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Diridon Reimagined: A Review of Planning for San José's Transit Hub

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DIRIDON REIMAGINED

A Review of Planning for San José's Transit Hub

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CLIENT
Joint Venture Silicon Valley

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DISCLAIMER:

This report is a culmination of the above research practices and only presents the perspective of the authors; it is not representative of any agency or client including Joint Venture Silicon Valley, BART, CAHSR, Caltrain, the City of San José, the MTC, or VTA.

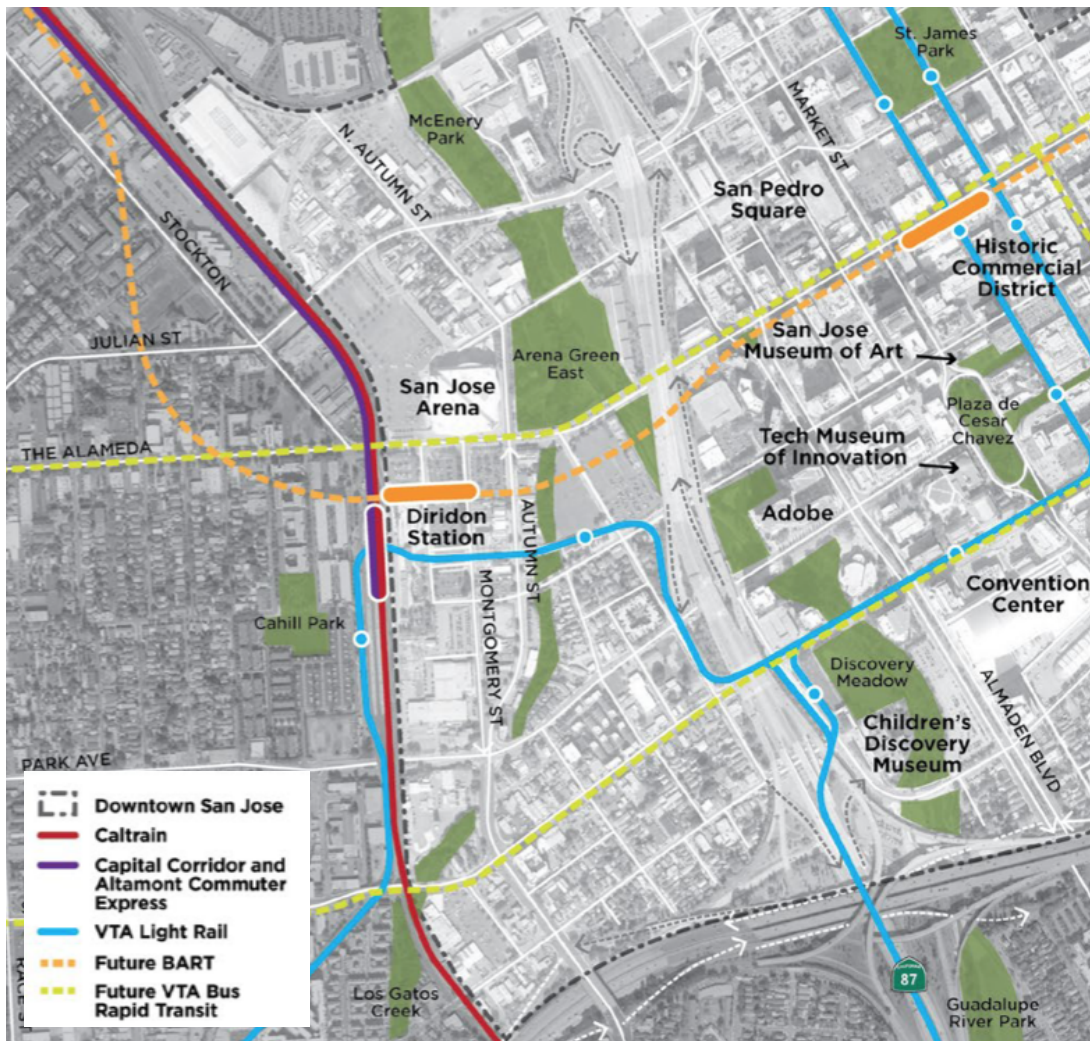
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Diridon Station in San José is emerging as the nexus for several major regional transportation investments taking place in the South Bay, including BART to Silicon Valley Extension (BSV P2), Caltrain electrification, and California High-Speed Rail. A redesigned and improved station has the potential to transform Downtown San José, with opportunities for increased connectivity, economic accessibility, and efficacy of transit networks. The Diridon Integrated Station Concept Plan (DISC) envisions a plan to redesign the station, emphasizing connectivity between transit modes and placemaking within San José. Local leaders, planning staff, transit advocates, and community members see the station project as a once-in-a-generation opportunity to meaningfully improve transportation networks in the region. As such, the stakes are high to ensure that the decades-long plans and investments required for a renewed Diridon Station are truly seamlessly integrated and lead to a completed project that serves riders well.

In analyzing the challenges associated with an integrated Diridon Station, our team saw three themes emerge: [governance](#), [station design](#), and [community engagement](#). Governance is central to the project and its complex issues, with misalignment or challenges affecting all aspects of the station project. Issues surrounding governance—and hence project planning, delivery, and management—greatly impact the components of station design and community engagement.

Figure ES1: Neighborhoods and major destinations near Diridon Station in San José.



Source: Map excerpt from [The Future of Downtown San José](#), 2014 report by SPUR/SOM.

Methodology

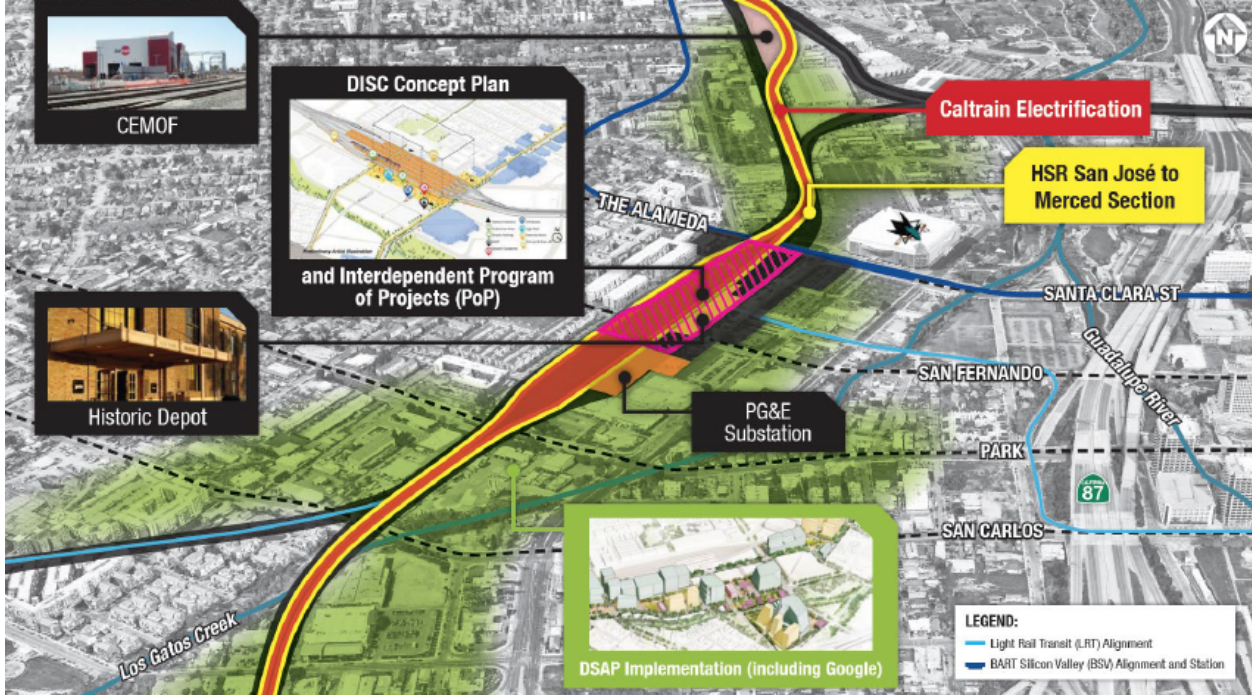
Over the course of the Fall 2021 semester, our group conducted interviews with staff from each of the five agencies involved with DISC: the City of San José, Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA), Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART), Caltrain, and Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC). Additionally, our team also spoke with members from the Diridon Station Area Advisory Group (SAAG), consultants involved in the project, and transit advocates. In total, the team conducted 17 interviews, totaling over 20 hours. Our team also attended transit board and public meetings, including the San José City Council, Diridon Station Joint Policy Advisory Board, the Joint VTA/BART Working Committee, and BART Board Meetings. We were able to visit Diridon Station in-person, and conducted two site visits. (All photos of the current Diridon station were taken by the report's authors.) Lastly, we also reviewed extensive agency documentation and final project plans available online.

Findings

Diridon Station has served the area for over a century, and will continue to do so for years to come. The existing conditions at the station however, include disjointed timetables and ticketing, confusing entry points and platform signage, and inactive and underutilized surface parking lots. These findings from site visits informed our recommendations, as they present opportunities to improve the passenger experience in several aspects. The current station design creates challenges for users to buy a ticket, utilize wayfinding (signage and other design elements to help orient oneself and locate destinations), transfer between modes, and find information on the surrounding area.

In analyzing the community engagement processes around Diridon station over the last few years, our group looked closely at the SAAG, which focused on the DISC plan, and VTA's Downtown-Diridon Community Working Group (CWG), which focused on the BSV P2 plan. Along with our interviews and scrutiny of existing plans, we performed a stakeholder analysis and found that transit constituencies generally have lower power in the process and have not been centered in most outreach. As is typical for large-scale infrastructure projects, public agencies, elected officials, & business groups hold most of the power in this process. We also conducted a detailed analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges (SWOC) of the core community engagement efforts.

Figure ES2: View of Diridon area projects.



Source: 2021 DISC Project Summary Slides, City of San José.

For our findings on governance, an initial component of analyzing the projects was to understand the interests of each of the agencies involved. The City of San José controls the land uses around Diridon station and wants to use the various projects around the station

area—DISC, Downtown West, and BSV P2—to activate the neighborhood and make Diridon station into the Bay Area’s premier multimodal hub. For the City to reach its long term goals, the projects must be coordinated rather than managed as separate disjointed projects. Caltrain (the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board, PCJPB) owns the station building itself, as well as former Southern Pacific tracks, platforms, and some adjacent properties. Caltrain also runs the most frequent service from the station and wants their service to remain as simple as possible. While Caltrain owns the station, it does not have the funds to make the necessary improvements itself, so it is in its interest to partner with the other agencies. VTA owns the Diridon light rail station as well as the future Diridon BART station property, and is also responsible for building the stations and tracks for the BVSII extension, with BART then running the operations. Since the BART extension and Diridon BART station is on a more immediate timeline than the DISC development, VTA has largely insulated the BART project from the goals of the DISC plan, with little regard for future station integration. For BART, their interests lay in ensuring the BART extension makes operations and maintenance as easy as possible, while ensuring potential passengers have easy access to its service. Finally, MTC’s interest in improving Diridon station is an important component to support its goals in Plan Bay Area 2050 related to regional growth, economic accessibility, and reducing GHG emissions.

Recommendations

The plans for Diridon Station are at risk due to difficulties integrating the many projects intersecting at the station with a regional, user-centric perspective. The fragmentation between agencies, interest groups, and residents with competing priorities for the area, as well as the focus on local impacts over the broader transit experience, is slowing project delivery and impeding its eventual success. In line with the policy goals of the MTC, [Seamless Bay Area](#), and other regional organizations, our recommendations for design, engagement, and governance seek to improve coordination and achieve a frictionless transit experience, vastly expanding Diridon's ridership and ensuring Downtown San José reaches its full potential.

1. Station Design & Operations

Regarding Diridon Station's design, our team's long-term recommendations should be applied to the DISC project, but near-term recommendations could be implemented at the current station to improve the passenger experience in the years before construction of the integrated station begins.

Near-Term Recommendations: As the station owner, Caltrain should integrate wayfinding for all transit services. The display of wayfinding should be consistent with the regional or transit-system brand, and should also clarify expected transfer routes between modes/services. Also in the near-term, streamlined ticketing, special event service, and improved links to active transportation could all improve transit and neighborhood connections. Finally, with Diridon station as an important component of placemaking in San José, near-term recommendations to help shape the public realm include partnering with public and private entities for community events, as well as activating the surrounding space with art, food trucks, or an interim public plaza.

Long-Term Recommendations: Improvements for station wayfinding focus on incorporating MTC's hub signage program, universal design standards (planning for people of all ages and abilities), and new technology such as an indoor positioning system (IPS), which works like a GPS system to help people locate indoor spaces using a network of connected devices. Central to the long-term recommendations for transit connections is the fact that most riders will be transferring between VTA's planned BART station and Caltrain or HSR located inside Diridon Station. Given that, the Cahill Street public plaza should be prioritized as an essential transfer point. Additionally, agencies should undertake a full analysis of the time needed to transfer from VTA's future BART platforms to both the current and future Diridon platforms, and develop a plan for timed transfers between services.

2. Community Engagement

Our team developed a series of recommendations for community engagement based around the themes of communication; continuity & consistency; and centering the community.

Near-Term Recommendations: Public agencies must improve communication with the public by consistent reporting back to the community concerns they have heard and managing expectations for the level of community involvement.

Long-Term Recommendations: To help simplify the many channels for connecting with the public on various projects in the same geographic area, Diridon-area engagement should be centralized with a single community advisory group, with public engagement continuing after project approval and completion. In this restructuring, we urge agencies to center underrepresented community groups with a smaller, community-led board, rather than focusing on businesses and professional advocacy organizations. We also recommend consistent engagement with current and future potential transit riders, as well as identifying and intentionally engaging underrepresented and marginalized groups.

3. Governance

For our governance recommendations, we grappled with two major challenges for these projects: The first is the fragmentation between plans involving Diridon Station. Without consistency among these plans, it is difficult to see how to achieve high-quality design, community engagement, connectivity, and other project goals. Specifically, the BART project does not appear to be well integrated with the multimodal hub concept developed through the DISC process. The same can be said of the California HSR Authority's Diridon Station proposal shown in their environmental documents. The second is that while the agencies involved may be able to operate cities and transit systems, they are not well-equipped to build megaprojects, such as the integrated Diridon station. Our team analyzed several different governance models for our recommendations. The goal of the governance models is to bring the overlapping projects together into one integrated transit hub and station district. One model was goal-oriented, ensuring good station design, while others were construction-oriented or management-oriented.

Recommendations: Ultimately, our team recommends that San José should create a public development company to manage the Diridon Station Area. This public development corporation should be supported by a regional project delivery entity such as Infrastructure Bay Area (which is described by SPUR in their [More for Less report](#)). Furthermore, all the agencies involved should support the creation of Infrastructure Bay Area, a regional infrastructure-building agency with the power to originate and build megaprojects of regional significance. If these two recommendations prove to be too difficult or politically unfeasible, all agencies should support the creation of a fund—likely to be housed at MTC—to incentivize passenger-oriented design at transit hubs. Such a fund could be carved out of an existing funding source that MTC has significant control over, such as Regional Measure 2 or the State Transit Assistance Population Based Funds. Ultimately, even modestly reformed governance over the station could align the future passengers' interests with the interests of the governing agency, resulting in a station that works best for the passenger.

