



SamTrans Board of Directors
Meeting of February 5, 2025

Correspondence as of January 31, 2025

Subject

1. Caltrain e-News - January 2025
2. City of Burlingame's FY 2025 RAISE Planning Grant Application for Old Bayshore Complete Streets Project
3. Public Board Member appointment process
4. TRANSIT FUNDING + REGIONAL PLANNING + PANDAS
5. End of January! Transit Bid Tracker

Caltrain e-News - January 2025

From Dan Lieberman <liebermand@samtrans.com>

Date Fri 1/24/2025 3:34 PM

To Board (@caltrain.com) <board@caltrain.com>

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• January 2025 | [View online](#) •

...and Here's to a Great 2025!

Even with the launch of electrified service behind us, there's plenty more in store for this year. In this month's issue, we'll be discussing our new and improved schedule, our support of the Equity in Infrastructure Project, and how our new trains are running even better than we anticipated.





Caltrain Launches New Schedule

Caltrain has made some small adjustments to its schedule in order to improve on-time performance.

[Learn More about the New Schedule](#)

Celebration Train Honors Dr. King's Legacy

Caltrain's MLK Jr. Celebration Train carries passengers to the annual march in San Francisco, as it has since 1985.



[Learn More about the Celebration Train](#)



Caltrain Takes Equity Pledge

Caltrain signed the Equity in Infrastructure Project Pledge alongside many other 90 other Bay Area transit agencies and private companies, ensuring that Historically Underutilized Businesses (HUBs) have an opportunity to work on Caltrain projects.

[Learn More about Equity in Infrastructure](#)

Electric Service More Efficient Than Expected

Since the launch of electric service, Caltrain's energy consumption has been lower than projected, and is returning approximately 25% of the energy used to the system thanks to regenerative braking.



[Learn More about Caltrain's Energy Efficiency](#)



Caltrain Takes Fans to Giants FanFest

Baseball season is months away, but the free Giants FanFest is coming to San Jose and is a short walk from San Jose Diridon.

[Learn More about Giants FanFest](#)

Caltrain 2024 Year In Review Celebrates Caltrain's Many Accomplishments

In case you missed it, see what projects and activities Caltrain accomplished in 2024.



[Learn More about Caltrain's Year in Review](#)



Caltrain Makes Governor Newsom's Recap

Caltrain was honored for its Electrification Project to be mentioned by Governor Newsom as one of the highlights of 2024.

[Learn More about the Golden State Recap](#)

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UPCOMING EVENTS

- February 6 - [Caltrain Board Meeting](#) - San Carlos Station
 - February 15 - [Chinese New Year Parade](#) - San Francisco Station
 - February 16 - [NBA All Star Game](#) - San Francisco Station
-



Join our team!

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Learn More about Job Opportunities at Caltrain



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Editor: Dan Lieberman

LiebermanD@Samtrans.com

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1250 SAN CARLOS AVENUE
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January 27, 2025

The Honorable Sean Duffy
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20590

Re: City of Burlingame's FY 2025 RAISE Planning Grant Application for Old Bayshore Complete Streets Project

Dear Secretary-Designate Duffy:

I am writing on behalf of the San Mateo County Transit District (SamTrans) and the San Mateo County Transportation Authority (TA) to express support for the City of Burlingame's (City) application under the FY 2025 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) transportation grant program for the Old Bayshore Complete Streets Project (Project).

This Project will bring Old Bayshore's sidewalks into ADA compliance; improve the efficiency of the corridor; provide improvements that benefit bicyclists, pedestrians, transit, and motorists; and address stormwater, sea level, and other environmental concerns. With support from the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), the City will be able to move the Project to the final design and engineering.

Support from DOT will empower the City to pursue its vision for Old Bayshore by creating a regional hub for business and facilitating economic development for the City of Burlingame and its residents.

SamTrans and the TA are supportive of this Project because of its commitment to enhancing safety, mobility, and connectivity for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users. The proposed improvements will help create a more efficient transportation network that benefits all users. Additionally, the Project aligns with both agencies' long-term goals of making a lasting, positive impact on the communities we serve.

SamTrans looks forward to working with the City of Burlingame to ensure transit stop improvements are completed in alignment with our Bus Stop Improvement Program guidelines. We encourage you to consider this important project for funding. Please contact Government Affairs Director, Jessica Epstein epsteinj@samtrans.com, if you have any questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

David Santoro
Deputy General Manager/CEO

Cc: San Mateo County Transit District Board of Directors
San Mateo County Transportation Authority Board of Directors

Public Board Member appointment process

From John C. Baker <jcb10@humboldt.edu>
Date Thu 1/30/2025 9:53 AM
To Board (@samtrans.com) <Board@SamTrans.com>

You don't often get email from jcb10@humboldt.edu. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Chairman Gee and Directors,

I write with concerns about the transparency of the recent SamTrans public board member process.

