



28th Street/Little Portugal Community Working Group (CWG) Meeting Summary

Date of Meeting: June 10, 2026 (4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.)

Location: Eastside Neighborhood Center, Zoom

Attendees:

Members in Attendance: Bill Rankin, Chris Patterson-Simmons, Danny Garza, David Burrowes, Davide Vieira, Elma Arredondo, Eric Eidlin, Vanessa Palafox

Members not in Attendance: Chris Burton, Craig Chivatero, Damone Jordan, Ed Berger, Elsa Oliveira, Helen Masamori, Jesus Flores, Justin Triano, Michael Ogilvie, Scott Smith, Tala Fatolahzadeh, Terry Christensen

Speaker Attendees: Frank Ponciano (VTA Facilitator), Erica Roecks (VTA), Greg Thiebaut (VTA), Ian Williams (VTA), Jennifer Hernandez (VTA), Christina Phillip (VTA), Martina Davis (City of San José)

Meeting Agenda:

- Welcome & Report Outs
- Phase II Program Update
- Station Plaza Design Update
- Demolition & Maintenance
- Services Update
- TOD Update
- Next Steps, Discussion & Feedback

Follow-Up Items:

- VTA will follow up on the date for when tunneling will begin.
- VTA will follow up with updates from the Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Team.

Comments, Issues, and Questions	Response
Welcome & Report Outs	
<p>I hope VTA will control the contractors doing work in the 28th Street/Little Portugal Station area. PG&E was able to postpone their work so that it wouldn't interfere with the last three days of Cristo Rey San José's school year. My report back is: We need VTA to keep the neighbors apprised of activities, whether theirs or their contractors', which I assume will become increasingly many over the coming few months of demolition.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p>
Phase II Program Update	
<p>The timeframe where I saw tunneling beginning was 2028. When might we see activity of any sort at 28th Street after that?</p>	<p>Support of excavation mobilization is scheduled to begin in January 2028, with work continuing from that point until mid-2032.</p> <p>The general construction sequence will begin with the support of excavation for both the station entrance building and the north ventilation shaft facility, which will be followed by heavy civil work within the excavation to get ready for the Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM).</p> <p>The TBM is scheduled to arrive in late Q4, 2030. Construction will then begin on the station proper.</p>
<p>Can you remind me of the board recommendations for the off-ramp? Are we talking about Santa Clara or Julian?</p>	<p>Off-ramp is a term tied into the progressive design-build contract. It's basically saying that VTA is going to not move forward with the contractor to construct a certain portion of the tunnel.</p>
Station Plaza Design Update/Discussion	
<p>What will the kiosk be used for?</p>	<p>Primarily coffee, snacks, and small retail. We've heard from Board members, Council members, and community members that they're interested in more activation and places to gather. VTA is</p>

	providing the utility hookups now so the space can be activated by vendors later.
How can local businesses learn about how to get a kiosk there? I'm hoping that mom-and-pop places can be there rather than corporation coffee shops.	This is a long-term goal. VTA Real Estate will manage procurement closer to the opening, but VTA will keep this on the radar for future discussion. Right now, VTA is focused on the location of the kiosks.
This is an evolving context; it's going to get a lot denser and have more activity, so I think we need to plan for that. It's going to get a lot warmer, so I think more trees rather than fewer to create a better micro-climate.	Comment noted.
At the Mexican Heritage Plaza, we experience terrible pollen because all the trees are male trees. It impacts AC and causes allergic reactions. Can we research the type of trees? I like the raised stage for visibility, but is there a way to create a ramp for Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance? Regarding seating on concrete, I'm concerned about elders sitting on cold concrete in winter. I like handrails to deter sleeping. For kiosks, I'd love to see a priority for local small businesses and cooperatives.	Staff will prioritize non-pollen species and will incorporate ADA ramps for any raised elements.
The stage is for things like plays, yoga, or aerobics? I'll echo the concern about making sure this doesn't become a place for the unhoused that distracts from public use. I see this being a great place to meet a group of people, have a meeting outside, grab some coffee. I like the kiosk location; sitting under trees with coffee seems fantastic.	Yes, the stage is multi-purpose and would act as a seating edge when not in use for performances.
I'm interested in the species of tree. Sycamores have roots that lift sidewalks, large leaves that clog drains, and require high maintenance. The maintenance has to be low and the roots shouldn't destroy pavement.	VTA will come back with more details on trees in the future.
You showed a blue and white tile. Sadly, at the Mexican Heritage Plaza, people ran	Comment noted.

