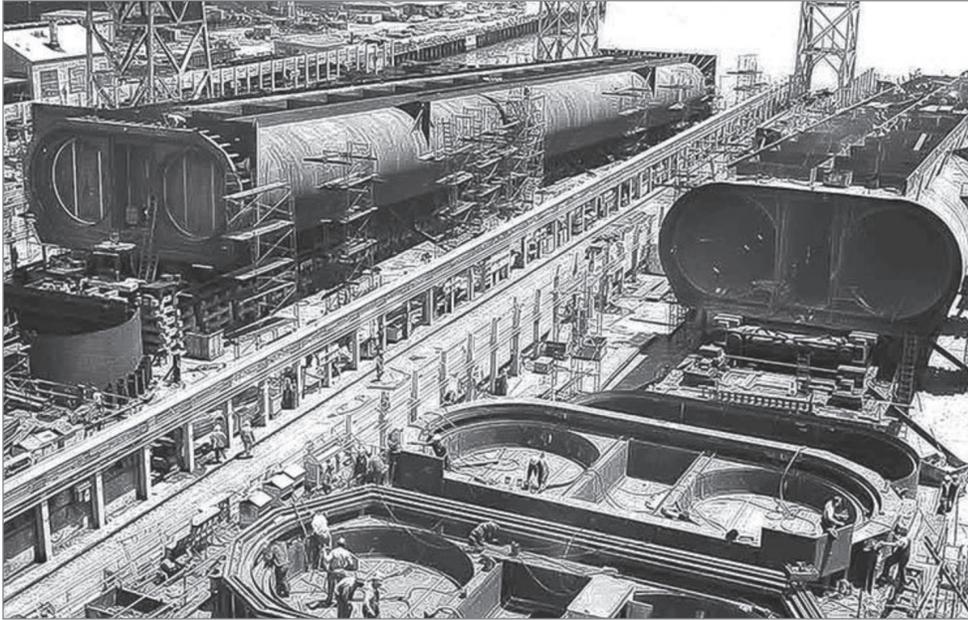


# IN THE NEWS



Construction workers build BART's transbay tube in 1970. (Courtesy Bechtel Corp.)

## Plan for second BART Transbay Tube takes step forward

*The Bay Area's second BART Transbay Tube may still be a glimmer in planners' eyes.*

SF EXAMINER | By JOE FITZGERALD RODRIGUEZ June 14, 2019

The Bay Area's second BART Transbay Tube may still be a glimmer in planners' eyes — not to mention decades and billions of dollars away from reality — but on Thursday afternoon the project took one small, but measurable, step forward.

The BART Board of Directors approved a \$50 million contract for up to 10 years to consultants HNTB Corporation, of Oakland, to advise and guide planning for the future Transbay Rail Crossing.

HNTB's strategic advising will help BART understand "how to set up the framework for a project this complex," Ellen Smith, BART's strategic planning manager, explained to the board Thursday.

"BART hasn't done anything this big since the construction of the original system," she said. "We really need their advice on other mega-projects, [to see] how they were handled."

Smith warned that the project will involve many stakeholders spread across the Bay Area's 21-county "mega-region." The consultants will help BART staff understand how to set up an approval process across such a wide swath of public entities, to set up an "evaluation system" for their progress, and how to manage planning stages of such a large project.

"Back-office stuff," Smith said.

HNTB's consultant contract will also go before the Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority's next meeting, according to Capitol Corridor staff.

Importantly, while many may know the proposal more commonly as the "Transbay Tube," partly because BART's only operating transbay crossing is also an underwater tube, current plans also consider scenarios to cross the bay that don't rely on tubes. Plans discuss both BART-specific tracks in a rail crossing, as well as a standard-gauge rail that would allow Capitol Corridor trains to use the crossing.

The agency, therefore, has opted to ditch the term "Transbay Tube" and call the project the new Transbay Rail Crossing.

The need for a second Transbay Rail Crossing is great, BART staff said Thursday. By 2030, high economic and population growth in the Bay Area may strain local transportation agencies' ability to commute people across the San Francisco Bay, according to agency projections.

That's where the second Transbay Rail Crossing comes in.

BART has \$110 million toward planning the crossing from its Measure RR bond, which was approved by voters in 2016. Roughly \$50 million in Metropolitan Transportation Commission-managed Regional Measure 3 funds will also go towards planning, in addition to \$1 million annually from the Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority.

About \$50 million of that funding will go to HNTB Corporation, which beat out competitors for what may be one day considered a historic contract.

BART netted five proposals from strategic consulting firms to help guide the Transbay Rail Crossing's planning: HNTB Corporation, Jacobs Engineering Group, Inc., LiNC Partners, and WSP USA Inc. All ventures had offices in Oakland, according to BART. Their proposals were reviewed by a selection committee assembled from BART staff, as well as representatives from the Capitol Corridor Joint Powers Authority, which manages Capitol Corridor train service from San Jose to Sacramento.

HNTB and BART have worked jointly on other projects — the corporation was the principal designer of BART's eight-mile San Francisco Airport Extension, which included designing both the South San Francisco BART Station and San Bruno BART Station, according to HNTB.