First, let me clarify that I am not unhappy with the actual *results* of the nomination/appointment process: Director Powell has proven to be a good advocate for the District in the years he's been on the Board, and while the time I've known Director Esser has been shorter, his resume is impressive and he has been a fine Board member since his appointment 15 months ago. Instead I am concerned that the process was opaque to those not on the nominating subcommittee.

At the January 8 Board meeting, Item 2 was listed as a "report" of the nominating committee, followed by the appointment of two public members. When the item came around, then-Chair Fraser's entire "report" was that they were "happy to reappoint" directors Powell and Esser, followed by a quick vote. There was no discussion in the meeting. Neither was there any staff or committee report in the agenda itself. The public has no idea how many applicants there were, who applied, or what criteria the subcommittee used in making its determination.

I admit I am not a completely disinterested party, as I put in a timely application for this appointment. That, however, arguably made me more attuned to the process, so I was surprised that I was not even called in for an interview despite: Being a frequent SamTrans rider (unlike many Board members), having served on the SamTrans Citizens Advisory Committee for almost 15 years (in non-consecutive terms), having a MPA with an emphasis in urban administration and transportation, and prior service as an elected Board member for a local district with a large operating budget (and having left that position more than two years ago, I was eligible for the public director position under SamTrans' rules).

Again, I value experience and continuity, and if I were on the Board, I would likely have chosen the same public board members as the subcommittee — I just find fault in the execution of the nomination process. SamTrans is an integral part of San Mateo County's functioning and needs a public process for selection of its non-elected Board members (indeed, it probably needs directly elected Board members, but that's a topic for another day).

For future public board member selections, I suggest SamTrans follow the method most other city councils and school districts have when there is a vacancy:

- Advertise to the public and accept applications (District does do this)
- Publish the name of applicants and home cities on its website
- Hold public interviews (may be live-streamed) with all candidates meeting minimum qualifications
- Ask all interviewees the same questions
- Have the subcommittee give a formal report outlining its recommendations.

Having these basic procedures in place would increase the already high respect I have for SamTrans, which provides vital services for tens of thousands of local riders daily and help install confidence in the annual expenditure of more than \$350 million in public funds.

Thank you for you consideration,

John Baker
South San Francisco

TRANSIT FUNDING + REGIONAL PLANNING + PANDAS

From Howard <wongaia@aol.com>

Date Thu 1/30/2025 6:25 PM

To Board (@samtrans.com) <board@samtrans.com>; Casey Fromson <fromsonc@samtrans.com>

📎 1 attachment (2 MB)

~000-PANDAS DOWNTOWN SAN FRANCISCO.docx.pdf;

You don't often get email from wongaia@aol.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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TRANSIT FUNDING: SIMPLER HOLISTIC PLANNING + + +

Like in Pennsylvania, the State can shift (flex) federal funding from highways to public transit. SFMTA (Muni) can flex funding from capita projects to operations. Flexing is a temporary fix, allowing time for a Regional Transportation Revenue Measure in November 2026's election--- which can pass if transit advocates take the lead and help shape a transformative Bay Area mobility vision. Near-term Muni service cuts are too damaging---causing cascading ridership drops and dampening economic growth.

STREETS BLOG: Pennsylvania Shifted Cash From Highways to Transit – But Other States Could Go Even Further <https://usa.streetsblog.org/2024/11/27/pennsylvania-shifted-cash-from-highways-to-transit-but-other-states-could-go-even-further>

STREETS BLOG: Illinois could help beat the transit fiscal cliff by shifting federal funding from highways to public transportation <https://chi.streetsblog.org/2024/12/16/illinois-could-beat-the-transit-fiscal-cliff-by-shifting-federal-funding-from-highways-to-public-transportation>

SFMTA: Flexing Capital Funds to Operations:

[https://media.api.sf.gov/documents/MFWG_Service_Cuts_Options_for_Discussion - 20 Nov 2024.pdf](https://media.api.sf.gov/documents/MFWG_Service_Cuts_Options_for_Discussion_-_20_Nov_2024.pdf)

SFMTA: Muni Funding Working Group---Data and Options: <https://www.sf.gov/resource-2024--muni-funding-working-group-meeting-materials>

FUNDING OUR FUTURE: A Roadmap for Equitable and Sustainable Transportation Action in Massachusetts:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NVfwtrvoQnMIS68Z11jyrGnw5kJBxx34/view?pli=1>

Note: An overview of common transportation revenue problems, recommendations and case studies.