<p>over that tile with the electric forklifts and hand trucks. The plaza has its own loading dock. People don't use it, and they've destroyed some of those entrances, and it's hard to repair them, especially the tile, because you may never get that tile back. Luckily, they're working to correct it. That creates a tripping hazard, but the key is to keep that equipment off.</p>	
<p>The elevation of the ground around, or in the station area, since that's a flood zone, does it have to be elevated?</p>	<p>The station itself must be at a certain elevation. The plaza itself will not necessarily be a depressed area. This isn't considered to be a flood basin for design purposes. The stormwater management plans that VTA is developing now will have stormwater bioswales and things located all throughout the site. All of that is part of the grading and work we're doing. Generally speaking, we don't raise the entire site by much, but we do have some grading in there to make sure drainage is adequately addressed.</p>
<p>And you mentioned berms? 40 years ago, there were berms at Roosevelt Park, along East Santa Clara Street. They were removed because the police said they couldn't see into the park. It would be a shame to put berms here and cause a security mess that has to be undone in the future.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p>
<p>I like more trees and that stage is nice, and I know Portuguese kids at San José High brought this up 25 years ago. Who is going to activate the plaza for things like farmers markets, performances on a stage? Is that the City or VTA?</p>	<p>Activation and management will be the focus of the mid-July CWG meeting.</p>
<p>The Crepe Myrtle is our city tree and it's non-pollen. Magnolia is also cool. Who is maintaining these trees? VTA maintenance of bus stops is horrendous. I want to see things happen for us, not just because of FIFA.</p>	<p>This is VTA property, so VTA will maintain the trees.</p>

<p>Are those tents permanent?</p>	<p>This shows how a special event would be accommodated, providing a sense of scale for the layout. They are not permanent.</p>
<p>Is the stage permanent?</p>	<p>It's either a permanent raised stage or a flat area. On the flat area, a temporary stage could be built if there is an event. VTA wants to hear if you want a permanent stage (something that's concrete and elevated) or if you want an open performance area where a stage could be built in any configuration depending on what's happening.</p>
<p>Looking at that area you're talking about, that's a big opportunity for grinding. A lot of damage could be done. I've seen stone amphitheaters that are secure and safe because they got things in place to make sure that doesn't happen.</p> <p>For the landscaping in the middle — I love flowers, I love landscaping — but for a public space, I would say no. That's an opportunity for garbage; it's an opportunity for people who are not well to dig up the plants. I say just flatscape it with some art for that particular area to represent the Portuguese area. I think that would be a better opportunity and would save a lot of money.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p>
<p>The concrete is probably going to be less happy for some people, so something 'wood-ish' seems nicer.</p>	
<p>I like these benches more because they're not just concrete. When I think about elders, I think about them sitting on cold concrete during the winter, and I don't know how that's going to feel on the bones. I like handrails so people can't sleep on them. I agree with the placement where they're facing center.</p> <p>My background: I used to work with an art consulting firm, and my recommendation is the medallion.</p>	<p>Art opportunities will be developed further as things mature. VTA will consider power access.</p>

<p>Are there ways to incorporate historical art in wayfinders, sculptures, and historical things that honor the Portuguese history, specifically in San José? So that as people are sitting there, they can read about how Five Wounds came to be, or different historical members in the Portuguese community. Let's honor that culture -- art is a phenomenal way to do that.</p> <p>In terms of the staging, something I had a question about was access to power. Is it just cement? Would we have a place to plug in a soundboard? I don't know if those are things that were maybe taken into consideration.</p>	
<p>As an elderly person, I need a back [on the bench]. Also, when you're planning events, look at the seating and how they face. When I go to Cesar Chavez Park, everyone is fighting for those few benches that are in the back and they're not really even facing the stage. A lot of people want to sit down. It would be nice if you're thinking about the benches, you're also thinking towards the activities.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p>
<p>I like a back too, but that's too much like a bed for somebody. I would go to the curved concrete bench. We aren't housing people there, are we? This is just temporary seating to relax. A flat bench is just a welcome invite for somebody to just camp right there, stretch out, and sleep. It's beautiful aesthetically, but that's inviting another problem unless they're going to have 24-hour security there saying you can't sleep here. Most places that have an amphitheater or a stage have a curved bench for seating.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p>
<p>We've touched on trying to recognize the history of San José Steel on the site. Let's that into consideration in the design of some elements — for instance I-beams as bollards or somehow incorporating steel,</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p>

