



Transbay Terminal gulps concrete

By J.K. Dineen - San Francisco Business Times, September 5, 2013

Transbay Terminal construction workers today made the transition from digging down to building up.

The shift was made with a ceremonial “first pour” for the transit center’s foundation — something which will be poured in 15 segments, each of which will require approximately 4,000 cubic yards of concrete.

At the ceremony flanked by House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi and Mayor Ed Lee, Transbay Joint Powers Authority Executive Director Maria Ayerdi-Kaplan said “today’s milestone marks the day ‘the Grand Central Station of the West coast,’ begins to take shape.”

“We are here to celebrate the first concrete pour for the permanent foundation and the rail levels of the new Transbay Transit Center,” said Ayerdi-Kaplan.

Ayerdi-Kaplan said workers have come a long way since August 2010 when the project broke ground. The old terminal has been knocked down, with 100 percent of its materials recycled, she said. Workers have excavated down to 65 feet below street level, installed temporary traffic bridges to keep traffic moving, and put in a vast internal bracing system to hold up the walls, she said.

“We relocated all utilities. We installed a geothermal piping system that will help cool the facility using the earth’s natural temperature. We installed waterproofing. We put in 1,800 drilled micro-piles and reinforced steel,” she added.

So far 600,000 cubic yards of mud and clay have been removed from the site. The job has provided employment for 2,400 workers. For the entire rail levels workers will pour 142,000 cubic yards of concrete, the equivalent of 30 olympic-size swimming pools. Webcor/Obayashi Joint Venture is the contractor.

The milestone celebration — which ended with elected officials pressing their white-gloved hands into a box full of wet concrete — takes place at a time when San Francisco's economy is in a very different place than it was when the project started. At the time building trade workers were desperate for the project to start, which happened thanks to \$400 million of funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which Leader Pelosi fought to secure.

Michael Theriault, secretary-treasurer of the San Francisco Building & Construction Trades Commission, said the project kicked off in 2010 "in the depth of the recession when our union

halls were cheek to jowl with workers out of work." He said the transit center "put an awful lot of our folks back to work and really began to seed the recovery in San Francisco."

Theriault said the digging so far has been a journey "through the strata of the city's history and pre-history."

"We have gone through a time when a 49er left a gold nugget here and it was later discovered. We have gone back through a time when ships moored here, and bat rays and leopard sharks swam here. We have gone back when Woolly Mammoths grazed here and one of them left a tooth for our workers to find," he said. "As with any major construction project in the city, you have to deal with its history in order to start going in the other direction. That is what this pour today does. This pour today starts us in the other direction, starts us back toward the present, where we stand, starts us toward the future that you see beginning to sprout around you."

The plan for the transit district around the transportation depot includes 4,500 housing units, 30 percent of them affordable, as well as 6 million square feet of office space. Mayor Lee pointed around to projects that are already underway in anticipation of the transit center: 535 Mission St., 350 Mission St., 505 Howard St., and 222 Second St. All of them are office developments hoping to be smack in the middle of the city's transportation center.

"Today as we celebrate this milestone I cannot help but think of how this visionary project has already begun to transform San Francisco – breathing new life into the South of Market neighborhood, stimulating smart growth and encouraging mass transit in the city and the region," said Mayor Lee.