SWI: Swiss reject plans for bigger motorways and extra rights for landlords

<https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/swiss-politics/swiss-reject-plans-for-bigger-motorways-and-extra-rights-for-landlords/88277982>



Red and Pink Wavy Line | by:~InfinityIyah by InfinityIyah



REGIONAL TRANSIT + PANDAS DOWNTOWN SF (ATTACHED)

REGIONAL TRANSIT TEAMWORK: *Occam's razor* (problem-solving principle): "Entities should not be multiplied unnecessarily" and "The simplest explanation [solution] is usually the best one." Consider regional transit efficiencies and new funding sources through regional collaboration, integration, planning, and teamwork. As budget fiscal cliffs threaten transit existentially, the Bay Area's 27 transit agencies can work as a collective ---because a well-oiled sum is greater than its disparate parts. Around the world, regional metropolitan agencies are great models, better serving their constituent parts (cities, counties, provinces, states, towns). The Bay Area can do the same---for cost savings, operating efficiencies, shared resources, purchasing power, system simplifications, and more ridership/ revenues. MTC (Metropolitan Transportation Commission) has already made great strides in its regional network management programs; and even without legal mandates, transit agencies can accelerate collaboration---for survival. Moreover, regional planning can connect high-volume destinations/ urban nodes/ transit centers; and design regional transit magnets, like a world-class Panda/ Conservation Center.

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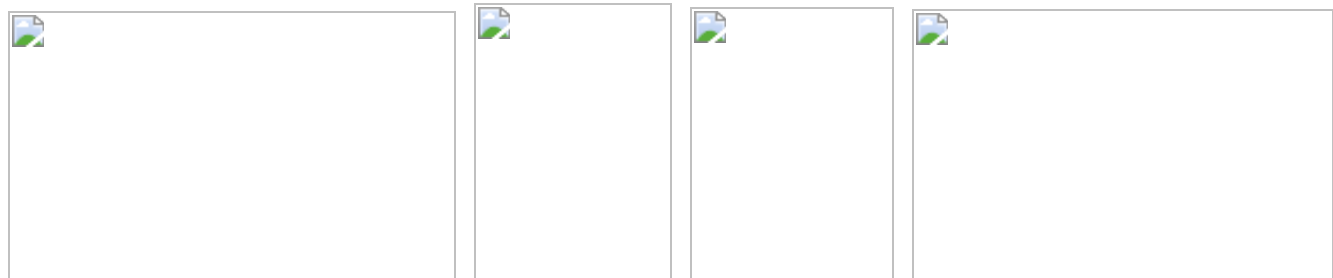
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NEXT CITY: Should Cities Reject Bad Transit Until Something Better Comes Along? A Lesson from Zurich: <https://nextcity.org/urbanist-news/should-cities-reject-bad-transit-a-lesson-from-zurich> Rather than moving its surface transit underground, Zurich decided to strengthen and speed up the bus and tram networks through dedicated transit lanes and priority at stoplights (approved in 1977), and to expand trams to the city's outer reaches and beyond (still under construction). [NOTE: Keep it simple.]

WEBINAR: Lessons from Switzerland for Bay Area and US Public Transit (Seamless Bay Area): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SbqaGgkvJk8>

 

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MASS TRANSIT: Employee Initiative Drives Growth and Success at C-TRAN
<https://www.masstransitmag.com/management/article/21279565/employee-initiative-drives-growth-and-success-at-c-tran> Establishing a work environment that celebrates communication and authenticity empowers employees to spark change and forge new paths for continued growth and success. Much of C-TRAN's success has been made possible by employees of all levels feeling empowered to not only make the agency a better place, but the community a better place. "We give people the opportunity to lead...".

KTVU: BART could take steps to cut the cost of transfers to other transit
<https://www.ktvu.com/news/bart-directors-could-take-steps-cut-cost-transfers-other-transit>

BART & Caltrain Transfers: <https://www.bart.gov/guide/transit/transfers>






MODAL SHARE CHART: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modal_share






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EXCERPT: ATTACHED---PANDAS DOWNTOWN SF

QUICK CASE STUDIES: PANDAS AND CONSERVATION ZOOS: During election seasons, the entire political spectrum hashes out societal problems and solutions. After elections, the

same divisive cycle begins again. Holistic/ visionary ideas should be seriously considered. By example, Downtown San Francisco offers the largest potential Panda Habitat---with the flexibility for state-of-the-art facilities and technology---and maximum regional benefits and fundraising prospects, as well as longest-term financial sustainability. Some panda projects (See more in Attached):