<p>whether it be the look or the feel or actual steel.</p>	
<p>I thought the loading zone was far from parking. What if you did a stage with a medallion on top of it? That's just me wanting the art to reflect the neighborhood you're visiting.</p> <p>I think that's important, whether in this space or inside the building, that we're paying tribute to the neighborhood.</p> <p>Regarding the mentioned skateboarding, I started seeing people doing what is called grinding on the ledge, so that could be an issue. However, I am also conflicted because I like the offside with the first layout we saw, but I also felt this one was very inviting towards engagement, center, unity, and circles. I'm conflicted, and I'm excited to see what this last layout could be.</p>	<p>This is a graphical example of what a medallion could look like, and that's something VTA would work through in the future.</p>
<p>I do like this medallion concept quite a bit. Think about City Hall. We didn't even think about the microclimate and how we make it comfortable. City Hall is a very light color concrete, but it's hot as heck. It becomes a bit of a moonscape, so that segues into the other point that several others raised about the programming. You want to define the space enough so it creates the place for people to act in a certain way. But you don't want to be locked in a place that is growing, you know? It's a fine balance. The programming and management are a key piece of it.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p>
<p>We're talking about the plaza, and that's great, but what kind of lipstick are you gonna put on the pig that is the infrastructure building? I think we need to have a discussion about art. I think we need to have a discussion about the infrastructure building. Perhaps not as in-depth as this, but let's certainly consider what is going to be done with it to make it not stand out.</p>	<p>That is the topic of our mid-July CWG meeting. Thank you.</p>

<p>We see lots of damage on the Five Wounds Church campus with people tearing up landscaping. If you look at squares in Portugal, they have the hardscape, trees, and benches and fountains. You don't see a lot of shrubs or flowers. Unfortunately, unless the condition changes with people who are unhoused and not well, it's going to get torn up.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p>
<p>Make sure there are adjustable grates as the tree grows, so you don't spend a lot of money removing them or replacing them.</p>	<p>VTA confirmed adjustable grates will be used.</p>
<p>I liked the medallion because it felt like it made the visibility into getting into the station clearer. Having the plant in there is lovely, but I'm thinking of commuters piling in and out, and that other planting seemed like a distraction and blocks the traffic flow. I also wondered whether having that stage right up near the street was ideal? I wondered if you could just move it into the center of the trees so you get a ring of trees and then a stage in the middle?</p>	<p>VTA can work through refinement.</p>
<p>I like the alternative medallion a lot more for the same reasons of accessibility. I like how it's separated where if you're just there to commute, you can go in and out, but if you want to venture off and see jazz or whatever, you can do that. I feel the stage is a little too close to traffic for noise reduction.</p>	<p>VTA can work through refinement.</p>
<p>I think the points made about hardscape versus planting are important. On San Fernando Street, where we are putting in the bikeway, we initially had a lot of lower shrubbery and had to get rid of it because we couldn't see a way to maintain it long term. Unless that is planned for us, there is not much point in proposing it.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p>
<p>I like the idea of a raised stage. I think it should be shaded as much as possible for people playing and sitting there. I heard someone else mention people sleeping</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p>

there, so that is something to watch out for. The designs all look pretty okay.	
I think the 'Park with Alternative' layout is the one I prefer. In terms of the stage location, I was thinking about the other issue you brought up — it's by the road, but then it's accessible to equipment being unloaded. So then maybe that was okay even if it was by the road. I don't know the pros and cons of noise or ease of use.	Comment noted.
Seating Elements Discussion	
The concrete is probably going to be less happy for some people, so something wood-ish seems nicer.	Comment noted.
The double-sided is really a cool concept. It seats more people, it's cool. I'm also conflicted because of the housing.	Comment noted.
Tree Grates Discussion	
Please make them as heavy as you possibly can. A lot of people who are not well think they're superheroes; the grate in front of my store took three months to get somebody to put back, and it's a hazard. Somebody came to try to put it back and couldn't do it, and somebody tripped over it. I reported it to 311, they passed the baton, and we finally got the owner of the property to move it because it took two guys. Make it as heavy as you can because I know they're necessary, but if they're flimsy, they're going to be all over the street. Again, people think something's under there and they're going to flip them up. But I like the design. I like Oblio and Rain. It would be nice to match the aesthetics/bench. Those are porous, right? That's nice. Make them heavy and make sure they can't be moved easily.	Some of them are bolted down, as well.
Make it easily adjustable for tree width, because I've seen some of the grates growing into the trees. It's a hazard.	Comment noted.

