

Questions Regarding RFP for Transit Center District Plan and Transit Tower EIR (RFP #CP-07/08-001)

1. Infrastructure Analysis

The Scope of Work identifies as necessary to the EIR analysis an “Infrastructure Analysis to assess the CEQA-related impacts of the proposed project on infrastructure such as waste and sewer systems and public services such as parks, and identify appropriate mitigation mechanisms for any identified service deficiencies”

We are not aware of a recent San Francisco EIR that has undertaken more than a relatively cursory analysis of public services and utilities, with limited exceptions. The recently published Eastern Neighborhoods DEIR included a relatively detailed analysis of parks and recreation facilities, but focused out other services and utilities in the initial study. The Market and Octavia Plan EIR and the previously prepared Transbay Redevelopment Plan/Caltrain EIR/EIS each covered public services and utilities in a dozen pages or so, relying on published (including web-available) information and some brief contacts with service providers. The Rincon Hill Plan EIR included an analysis of sewer system capacity under Hydrology and Water Quality and a brief discussion of water supply under Population and Housing, but otherwise focused out services and utilities. The Hunters Point Shipyard Reuse EIR relied in substantial part on a DPW/Bureau of Engineering-prepared draft “Infrastructure Backbone Project Plan.”

Questions:

1a) Does the Department wish the scope of the Infrastructure Analysis for the Transit Center District EIR to depart substantially from the above-described practice?

The appropriate level of analysis would be similar to the Market and Octavia Plan EIR and the Transbay Redevelopment Plan/Caltrain Extension EIR/EIS.

1b) If yes, can you please provide a brief outline of the wished-for scope for the Infrastructure Analysis?

See above.

1c) Is the Infrastructure Analysis intended to provide an engineering analysis of infrastructure capacity?

The infrastructure analysis is meant to give evidence to substantiate the findings that the EIR makes with regard to the significance of impacts on various utilities and services. It is not anticipated that this would require an engineering analysis.

2. Initial Study

The RFP makes no mention of an Initial Study. The RFP lists some issue areas with no detail (biological resources, hydrology and water quality, mineral resources, agricultural resources) that could presumably be scoped out in an Initial Study.

Question:

2) Does the Department intend to publish an Initial Study, or will all topics be included in the Transit Center District EIR?

There will be no Initial Study and all topics will be included in the EIR. Proposers are invited to discuss how they might structure the document to address topic areas that might otherwise be scoped out in an Initial Study.

3. Transit Center (replacement Transbay Terminal)

The new Transit Center, a replacement for the existing Transbay Terminal, has received CEQA and NEPA clearance in the Transbay Redevelopment Plan/Caltrain EIR/EIS. However, all of the recently submitted proposals for the Transit Tower include a design for the Transit Center, as well.

Questions:

3a) To what extent, if at all, with the Transit Center District EIR be required to analyze the new Transit Center Terminal itself at a project level of detail?

The terminal itself should be considered as a cumulative project in the Transit Center District Plan EIR and not as part of the proposed project.

3b) If yes, will the EIR, for example, have to include visual simulations of the new terminal? What about wind and shadow analysis of the new terminal building?

The Transit Center District Plan analysis should consider the terminal in light of the issues it raises for analysis of the proposed project. For example, if the option that includes a park on top of the terminal is selected, the Transit Center District Plan EIR should analyze the potential effects of the project on that new open space.

3c) Will the Transit Center District EIR be required to analyze operational aspects of the new terminal?

No, except as they potentially affect the cumulative analysis.

3d) If yes, will this analysis be part of the separate Transportation Analysis and simply incorporated into the EIR, or will other analysis be needed?

See above.

4. Other Towers

A number of private high-rise buildings are proposed in the Transit Center District Plan Area. At the pre-bid conference, there was discussion of one or more “variants” to the project description that might include one or more of these towers?

Questions:

4a) To what level of detail should the nearby proposed towers be addressed in the Transit Center District EIR?

The analysis to be completed for the EIR will address the proposed Transit Center District Plan project, which may or may not include rezoning of some number of parcels, some are properties on which individual towers have been proposed by private developers. Cumulative analysis of a development scenario that includes all proposed projects in the area will also be necessary. It is unknown at this time how that development scenario will be treated, discussed, or characterized in the EIR.

4b) Will these towers be addressed at the project level so that they could conceivably be approved based upon the Transit Center District EIR? For example, will visual simulations included in the EIR include specific building design features for these other towers, to the extent that such detail is available?

The only tower to be analyzed at the project level is the proposed Transit Tower on TJPA property. Other towers are to be addressed programmatically as potential development under a rezoning. It is expected that subsequent CEQA documents will be prepared for these individual proposed projects as appropriate. Although as much detail as is necessary to identify potentially significant impacts of each building would be ideal in order to facilitate future individual CEQA review, it may not be possible to achieve such a level of detail for each project. To address the example given, it is anticipated that the visual analysis would include only a massing analysis for proposed towers other than the Transit Tower.

4c) Will the analysis instead be at a programmatic, cumulative level of detail? For example, will the visual simulations in the EIR include only a massing analysis for the other towers?

See above.

4d) Will some other level of detail be appropriate?

See above.