-  Red and Pink Wavy Line | by:~InfinityIyah by InfinityIyah
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 <p>Berlin Panda Paradise: The new 59,000 square feet facility includes a Visitors Pavilion inspired by 1898 Chinese architecture. The panda house has tiled facades and Chinese-style gates, railings, and colors. Bamboo plants, rock formations and small waterways are modelled after natural Sichuan habitats. https://www.zoo-berlin.de/en/news/zoo-news/detail/plans-unveiled-for-our-panda-paradise</p>	 <p>Ueno Zoo (Tokyo): The 73,200 square feet habitat has the look and feel of China’s mountainous Sichuan Province---with trees, boulders, and caves. Called “Panda no Mori”, the center’s name can be translated as Panda Forest, but the word “mori” also means “conservation”---including a nursing facility for newborns. https://www.timeout.com/tokyo/news/ueno-zoo-has-opened-a-new-panda-enclosure-that-resembles-the-bears-habitat-091120</p>
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 <p>Adelaide Zoo Bamboo Forest: Visitors flow through a sequence of rooms, both indoor</p>	 <p>Male giant panda Xiao Qi Ji walks around his enclosure at the Smithsonian National Zoo on Sept. 23, 2023 in Washington, D.C., as visitors watch.</p> <p>Smithsonian Zoo (Washington DC): Along a landscaped Asian Trail, the 40,000 square feet Panda Habitat was uniquely designed---with the help of pandas whose preferences were observed for years. Rolling rocky terrain, dense planting with bamboo/ perennials. large trees, grottos, and water features. https://zooex.org/gallery/show/964/</p>
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and outdoor, for a series of experiences--- duck water glades to circular amphitheater spaces. The 55,400 square foot facility has a separate conservation center---research, breeding, and education.


<https://architectureau.com/articles/giant-panda-bamboo-forest-adelaide-zoo/>

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GUARDIAN: Zoos weigh up the costs of China's 'pandanomics'


<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/13/edinburgh-zoo-pandas-tian-tian-china-pandanomics-birth-cub>


Having a panda can be ruinous, say some zoos, and could even take money away from other conservation work. Washington, Atlanta, Memphis, and San Diego zoos are said to have spent \$33m more on pandas from 2000-03 than they received from showing them.


BBC: Why paying for pandas is not so black and white


<https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20190516-why-paying-for-pandas-is-not-so-black-and-white>


Looking after each panda also costs many hundreds of thousands of dollars a year. Pandas are the most expensive animal to keep in a zoo, costing about five times as much as an elephant.

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PANDAS DOWNTOWN SF: STRATEGIC CRITERIA


BIGGER FLEXIBLE SPACE: Downtown offers more square footage than the existing SF Zoo--overcrowded, aging infrastructure. Portions of Macy's 400,000 square footage could be reimagined for a modern Panda habitat. Public spaces (Geary Boulevard, sidewalks, public air-rights, Union Square) could be reimagined as green parkways. Or other sites?


DONATIONS-IN-KIND: Macy's could donate portions of their building---in exchange for added value to their property, tax advantages, and advertising returns. Public parks, streets, sidewalks, and air-rights are existing public assets---no cost. Or Emporium Center or ?


FUNDRAISING DIVERSIFICATION: Widens the pool of donors---with broad swaths of downtown and the region benefiting from Pandas Downtown.

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ATTACHED: FULL ANALYSIS + MORE PANDA PROJECTS

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Howard Wong, AIA wongaia@aol.com



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PANDAS DOWNTOWN SAN FRANCISCO

By Howard Wong, AIA wongaia@aol.com November 2024

CASE STUDY: An example of integrated regional planning---to tackle multiple regional problems simultaneously. Leveraging regional funding, expertise, and resources, a centralized world-class Panda Conservation Center would spark regional economics, transit and more---within a faster schedule. Think stellar architecture, animal care and customer experience. Think Design+Economics+Jobs+Technology+Tranist---everything, everywhere, all at once---utilizing public land and public/ private partnerships. Some panda projects:



Central Park Zoo: In the middle of Manhattan, a thriving downtown zoo (off 5th Avenue at 64th Street)---founded in 1861 and transformed in 1988 into a wildlife conservation center. Animals include grizzly bears and red pandas. <https://centralparkzoo.com/about>



Copenhagen Yin-Yang Panda House: Working with China experts in zoology and veterinary medicine, natural habitats were created. The 26,000 square feet facility has harmoniously linked indoor-outdoor gardens---viewable from multi-directions. <https://www.archdaily.com/927643/panda-house-big>