<p>Is there a grate design that is best adjustable?</p>	<p>VTA can do a circular pattern, a square pattern, or something more elegant. Both rectangular and square tree grates have adjustable ability. The square versus rectangular choice is a design/aesthetic preference. They will all provide enough space for the tree to grow.</p>
<p>I'm looking at the oblio, and it looks like it has lights. I would discourage string lights. If you want to light the trees, do it right.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p>
<p>Will it incorporate an irrigation system?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>
<p>Bollards Discussion</p>	
<p>Where are these going to be?</p>	<p>They're going to block the various entry points, between planted islands around the edges. They will be between each of the islands.</p>
<p>Do bollards need to be removable for fire or emergency access? They need to be designed with that in mind.</p>	<p>Some bollards do need to be removable in a couple instances for fire truck access. That's only maybe 8 or 10 that have to be removable or retractable of about 25 total bollards that we need. We can pick and choose whether we want the other bollards to be removable or not. We have the freedom and ability to do permanent ones in many locations.</p>
<p>I like the stainless steel, but I know it's not aesthetically appealing to most people. I like that look.</p> <p>For art, I like the sculpture, but again, I am thinking about people who like to tag stuff. That's a concern unless someone is going to be there every day to go right behind them with remover, because tagging is going to happen.</p> <p>The concrete ground light is common throughout all stations since the beginning of BART. I remember seeing those in the city at Embarcadero and West Oakland BART stations, but we want to upgrade and do something new, so I like the stainless steel.</p>	<p>VTA designs the geometric steel bollards you see there so they cannot move. Comments noted.</p>

<p>Those concrete ground ones are boring.</p> <p>Regarding the plants, people are going to steal them unless there is a big budget for replacing plants that get stolen.</p> <p>I like the geometric steel idea if they can't move. I like that they can't move. Sure, people can probably tag that too, but those are my two favorites: the stainless steel and the geometric steel.</p>	
<p>I like the steel or concrete, and I love the idea of light and visibility at night. I think it's a safety thing that helps people feel safe while walking to the bus stop late at night.</p> <p>I don't know if there's a way to do a mix of options. I like the idea of plants; maybe plants alternating with concrete brown lid lights would be cool. I also like the design or ability of the flower pots — I know you're not going to use these specific ones, but I like using something that is harder to tag. I don't know if there's a way to get plants with lights, but I do like the idea of lights and I like the plants.</p> <p>Those are the two that stood out to me. When I look at these concrete ones, specifically downtown, I hate those rubber green things that are supposed to separate the bike lanes. People still run them over, they're an eyesore, and nobody fixes them. That's what it reminds me of; it feels like it's taking up space for no reason. However, if you incorporate more trees and more lights, there's a purpose for it, and it's also creating safety. So, those are my two favorites, and if there's a way to fuse them, I like that.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p>
<p>This is a perfect opportunity to integrate the steel into something here. Tagging is a big deal. I don't like the planters for a lot of reasons: they become ashtrays and bathrooms, and everything else in between.</p>	<p>Comment noted.</p>

This is where I would try to integrate something reflecting San José Steel.	
I like the idea of incorporating steel. Is there a way to also incorporate light? Security is important, and it's nice to have everything lit up.	Comment noted.
I was looking at the geometric steel and the icosahedrons there, and it made me think of D&D dice, which then made me think of the variety of D&D dice, which then made me think it might be interesting if there was some San José-related theme, where each bollard was a different work of art by some artist.	Comment noted.
Given that people will probably steal plants, I think the steel light bollard makes sense.	Comment noted.
Demolition Update	
Is one vibration and noise detector for the church and one for the school enough? It seems like there should be more monitoring throughout the perimeter of the buildings.	This monitoring is just for the demolition of the above-ground structure. When VTA moves forward with further construction of the station, there will be another evaluation and a plan associated with that. This is just for demolition of the above-ground, non-basement portion of the building.
TOD Update	
I prefer that the meeting happens in September rather than over the summer.	VTA may not be able to make September; it may have to be earlier than that.
I prefer in-person.	Comment noted.
It should be in-person.	Comment noted.
Next Steps	No comments.
Discussion or Questions	No comments.

Upcoming CWG Meetings:

- Wednesday, September 16 | 4:00 – 6:00 p.m.
- Wednesday, November 18 | 4:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Prepared by: Jennifer Hernandez, Laura Nguyen

Concurred by: Erica Roecks, Greg Thiebaut

Distribution: Website, Email