Table of Final Recommendations

	STATION DESIGN (see Section 1)	AGENCIES RESPONSIBLE
	Platform Design & Safety	
Near Term	Provide increased safety guidance for narrow platforms.	Caltrain
Long Term	Estimate average and peak platform usage needs.	MTC, City of San José
Long Term	Improve platform safety features, like tactile warning strips.	City of San José, Caltrain
	Wayfinding & Signage	
Near Term	Integrate wayfinding/interior signage for all transportation services.	MTC, Caltrain
Near Term	Upgrade wayfinding to meet universal design standards (design for people of all ages and abilities).	MTC, Caltrain
Near Term	Streamline ticket purchasing by consolidating machines and improving instructions.	MTC
Near Term	Improve concourse and platform signage.	MTC, Caltrain
Near Term	Update signage to follow regional wayfinding standards.	MTC, Caltrain
Near Term	Clarify predicted transfer routes for passengers between services and modes.	MTC, Caltrain
Long Term	Wayfinding system should be integrated with the station's architectural design and structure using paving colors, textures, or materials.	City of San José, future Diridon Station project manager
Long Term	Develop indoor positioning system (IPS) technology to help users locate places within the station using their mobile devices.	future Diridon Station project manager
Long Term	Adopt universal design guidelines for future station projects.	MTC, future Diridon Station project manager, City of San José
Long Term	Incorporate the MTC's Hub Signage Program (HSP) to standardize signs across various transit services	MTC, future Diridon Station project manager
	Transit Connections & Interagency Operations	
Near Term	Improve the station's western approach to direct passengers to various transit options.	Caltrain

Near Term	Better coordinate transit service with SAP or other nearby events.	Caltrain, VTA
Long Term	Centralize ticketing systems and fares.	MTC, Caltrain, VTA, BART, CAHSR
Long Term	Improve inter-agency transit coordination and transfers.	MTC, Caltrain, VTA, BART, CAHSR
Long Term	Analyze future transfer times and minimize walking distance between modes.	MTC, City of San José, VTA
	Public Realm & Neighborhood Integration	
Near Term	Engage with the community in a placemaking process for a future site at Diridon Station.	City of San José
Near Term	Activate the public realm surrounding Diridon.	City of San José, Caltrain
Near Term	Develop an interim public plaza.	City of San José, Caltrain
Near Term	Better wayfinding for surrounding neighborhoods and destinations.	City of San José, MTC
Near Term	Work with the community to develop temporary housing alternatives and/or social services on existing parking lots or vacant lots.	City of San José, Caltrain
Near Term	Improve wayfinding for surrounding neighborhoods and destinations.	City of San José, MTC
Near Term	Work with the community to develop temporary housing alternatives and/or social services on existing parking lots or vacant lots.	City of San José
Long Term	Design a space that is complementary to Downtown West Mixed-Use Plan.	City of San José
Long Term	Configure the Cahill Street public plaza as the active heart of the new station.	City of San José
Long Term	Develop standards for policing of public space.	City of San José, Caltrain, VTA, BART
Long Term	Maintain city and VTA-owned property for longterm development leases.	City of San José, VTA
Long Term	Encourage small active-use spaces on the ground floor of Diridon Station and in the immediate vicinity.	City of San José
Long Term	Prioritize housing development for all income levels.	City of San José
Near & Long Term	Extend active transportation links to the wider neighborhood & accelerate projects connecting to Diridon station.	City of San José

Near & Long Term	Provide wayfinding directions to active transportation.	City of San José
Near & Long Term	Clearly mark micro-mobility opportunities on and around station property.	City of San José
Near & Long Term	Expand current micro-mobility information available for public knowledge.	City of San José
	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (See Section 2)	AGENCIES RESPONSIBLE
Near Term	Consistently report back to the community by summarizing public feedback and its impact on the projects.	VTA, City of San José
Near Term	Manage public expectations for community engagement.	VTA, City of San José
Long Term	Centralize Diridon-area engagement for all projects with a single community advisory group.	MTC, future Diridon Station project manager
Long Term	Continue public engagement after project approval and implementation.	VTA, City of San José, future Diridon Station project manager
Long Term	Redesign the SAAG to improve its usefulness as a community-led board.	City of San José
Long Term	Ensure consistent engagement with transit riders.	VTA, City of San José, future Diridon Station project manager
Long Term	Identify and intentionally engage underrepresented or marginalized stakeholders.	VTA, City of San José, future Diridon Station project manager
	GOVERNANCE (See Section 3)	AGENCIES RESPONSIBLE
Near & Long Term	Create a special development company to oversee the design and construction of Diridon Station and its environs.	MTC
Near & Long Term	Create a new regional agency to build transportation infrastructure, modeled on SPUR's proposal for Infrastructure Bay Area.	

Near & Long Term	Develop a passenger-oriented design financial incentives program to provide funding for passenger-centric design.	
Near & Long Term	Establish internal and external oversight in tandem with external independent peer review and an independent project cost evaluation, especially for BSV P2.	

SECTION 1: STATION DESIGN & OPERATIONS

Summary

- Diridon Station's current and future designs will have major implications for transit-rider and general community usage, and those users should be centered in developing the building and its many public spaces.
- Many changes at the existing Caltrain-owned Diridon Station can and should be implemented in the near term before the integrated station breaks ground to make Diridon a more useful transit hub for riders today.
- Some of the most important design considerations include: integrated interior wayfinding, universal design, streamlined ticketing, coordinated transit services and transfers, community placemaking, activating the public realm, expanded neighborhood wayfinding, improved active-transportation links, centering the Cahill Street public plaza, maintaining city land for longterm development leases, and increasing housing options in the immediate station area.
- VTA's planned design for BART facilities at Diridon Station put the BART platforms far underground and across a large city block from other passenger rail services. The long and convoluted transfer between BART and other modes there could significantly depress ridership. As such, we recommend that the various agencies need to work with transit riders to develop the best outcome for transfers in the near term and long term.

Introduction

Transit station design is a critical component to lower barriers for widespread transit adoption and ensure accessibility for all riders. Successful stations utilize a passenger-centric model and adhere to universal design standards: This means planning for people of all ages and abilities at every point in the journey including trip planning, ticket purchasing, station navigation, boarding and riding transit, locating a final destination, and emergency protocols¹. In the case of the Diridon Integrated Station Concept (DISC), the project's final design will also help determine whether it accomplishes the goal of transforming the western edge of Downtown San José from an empty and car-centric suburban landscape to a lively, multifaceted central city.

In this section, we undertook an analysis of the current station conditions as well as the draft concept layout for DISC, and developed a series of near-term and long-term recommendations for the Diridon partner agencies to implement going forward. These recommendations cover three general areas: (1) [Station wayfinding and interior layout](#), (2) [transit connections and interagency operations](#); and (3) [public realm and neighborhood integration](#).

¹ Joan Campos, "Transportation Designed for You: Universal and Wayfinding Designs for Rail Stations" (University of California Transportation Center, 2018), <https://joancampos.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/6.-Research-Transportation-Designed-for-you.pdf>.

Methodology

In Fall 2021, we took two site visits to the existing historic Diridon Station to better understand the station design, layout, wayfinding, public space, and surrounding neighborhood context. We also interviewed agency staff from Caltrain, BART, VTA, and the City of San José as well as other neighborhood stakeholder groups. Additionally, we reviewed many DISC/BSV P2 documents and the minutes of various public meetings on the project's design. To complement this research on Diridon Station, we also undertook an analysis of similar station projects in other American cities ([Denver Union Station Master Plan](#) and [Sacramento Valley Station Master Plan](#)).

Existing Conditions

Diridon Station, which is owned and operated by Caltrain, exemplifies many of the issues with Bay Area transportation agencies operating along intersecting routes with disjointed passenger-facing experiences that discourage transit use. The existing station offers rail service to San Francisco via Caltrain; to Stockton via Altamont Corridor Express (ACE); to Sacramento via Amtrak's Capitol Corridor; and to Los Angeles via Amtrak's Coast Starlight; plus Greyhound buses to several locations in California, Nevada, and Mexico; and light rail/buses for local destinations via VTA and other regional bus providers.

The historic station building on Cahill Street is disconnected from the city's urban fabric, facing several surface parking lots to the east along with low-density industrial and commercial buildings to the south. The station's secondary entrance on Laurel Grove Lane is surrounded by mid-rise residential buildings.

Apart from the various agency logos displayed on the sign facing Cahill Street, the many services and routes offered at Diridon are not immediately evident to visitors arriving at either entrance. Along the interior passageway to the tracks, complex maps in a confusing mix of graphic styles show the station's routes, timetables, and nearby transit stops, but they are not intuitive to find or use. And without a clear understanding of the separate systems, it's difficult to know the correct train or bus to take to your destination. The rear entrance on Laurel Grove Lane lacks adequate signage for the main Diridon Station and its rail services, with most signs directing users to VTA's adjacent light-rail stop.

Figure 1.1: Laurel Grove entrance to Diridon.



Trip planning among multiple agencies with such limited information is very confusing. For example, if you're trying to go from San José to Berkeley, you could take Amtrak's Capitol Corridor directly there or instead take a VTA bus to BART at Berryessa. But this information—as well as the various ticket prices and scheduling options—is difficult to discern without speaking to a customer-service agent or searching Google Maps. Likewise, separate ticket machines for Caltrain, Amtrak, and Clipper Card are only helpful for guests who already know which service they need. For those unfamiliar with the payment system, there is no simple guidance on what a Clipper Card is or which systems accept it.

Figure 1.2: Various agency ticket machines at Diridon Station.



There are no ticket machines or representatives serving all agencies, and most of the lighted track assignment screens in the station and tunnel only identify Caltrain departures (leaving off the other agencies, including VTA's adjacent light rail). Platform-level signage also does not indicate what service is available there, with signs simply showing a train number and arrival time. Existing platforms have very narrow passenger space alongside the lengthy access ramps.

Figure 1.3: Left: Station signage while heading to the platforms. Right: Diridon's narrow platforms.



Each of the transportation agencies also has its own unique website for schedules and fare information, and its own process for ticket purchasing.

Figure 1.4: A highly complex display of agency schedules and fares at Diridon.



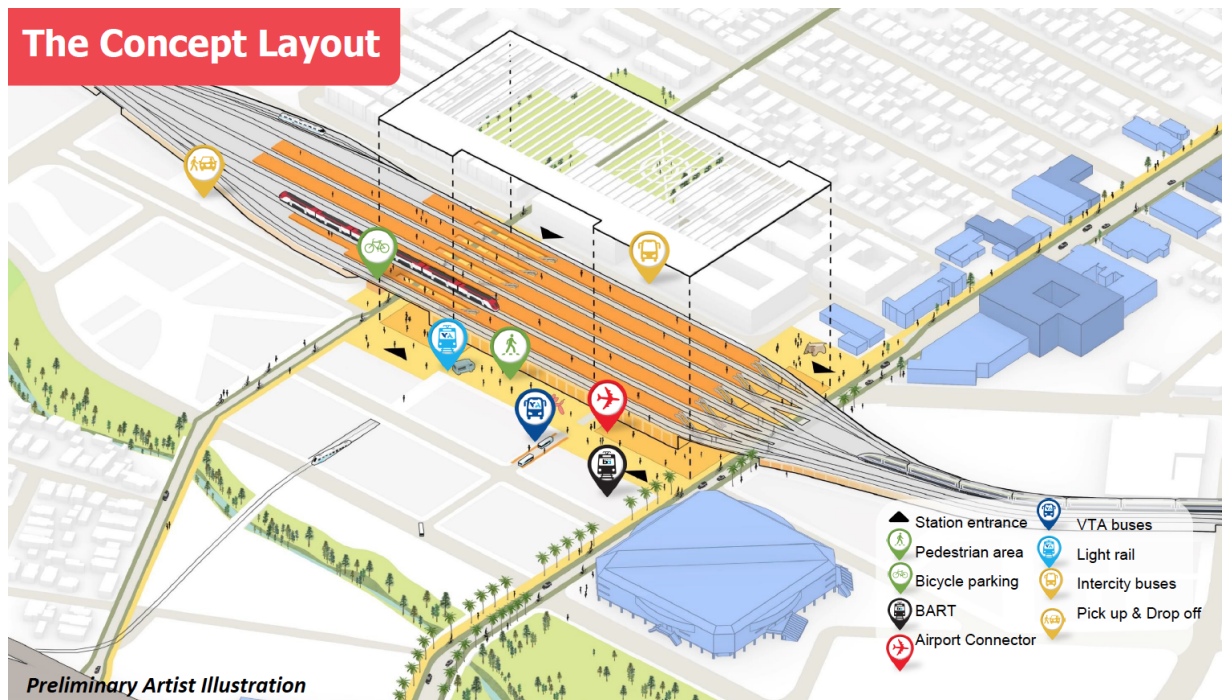
Riders bringing a bicycle on the train, looking for secure bicycle parking, or wanting to rent one from a BayWheels bikeshare are not provided guidance or directions via signage in and around the station. There are signs, however, telling those with bikes not to ride them in the tunnel area.

Preliminary Diridon Concepts and VTA's BART to Silicon Valley Phase II

In 2019, the five agencies involved with DISC agreed to three basic stipulations regarding the future station design: (1) The tracks will be elevated to provide better surface connections, particularly along W. San Fernando and W. Santa Clara Streets, (2) DISC will feature two main entrances—one north and one south—facing these two streets, and (3) the track approaches will mostly remain in the existing rail ROW.

While still in the very early stages of conceptual design, the DISC indicates that the stops for most transit services offered outside the future expanded station, including BART, VTA light rail, and the airport connector, will be located along the eastern side of the new station near where Cahill Street runs today. This means that riders transferring between these modes will be crossing the planned pedestrian plaza in order to transfer, rather than transferring within the station itself. (See Figure 1. Note: Since the illustration below was created, VTA is considering relocating its bus service to W. Santa Clara Street near the northern entrance to DISC.)

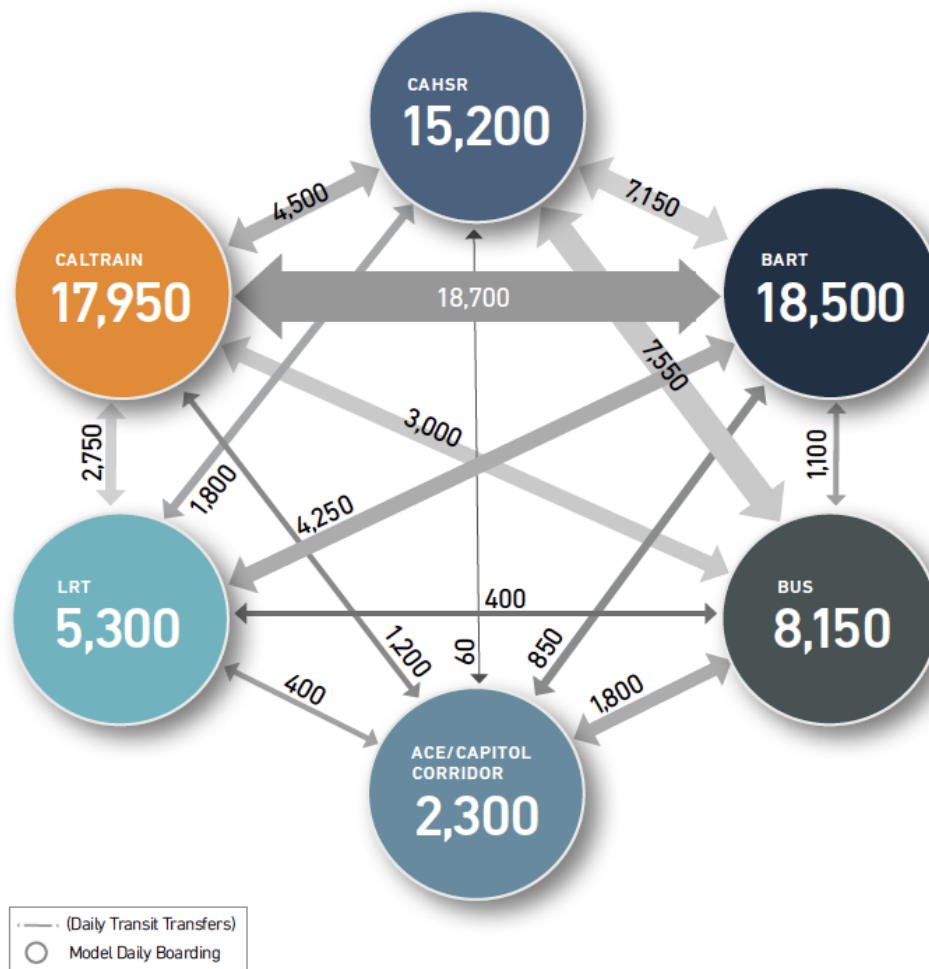
Figure 1.5: Diridon's collaborative "Concept Layout" from 2019.



Source: City of San José.

As the DISC layout development report from November 2019 estimated, even after the completion of CA High Speed Rail, the highest passenger transfer volumes will be between BSV P2 and Caltrain's services (see Figures 2 and 3). This suggests that one near-term priority before the DISC project is finalized should be ensuring a smooth connection between these two services, potentially including timed transfer options, realtime signage of upcoming departures for both agencies inside the stations and at the platform levels, and a short, well-marked path of travel for riders to move between the Diridon BART and Caltrain stations. A direct connection with very limited walking between the BART platforms and the Caltrain/CAHSR platforms is ideal.

Figure 1.6: Estimated daily passenger transfer volumes for six major modes at Diridon.



The transfer volumes in this figure are based on preliminary analysis and are subject to future refinement.

Source: DISC Layout Development Report, 2019.

Figure 1.7: Estimated daily passenger transfer volumes from BART to other transit services at Diridon.



Source: Authors' own illustration.

However, given the separate governance structures and timelines, VTA's BSV P2 has moved forward with BART platforms and facilities that are poorly integrated into the larger station complex. This risks discouraging transit ridership, particularly for passengers wishing to transfer between modes at Diridon. Interviews with various planners and advocates suggest that the design of the BART facilities is constrained by the decision to pursue single-bore tunneling technology, as a single-bore tunnel would result in stacked platforms and limit possible entrances to a single side of the tunnel. The agency's decision to utilize single-bore was driven by a very well-intentioned and understandable desire to limit surface disruption during construction. However, the long-term impacts for transit riders were not fully understood in 2017 when VTA and the City opted to pursue this tunneling technology. Unfortunately, as has been emphasized in recent media coverage on the project, the single-bore station designs currently under consideration are less accessible than traditional twin bore stations that have multiple entrances. Moreover, their layout is generally unfamiliar to existing riders and BART staff, which

raises concerns about how easily and quickly passengers can exit stations in emergency situations.

(Although VTA staff and board members often referenced the “innovative” aspects of single-bore tunneling technology, there are often unforeseen complications with applying new technologies, especially when users are unfamiliar with them. For example, BART’s “innovative” rail gauge used in the 1970s has resulted in the need for custom wheel sets, brake assemblies, repair vehicles, and other parts, while its flat edge means the system needs more maintenance than most and is noisier.² These have increased BART’s costs and do not appear to be positive features of innovation.)