Berlin Panda Paradise: The new 59,000 square feet facility includes a Visitors Pavilion inspired by 1898 Chinese architecture. The panda house has tiled facades and Chinese-style gates, railings, and colors. Bamboo plants, rock formations and small waterways are modelled after natural Sichuan habitats. <https://www.zoo-berlin.de/en/news/zoo-news/detail/plans-unveiled-for-our-panda-paradise>



Ueno Zoo, Tokyo: The 73,200 square feet habitat has the look and feel of China's mountainous Sichuan Province---with trees, boulders, and caves. Called "Panda no Mori", the center's name can be translated as Panda Forest, but the word "mori" also means "conservation"---including a nursing facility for newborns. <https://www.timeout.com/tokyo/news/ueno-zoo-has-opened-a-new-panda-enclosure-that-resembles-the-bears-habitat-091120>



Adelaide Zoo Bamboo Forest: Visitors flow through a sequence of rooms, both indoor and outdoor, for a series of experiences---duck water glades to circular amphitheater spaces. The 55,400 square foot facility has a separate conservation center---research, breeding, and education. <https://architectureau.com/articles/giant-panda-bamboo-forest-adelaide-zoo/>



Smithsonian Zoo, Washington DC: Along a landscaped Asian Trail, the 40,000 square feet Panda Habitat was uniquely designed---with the help of pandas whose preferences were observed for years. Rolling rocky terrain, dense planting with bamboo/ perennials. large trees, grottos, and water features. <https://zooex.org/gallery/show/964/>



Pavilion Capital Giant Panda Forest, Singapore: A glass bio-domed roof encloses a climate/ humidity-controlled forest (in tropics). The 16,150 square feet natural habitat has lush plantings, trees, boulders, and water features. A special bamboo-growing program provides fresh food and toys for the insatiable pandas. <https://www.mandai.com/en/river-wonders/animals-and-zones.html>



Beijing Zoo Panda Hall: Built in 1989, the facility covers an area of 108,000 square feet. Lush bamboo and bushes simulate the natural habitat of southwest China. Here in 1963, the first birth of a giant panda in captivity occurred. In 1978, the first artificial insemination success, facilitating friendship pandas' travel around the world. <https://www.mybeijingchina.com/beijing-attractions/beijing-zoo/>

MITIGATE PANDA RISKS: HEALTH, FINANCIAL, BAD PRESS....

What is best for the pandas? Poorly-designed Zoo enclosures have demonstratively harmed pandas. Experts already question the conservation benefits of captivity, as evidenced by the reliance on artificial insemination for breeding. A panda's death in the Memphis Zoo was preceded by weight loss and declining health. **SEE BELOW FOR BETTER STRATEGY.**

PANDAS INTERNATIONAL: Pandas Around the Globe

<https://www.pandasinternational.org/pandas-around-the-globe/>



Panda Pavilions, Chengdu Research Base: Four ring-shaped pavilions are organized around open-air courtyards, serving as outdoor playgrounds with a continuous connection to nature. Merging architecture, landscape and ecology, the pavilions are integral with the park's natural woodland topography---with terraced spaces for pandas. Visitors view pandas close-up from connected paths and bermed glass viewing galleries.
<https://www.designboom.com/architecture/eid-architecture-panda-pavilions-expansion-chengdu-research-breeding-center-china-03-22-2023/>



Macao Giant Panda Pavilion: The 32,300 square feet fan-shaped pavilion adapts to the terrain's natural undulations---with two 3,550 square feet indoor habitats, a 6,460 square feet outdoor yard, and a 9,688 square feet indoor exhibit area. At the front of the fan-layout indoor area are two layered viewing paths---accessible to two streams of visitors. The logistics center contains panda dens, bamboo-washing/ storage, feed preparation/ warehouse, control center, veterinarian clinic.
<https://www.macaotourism.gov.mo/en/shows-and-entertainment/family-fun/macao-giant-panda-pavilion>



Qatar's Panda House: At 1,292,000 square feet, one of the largest panda enclosures in the world---with viewing atriums and green spaces. Designed to mimic the Minshan mountains, the pandas inhabit an air-conditioned indoor exhibit hall, separate bedrooms, and grounds---with swimming pools, play platforms, interactive landscapes, and hospital.
<https://visitqatar.com/intl-en/things-to-do/get-inspired/panda-park#:~:text=Panda%20House%20at%20Al%20Khor&text=The%20pandas%20live%20in%20supreme,them%20in%20Mandarin%20and%20English.>