5. Engineering Estimator

According to the RFP, an “engineering estimator” should be included in the project team to develop “cost estimates for mitigations.” While there is the possibility that some physical improvements could serve as traffic or transit (or other transportation) mitigation measures, this seems unlikely in the built-out context of the Transit Center District. To the extent such improvements are possible, however, we understand that cost estimates could be required. In terms of the other “big ticket” issues for the Transit Center District

EIR (wind, shadow, and visual), to the extent that significant impacts are identified, mitigation would likely involve changes to the proposed building(s), including the Transit Tower. Meanwhile, many other mitigation measures typically employed in San Francisco are standard measures for which cost estimates are not likely necessary (e.g., archeology testing; hazardous materials remediation including compliance with laws and regulations and DPH direction; implementation of geotechnical engineer's recommendations; construction-period air quality and noise controls).

Questions:

5a) Is the Department anticipating that mitigation cost estimates will be applicable to areas other than transportation?

Yes, other areas of potential impact may be mitigated through contributions to a funding mechanism.

5b) If yes, can you clarify the Department's understanding of the anticipated role of the engineering estimator?

The EIR should include reasonable cost estimates for potential mitigation measures and propose mechanisms for distributing costs among project sponsors.

6. Nexus Studies

The RFP requests a "statement on your firm's or subconsultants' experience with developing nexus studies (p. 11). However, page 5 of the RFP states that Citywide Planning is "conducting an economic analysis [and] a nexus and feasibility analysis," and no nexus study is noted as part of the EIR scope.

Questions:

6a) Is the nexus study noted on p. 5 part of the Seifel Consulting scope?

No, Seifel's scope does not currently include a nexus study. This study will be part of the planning consultant's scope or will be an addition to Seifel's scope or contracted to another firm in the Department's as-needed pool of economic consultants.

6b) Can the Department provide the work scope that Seifel is undertaking?

The work scope is posted on the website for the Transit Center District Plan.

6c) Is there another nexus study being undertaken separate from Seifel's work? If so, can we see the scope of that study?

See above. The Department will develop the scope of the nexus study in the near future. This scope will be available once developed. If the consultant selection of the EIR precedes completion of the nexus scope, the EIR consultant will review and provide comments on a draft nexus study scope.

6d) Is the Department anticipating that the Transit Center District EIR will include a separate nexus study? Please clarify what the scope of this separate study should include?

No separate EIR nexus study is anticipated. The findings of the nexus analysis or other socioeconomic analysis being conducted by Seifel Consulting or by the planning consultant will likely be brought into the EIR as mitigation measures.

7. Blight Analysis; Socioeconomic Analysis

The RFP states, in the Land Use and Planning portion of the Work Scope, that the Transit Center District EIR “will also need to address the potential “blight” effects of the proposed project on other parts of San Francisco or surrounding areas, as appropriate.” There is the potential for a very large effort here – and it might be more appropriately addressed as part of the Population and Housing [and Employment] section, or at least by the same consultant. This raises a larger question about whether a socioeconomic analysis similar to that prepared for the Eastern Neighborhoods will be needed as part of the EIR scope, or whether Citywide Planning is anticipated to provide sufficient background information based on the work of Seifel and/or other consultants/

Questions:

7a) Is such a blight analysis part of the Seifel Consulting economic analysis scope? If so, can we see the scope?

No blight analysis is included in the existing scope of work for Seifel Consulting. However, the Department’s Urban Simulation model may be helpful in blight analysis, insofar as it can model the impact of employment and/or population drawn to the Transit Center District Plan area rather than other parts of San Francisco.

7b) Or is the Department seeking a separate economic analysis of potential effects outside the Transit Center District, including potential blight? If the answer to this is yes, can you please clarify the information the Department is looking for and/or provide a suggested work scope?

The Department is anticipating that the EIR will need to discuss the potential for the Transit Center District Plan to affect economic conditions and development potential in other parts of San Francisco and the Bay Area, to the extent that such an impact would result in potential physical environmental effects in those areas.

7c) Is a Socioeconomic Impact Analysis necessary to evaluate implications of the project for existing residents, including those outside the Transit Center District (looking at housing options and job options) and for existing businesses and employment, including those outside the District (looking at, among other things, business and employment displacement)?

This EIR proposal should not include a Socioeconomic Impact Analysis. If it is determined that additional socioeconomic information is needed, this need would be met under a separate contract.

7d) If yes, a cumulative study area (or “area of interest”) would need to be defined by the consultant in cooperation with Citywide Planning; maybe it would be the downtown & 4th and King Railyards area, or perhaps the rest of the City; has the Department looked at these questions?

See above.

8. Firm Qualifications

The RFP (Item 3, p. 11) indicates that required firm qualifications should be limited to 7 pages, including a description of not more than four projects, at one page each. The RFP also states, “If ... subconsultants are proposed, provide the above information for each.” If the “above information” required for each subconsultant includes descriptions of up to four projects at one page each, it would appear that a team with more than one subconsultant could not maintain the 7-page limit.

Question:

8a) Does the “above information” include project descriptions, only firm name, address, contact person, and a brief description of the firm?

The section on “firm qualifications” refers only to the prime consulting firm.

8b) If the former, is the 7-page limit on Firm Qualifications a 7-page limit per firm, or does the Department want only four project descriptions in total, regardless of how many firms are included on the proposing team?

See above.

9. Work Sample

Question:

9) Please confirm that the “separate sample of your firm’s work” that is mentioned under Item 3 on page 11 of the RFP is excluded from the 7-page limit for Firm Qualifications (i.e., you are anticipating submittal of a separate document).

The separate work sample is excluded from the 7-page limit.