

# San Francisco Chronicle

## COVER STORY

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### Plan for new Transbay Terminal in, under budget

BY JOHN KING

The iconic tower intended to come first is nowhere in sight, but San Francisco's new Transbay Terminal is ready to go.

There are still plans for a 5.4-acre park that will rest atop three levels of shops and bus platforms, 70 feet in the air. The architecture retains the glassy futurism of the concept selected with fanfare in 2007.

Now, after two years of tweaking, the completed terminal design will be presented today to the Transbay Joint Powers Authority. Officials say the first stage of construction - demolition of the existing terminal at First and Mission streets - should begin in August or September.

Under this scenario, the \$1.189 billion terminal would open for bus service by 2017. An additional \$400 million will be spent to build a shell beneath ground that will eventually house a train platform and concourse.

"There are two missions" in the design, said Fred Clarke of Pelli Clarke Pelli, the lead architects. "We want this to be a great transit center by which the city is perceived, but also the very best neighbor it can be."

The complex would replace the existing terminal, a concrete structure that extends

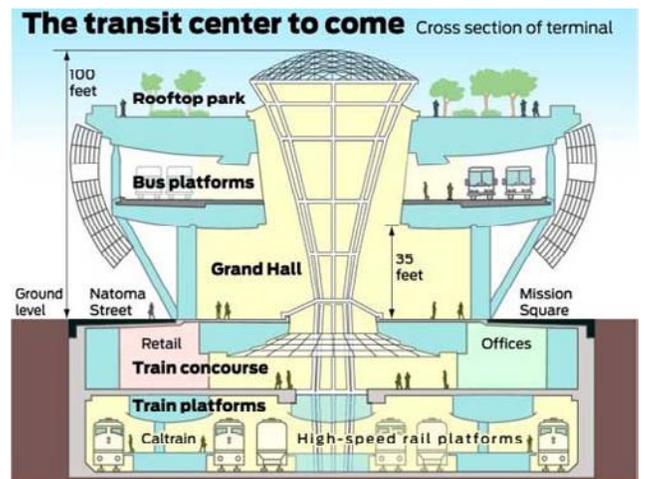


The Transbay Terminal design shows Muni buses on the ground beneath a commuter bus pavilion and a park. The tall buildings behind are the proposed Transbay Tower (left) and the existing Millennium Tower (right).

across First, Fremont and Beale streets. It is the terminus for bus routes to San Francisco from throughout the Bay Area.

#### Prominent architect

The 1939 terminal was designed by Timothy Pflueger, the city's most prominent architect of the era. Because of this connection, there have been sporadic calls to restore and upgrade the building instead of tearing it down.



Source: Transbay Joint Powers Authority

John Blanchard / The Chronicle

PROJECT ARCHITECT: PELLI CLARKE PELLI; RENDERINGS COURTESY TRANSBAY JOINT POWERS AUTHORITY



One obstacle is the difficulty and expense of trying to thread tunnels for commuter trains and California's high-speed rail system beneath Pflueger's terminal. But the new center also is designed to be a centerpiece of the emerging Transbay district, inviting rather than heavy.