Panda Passage, Calgary Zoo: The 23,600 square feet renovation of an existing building incorporates cutting-edge habitat design, wildlife conservation, and natural materials. 'Panda-priority' programming led to a mountain forest environment---with lush landscaping, grassy/ rocky terrain, waterfall, stream, and play features. The pandas' cultural significance is further conveyed by Chinese Feng Shui and biophilic design elements. Since the pandas may leave in five years, the space is designed for future adaptability for other species' habitats.
<https://zeidler.com/projects/panda-passage-calgary-zoo/>



COUTERPUNCH: Zoo Troubles: the Plight of Two Pandas Lays Bare the Flaws

<https://www.counterpunch.org/2022/09/15/zoo-troubles-the-plight-of-two-pandas-lays-bare-the-flaws/> Over the years, panda lovers have noticed a significant deterioration in both pandas' appearance as a result of the zoo's negligent treatment. It is apparent to visitors that their enclosures are lacking in enrichment. Interactions between the keepers and YaYa and LeLe are rarely seen. They are both very thin and often show signs of mental distress. YaYa has mites all over her body and patches of shedding fur. She has experienced several artificial inseminations over the years and had at least three miscarriages. As far as food is concerned, the quality of bamboo given to them is often yellow and dry.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC: Captivity can screw up pandas' internal clocks:

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/article/giant-pandas-captivity-circadian-rhythms-behavior#:~:text=Living%20outside%20their%20natural%20Chinese,not%20be%20captive%20at%20all.&text=Giant%20pandas%20delight%20zoo%2Dgoers,play%E2%80%94especially%20in%20the%20snow>

GUARDIAN: Zoos weigh up the costs of China's 'pandanomics'

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/13/edinburgh-zoo-pandas-tian-tian-china-pandanomics-birth-cub> Having a panda can be ruinous, say some zoos, and could even take money away from other conservation work. Washington, Atlanta, Memphis, and San Diego zoos are said to have spent \$33m more on pandas from 2000-03 than they received from showing them.

BBC: Why paying for pandas is not so black and white

<https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20190516-why-paying-for-pandas-is-not-so-black-and-white> Looking after each panda also costs many hundreds of thousands of dollars a year. Pandas are the most expensive animal to keep in a zoo, costing about five times as much as an elephant.

ATLANTA JOURNAL CONSTITUTION: Zoo reveals terms of panda deal with China

<https://www.ajc.com/entertainment/calendar/zoo-reveals-terms-panda-deal-with-china/LwtJNKWq0OLmNSK6s9C8TL/> In details revealed exclusively to the AJC on Thursday, Zoo Atlanta president and CEO Dennis Kelly said the deal calls for the zoo to pay China \$570,000 yearly during the next five years, compared to the \$1.1 million that it paid annually over the last decade.

NIKKEI ASIA: China's Panda Business: <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/The-Big-Story/China-s-panda-business-How-zoos-from-U.S.-to-Japan-fund-Beijing-soft-power#:~:text=A%20survey%20by%20Nikkei%20Asia,%2C%20the%20world's%20second%2Dbiggest>. Nikkei found Ahtari's experience to be consistent with a trend observed in zoos around the world. Edinburgh Zoo also did not see many long-term financial benefits from hosting its pandas, beyond an initial increase in visitors.

SMITHSONIAN: Two Pandas Arrive at the San Diego Zoo, the First to Enter the U.S. in 21 Years

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/two-pandas-arrive-at-the-san-diego-zoo-the-first-to-enter-the-us-in-21-years-180984636/?utm> For months, the only pandas in the country had been in Atlanta. Next, San Francisco and Washington, D.C., are expected to also receive pandas this year.

DEZEEN: BIG completes yin-and-yang-shaped Panda House at Copenhagen Zoo

<https://www.dezeen.com/2019/11/05/big-panda-house-copenhagen-zoo-architecture/> Together this provides the pandas with plenty of opportunity to rest, explore, eat and find shade and sun depending on the season, temperature and preference.

SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL ZOO Receives \$4.5 Million to Fund Giant Panda Program:

<https://nationalzoo.si.edu/news/smithsonians-national-zoo-receives-45-million-fund-giant-panda-program>



PANDAS DOWNTOWN ANALYSIS:

Hello Everyone: My Chronicle Letter to the Editor (see below) proposed a concept for Pandas Downtown. A strong design process needs divergent thinking with more options---rather than convergent thinking with one solution. Pandas Downtown has more regional benefits, and arguably, more benefits for the Pandas---especially by designing the largest state-of-the-art facility possible. Also, greater potential fundraising and revenue. Let us holistically study the project's premises, needs, variables, and possibilities. Regards, Howard Wong, AIA