Based on our stakeholder interviews, the single-bore method was not supported by most BART staff given the passenger experience and fire/life-safety concerns enumerated above. Advocates also raised similar concerns. While this report is not focused on the specific design of BART’s Diridon facilities, creating the best possible DISC project requires that VTA (or other BART representatives) better examine the Phase II Extension’s relationship to existing services at Diridon as well as the connection with future services. We agree with Mayor Sam Liccardo’s December 7th, 2021, memo to the San José City Council regarding VTA’s staff update on Phase II, which states that the design “must be refined to prioritize a passenger-centric approach that maximizes ridership by ensuring seamless connections and intuitive access for the public, particularly at Diridon Station.”³

² Matthias Gaffni, “BART’s Past Rearing Its Head: Technology That Was Once Cutting Edge Now A Costly Burden For Aging System,” *The Mercury News*, March 29, 2016, 3.

³ Mayor Sam Liccardo et al., “BART Silicon Valley Phase II Extension Memo,” December 3, 2021, <https://sanjose.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=10325504&GUID=455A9267-050A-4076-BDCE-0292024CE180>.

Recommendations

1. Station Layout, Design, & Wayfinding

Platform Design & Safety

The platform design can be a significant factor that affects the frequency of safety incidents at transit platforms. According to the study, the overall safety of the platform increased as the area or size of the platform increased.⁴ In general, larger platforms with more standing area are safer than those that are smaller. Since the current station will continue to be in use for at least the next ten years, it is impossible to broaden the platforms during this decade. However, near term and long term platform design strategies with different emphases should be implemented.

Near term:

- **Increase platform safety guidance:** The current narrow Diridon station platform doesn't provide a safe space for passengers, especially for wheelchair and bike users. Before the new station is built, more station staff should be present on busy platforms to provide safety guidance and assistance to passengers.

Long term:

- **Passenger volume prediction:** The future Diridon station will not only be near SAP Center, which will host events like concerts and hockey games, but also Google's new offices and dense residential areas. Peak hour & average passenger volume should be estimated to make sure the future platform design and facilities can meet the future demands.
- **Improve platform safety features:** The use of tactile warning strips and pavement color with strong contrast will create a safer space for visually disabled passengers. For semi-/outdoor platform areas, the climate condition should be considered, for example the slickness of pavement material on rainy days. Sufficient lighting can also provide a space with visibility and positive social interaction, which can prevent potential crime in the platform area.

Wayfinding & Signage

One of the efficient and safe design approaches for public transportation systems is informative wayfinding, or signage systems that orient users and help them to locate destinations. Losing one's way at the transit station can be frustrating and time consuming if the station lacks useful guidance. For better navigation, inclusive and universal design should be applied in all elements of the wayfinding & signage system.

Near term:

⁴ Engineering National Academies of Sciences, *Manual to Improve Rail Transit Safety at Platform/Vehicle and Platform/Guideway Interfaces*, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.17226/24690>.

- **Integrate wayfinding for all services:** As the owner and operator of Diridon Station, Caltrain must do more to integrate wayfinding for all transit services. A person arriving to Diridon for the first time should not have any difficulty in learning what local and regional service is available, which train or bus will get them to their destination, how to purchase a ticket for that specific service, and where to locate their stop or platform.
- **Upgrade wayfinding to meet universal design standards:** Diridon Station should adopt wayfinding strategies that meet the needs of all potential users, for example, passengers transferring from different transportation systems, outbound passengers, bike riders (especially for bicycle parking), and passengers with disabilities. Transfer passengers arriving at Diridon station platform will look for station identification and platform directions; for outbound passengers, the station should provide wayfinding information about the surrounding street names, the location of other nearby transit systems, and surrounding landmarks; for passengers with disabilities, such as wheelchair users, wayfinding information should be legible at the correct height. For non-English speaking passengers like immigrants, the station should consider emphasizing graphics and information in other languages; for people riding bicycles, there should be directions to bike parking and cycling routes; for cognitively impaired passengers, there should be a route preview; and for all passengers, there should be information about optimized travel routes.
- **Streamline ticket purchasing:** On the concourse level, the current ticket booth is for Amtrak and Greyhound, while passengers aiming for other transit systems such as Caltrain have to buy the ticket at the ticket vending machine in the outer lobby. One near-term improvement should be to locate all ticket machines together (potentially one cluster near each station entrance), and add signage that helps passengers quickly find the right place to buy tickets when entering the station.
- **Improve concourse & platform signage:** On the platform level, current wayfinding information and other signage are all gathered together, meaning passengers can't find routes to their destination efficiently. Wayfinding information should be prioritized, followed by regulatory signage, safety and security signage, and temporary signage. In addition, real-time departure and arrival information should be placed in the concourse. Track designations should indicate all services at Diridon, rather than just Caltrain, and outside both entrances to the existing station, realtime signage should indicate upcoming departures and arrivals so riders can better make their connections.
- **The display of wayfinding information should be consistent with regional wayfinding standards:** Diridon station connects several transit systems, and the many system logos and colors should be used in wayfinding to clearly direct riders between services. Adhering to the MTC's [guidelines for regional wayfinding](#) will improve the experience for passengers navigating this hub.

- **Wayfinding system should clarify the common, predictable routes for passengers transferring between services or modes:** Within the station, predicted routes are transfers between trains; outside the station, predicted routes are the pedestrian routes, bike routes, bus stops, the parking lot, and transfers to other systems.

Long term:

- **Wayfinding system should be integrated with the station's architectural design and structure:** Particular colors, textures or pavement materials can be used to guide passengers through transit facilities. Spaces with the same function should be consistent with the pavement color and material.
- **Develop indoor positioning system (IPS) technology to help users locate places within the station using their mobile devices:** Similar to Global Positioning System (GPS), IPS helps people locate their position while indoors using a network of connected devices. Silicon Valley has many companies and startups who have launched these services and the future Diridon Station should leverage their expertise. IPS can be an innovative solution to achieving inclusive design. In fact, New York City transit is collaborating with a French company ([Evelity](#)) to offer IPS service through its mobile app. Passengers can use their mobile devices and download the app or use their wearable electronic devices to get step-by-step instructions about the route, direction, and guidance from the entrance of a station to the exit at another station.
- **Adopt universal design guidelines for future station projects:** Both the DISC project and VTA's BSV P2 should formally adopt universal design standards for their stations to ensure they are fully accessible to all users. Typical guidelines cover elements like ambient sound, hearing-assistance systems, fare collection, ticket purchasing, fare gates, handrails, seating, horizontal and vertical circulation, pickup/dropoff areas, lighting, wayfinding and maps.⁵
- **Incorporate the MTC's Hub Signage Program (HSP) to standardize signs across various transit services:** MTC is teaming with transit agencies to install [a standardized signage system](#) across all major operators in the Bay area. The goal is to make it easier for riders to transfer between connecting transit services at regionally significant stations by creating a consistent 'look' and 'feel' and by giving riders actionable information. The current station includes HSP partially in the wayfinding signage system, but it doesn't provide sufficient information for passengers to have a holistic understanding of the public transit system in the whole region.

⁵ APTA Urban Design Working Group, "Transit Universal Design Guidelines: Principles and Best Practices for Implementing Universal Design in Transit," APTA Standards Development Program (American Public Transportation Association, July 28, 2020), <https://www.apta.com/wp-content/uploads/APTA-SUDS-UD-GL-010-20.pdf>.

2. Transit Connections & Interagency Operations

Although Diridon Station is currently a regional transit hub, making connections between different modes or services is confusing, slow, and often expensive. As indicated in recent recommendations by the Bay Area's Blue Ribbon Transit Recovery Task Force⁶, all transit agencies need to better integrate their ticketing, mapping, signage, and schedule information systems, particularly to improve the customer experience for vulnerable groups like seniors, users with disabilities, and low-income riders. Riders consistently indicated they want more uniform maps and signage; shorter wait times and more direct service; better realtime information on wait times and vehicle locations; a single set of system fares and transfer policies; and a single app and website to locate this information.⁷

Near Term:

- **Improve the western approach to direct passengers to various transit options:** Diridon's entrance near Laurel Grove Lane (adjacent to VTA's Diridon light rail station) needs clearer signage directing visitors to ticket machines, platforms for Caltrain/Amtrak/ACE, bus service, and bicycle parking.
- **Better coordinate transit service with SAP or other nearby events:** Like SFMTA does for events at Oracle Park and Chase Center in San Francisco, VTA should consider coordinating additional transit service from Diridon during major events at SAP Center, particularly those that end after VTA's final scheduled service. To encourage event attendees to choose transit rather than driving, VTA and SAP management should also consider offering free or reduced transit passes with ticket purchases, as the Chase Center does.

Long Term:

- **Centralize ticketing systems and fares:** Building on the Blue Ribbon Transit Recovery Task Force & Seamless Bay Area fare-integration recommendations, agencies should expand services accepting Clipper Cards, develop a single universal ticketing machine serving all future transit options at Diridon Station (BART, Caltrain, VTA, Amtrak, and CAHSR), and ensure that fares are standardized across all services.
- **Improve inter-agency transit coordination and transfers:** Given low transit ridership in San José and the South Bay generally, the various transit agencies operating at Diridon Station need to better coordinate their overlapping services. This includes timing connections to allow for easy transfers between services operated by different agencies, easy fare transfer options, and ideally, a consolidated website/app and ticket machines that allow users to search route options by destination and time of day.

⁶ Blue Ribbon Transit Recovery Task Force, "Bay Area Transit Transformation Action Plan" (MTC, July 2021), https://mtc.ca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2021-09/Transit_Action_Plan_1.pdf.

⁷ Blue Ribbon Transit Recovery Task Force.

- **Analyze future transfer times and minimize walking distance between modes:** Projections suggest the greatest future passenger transfers between BART & Caltrain, with an estimated 18,700 daily transfers (followed by BART & CAHSR at around 7,150).⁸ Because VTA's BSV P2 is moving ahead of the DISC development, the design for VTA's Diridon BART station should ensure that a direct pedestrian connection between the two stations is possible, ideally enabling transfers of less than five minutes platform to platform. VTA has indicated that transfer times between the future BART location and existing service at Diridon have not been undertaken, but a rough analysis can and should be performed immediately given the parameters of BART's current design. (Using VTA's internal station projections and the walking time from Google Maps, our estimation suggests that direct transfers from the lower platform of BART's future station to Caltrain's existing platforms could take up to 10 minutes for a typical user, not including time required to purchase a ticket or use stairs if escalators are not in operation.⁹ For people with mobility issues or those assisting others, this transfer time might easily double.)

3. Public Realm & Neighborhood Integration

Public Realm

Shaping the current and future public realm at Diridon Station is a unique opportunity for the station to anchor itself as a community, transportation, and city destination. The Downtown West project will change the environment surrounding the station yielding an opportunity for the station to become more than a transit connector. Activating spaces within and around the station fosters opportunities for the public realm to thrive. The Covid-19 pandemic has shown us the importance of public spaces in our surroundings. Creating accessible spaces must also consider how these spaces will be maintained and monitored. Engaging with the surrounding communities and the city at large through placemaking activities allows for a collective reimagining and reinvention of the public realm at the station.

Near term:

- **Engage with the community in a placemaking process for a future site at Diridon Station:** Community based participation at the center allows members of the community the opportunity to collectively reimagine and reinvent public space. Placemaking facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to cultural, social, and physical identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution.

⁸ "San José Diridon Integrated Station Concept Plan: Layout Development Report" (City of San Jose: Bentham Crouwel Architects, November 2019), https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5c38bcfdcc8fedd5ba4ecc1d/t/5dca005526a1a305753ce5f0/1573519485585/2019.11.08_DISC_Layout+Development+Report_FINAL.pdf.

⁹ This rough time estimate includes at least six minutes walking time from Google Maps plus VTA's calculation of three minutes from the future BART fare gates to the platforms.

- The city of San José has established [Viva Calle SJ](#), a free recreation program that closes city streets for community enjoyment through active mobility.
- **Activate the public realm:** The station can transform from a transient space into a neighborhood anchor by activating the public realm at the station. Activation of the public realm is a flexible process and a unique opportunity to workshop ideas for the future station. Interventions can be physical changes to the station such as public art installations or murals. Temporary interventions such as markets ([farmer's market](#) or [culinary market](#)) add another dimension to the station.
- **Develop an interim public plaza:** The San Fernando plaza offers a good example of improvements the city could implement in the near-term around Diridon Station, including seating, public art, and trees or other landscaping beyond grass. In its current environment, a design complimentary to the SAP center can help envision future public realm design. The [Chase Center Entertainment District](#) in San Francisco is an example of a plaza that is flexible in use, with surroundings similar to those found at Diridon Station.

Figure 1.8: Section of Chase Entertainment District in San Francisco.



Source: SWA Group

Long term:

- **Design a space that is complementary to Downtown West Mixed-Use Plan:** Designing a space that is both functional for multimodal transportation and complementary to new developments in the area. As the built environment changes around the station it is a unique opportunity to design spaces that can help integrate the

station into the downtown area of the city.

- **Configure the Cahill Street public plaza as the active heart of the new station:** Assuming that the Diridon BART station will not be integrated into the Diridon Station building specified in the DISC, the plaza in front of the station will function as the interface between many of the modes which converge at Diridon, rather than the building itself. This means that in the likely scenario that VTA continues to isolate the BART station from the rest of Diridon, planning for the transfer between the two will entail greater focus on the passenger experience of the plaza. Thus, the plan should provide large amounts of seating and shade cover to protect from the elements along Diridon Station's eastern side where many passengers will be waiting and transferring to other transportation modes. Since this area may be among the busiest portions of the new station, it could also benefit from other amenities like an information station, seating, tables, restrooms, lockers, a device-charging station, and more.

Figure 1.9: Designed by John McAslan + Partners, King's Cross Station canopy and plaza in London, U.K., is an example of a successful semi-outdoor space combining adaptive reuse of a historic structure with elegant protection from weather.

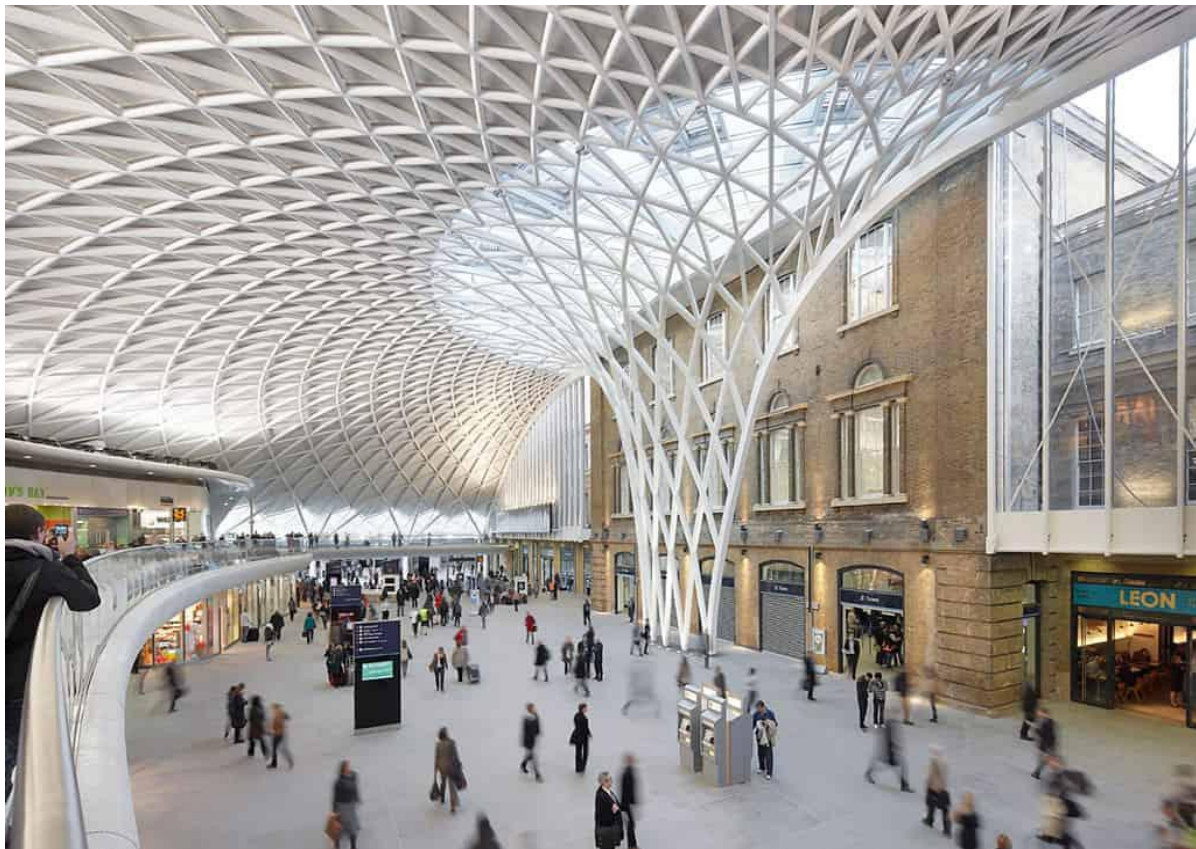


Photo by Hufton + Crow.

- **Develop standards for policing of public space:** The public realm at Diridon Station will be a nexus between the multiple transportation agencies at Diridon, transit riders,

and the surrounding community. These various stakeholders represent different needs and interests, which require different approaches and not a “one size fits all” approach. Upon knowing what entity manages and maintains public space at Diridon Station, it is essential to coordinate between transit agencies on how and in what form policing will take to prevent biased enforcement of the city’s policies.

Micro-mobility, Bicycle, & Pedestrian Infrastructure

Ensuring high quality active mobility options encourages transit use and reduces reliance on driving, including Uber/Lyft/ride hail services, especially for last-mile connections from Diridon Station. Given the limited space on downtown streets, expanding active transit use is a much more efficient way of connecting users to this regional transit hub.

