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Penrose design unveiled for new Transbay Transit Center

By Nashelly Chavez



The San Francisco's new Transbay Transit Center will serve as The City's largest transportation hub while reviving a design from the past.

City and state leaders Monday celebrated the unveiling of the awning design as part of the last construction milestone before the completion of the \$4.5 billion center, which will serve as the hub of the region's transportation system, at a gathering in the South of Market neighborhood.

Dubbed "the Grand Central Station of the West," the center will connect San Francisco with eight Bay Area counties

and the rest of the state by serving as a pit stop for transit systems including BART, Caltrain, Muni, SamTrans and California's upcoming high speed rail, according to project officials.

The center will span four blocks along Mission Street and is set to be completed in the fall of 2017.

At Monday's event, project leaders unveiled the white awning panels that will surround the center's exterior. Constructed with sleek, white steel columns and glass, the multistoried building will sit next to the Salesforce Tower and will be crowned with a 5.4 acre rooftop park.

Mathematical physicist Roger Penrose invented the Penrose design in the 1970s, which the awning panels are shaped after, and donated the pattern for the building, according to project officials. The rhombus pattern is known for being able to extend indefinitely without repeating itself.

Democratic House Leader Nancy Pelosi, a long-time supporter of the center who has advocated for federal funding for the project in Washington D.C. — including \$171 million in federal loans in 2010 — noted the significance of the project.

"That says a lot in terms of intermodal transportation coming along together," Pelosi said. "Everything from buses to high speed rail. It's pretty exciting, it's about the future."

Besides serving as a major transit hub for The City, the project also plans to build parks, retail space, 6 million square feet in office space and almost 4,400 homes, according to project officials. Of those units, 35 percent have been set aside for below-market-rate housing.

“That is extraordinary,” said Supervisor Jane Kim, also a member of the Transbay Joint Powers Authority Board. “There is no neighborhood that is hitting 35 percent affordability for our working and middle class households here in San Francisco.”

TJPA Board’s Executive Director Maria Ayerdi-Kaplan, who is responsible for overseeing the the Transbay Transit Center’s design, construction and funding, said the project has helped create jobs both on a local level and across the U.S., with almost 13,000 construction jobs alone spanning 29 states in the U.S. as a result of the project.

California Democratic Party Chair John Burton was presented with a plaque at the event for his work on the project, including helping secure the land for the center and his work to include 35 percent below-market-rate housing units in the project’s residences, according to Ayerdi-Kaplan.

”What we have before us, this is the first step,” Burton said. “And I look forward to seeing all of you when we have the ribbon cutting [for] the project.”