CHRONICLE LETTER TO EDITOR (May 1, 2024): Build a Panda Park: Regarding "Is this real? San Francisco' panda plan has many hurdles ahead" (San Francisco, SFchronicle.com, April 26): Thinking as an architect, why not locate S.F.'s pandas downtown? Attracting crowds would help nearby businesses and tourism would thrive. What if China could guide the construction of an appropriate habitat using an existing downtown building---prefabricated units can be slipped into structural bays at lower costs than new construction. Indoor facilities could be linked to an outdoor enclosure. Reimagine the block of Geary Boulevard flanked by Macy's at Union Square. The Macy's structure could house an indoor habitat and a glass bridge could connect to an outdoor panda park on a portion of Union Square. The pandemonium would energize regional transit, spark investment and lure workers back to offices. **Howard Wong, San Francisco**

PANDAS DOWNTOWN SF: STRATEGIC CRITERIA

BIGGER FLEXIBLE SPACE: Downtown offers more square footage than the existing SF Zoo---overcrowded, aging infrastructure. Portions of Macy's 400,000 square footage could be reimaged for a modern Panda habitat. Public spaces (Geary Boulevard, sidewalks, public air-rights, Union Square) could be reimaged as green parkways. **OR** other site---like San Francisco Center/ Powell Street Station, Justin Herman Plaza/ Embarcadero Park.....

DONATIONS-IN-KIND: Macy's could donate portions of their building---in exchange for added value to their property, tax advantages, and advertising returns. Public parks, streets, sidewalks, and air-rights are existing public assets---no cost. Or San Francisco Center?

FUNDRAISING DIVERSIFICATION: Widens the pool of donors---with broad swaths of downtown and the region benefiting from Pandas Downtown.

BENEFACTORS AND SPONSORS: High quality and well-designed Panda Habitats are worthy of attracting big underwriters, who covet being associated with something special.

STATE-OF-THE ART: With more flexible square footage, China could help implement state-of-the-art Panda technology. Prefabricated shelter units, food/ medical/ research pods, air/ environmental quality controls, bamboo farming/ processing and more.

PANDA HEALTH AND WELL-BEING: More space allows for more natural habitats---room to roam and places to hide. Unlike other Zoo enclosures, no need to cram animals into tight spaces. A large natural Panda Park enables optimal health benefits.

LOCAL AND REGIONAL STAKEHOLDERS: Pandas Downtown would be a centralized regional asset. With frameless glass-walled habitats (built-in privacy designs), the exhibit

could nearly operate around the clock. Downtown and SF economic benefits would be huge--assuring reinvestments into panda health and the existing SF Zoo & Gardens.

PANDA GLASS BRIDGE: A slightly arched glass bridge can connect the indoor Panda House to the outdoor habitat on a portion of Union Square and over Geary's sidewalk/ street. The bridge also serves as a "Panda Run" for exercise---and panda sightings. Or elsewhere?

LONG-TERM PLANNING: A large regional Panda Park could be designed for multi-purpose uses---even if Pandas return to China. The facility could be flex-designed for Grizzly Bears, Polar Bears or Red Pandas---linking to green event spaces and convention facilities.

PANDAS DOWNTOWN SF = REGIONAL TRANSIT HUB



REGIONAL INTEGRATED TRANSIT can be jumpstarted by a regional Panda Conservation Center---with world-class architecture and park planning---a public transit magnet.

Dynamic Marketing Communiqué: Snakes on a bus?! How a Danish zoo attracted so much attention [Gorillas of Guerilla Marketing]: <https://www.valens-research.com/dynamic-marketing-communicue/snakes-on-a-bus-how-a-danish-zoo-attracted-so-much-attention-gorillas-of-guerilla-marketing/>



More Panda Projects:



Panda Trek, San Diego Zoo: The Zoo Wildlife Alliance significantly upgraded its existing panda enclosure, expanding to 6,000 square feet in size. The architects enlivened the guest queuing experience with themes/ interpretive structures, exhibits and management structures for Takins, Red Pandas and Asian Vipers. Design approvals via an [application submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Alliance](https://fpbarch.com/portfolio/panda-canyon-at-the-san-diego-zoo/).
<https://fpbarch.com/portfolio/panda-canyon-at-the-san-diego-zoo/>
<https://fox5sandiego.com/news/local-news/san-diego-zoo-lays-out-plans-for-pandas-in-application-filed-ahead-of-arrival/>



Red Panda Exhibit, Toronto Zoo: Modern zoo designers attempt to set new standards in transforming existing facilities. An enlarged management center integrates the existing with modern, flexible housing systems and naturalistic habitats. Hidden barriers, climbing structures, live landscapes and water features promote natural behavior---prioritizing animal care, staff functionality, and public education. Viewing areas, exhibit spaces, and ADA-accessible pathways are seamlessly balanced.
https://salasobrien.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/AdobeStock_916000281-1536x1023.jpg



