see Exhibits 13, 18 and 18A);

- Phase 4 – The restoration of Hercules Point, an approximately 11-acre public park and open space area (see Exhibit 5); and
- Phase 5 – The construction of a ferry terminal connected to the transit station building (see Exhibits 5 and 7 - 8).

San Francisco Bay Plan Policies. The *San Francisco Bay Plan's* policies on Transportation state that "Transportation projects on the Bay shoreline and bridges over the Bay...should include pedestrian and bicycle paths that will either be a part of the Bay Trail or connect the Bay Trail with other regional and community trails" and that these projects "be designed to maintain and enhance visual and physical access to the Bay and along the Bay shoreline." The *Bay Plan's* policies on Public Access state that "a proposed fill project should increase public access to the Bay to the maximum extent feasible" and that the public access improvements provided as a condition of any approval "should be consistent with the project and the physical environment..." and "...should be designed and built to encourage diverse Bay-related activities and movement to and along the shoreline...."

The policies require that the *Public Access Design Guidelines* be used as a guide to siting and designing public access consistent with a proposed project. The *Bay Plan* policies on Appearance, Design and Scenic Views further state that "all bayfront development should be designed to enhance the pleasure of the user or viewer of the Bay" and that "maximum efforts should be made to provide, enhance, or preserve views of the Bay and shoreline, especially from public areas, from the Bay itself, and from the opposite shore."

Public Access Issues. At this conceptual stage, the project applicants and staff are seeking the Board's advice on the proposal. Specifically, the Board should focus on the siting and massing of the new station building, the amount and quality of the proposed public access, the proposed extensions of the Bay Trail, the proposed connections and circulation around the station building, along streets, and out to Hercules Point, and any potential impacts the development could have on physical and visual access to the Bay. The staff requests that the Board consider the following design questions during its review of the project:

1. Does the proposed project provide adequate, usable, and attractive public access spaces?
2. Although later phases of the project involve the construction of additional public access, does the Phase 1 public access, provide adequate spaces and connections in the initial phase? Are the interim improvements adequately designed and implemented? For example, the viewing platforms where future bridges or connections are proposed in later phases?
3. Does the proposed project maintain and enhance the visual quality of the Bay, shoreline and adjacent developments? Is the station building appropriately sited, massed and designed to adequately preserve views to the Bay and maximize the public's enjoyment of the waterfront?
4. Would the proposed public access areas accommodate the number of individuals and variety of uses that would likely use the public access areas?
5. Are there adequate view corridors from the public street to the Bay that would lead the public to and along the public access areas?

6. Do the site layout and the design of the public plazas, trails, and parks provide usable and inviting public spaces that are oriented to the Bay and adequately separate different public uses?