Near & Long Term:

- **Extend active transportation links to the wider neighborhood & accelerate projects connecting to Diridon station:** Well-designed bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure links Diridon to Downtown San José to the east along W. San Fernando Street and north along Barack Obama Boulevard, but people heading to destinations along The Alameda/W. Santa Clara Street or south near Park Ave or the Los Gatos Creek Trail are not offered similar protective infrastructure. As the city’s largest transit hub, people walking, biking, or rolling should be able to safely and easily connect to the citywide network of streets in any direction, particularly along W. Santa Clara Street/The Alameda or nearby neighborhoods like Gardner and Washington-Guadalupe), not just protected access to downtown.
- **Provide wayfinding directions to active transportation:** Better signage is needed for existing bike parking along with clear directions for taking bikes on transit and an explanation of how to purchase BikeLink cards for long-term secure bike parking. First and last mile connections are an existing issue for transit ridership. Connecting purchasing points to existing locations of service can encourage more ridership.
- **Clearly mark micro-mobility opportunities on and around station property:** Current availability of micro-mobility modes is sparse around the station. Clearly delineating locations where rental devices are available for pick up/drop off on the property makes these modes more accessible to riders. The City should consider leveraging current micro-mobility and transit options available at the station into creating [Mobility Hubs](#).

Figure 1.10: A rendering of potential Mobility Hub Design.



Source: MTC

- **Expand current micro-mobility information available for public knowledge:** Micro-mobility options have risen in popularity but rules, regulations, and etiquette on usage are vague. Creating and distributing more resources for micro-mobility best practices and FAQs surrounding the different options available. The Shared Mobility Services site from the city of Austin offers a good example of the information available for the public: <https://www.austintexas.gov/sharedmobility>

Land Use & Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)

Many long-term recommendations for adjacent land use are covered in the extensive development guidelines for Google's Downtown West; however, to make Diridon a successful transportation hub, the City of San José should work to implement some of the following changes *before* future development takes place.

Near term:

- **Activate Diridon's surroundings:** The front entrance of Diridon Station currently faces a sea of parking lots and an underutilized pedestrian lawn. With minimal investment, this area could offer public amenities like food trucks or a coffee kiosk for neighborhood residents, commuters, and travelers waiting for transit. Outdoor exercise classes, live music, art classes, or other group activities could also help enliven the dead spaces in

front of Diridon. (For example, Salesforce Transit Center in San Francisco has [frequent events](#) in its rooftop public park space that helps bring the community together.)

- **Improve wayfinding for surrounding neighborhoods and destinations:** Diridon Station is the first place many visitors or commuters arriving on Caltrain, Amtrak, ACE, or Greyhound experience in San José. Yet there is limited guidance to local event spaces, stadiums, museums, retail, and other potential needs. A lighted map in front of the station showing major destinations nearby—along with safe and accessible walking or biking routes—could help orient visitors.
- **Work with the community to develop temporary housing alternatives and/or social services on existing parking lots or vacant lots:** The City of San José should work with Google and other nearby owners of underused surface parking or empty lots to determine whether it is feasible to establish secure RV parking spaces, like the pilot project at 71 Vista Montaña, or build temporary [navigation centers](#) (including amenities like showers/laundry facilities, recreation space, childcare, and mobile social/health services) for unhoused residents in the interim before these parcels are redeveloped. Supportive housing for the homeless is severely undersupplied in the region, and despite the widespread agreement among DSAP stakeholders that more affordable housing options are needed, residents often fight against homeless shelters in their own neighborhood. There are already unhoused individuals living in the area immediately East of Diridon Station near to the Guadalupe River, so residents may be open to this temporary solution during the development period.

Long term:

- **Maintain city and VTA-owned property for longterm development leases:** Several parcels near Diridon are owned by VTA and/or the City of San José, and these agencies should maintain ownership of such valuable property rather than selling to private developers. Using a [Japanese model](#) of land-value capture, the city should use income earned from leasing long-term development rights on these properties to improve transit service and public infrastructure in the immediate vicinity.
- **Encourage small active-use spaces on the ground floor of Diridon Station and in the immediate vicinity:** As emphasized in the DSAP plan, active ground-floor uses will enliven the station area and meet the needs of residents and visitors. As the station concept is refined, project managers need to ensure that planned commercial/retail spaces also include options for community needs, particularly along the Cahill Street pedestrian plaza. Besides encouraging standard retail/restaurant options, the plan should promote a variety of community uses that will serve long-term residents, newcomers, and visitors, including but not limited to meeting/event space, pharmacies, childcare, laundry services, and grocery stores. Existing residents and transit riders should help to determine what these priority uses should be.

- **Prioritize housing development for all income levels:** Given the dire need for more housing options and the emphasis put on housing in the SAAG process, the City of San José should prioritize development of residential projects on nearby land that will create the largest number of affordable units for both low- and middle-income San José residents. The plan for developing Downtown West near Diridon Station includes space for 5,900 housing units with another 7,000 units in areas covered by the DSAP; office space for Downtown West is estimated at 7.3 million square feet, with another 6.4 million in the surrounding DSAP area. Assuming an average of 150 square feet per worker, Google's Downtown West plan alone will create office space for more than 48,000 employees. Using the [2020 census average for household size](#) of 3.12 for San José, the total housing capacity for DSAP will support a little over 40,000 residents—less than the worker capacity within Google's project, and far less than the workers accommodated by the full DSAP office allotment (~91,000). This imbalance replicates decades of underbuilding housing to accommodate job growth in the Bay Area, and more should be done to encourage residential development, particularly units in the affordable range.

SECTION 2: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Summary

- VTA/BART's Community Working Groups (CWGs) for Downtown San José and Diridon Station and the City's Diridon Station Area Advisory Group (SAAG) had different membership, interests, and goals for their engagement processes. This resulted in both information silos and redundant communication.
- Passenger experience and needs heard in engagement do not appear to have been adequately prioritized.
- It can be difficult to engage the public for a project that is 15-20 years out; challenges include assuring the public this project is truly forthcoming and conceptualizing their needs/transit use far in the future.
- Size of engagement group matters; reaching consensus or having meaningful, in-depth discussion can be difficult with 38 voices (the group size of an outreach process discussed below).

Introduction

The many plans for the Diridon Station area of Downtown San José represent a significant transformation for both the city and the region. This includes a major increase in housing and jobs, as well as transportation and other lifestyle shifts to meet the region's climate change goals. Diridon is also an essential link in the Plan Bay Area 2050 transportation strategy to build a "next-generation transit network." Public engagement is essential to these projects' success: By addressing the existing community's needs, we can ensure our future transportation system is accessible and seamlessly integrated, thus replacing personal-vehicle trips, the largest contributor to California's GHG emissions.¹⁰

This section of the report analyzes the existing community engagement structure, looking particularly at the City of San José's Station Area Advisory Group (SAAG), initially formed to provide input on a Google project and later on the Diridon Station Area Plan (DSAP) and the Diridon Integrated Station Concept (DISC), as well as VTA's Downtown-Diridon Community Working Group (CWG), established to focus on the future BSV P2 stations near Diridon and Downtown San José. We evaluated the existing committee structure/membership, identified underserved groups, analyzed the formal engagement strategies, and developed a set of recommendations.

In the current structure for community engagement, outreach around VTA's BSV P2 and the DSAP/DISC plans has been mostly segregated between the CWGs and SAAG, with a specific set of groups and advocates represented in each. As with overall project governance,

¹⁰ <https://www.ucdavis.edu/climate/news/decarbonizing-california-transportation-by-2045>

engagement would ideally be centralized at a regional scale to reduce fragmentation between agencies and prioritize user experience across the entire transportation network.

Methodology

In Fall 2021, the team interviewed representatives at the City of San José, Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA), Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART), members of the City’s Station Area Advisory Group (SAAG), VTA’s Downtown-Diridon Community Working Group (CWG) and the independently formed Diridon Area Neighborhood Group (DANG). We also reviewed official outreach documentation and meeting notes for the SAAG and CWG. The team explored the interests of those involved in the engagement process, what needs they had for the station, and perceptions on the extent to which their thoughts impacted the design and layout of the integrated station plan. A comparison of these responses and an examination of what was included (and especially what was excluded) in meetings and project plans yielded insights into the process behind the engagement of the DISC plan and revealed shortcomings of the current engagement strategies and opportunities for future outreach.

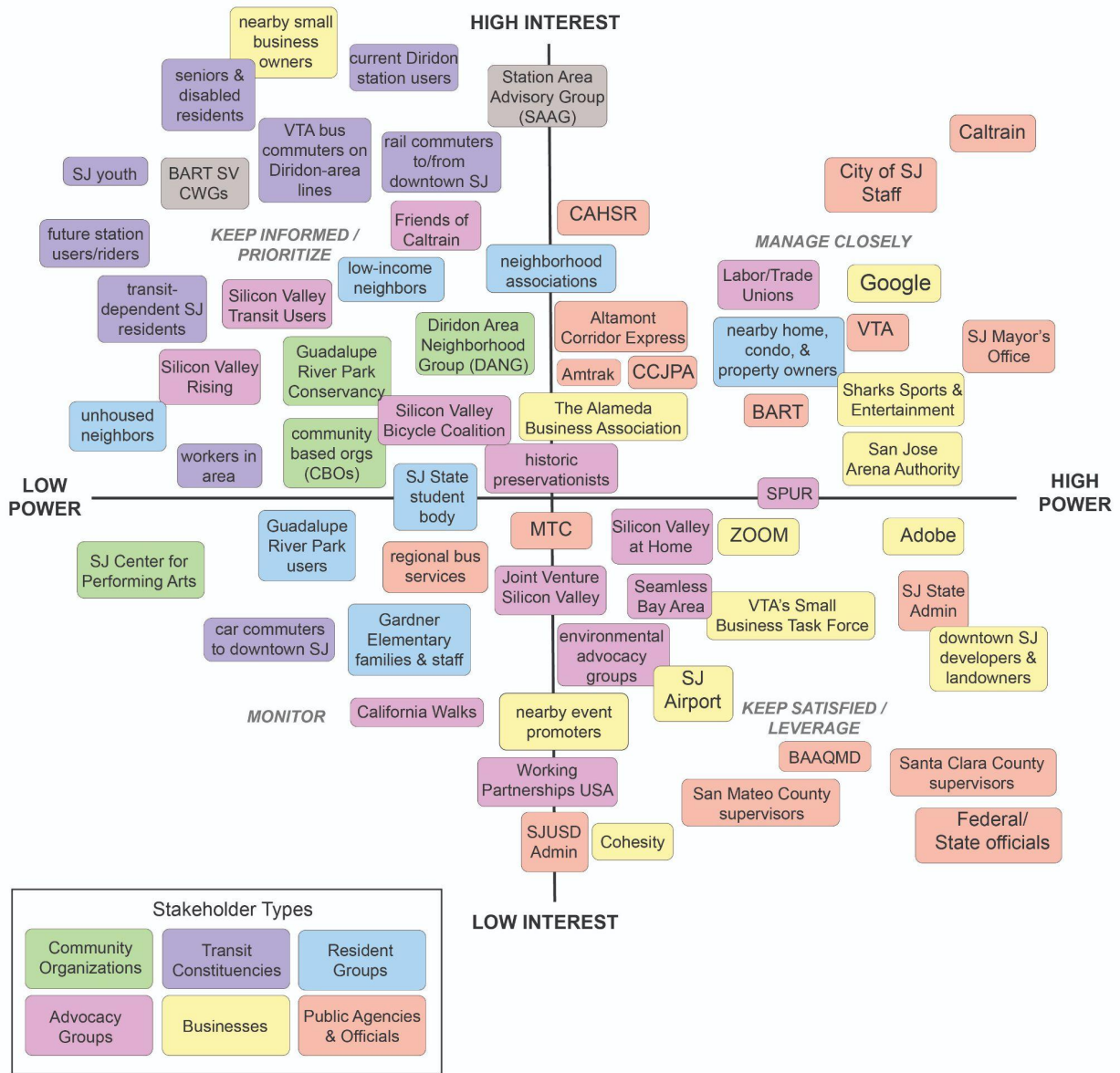
Stakeholder Analysis and Identification of Underserved Groups

To better understand the diverse stakeholders involved with the DISC project, our team developed a Power-Interest Matrix¹¹ ranking six types of stakeholders (community organizations, transit constituencies, resident groups, advocacy groups, businesses, and public agencies/elected officials) from low power to high power and low interest to high interest (See Figure 4). The Station Area Advisory Group (SAAG) is positioned at the top of the matrix in gray, as it represents a mix of the six stakeholder types (VTA’s BART CWGs are also shown in gray).

The Power Interest Matrix is not an objective, data-driven method, but rather a qualitative way of analyzing the group dynamics and understanding engagement needs. In this case, it is particularly helpful to identify groups with a high interest in the project but limited or low power in the process, which can help the City of San José and other organizers to focus their efforts on reaching those community members who may be disengaged, but will be highly impacted by the DISC plan. When reviewing the stakeholder map for DISC, the overall trends are more important than the exact position of individual interest groups.

¹¹ “Stakeholders Power/Interest Matrix,” URBACT, July 30, 2020, <https://urbact.eu/stakeholders-powerinterest-matrix>.

Figure 2.1: Power Interest Matrix for DISC



Source: Author's own illustration.

A notable cluster in this matrix is the high number of transit constituencies that fall into the high-interest and low-power quadrant (upper left). These are people who are highly dependent on public transportation or frequent users by choice and have a high stake in the success of a new multimodal transit hub at Diridon. Additionally, public agencies, elected officials, and business groups almost always fall into the higher power quadrants, meaning that their interests will typically be overrepresented in the planning process and must be balanced with thorough outreach to community organizations. Speaking with community members and planners involved with public engagements for the DISC project, the DSAP, and BSV P2, we confirmed some of the general trends visible in the Power Interest Matrix above.

Key Takeaways

- **Lack of attention to various transit constituencies, which have some of the highest interest and lowest power in this process:** Planners have not consistently prioritized transit-dependent groups (disabled, elderly, children, current Diridon users, and rail/bus commuters) to take part in this process, particularly the SAAG. While some outreach for the various projects was done at Diridon and other stations, these were typically one-off events and intentional, long-term engagement of these users has not been realized for the DISC, DSAP, or BSV P2 projects.
- **Low-income and unhoused neighbors have little power in these projects:** Because low-income and unhoused residents have traditionally been excluded from planning processes—despite the major impacts they have on their lives—these groups should be intentionally and proactively engaged to understand their needs.
- **Agencies, officials, and business groups involved with DISC need to be managed closely:** As with most public infrastructure projects, the government agencies, elected officials, and business interests involved skew towards the high power quadrants, and must be carefully managed and/or leveraged to improve final outcomes, rather than given a louder megaphone to manipulate the process.
- **The SAAG represents a very broad cross-section of stakeholder groups, rather than a typical community advisory council.** Unlike many community advisory groups, which are focused on residents and community-serving organizations, a majority of the seats on the SAAG are reserved for professionals, including public agencies, private businesses, and advocacy-organization staff. Except for one seat on the SAAG reserved for a Downtown resident who has experienced homelessness, the SAAG and BSV P2 CWGs do not reserve seats for specific demographics. (For examples of alternative Community Advisory Council structures focused on community members, look at the [AC Transit CAC](#) or the [TJPA CAC](#).)

Engagement Strategy

The chart below outlines the engagement purpose, goals, process, and stakeholder involvement for VTA's Downtown Diridon CWG and the City of San José's SAAG. (See Figure 5 for a diagram of the two groups' ov

BART SV Expansion/VTA (Downtown-Diridon CWG, DANG)

The 15-member Downtown-Diridon CWG has met quarterly since 2015, primarily serving as a conduit for VTA to update representatives from various businesses and community-advocacy organizations on staff progress on BSV P2. VTA's current guiding engagement plan, the [Construction Education and Outreach Plan \(CEOP\)](#), says the general outreach process is

“designed to educate, engage, and inform general audiences and communities located along the six-mile Phase II Project alignment. The overarching goal for the general outreach activities is to raise the visibility of VTA’s commitment to deliver the Phase II Project.” As the title indicates, the document is primarily focused on engagement around the project’s construction process and gives priority to stakeholders “most impacted by Phase II Project construction activities.” Based on our interviews, participants in the group perceived it as a way to inform members of the public on project timelines and forward advancement—rather than shape outcomes via feedback or project alternatives—though not all stakeholders were aware of this from the beginning.

DISC and DSAP (SAAG)

DISC is a collaboration between five agencies (Caltrain, VTA, California High-Speed Rail, the City of San José, & the Metropolitan Transportation Commission) to develop a new multimodal transportation hub. This will be followed by the redevelopment of Diridon Station itself. Input from the SAAG would inform decision-making around providing connections between modes and integration with the surrounding neighborhoods.

San José City Council established the SAAG early in the Downtown West/Google negotiations, in response to community concerns regarding gentrification and displacement and the desire for the public to be involved in the process. Per the City of San José’s Station Area Civic Engagement report, the “primary goal [of the engagement process] was to provide a balanced, inclusive, and effective two-way dialogue with a broad range of the San José community”. The civic engagement process began in February of 2018 and continued until the Development Agreement with Google for DTW was finalized in May of 2021.