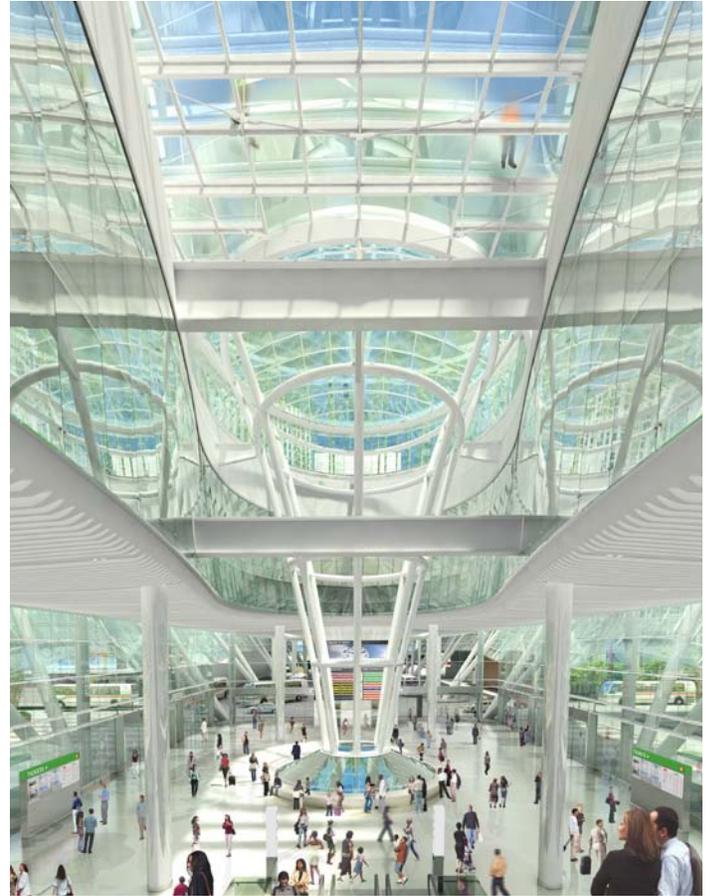
Where the new terminal crosses First and Fremont streets, for instance, there will be a 25-foot clearance between the sidewalk and the underside of the bus deck. The current clearance is 18 feet.

The terminal will be veiled in glass panels supported from behind by a lean net of steel. Corner brackets clamping the glass in place will be embedded with LED lighting, as will the underside of the bus deck above the streets.

And unlike today's low-ceilinged waiting rooms, travelers will enter the facility through the Grand Hall, a glassed-in space between First and Fremont streets that will be 100 feet wide, 260 feet long and as much as 100 feet high.

For all the emphasis on aesthetics, much of the design work involved the structural engineering required to handle an anticipated 114,000 daily travelers by 2030.

The terminal is designed to ride out an earthquake on the scale of the magnitude 7.9 temblor in 1906. The foundation beneath the train platform will consist of a 5-foot-thick mat of concrete. Each panel of the outer glass veil has four inches of air between it and the next panel, allowing air to circulate and also preventing the panels from rubbing



together and shattering during an earthquake.

"The awning is designed to move and flex, almost like the scales of a fish," Clarke said, referring to the outer veil. The terminal in a sense will do this as well, consisting of three structures linked by rubber-like expansion joints.

#### Under 2007 budget

It's a mark of today's slow economy that the elaborate project remains on the budget set in 2007, when the Transbay authority held a competition to select a design team for the new terminal and a developer for the adjacent parcel at First and Mission streets, a site seen as the future home of San Francisco's tallest building.

Not only that, the \$1.189 billion budget now includes the

rooftop park, which in 2007 was to be financed separately.

The final park design by PWP Landscape Architecture isn't as elaborate as the original rooftop concept: The waterway along one edge is gone, as is a thin southern extension that would have covered the ramp that will be used by buses to and from the Bay Bridge.

But the park space remains expansive, 1,400 feet long and 170 feet wide. A grassy bowl at one end could seat 1,000 people. The design also includes a picnic meadow, a children's park and a small cafe.

#### Entertainment options

"It's a landscape that needs to be broken down into more manageable pieces," said Maria Ayerdi-Kaplan, executive director of the authority. "That's why the programming is so important, the cultur-

al and entertainment components.”

Other changes have streamlined the terminal’s structure, such as reducing the number of skylights from five to three. It still is expected to receive a gold ranking from the U.S. Green Building Council.

As for the once-touted 1,000-foot tower, the new design treats the building’s planned footprint as a plaza filled with a grid of potted trees. Developer Hines continues to negotiate the fine points of the land sale agreement with the Transbay authority, and the city is still crafting the zoning that would allow such heights.

While the existing terminal is demolished and the new transit center is being built, buses will use a temporary terminal two blocks away at Main and Folsom streets.