

ENDANGERED SPECIES

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Transit is underutilized both for its function and its visual element. Like street trees and sidewalk widths, transit vehicles add significantly to the urban scene. Trolleys and cable cars provide nostalgic, theatrical moments, but Muni buses are practically self-deprecating. Endangered Species is an example of how buses may play an intentionally constructive visual role. It connects transit and the spaces in which transit moves, to issues we share with local species: niche specialization, range, mobility and vulnerability.

The movement of the buses through the city will animate the images. Think of a Salmon Bus in the rain, picking up shoppers in Union Square and trudging up Geary Boulevard; or a San Francisco Garter Snake Bus winding its way on a hot summer day through the industrial lots of the Bayview. Both habitat and transit can be considered endangered in the Bay Area, but transit is also a piece of the solution of habitat protection. The wrapped buses are a kind of 'reintroduction' of these species into the urban scene, wedding these two complementary issues to each other.

Endangered Species supports the idea that it is interesting and useful for citizens to know about urban infrastructure. Transit is one of many systems that could become more 'vocal', helping citizens to understand the infrastructures that support our everyday activities. Endangered Species addresses the potential of public transit and transit-focused development to articulate habitat boundaries for species besides our own, both in actual and in conceptual space. The project also questions how we manage the visual environment, especially advertising, in urban life. Within what limits is the visual field a public right? What amount of corporate presence is acceptable?