Input from the SAAG would inform the initial vision for Google’s Downtown West project (2018), the project itself (approved in 2021), and the associated Development Agreement that included a set of community benefits (part of the approved project). The SAAG also informed decision-making around the update of the Diridon Station Area Plan and the Diridon Affordable Housing Implementation Plan. The focus of the engagement process in 2019 was on the DISC.

Public Engagement Analysis Overview

	VTA's BART to Silicon Valley Phase II (BSV II)	Diridon Integrated Station Concept (DISC) & Diridon Station Area Plan (DSAP)
Primary community engagement group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Working Groups (CWGs) for Downtown San José and Diridon Station 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Station Area Advisory Group (SAAG)
Geographic scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CWG for Diridon Station serves both future Downtown San José and Diridon stations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diridon station area
Timeline (start - end)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2015 - present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feb 2018 - May 2021
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From the first meeting: "No specific recommendations are expected from the CWGs; they are an information exchange not an advisory body." ¹² 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spurred by Downtown West/Google negotiations, community concerns around gentrification and displacement Per Station Area civic engagement report: "primary goal was to provide a balanced, inclusive, and effective two-way dialogue with a broad range of the San José community." ¹³ From Diridon SJ website on SAAG page: "The primary purpose of the SAAG is to provide input to the City Administration on land use, development, transportation, and construction plans affecting the Diridon Station Area." ¹⁴
Guiding plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction Education and Outreach Plan (CEOP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diridon Station Civic Engagement Report
Group members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 15 members Mix of neighborhood associations, business associations, advocacy orgs, SJSU, Sharks, Arena Authority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 38 members 1/3 neighborhood associations, 1/4 business groups, 1/4 advocacy organizations, plus reps from VTA, CAHSR, SJUSD, SJ Water District, and two other public agencies

¹² <https://www.vta.org/sites/default/files/documents/Downtown%2520Diridon%2520CWG.pdf> 5/12/15

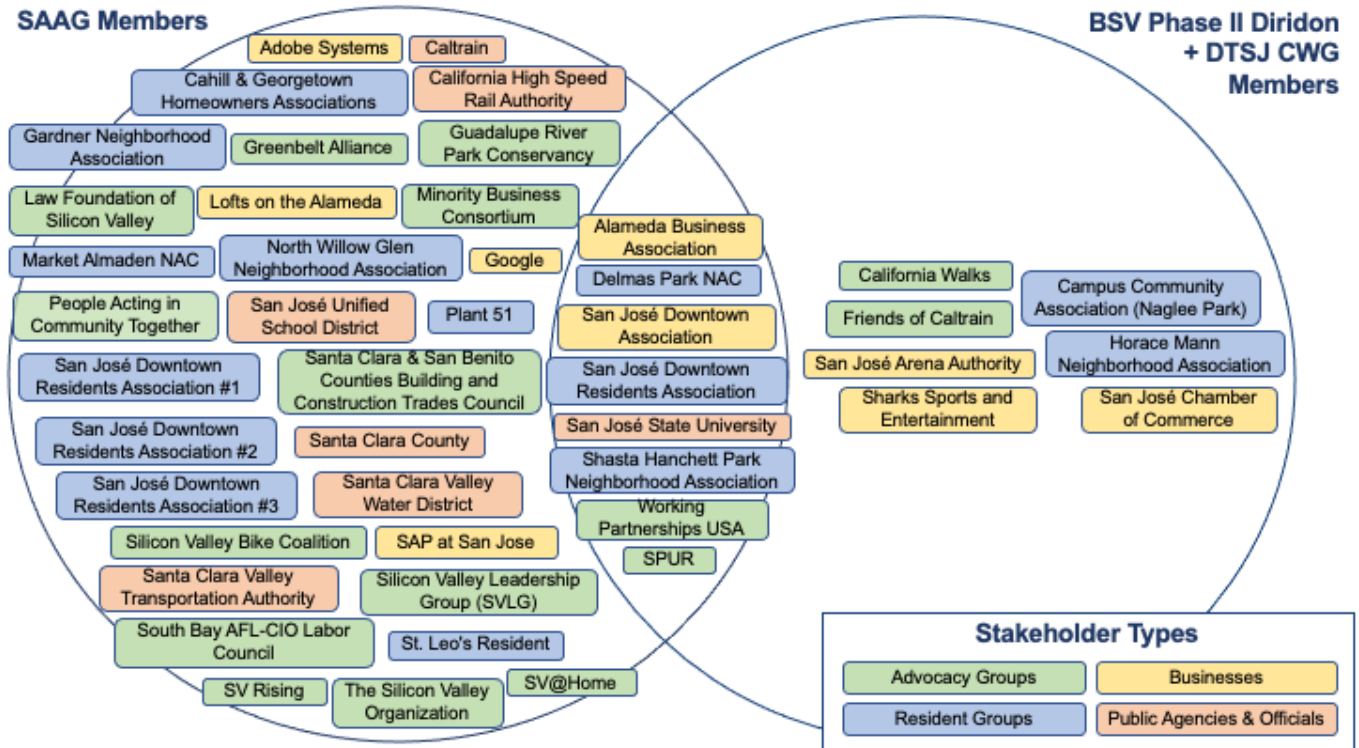
Downtown-Diridon CWG Meeting Summary

¹³ <https://www.diridonsj.org/s/FINAL-DiridonStationAreaCivEngagementReport10312018.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://www.diridonsj.org/saag>

	VTA BSV II (CWG)	DISC/DSAP (SAAG)
Meeting cadence & processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meets quarterly • Members are meant to serve as a conduit for the stakeholders/interests they represent; give feedback to VTA project team; responsible for disseminating project info back to the stakeholders they represent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Met quarterly • Primary goals of providing input to the City on the Downtown West, DISC, and DSAP projects, while serving as an information conduit to other stakeholders/communities.

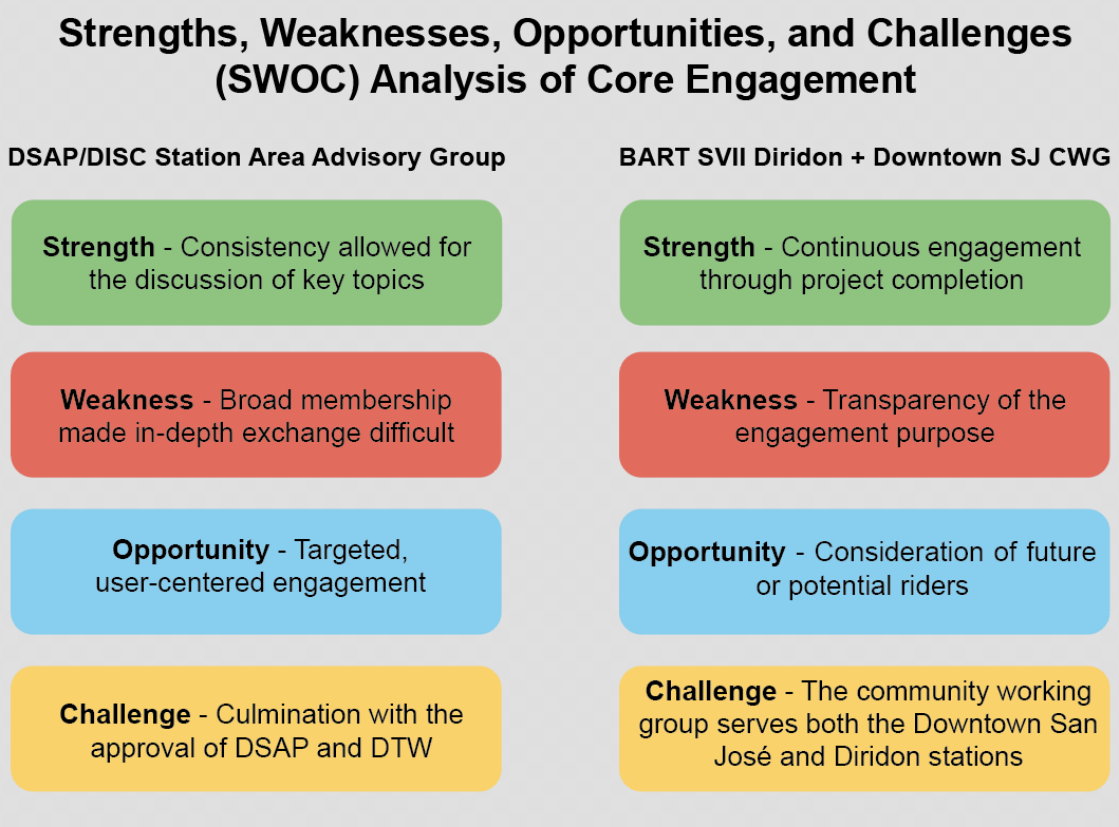
Figure 2.2: Venn Diagram of SAAG and CWG Membership Overlaps



Source: Author's own illustration.

Evaluation and Analysis

Our team conducted a SWOC analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges of the core community engagement efforts. This analysis primarily drew upon our interviews, as well as plans and documentation associated with the engagement processes.



Source: Author’s own illustration.

DSAP/DISC Station Area Advisory Group (SAAG)

For the SAAG, convening such a large group of stakeholders with different interests required a large amount of trust-building. Because of that intentionality, a strength we identified was that consistency allowed for the discussion of key topics (such as housing and displacement) as important centerpieces. Creating a cohesive process for so many different interests and representatives is no small feat, and the process behind getting the group off the ground was thoughtfully considered. Even among some members of SAAG that our group spoke to that offered critiques or areas of improvement for SAAG, our sense was that those members still felt that the process and group was well-intentioned, even if not executed to their preference.

A weakness of the SAAG was that the large number of members made it difficult for in-depth exchange on important topics. Due to the large group size, speaking time at meetings from

individual members was limited. The organizational membership of the SAAG was appointed by the San José City Council, but an opportunity we identified is for more targeted, user-centered engagement. Although transit riders may have fallen into other groups that comprised the SAAG, no seats were specifically reserved for transit riders. Lastly, a challenge for the SAAG was that core engagement efforts took place during a relatively short period, compared to the lifespan of the projects the group advised. The SAAG met for a concentrated period of eight months in 2018, with additional engagement efforts and regular meetings through April of 2021. Although group meetings informed the approval of the amended Diridon Station Area Plan, DISC Concept Layout, and Downtown West project (including the Development Agreement), SAAG engagement slowed down as those aforementioned projects prepared to enter into next phases and construction. As SAAG is not disbanded though, there will be future SAAG community meetings and events to keep people informed and to gather targeted feedback. Renewed, targeted outreach and momentum will be critical to these future efforts.

VTA's BSV P2 Community Working Group (CWG)

A strength identified within VTA's BSV P2 DTSJ/Diridon Community Working Group process was the continuation of the Community Working Group, which were originally intended to conclude once the project received a record of decision from the FTA. However, by allowing the DTSJ/Diridon Community Working Group to continue into the next phase of the project, there is a channel that remains open for the community to seek information on the project.

A weakness with VTA's BSV P2 DTSJ/Diridon Community Working Group is the transparency of the engagement purpose. Members of the group are intended to serve as conduits for project information, rather than an advisory board for feedback. Feedback from some members of the DTSJ/Diridon Community Working Group that our team spoke to was that they felt they were at meetings to receive information on the project, rather than engage in dialogue about the project. Although this is VTA's intended purpose for the group, it does not align with community members' understanding of the group or best serve their desired purpose. The Community Working Group is meant to be an access point from which members can disseminate information to the stakeholders they represent. However, in the current set up, there is no way to be certain that the information is actually reaching who it needs to. Some community working group members have reported that meeting materials were received often no more than 24-48 hours in advance of meetings, which gave them little time to review documents.

An opportunity for the Community Working Group is to more purposefully consider future or potential riders. The Community Working Group could be used as a venue to connect with potential future riders on how the BART station will work for them, and make sure project information reaches them. Finally, a challenge with the Community Working Group is that it serves both the future Downtown San José and Diridon stations. Although the stations are relatively close to one another, the Diridon BART stop also has the context of a multimodal station for connections and issues that deserve dedicated attention. By trying to cover information on both stations at VTA BSV P2 Community Working Group meetings, issues pertaining specifically to the future Diridon BART station are not able to receive enough time or

attention. VTA's BSV P2 project timeline is well ahead of the Diridon integrated station (DISC), with construction planned to begin shortly. As VTA's BSV P2 project and, specifically, the Diridon BART station are in the forefront of the public's attention, any public venue regarding the project should have adequate capacity to engage.

Recommendations

Our team developed a series of near and long-term recommendations for community engagement based around the themes of communication, continuity & consistency, and centering the community.

Communication - Near Term

1. **Consistently report back to the community by summarizing public feedback and its impact on the projects:** A transparent outreach process includes regular updates on the feedback received, as well as the ways it has shaped the project outcomes. The existing [SAAG website](#) and the Diridon Station Area Civic Engagement Report from 2018 are good examples of reporting back to the community, though it is not clear what projects are continuing to provide opportunities for input going forward, and why the BSV P2 is not represented on this website. Additionally, beyond individual meeting summaries, reports on VTA/BART community working groups' progress and the ways they have influenced the BSV P2 project are not available online. Group members also expressed concerns that official documents for review were not always provided far enough in advance for members to analyze them before their public meetings.
2. **Manage public expectations for community engagement:** Agencies need to be clear in advance regarding what elements of these transportation projects the community can impact. If the public is only given a voice in superficial elements, like the color of the floors or placement of artwork, and not layout or design considerations, this needs to be made clear throughout the process. Many members of the existing community advisory groups felt their contributions were not considered important and had no influence on the outcomes, and that engagement was primarily a one-way flow of information from agencies to the public. Lastly, when asking community members to volunteer their time and expertise, the City should attempt to compensate them on a daily basis for doing so.

Continuity & Consistency - Long Term

3. **Centralize Diridon-area engagement for all projects with a single community advisory group:** Because the DSAP, Downtown West, DISC, and BSV P2 projects are overlapping in nature and all impact the Diridon area, establishing a single community advisory group for the neighborhood would streamline communication and ensure continuous engagement, without requiring community members to juggle multiple meetings on similar topics. The existing process that separates VTA/BART's CWG from the community engagement for DISC and the Station Area Plan means the two projects are not fully meeting their stated goals of interconnectedness, seamless transferring, fiscal responsibility, and integration with the urban fabric. This is especially problematic for the future transit-user experience at the station, which is not being prioritized in the current process. Ideally, a project-specific entity governing the integration of all plans in

the area would lead this engagement.

- 4. Continue public engagement after project approval and implementation:** Community advisory councils and public engagement is still valuable after the project is “complete,” as they can assist with ongoing monitoring and evaluation, as well as acting as a conduit to the wider neighborhood as issues arise.

Community-Centered - Long Term

- 5. Redesign the SAAG to improve its usefulness as a community-led board:** As a 38-member group with mostly paid professional membership, the SAAG is not a standard community advisory council. To give members meaningful time to speak at meetings, a community advisory group should be limited to 20 seats. Additionally, to make the SAAG’s input more meaningful, the City of San José should consider establishing seats for community members with specific experience (ie. bicycle advocate, frequent bus-rider, small-business owner, etc.) to create a representation of particular groups that may not feel empowered by the typical planning process. Major area employers and agencies involved in the plan’s development do not need representation in a community advisory council; they have many levers to impact the process and will be included regardless.
- 6. Ensure consistent engagement with transit riders:** Despite the fact that the DISC and BSV P2 are both major transit projects, transit-riding demographics have been underrepresented throughout the planning process. Consistent engagement with transit-dependent populations—and not just via advocacy groups like Friends of Caltrain or Seamless Bay Area—is essential to ensure that a variety of system users are heard and their needs considered throughout.
- 7. Identify and intentionally engage underrepresented or marginalized stakeholders:** Certain populations that have a high stake in these projects may not be familiar or understand the typical engagement process, so these groups should be proactively recruited by the project outreach team. Beyond making space for them in any official advisory council, outreach events should be targeted to these stakeholders by holding them within community spaces at convenient times with language translation, childcare, food, and other services provided. In particular, transit projects should seek out feedback from users with special needs, including children, elderly, disabled, and low-income riders, to ensure that the system works for everyone.

SECTION 3: GOVERNANCE

Summary

- Many of the problems associated with the community engagement and design of the station arise from the lack of a formalized and holistic approach to station governance.
- Each agency is responsible only for building its piece of the station, and no agency is responsible for ensuring that the station works as a whole.
- Ideal station governance includes a station agency to design and develop the station, a regional agency to build the transport infrastructure, and incentives for cooperation to ensure the agencies integrate their designs.

Introduction

The designs and community engagement challenges around Diridon Station are a product of the way the projects are governed. There is no formal need for the institutions in charge of each project to cooperate, so each project is at liberty to proceed independently of all the others. Centralization of design and community engagement would be the most effective strategy for ensuring high quality station development and outreach processes, but the current governance structure is not conducive to this.

As part of this project, the group researched station governance and the interests of the various agencies, and documented them. This section reviews the current governance of the projects and plans surrounding Diridon Station, analyzes the involved agencies and their interests, analyzes potential alternative governance options, then makes some recommendations for governance models that could better position officials to create and operate a new Diridon Station as a regional multimodal transportation hub. The goal of these arrangements is to break down the silos that separate the agencies, creating a system where the entity in charge of the station's interests align with the passengers'.

Over the course of the interviews, it emerged that the problems with the current governance stem from the decentralization of design and outreach activities in addition to the difficulties that all agencies must face when building megaprojects. The recommendations create a governance structure that is better suited to handling these two problems.