Pandasia at Ouwehands Zoo, Rhenen, Netherlands: A radical redesign transformed the zoo into a thriving attraction and conservation center. A Dutch/ Chinese team built two unique traditional Chinese buildings---joined by a bridge. The panda enclosure covers 36,600 square feet---within another 9,400 square feet of habitats for other Asian species. The zoo established a foundation, supporting nature and conservation projects all over the world.
<https://blooloop.com/animals/in-depth/giant-pandas-ouwehands-zoo/>



Ahtari Zoo, Finland: Returned pandas to China because of high costs of upkeep and a preservation fee to China---costing 1.5 million euros (\$1.6 million) annually. Special bamboo was flown in from the Netherlands.
A zoo in Finland is returning giant pandas to China because they're too expensive to keep; <https://apnews.com/article/finland-giant-pandas-china-449b913189d85e7fef7ded9897db7f9d>
Finland to return pandas to China early due to cost <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cd0z289ervmo>
Visitors flock to Ähtäri Zoo for final glimpse of pandas <https://yle.fi/a/74-20119018>

BE BOLD---Not a time to be timid, especially when leveraging regional resources and funding gets exponential bang for the buck. Panda renovations at the existing dilapidated SF Zoo will not solve its pervasive problems. But a regional Panda Conservation Center would spark regional planning, urban design, public transit, economic benefits and if done right, regional architectural/ design quality---and most importantly, thriving pandas.



Howard Wong, AIA wongaia@aol.com



End of January! Transit Bid Tracker


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JANUARY 31, 2025

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COUNTYWIDE TRANSPORTATION MASTER PLAN REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

From Palm Tran


Palm Beach County (PBC) is seeking proposals from qualified consultants, whose firm has worked in a similar metropolitan area, with a minimum population of 1.5 million and geographical land area comparable to PBC's 1,977 square miles,...

 6786972d5619ea2e281718cd Gunnison Rtd

RFP #2025-01 - Operations of GVRTA's Commuter Bus Service

From The Gunnison Valley Transportation Authority (GVRTA)


NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Gunnison Valley Transportation Authority (GVRTA) is issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP #2025-01). This RFP and related documents will be available at 8:30 AM on January 17, 2025. Firms desirous of securing a...

 6785a069264f8d2fc5f16da4 Luzerne

Development of a Safety and Security Plan RFP #25-01-001

From Luzerne County Transportation Authority

The Luzerne County Transportation Authority (LCTA) is seeking qualified and experienced firms to develop a comprehensive Safety and Security Plan, resulting in the creation of a Safety, Security, and Emergency Preparedness Manual specific...

 6785906b36839356ff64f42b Pima

Sun Shuttle Fixed-Route and Sun Shuttle Dial-a-Ride Public Transportation

From Regional Transportation Authority of Pima County (RTA)

The Regional Transportation Authority of Pima County (RTA) seeks proposals from qualified entities, either singly or through a joint venture with others, to provide fixed route (Sun Shuttle) and paratransit (Sun Shuttle Dial-a-Ride) services...

RFP 24-11-530 IndyGo Landscaping Services

From Indianapolis Public Transportation Corporation (IndyGo)

Summary: IPTC seeks a qualified vendor to provide comprehensive landscaping and ground maintenance services across multiple properties. These services encompass routine tasks such as mowing, pruning, mulching, debris removal, and seasonal responsibility...

Six 2014 MCI Coach Buses Available for Title Transfer

From Beaver County Transit Authority (BCTA)

Beaver County Transit Authority (BCTA) has six (6) 2014 D4500 MCI Coach buses available for title transfer to interested public agencies. These vehicles are in fair plus condition, well-maintained, and have mileage ranges from 410,000 to 440...

Americans With Disability Act (ADA) Certification Services for Ventura County

From Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC)

The Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC) is seeking proposals from qualified firms to provide consultant services to provide ADA assessment and certification services for Ventura County. A detailed Request for Proposals, Scope of...

25-B04 CCTV Transit center-Pine Hills Terminal

From Central Florida Regional Transportation Authority (Lynx)

25-B04 CCTV Transit center-Pine Hills Terminal

RFP: Automatic Passenger Counter and Transportation Technology

From Fresno Area Express (FAX)

The City of Fresno Department of Transportation is seeking information on the various manufacturers and types of Automatic Passenger Counter (APC) systems and transit technology for transit vehicles. The City of Fresno's Department of...

To post a RFP, please contact Amy Stauffer

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