Methodology

Throughout Fall 2021, the team interviewed people at the five agencies (The City of San José, Caltrain, MTC, BART, and VTA). The team sought to explore the interests of the five agencies, what needs they had for the station design, and their thoughts on the governance of the station and possible reforms. A comparison of the responses and an examination of what was included (and especially what was excluded) yielded insights into the process behind the design of Diridon Station and revealed shortcomings of the current governance model.

The Current Governance Model

The projects in and around Diridon Station are currently run as three separate projects. There is currently no formal requirement or need for agencies to work together, so collaboration and coordination is on an ad-hoc basis. The following is a description of the three projects and which agency is responsible for which project.

Diridon Integrated Station Concept (DISC)

The first of the three projects is the Diridon Integrated Station Concept (DISC), an effort of five public agencies to reconfigure and modernize the existing 1935 Diridon Caltrain Station which will serve Caltrain, Capitol Corridor, ACE, and eventually, California High-Speed Rail trains. As the owner of the existing Diridon Station building, platforms, and right of way, Caltrain has the power to plan Diridon Station as it wishes. Barring major institutional changes, it will also ultimately be responsible for rebuilding and remodeling the station.

VTA initially took the initiative on the DISC project, along with the City of San José. As the owner of the station, Caltrain allowed these two institutions along with two others (the California High-Speed Rail Authority and MTC) to have a hand in designing the DISC project. Currently, Caltrain and the City of San José are the de facto lead agencies on the project. None of the institutions have an obligation to continue working with Caltrain, and Caltrain has no externally-imposed obligation to internalize their input.

The JPAB (Diridon Station Joint Policy Advisory Board), the advisory committee that provides quarterly input on the DISC, was formed out of the agencies' desire to create a station that met all their needs as well as the needs of passengers. Some of its current members even participated in a SPUR-led study trip to Europe before the start of the project. This demonstrates a desire to collaborate in service of creating a high-quality station. It is a remarkable show of goodwill and dedication to station design excellence that all parties have managed to cooperate up to this point.

DISC renderings show a detailed station concept. However, most aspects of the design are subject to change, as the agencies have only formally adopted the following three elements:

1. **Track elevation:** The tracks into Diridon Station will be elevated for full grade separation
2. **Number of entrances:** The station will have two entrances
3. **Track alignment:** The approaches to Diridon Station will be kept in the existing corridor and not moved

VTA's BART to Silicon Valley Phase 2 (BSV P2)

The second project is the BART to Silicon Valley Phase 2 (BSV P2), which will extend BART service to San José with a station in the vicinity of Diridon Station.

This project will be operated by BART, but it is being designed, constructed, and paid for by VTA since this extension in Santa Clara County, which is outside the BART district. The governance is spelled out in the agreements between BART and VTA, which specify that VTA will pay for and build the project, then hand the infrastructure over to BART. After the start of revenue service, VTA will pay for BART operations within Santa Clara County and collect revenues associated with BART operations within Santa Clara County.

VTA is contractually obligated to work with BART through the VTA-BART working committee. However, as the entity paying for the project's construction, VTA has all the real power over the project. Despite the fact that all responsibility for the project rests with VTA, VTA has deftly deflected blame for all the project's flaws to other agencies, most notably BART. VTA is not under any obligation to allow any other agency to influence its design choices, and does not, in fact, allow any other institution to influence its design process.

Diridon Station Area Plan (DSAP)

The third is the Diridon Station Area Plan (DSAP), a set of zoning regulations managing the development of the land between Diridon Station and Downtown San José. As the municipality fully containing Diridon Station and its surroundings, the City of San José is responsible for creating and enforcing the DSAP. The City of San José is technically at liberty to write the DSAP as it wishes, but practically needs to avoid regulations that could be construed as a legal taking. The City has worked with Google, the owner of Downtown West, the biggest planned development in the DSAP, to create the DSAP.

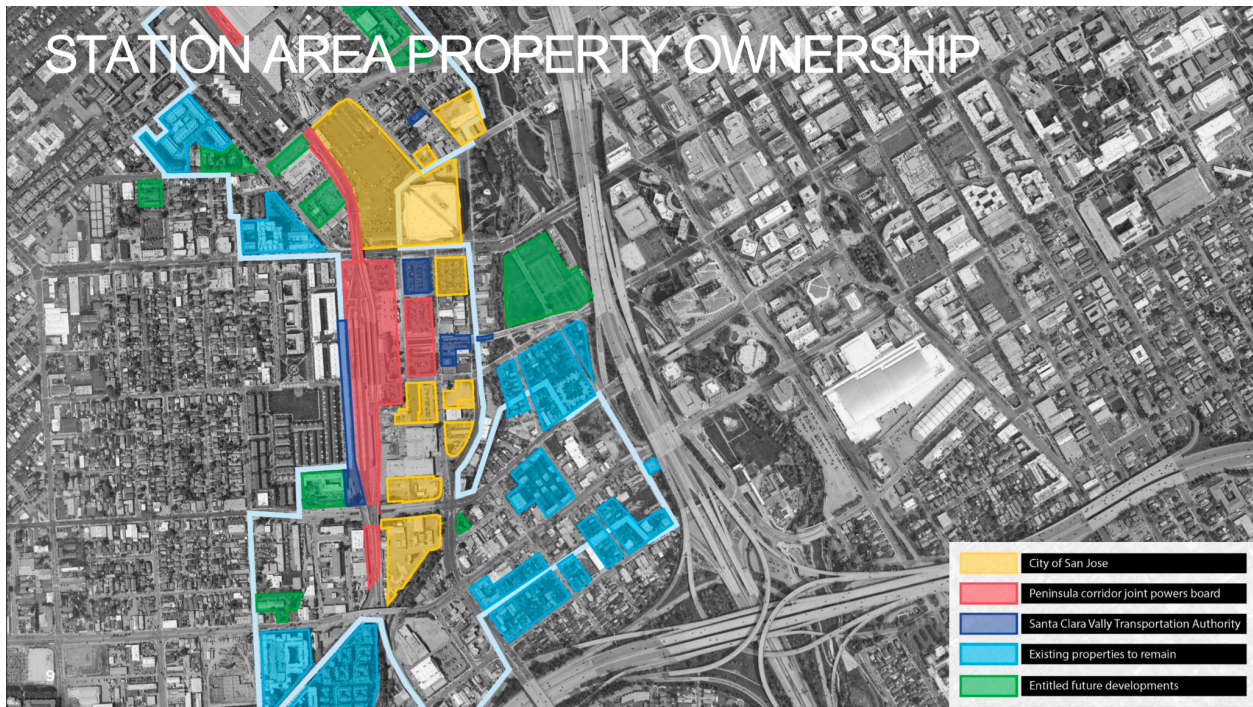
Why isn't BART building the BART Silicon Valley extensions?

When the BART District was originally proposed, it originally included Santa Clara County. However, as more details of the proposed system emerged, it became clear that Santa Clara County wouldn't be served by BART for several decades despite paying into the district for that entire time. To avoid paying into a system from which they would not benefit for a protracted period of time, Santa Clara County withdrew from the proposed BART District.

San Francisco, Contra Costa, and Alameda Counties then created the BART District with legislation stipulating that any county that wished to join in the future would need to pay back all the taxes they would have owed to the district had they joined from the outset.

This clause has deterred any county from seeking accession to BART, meaning that BART extensions beyond the borders of BART District need to be funded by special agreement between the BART District and the relevant agency in the county served by the extension. It is for this reason that VTA, not BART, is paying for and building the BART Silicon Valley extensions into Santa Clara County.

Figure 3.1: Property ownership map of Diridon Station and the future Downtown West District



Source: Benthem Crowel Architects

Benefits and shortcomings of the current model

The current governance model arose from the status quo of transit governance in the Bay Area and has its benefits as well as its shortcomings.

Benefits

The main benefits relate to the risk each agency is taking by being the sponsor of each project. In the current system, every project is independent of the other, so each can be built regardless of what happens on the other projects. This means that mishaps on one project will not hinder the construction schedule of the other projects, minimizing the construction risk to each agency in the short term.

Shortcomings

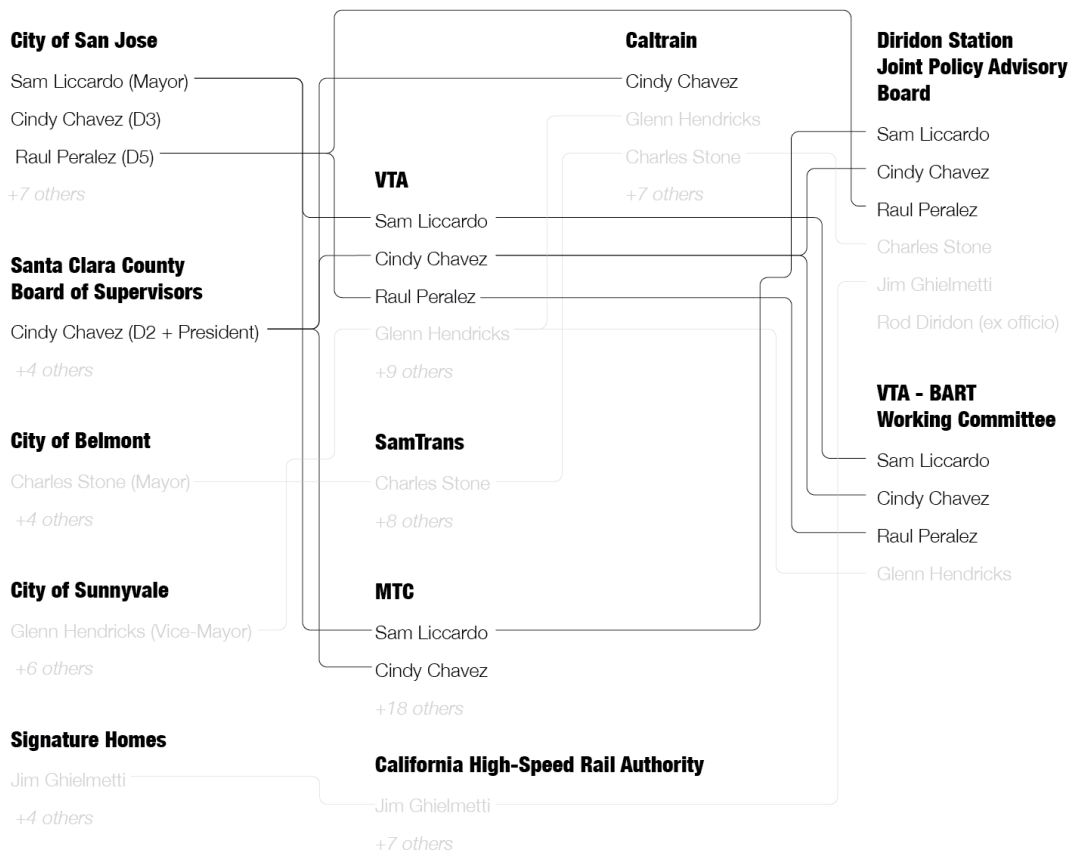
While the benefits of fragmented governance might be good in the short term, the shortcomings are much longer lasting. The current governance structure means that agencies do not work together to coordinate their developments, design and community engagement are decentralized and confusing, and projects miss opportunities to interconnect and create a structure larger than the sum of its parts.

Conflicting or incompatible designs between some plans reflect the lack of collaboration between certain agencies. Neighborhood groups we interviewed have expressed frustration at

the lack of consistency between outreach processes, both in terms of the information presented and the degree to which participants were actually allowed to make meaningful change. These issues stem from the decentralization of the design and community engagement processes for the projects around Diridon Station. If this continues, the overall customer, passenger, and resident experience will be degraded, a cost which will persist indefinitely.

One note about the agencies in charge of the projects in the South Bay is that many of them including VTA and Caltrain are agencies whose boards are made of representatives from other institutions, such as the City of San José (see Figure 6). This means that even though it appears the project has multiple agencies on it, the same people could well be on these boards (as shown on the diagram below). This might seem good for governance, but in reality it results in these few people being spread too thin as for none of those people is managing Diridon projects a primary job.

Figure 3.2: A diagram of local politicians and the transit boards on which they sit.



Source: Author's own illustration.

Another shortcoming of the current structure is that it makes transit agencies individually responsible for building megaprojects that they are not accustomed to building. This is more of a

problem with megaprojects generally and not one specific to San José. The problem with each agency building its own megaprojects is that agencies often do not have the opportunity to build them often enough to develop and retain institutional knowledge of how to do them. This means that megaprojects are subject to “first-timer” mistakes which can be costly.

In summary, the current governance raises two major challenges. The first is that fragmentation of the plans at Diridon makes it difficult to achieve high-quality passenger-centric design, community engagement, interconnections, and other project elements. The second is that the agencies involved are well-equipped to operate cities and transit systems, but not well-equipped to build megaprojects.

The Agencies and Their Interests

The agencies designing projects around Diridon Station have disparate interests. The design of the station, therefore, needed to reconcile all these differences.

Caltrain

Caltrain owns Diridon station, the Caltrain tracks from San José to San Francisco, the platforms, and some properties in front of Diridon Station. Caltrain runs the most frequent service from the station, and wants their operations to remain as simple as possible. They also have little money to make improvements. Finally, they are hindered by Union Pacific whenever they wish to make extensions to their system.

VTA

VTA owns the Diridon light rail station and future BART Station area, but not the bus station (this is on Caltrain land). Like Caltrain, VTA wants no disruption to its light rail and bus operations during construction. They have a mandate to Santa Clara County residents to deliver the BSV P2 extension. This BART project is very risky and expensive, so VTA wants to insulate the project from the uncertainty of the DISC process. For this reason, VTA to date has not allowed the DISC process to influence anything about the Diridon BART station, out of fear that BART assets designed to accommodate DISC will be stranded if the Diridon Station design changes later on in the DISC process.

Simultaneously, VTA was under significant pressure from the local business community to ensure absolutely no disruption along Santa Clara Street, in light of the disruption from the Alum Rock BRT construction causing several businesses to shut down. Therefore, VTA committed to building the BSV P2 extension very deep underground in 2017 with input mostly from the business community, and has not deviated from that decision ever since. This, even as transit riders, neighborhood groups, and even some early supporters of the deep bore option have realized the negative impact that this design will have on accessibility, and as such have begun to lobby for the shallower option.

California High Speed Rail Authority

The California High Speed Rail Authority does not yet operate any services, so is more flexible in their disruption requirements. However, it is in a tenuous position as it is in the process of building the high speed rail network right now, and being met with lawsuits on all sides. To fulfill the needs of a ballot measure that has supplied most of the funding thus far, the authority needs an arrangement that allows them to move trains between the Bay Area and Los Angeles in 2 hours, 40 minutes. Failure to deliver this project will likely result in a lawsuit that could jeopardize its finances. Ultimately, they too want a design that allows them to have operations as simple as possible.

City of San José

The City of San José controls the land uses around the station and aspires to become a city with a reputation befitting its large population. They wish to use the three projects around Diridon — DISC, Downtown West, and BSV P2 — to activate the area between Diridon Station and Downtown San José while making Diridon into the Bay Area's premier multimodal hub. While all would benefit to a degree if all three projects were planned and managed as one large project instead of three disjointed ones, San José especially stands to benefit from the creation of a great station and station neighborhood at Diridon Station.

MTC

As the regional planning organization, MTC is in charge of making plans for the region to meet its transport and housing needs. Pursuant to this goal, MTC's current primary objective is to fulfill Plan Bay Area 2050. The choices they make and the goals they advocate for are in pursuit of this goal.

BART

As the agency that will ultimately operate the BSV P2 extension, BART's primary objective is to ensure the extension has a configuration that is conducive to ease of operation for BART. This means that tracks are arranged so BART standard operations apply and stations designed to be easily run, cleaned, and maintained. Secondly, BART is interested in ensuring passengers have easy access to BART and to other modes.

Notable aspects of agency interests

Passenger-friendly design would have indirect benefits for all involved, but it is far from the main goal of the agencies above. The DISC partnership was formed out of the five agencies' desires to create a passenger-friendly station, but if this voluntary partnership dissolves for any reason, the station could revert to a passenger-unfriendly design.

Potential Governance Models

The goal of governance models is to bring the three projects together into one integrated transit hub and station district. Part of this research project was to identify several models that could assist Diridon Station in particular and the Bay Area more generally in doing this.

This report examines several governance structures, each which do different things. One structure exists only to ensure good station design through incentives. Two are construction-oriented, existing only to build the station or the projects around it. The last five are management-oriented, existing to build and manage the station indefinitely. All are explained, evaluated with a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges (SWOC) matrix, a blank format of which is shown below.

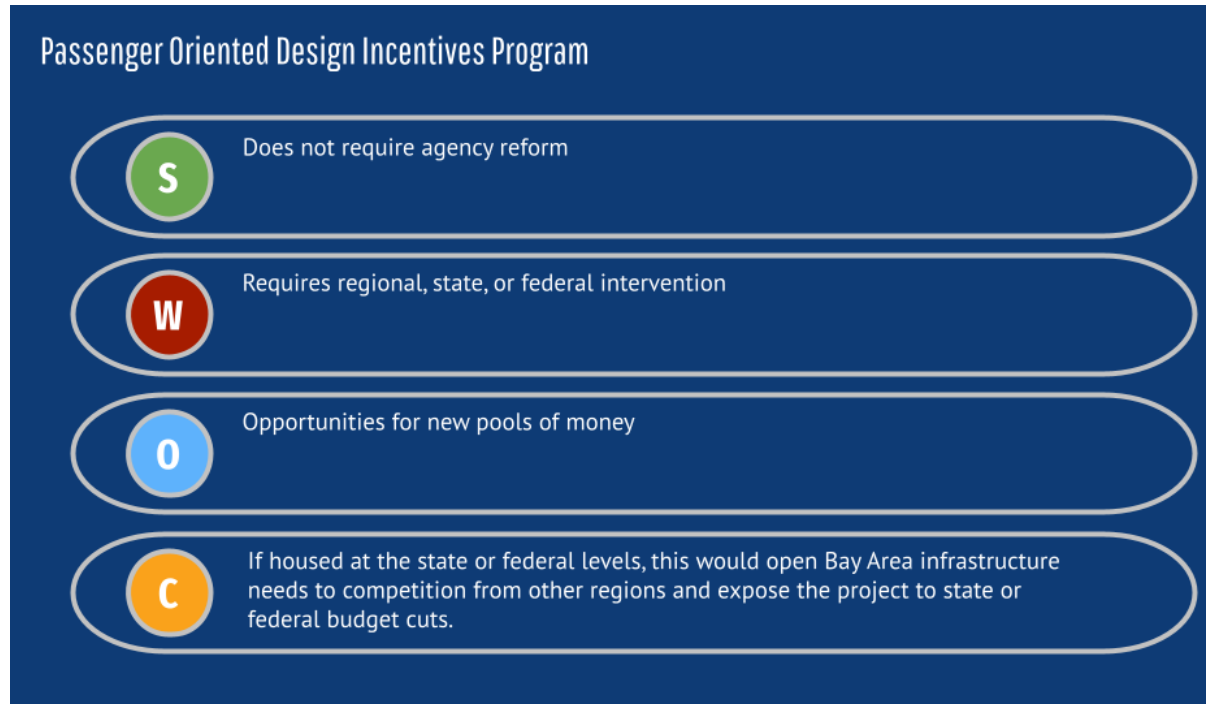


Structures for ensuring good design only

Passenger-Oriented Design Incentives Program

A passenger oriented design incentives program is a program that offers financial incentives to agencies to add passenger friendly station elements to their stations. This requires a higher level of government to have an agency that has a pot of money from which those incentives are funded. In California, this could be administered at the regional, state, or federal government level. At a regional level, such a fund could be carved out of an existing funding source that MTC has significant control over, such as Regional Measure 2 or the State Transit Assistance Population Based Funds. This is how the German federal rail administration incentivizes good

station design in Germany, and how the interstate highway program in the US ensures interstate highways adhere to federal standards.



Structures for delivering the Diridon-related capital projects only

Public Development Company

A public development company is a government-owned enterprise established to plan and possibly develop the station area, then be dissolved. In this model, several relevant cities, and counties, and possibly the state, create a company where all have part ownership whose sole purpose is to plan the station, develop the parcels around it, then turn all the infrastructure over to the relevant transportation authorities. Note that this company would not be responsible for building any rail infrastructure, but would work with the agencies building the train stations to ensure the stations are well-integrated with each other and the surrounding community. If the station is deemed of regional or state significance, this cooperation could be mandatory. This company is

Projects of State Significance

In France, projects can receive the designation of 'project of national significance.' This designation gives the development company additional powers which allow it to take actions not typically allowed for cities in the name of ensuring the nationally significant transport node is designed to the highest standards.

In California, the equivalent designation could be a project of regional or state significance, using as a policy anchor the projects needed to make the state rail plan a reality.

only meant to oversee the construction of the station and station area, then hand over all constructed infrastructure to the relevant authorities for operation. After Diridon Station and the surrounding developments are completed, the company is to be dissolved. Private companies such as Google may be stakeholders if desired, though this is not necessary.

This company can be structured to allow for value capture, which comes with its own sets of opportunities and risks. Value capture has the potential to allow for profit, but depends for its success upon the company's development increasing the value of the land. If the market crashes, the special development company's finances, and with it the finances of any city who is a part owner, could be jeopardized. By contrast, the standard arrangement of having the developers all be private offloads all the risk (and potential reward) to the private sector. The precedent organization for this is the SPL Lyon Part-Dieu, which led the redevelopment activities around Lyon's Part-Dieu station in France.



Infrastructure Bay Area

Infrastructure Bay Area, originally proposed by SPUR¹⁵, would be an agency tasked with originating and building projects of regional significance, then handing those projects over to relevant authorities to operate. This agency would exist indefinitely, even after Diridon is completed, and go on to build all the Bay Area's megaprojects of regional significance. This agency could be a part of MTC, part of a large regional transit agency, part of a regional network manager (which could also be a large regional transit agency), or a completely separate regional organization. This is how Toronto builds transit infrastructure through Infrastructure Ontario, and how California builds highways through Caltrans.

¹⁵ SPUR. (2020). *Infrastructure Bay Area*. San Francisco: SPUR.

Infrastructure Bay Area

- S** A regional specialized infrastructure agency has the ability to build up institutional knowledge which helps the region build projects without paying for skill building and first timer mistakes every time
- W** Requires intervention from the state or federal governments to establish; Requires a funding source from somewhere
- O** Opportunities to attract the most talented professionals and specialists to an exciting agency
- C** Funding will be vulnerable to fluctuations in whichever source it is tied to - whether federal, state, or regional tax measure

Models for delivering and operating the Diridon-related projects

Joint Powers Authority (JPA)

A JPA is the most familiar method we have in the Bay Area for dealing with multi-agency projects and hubs, which means there is more knowledge about what is wrong with them. One would be made by creating a new oversight board made of representatives from several agencies or cities and giving that board authority over the renovation and operation of Diridon Station. The difficulty here is that the members of a Diridon JPA would likely include a number of institutions which are themselves composed of member institutions. This means that (1) the board members of the JPA will be politicians who are unlikely to have specific station design expertise, and (2) the leaders will not be dedicated full-time staff. To illustrate the second point, the Diridon JPA board member representing VTA could be on the VTA board representing Santa Clara County where they are on the Board of Supervisors representing Santa Clara County Supervisor District 3. This means that overseeing the Diridon JPA would not be their primary or secondary responsibility, but their tertiary responsibility. It is unlikely in this situation that the board members of the JPA will be able to dedicate much time to governing the JPA, meaning that it is unlikely that the JPA will be governed as well as it could be were it governed by dedicated staff. This is similar to the problems with staff bandwidth DISC faces today. This combined with the fact that the board members are not guaranteed to know anything about station construction and operation is a recipe for mediocrity despite their good intentions. Good governance is also difficult in a JPA because this requires strong centralized long-term leadership and independence to pursue outcomes. The member agencies of JPAs often are reluctant to relinquish that authority, though, which leads to weak decentralized short-term

leadership and crippling dependence. The reluctance of member institutions to allow their JPAs to operate more freely and cede control to the leadership team means that instead of having all the strengths and none of the weaknesses of their members, most JPAs have all the weaknesses and none of the strengths. Several JPAs exist in the Bay Area, but the most relevant is the Transbay Joint Powers Authority, which is building a station at the other end of Caltrain's network.

Joint Powers Authority

S

Voices of all agencies will be heard

W

Being tied to the opinions of many agencies can hamper the JPA's ability to act; Leading the JPA will not be most board members' primary or secondary role, so good governance will be difficult; Often paralyzed when disagreements arise

O

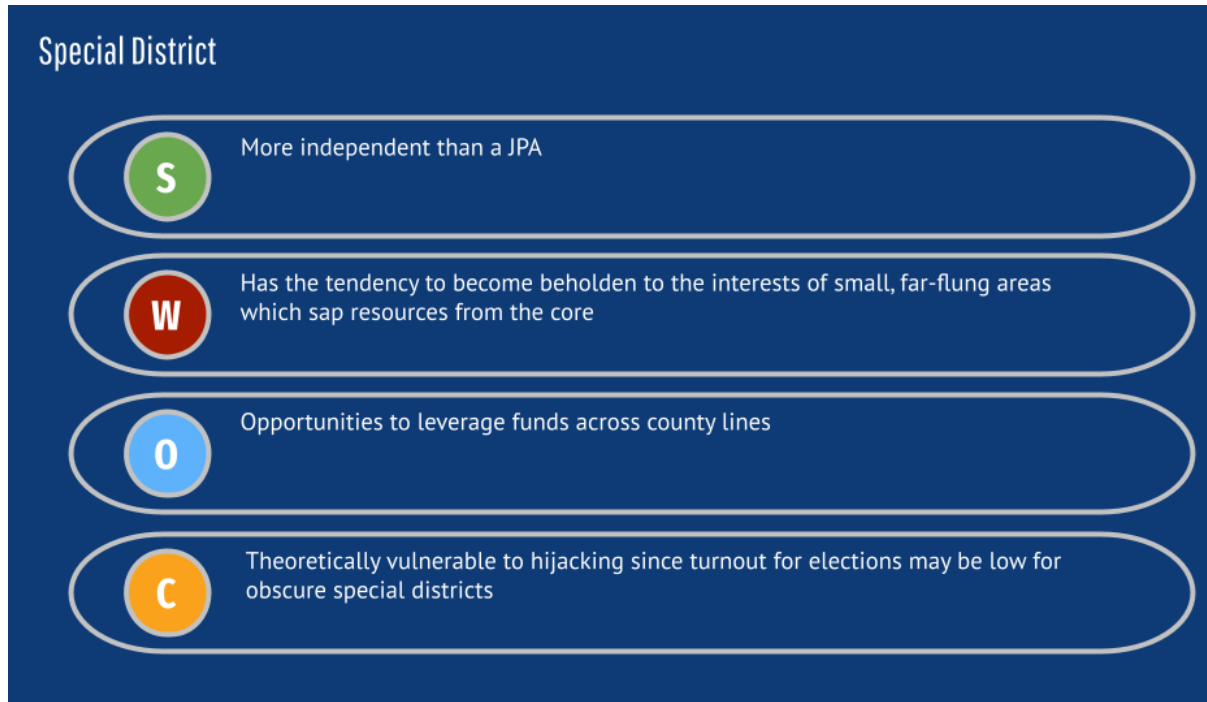
Opportunities to leverage funds across county lines

C

Vulnerable to being paralyzed by external disputes among its member agencies, and vulnerable to fluctuations in government budgets

Special District

A special district is another familiar entity within the Bay Area. This can be made by creating a new oversight board made of directly elected representatives or representatives from existing institutions from within the special district, then giving that board authority over the renovation and operation of Diridon Station. Special districts are more independent than JPAs, so have fewer of the problems of infighting. However, they are usually staffed by elected officials from municipalities within their jurisdictions, meaning that they have many of the same staff bandwidth problems that JPAs have. The closest special district to Diridon Station is VTA.



Special District

- S** More independent than a JPA
- W** Has the tendency to become beholden to the interests of small, far-flung areas which sap resources from the core
- O** Opportunities to leverage funds across county lines
- C** Theoretically vulnerable to hijacking since turnout for elections may be low for obscure special districts

Business Improvement District (BID)

A BID is a special tax district which funds services above and beyond what the city normally provides. One can be created for Diridon Station by establishing a district inside of which property owners and business owners pay a special tax which is used to fund the Diridon Station renovation project. This model is good for raising money, but less well-equipped to operate a train station. It is also unclear whether such a local political organization should be given authority over a hub of such regional significance. Additionally, there are equity concerns of essentially establishing a government within a government controlled only by landowners. BIDs are common in California; San José even has one in its downtown.



Public-Private Partnership (PPP)

PPPs come in many flavors with varying degrees of private participation. The version with the most private involvement involves leasing Diridon Station and/or the surrounding parcels of land to a private company who renovates the station, develops the land and collects revenues from its development. This is the model used for the renovation of Terminal B at Laganrdia Airport.

Public-Private Partnership



Good for offloading the cost and risk onto a private entity



Will likely need to be secured with subsidies or bonds, so not actually cost-free



Opportunities to leverage outside expertise for developing a large station area



If the developer fails, existing agencies have an obligation to assume the defunct development

Port Authority

A port authority is a form of government owned enterprise which builds and operates infrastructure, often funded by user fees. This could be established as a joint venture between all Bay Area counties, but given financial independence from the counties and the state. A Bay Area Port Authority would be responsible for financing, delivering, and operating large infrastructure projects in the Bay Area. This is how interstate infrastructure and port infrastructure is handled in New York City and its surroundings through the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.



Figure 3.3: A summary of the governance structures and their attributes

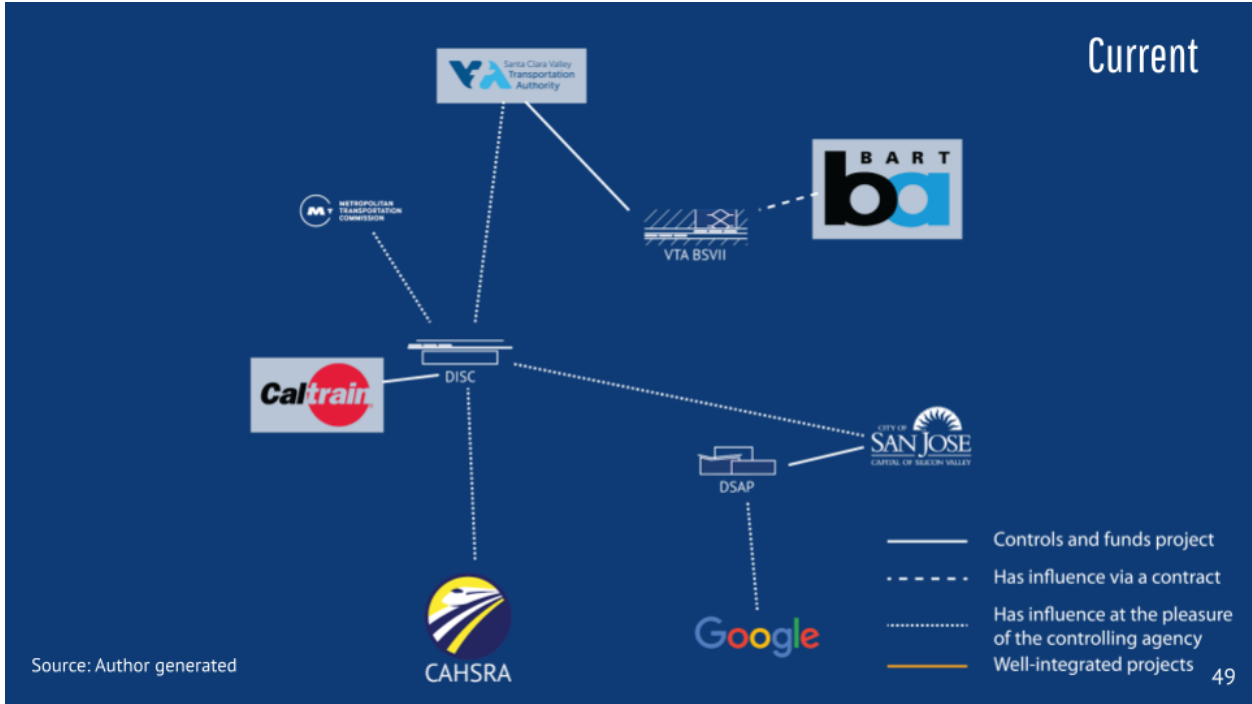
Structure	Type of entity	Role	Purview	Scale	Duration
Passenger Oriented Design Incentives Program	Government program	Incentivizing good design	Station areas and transport infrastructure	Regionally	In perpetuity
Special Development Company	Government-owned enterprise	Planning	Station areas	Locally	One time use
Infrastructure Bay Area	Government agency	Building	Transport infrastructure	Regionally	In perpetuity
Joint Powers Authority	Joint powers authority	Planning, building, and operating	Station areas and transport infrastructure	Locally	In perpetuity
Special District	Special district	Planning, building, and operating	Station areas and transport infrastructure	Locally	In perpetuity
Business Improvement District	Special tax district	Planning, building, and operating	Station areas and transport infrastructure	Locally	In perpetuity
Public-Private Partnership	Private company	Planning, building, and operating	Station areas and transport infrastructure	Locally	In perpetuity
Port Authority	Government-owned enterprise	Planning, building, and operating	Transport infrastructure	Regionally	In perpetuity

Source: Author's own illustration

Recommended Models

There are two major challenges that governance reform can address. The first is the fragmentation of the plans at Diridon making it difficult to achieve high-quality passenger-centric design, community engagement, interconnections, and other project elements. The second is that the agencies involved are well-equipped to operate cities and transit systems, but not well-equipped to build megaprojects.

Figure 3.4: Diagram of the current organizations and the relationships between them.



Source: Author’s own illustration

These can be handled with two governance structures which govern different aspects of the Diridon projects. Each one can be implemented on its own, but best results can be achieved by implementing both.

Ideal Model

A goal of reform should be to only introduce new governance structures where they will alleviate areas where current governance falls short. Bay Area transit agencies have demonstrated that they are capable of operating infrastructure once it is complete; planning building the megaprojects is what has proven difficult. For this reason, the ideal solution makes use of structures that together handle planning and building the megaprojects, then hand the finished infrastructure over to existing agencies to operate.

The ideal model solves the problems of fragmentation at Diridon Station and megaproject delivery by creating a **special development company** to oversee the development of Diridon Station and its environs as well as Infrastructure Bay Area to build the transport infrastructure. Critical benefits of this approach are:

1. By dealing with both the transportation hub and the land around it, this governance structure could and should be multi-disciplinary in its approach. This multi-disciplinary approach is critical for the success of a train station project, which is also multi-disciplinary.
2. By having an authority that is responsible for the area surrounding the station, this means that this authority oversees a bigger land area and as a result has more options for solving issues that require land.

The two structures should together handle both the two major challenges of fragmentation and megaproject delivery at Diridon Station.

Fragmentation affects the project because each of the entities building projects in the area (Caltrain, VTA, and the City of San José) have entire jurisdictions to manage and can't just focus on Diridon. A public development company (our first governance structure) can fix this by being an entity dedicated to managing this project, with the ability to have dedicated staff and develop strong leadership. This company would be in charge of the community engagement for all the projects in and around Diridon Station, and would be in charge of DSAP as well as influencing the designs of DISC and BSV P2 to ensure good station and station area design. To assist the company in achieving its objectives, the city would lend it zoning powers to shape the project, as well as a degree of autonomy to pursue development without being beholden to political forces seeking to unduly manipulate or undermine the project.

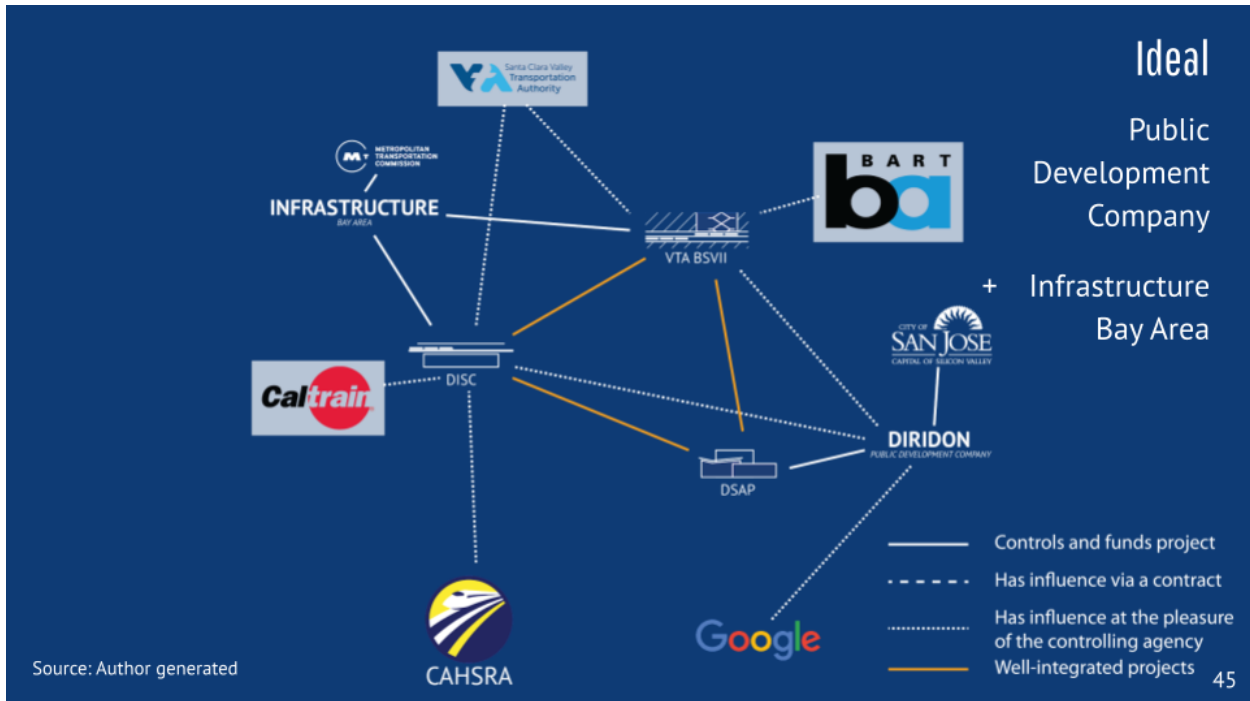
Megaprojects are challenging in the Bay Area because no agency gets to build them often enough to build up experience with them, meaning that agencies must re-learn how to build megaprojects every time. Infrastructure Bay Area (our second governance solution) would be a **regional infrastructure-building agency** with the power to originate and build megaprojects of regional significance. Each agency might not build enough to get experience individually, but the region as a whole does. By having a regional agency specialized in building megaprojects, it is possible to build up institutional knowledge and experience that will allow for projects to be delivered more efficiently without unnecessarily complex construction methods or system design choices. This agency would exist at the regional level, probably with MTC, and would be in charge of designing and building transport infrastructure only. It would work with the Diridon Public Development Company to design the DISC and BSV P2 connections to the station neighborhood.

After the construction of Diridon Station and the neighborhoods around it, Infrastructure Bay Area would hand over the infrastructure to Caltrain and BART for operation, and the public development company would dissolve.

Ideal Model

- S** Public development company ensures good station and station area design
Infrastructure Bay Area ensures competency in building megaprojects
- W** There is some potential for friction between Infrastructure Bay Area and the special development company if Infrastructure Bay Area is not sufficiently attuned to the importance of placemaking
- O** Opportunities to attract the most talented professionals and specialists to an exciting infrastructure construction agency; Opportunities for new pools of money
- C** Vulnerable to fluctuations in revenue to the regional body

Figure 3.5: Diagram of the ideal arrangement of agencies and the relationships between them.



Source: Author's own illustration

Fallback Model

The ideal model requires a large amount of institutional change and restructuring, making it challenging to achieve. If the region finds it too difficult to achieve the ideal model, a less effective but much easier option would be a **passenger-oriented design incentives program**. A passenger oriented design incentives program could alleviate the challenges with passenger oriented station design by covering some or all of the extra costs associated with passenger oriented design elements, provided that the agencies design them into stations. This would address many of the design challenges, but not address the megaproject challenges. This program could exist at the regional or state level.

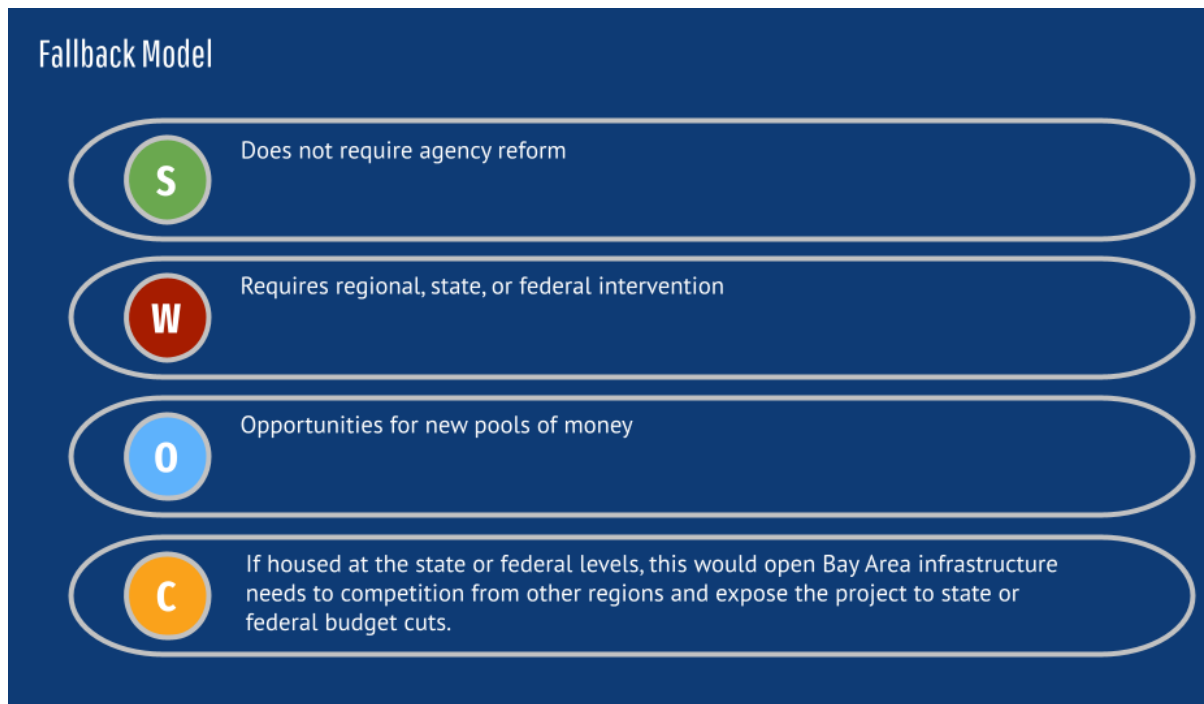
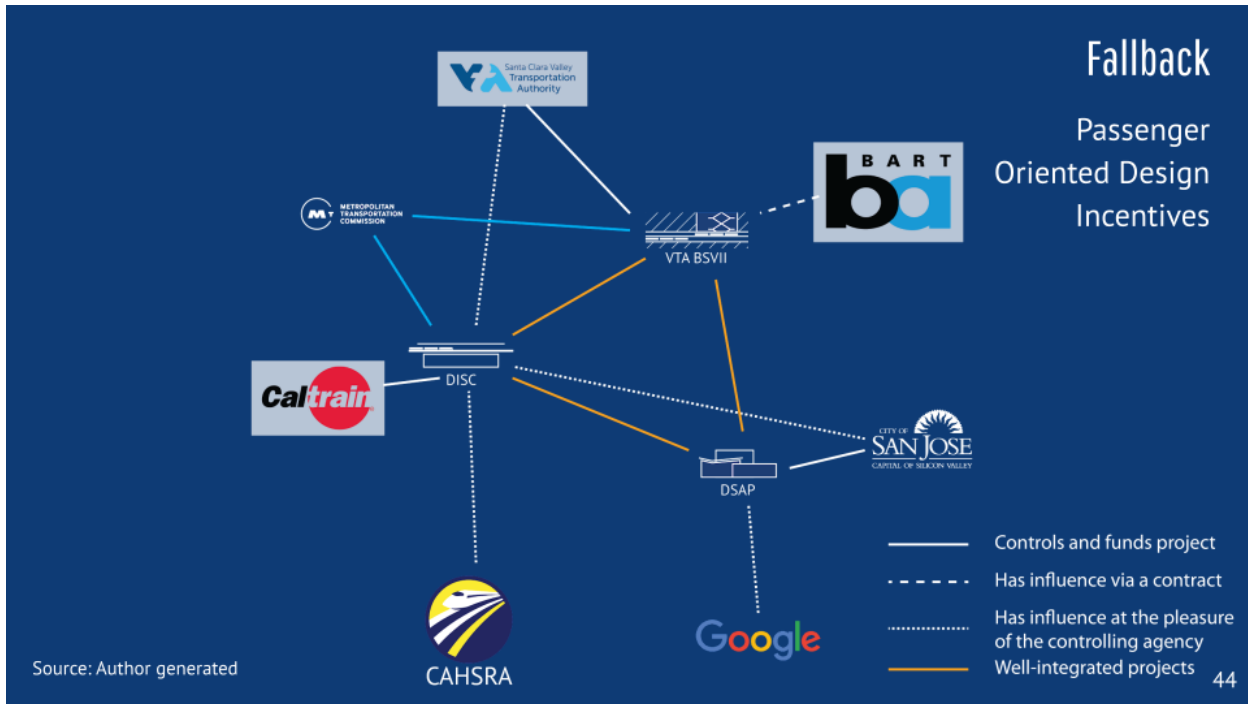


Figure 3.6: Diagram of the arrangement of agencies in the fallback model and the relationship between them.



Source: Author’s own illustration

Oversight

Regardless of which governance option is chosen, the project will need an oversight mechanism. In accordance with earlier research, the team recommends the establishment of internal and external oversight in tandem with external independent peer review and an independent project cost evaluation, especially for BSV P2. For megaprojects, institution of these management mechanisms would assure continuation of the “outside view” and uncover when lock-in and bias cloud project sponsors’ judgment. These bodies can also be attuned to ensuring that key project social equity, environmental, safety and other public interest goals remain at the forefront. They can recommend the necessary data to collect before, during and after implementation to allow for robust project evaluations. In so doing, project sponsors could consider a community advisory board like those established in large infrastructure projects, such as the reconstruction of the Cypress Freeway/Interstate 880 in Oakland or the Big Dig in Boston¹⁶. This body could contribute insights on key project aspects, including development of community metrics and data considerations developed through local knowledge. Such review groups can facilitate full disclosure of key information to increase transparency and accountability. This is critical for decision-making and building an informed citizenry, and well worth the investment in time and transaction costs. The further down the road a project’s scope changes, the higher potential for increased costs and time delays.

¹⁶ Alston, et al. (2016). The Third Crossing. Thirdcrossing.org. Berkeley.

SECTION 4: FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Table of Final Recommendations

	STATION DESIGN (see Section 1)	AGENCIES RESPONSIBLE
	Platform Design & Safety	
Near Term	Provide increased safety guidance for narrow platforms.	Caltrain
Long Term	Estimate average and peak platform usage needs.	MTC, City of San José
Long Term	Improve platform safety features, like tactile warning strips.	City of San José, Caltrain
	Wayfinding & Signage	
Near Term	Integrate wayfinding/interior signage for all transportation services.	MTC, Caltrain
Near Term	Upgrade wayfinding to meet universal design standards (design for people of all ages and abilities).	MTC, Caltrain
Near Term	Streamline ticket purchasing by consolidating machines and improving instructions.	MTC
Near Term	Improve concourse and platform signage.	MTC, Caltrain
Near Term	Update signage to follow regional wayfinding standards.	MTC, Caltrain
Near Term	Clarify predicted transfer routes for passengers between services and modes.	MTC, Caltrain
Long Term	Wayfinding system should be integrated with the station's architectural design and structure using paving colors, textures, or materials.	City of San José, future Diridon Station manager
Long Term	Develop indoor positioning system (IPS) technology to help users locate places within the station using their mobile devices.	future Diridon Station manager
Long Term	Adopt universal design guidelines for future station projects.	MTC, future Diridon Station manager, City of San José
Long Term	Incorporate the MTC's Hub Signage Program (HSP) to standardize signs across various transit services	MTC, future Diridon Station manager
	Transit Connections & Interagency Operations	
Near Term	Improve the station's western approach to direct passengers to various transit options.	Caltrain
Near Term	Better coordinate transit service with SAP or other nearby events.	Caltrain, VTA

Long Term	Centralize ticketing systems and fares.	MTC, Caltrain, VTA, BART, CAHSR
Long Term	Improve inter-agency transit coordination and transfers.	MTC, Caltrain, VTA, BART, CAHSR
Long Term	Analyze future transfer times and minimize walking distance between modes.	MTC, City of San José, VTA
	Public Realm & Neighborhood Integration	
Near Term	Engage with the community in a placemaking process for a future site at Diridon Station.	City of San José
Near Term	Activate the public realm surrounding Diridon.	City of San José, Caltrain
Near Term	Develop an interim public plaza.	City of San José, Caltrain
Near Term	Better wayfinding for surrounding neighborhoods and destinations.	City of San José, MTC
Near Term	Work with the community to develop temporary housing alternatives and/or social services on existing parking lots or vacant lots.	City of San José, Caltrain
Near Term	Improve wayfinding for surrounding neighborhoods and destinations.	City of San José, MTC
Near Term	Work with the community to develop temporary housing alternatives and/or social services on existing parking lots or vacant lots.	City of San José
Long Term	Design a space that is complementary to Downtown West Mixed-Use Plan.	City of San José
Long Term	Configure the Cahill Street public plaza as the active heart of the new station.	City of San José
Long Term	Develop standards for policing of public space.	City of San José, Caltrain, VTA, BART
Long Term	Maintain city and VTA-owned property for longterm development leases.	City of San José, VTA
Long Term	Encourage small active-use spaces on the ground floor of Diridon Station and in the immediate vicinity.	City of San José
Long Term	Prioritize housing development for all income levels.	City of San José
Near & Long Term	Extend active transportation links to the wider neighborhood & accelerate projects connecting to Diridon station.	City of San José
Near & Long Term	Provide wayfinding directions to active transportation.	City of San José
Near &	Clearly mark micro-mobility opportunities on and around station	City of San José

Long Term	property.	
Near & Long Term	Expand current micro-mobility information available for public knowledge.	City of San José
	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (See Section 2)	
Near Term	Consistently report back to the community by summarizing public feedback and its impact on the projects.	VTA, City of San José
Near Term	Manage public expectations for community engagement.	VTA, City of San José
Long Term	Centralize Diridon-area engagement for all projects with a single community advisory group.	MTC, future Diridon Station project manager
Long Term	Continue public engagement after project approval and implementation.	VTA, City of San José, future Diridon Station project manager
Long Term	Redesign the SAAG to improve its usefulness as a community-led board.	City of San José
Long Term	Ensure consistent engagement with transit riders.	VTA, City of San José, future Diridon Station project manager
Long Term	Identify and intentionally engage underrepresented or marginalized stakeholders.	VTA, City of San José, future Diridon Station project manager
	GOVERNANCE (See Section 3)	
Near & Long Term	Create a special development company to oversee the design and construction of Diridon Station and its environs.	
Near & Long Term	Create a new regional agency to build transportation infrastructure, modeled on SPUR's proposal for Infrastructure Bay Area.	
Near & Long Term	Develop a passenger-oriented design financial incentives program to provide funding for passenger-centric design.	
Near & Long Term	Establish internal and external oversight in tandem with external independent peer review and an independent project cost evaluation, especially for BSV P2.	