

Community Meeting Summary

Palo Alto Rail Program Management Services

City of Palo Alto

August 23, 2018

Prepared for:

City of Palo Alto Contract No. 18171057

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Prepared in association with:



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1. Meeting Summary

The City of Palo Alto hosted a community meeting on Thursday August 23, 2018 from 6:00-8:00 p.m. to discuss the Connecting Palo Alto Project. The meeting was held at the Mitchell Park Community Center, El Palo Alto Room at 3700 Middlefield Road in Palo Alto. (See **Appendix A** for Meeting Notice.) Approximately 120 community members attended the meeting. (See **Appendix B** for Sign-In Sheets.) This was the first community meeting regarding this planning effort with this Project Team. In addition to the Project Team, City Councilmembers Cory Wolbach and Lydia Kou were in attendance.

The City has convened a Community Advisory Panel (CAP) to help advise the Project Team and City staff regarding the effort. CAP members Mandar Borkar, Gregory Brail, Phil Burton, Tony Carrasco, Inyoung Cho, Megan Kanne, Kari Hodgeson, Pat Lau, Christine Logan, Nadia Naik, and Parag Patkar were in attendance at the meeting and were introduced.

Approximately 90% of the meeting attendees indicated they saw a posting of the meeting notice on NextDoor. One-third of the attendees said they saw the meeting details on the City website. Other ways community members found about this meeting include postings on several homeowner group sites as well as word of mouth. Sixty percent of attendees indicated they had attended a previous meeting on the grade separation effort while forty percent indicated they were new to this topic.

After brief introductions by Eileen Goodwin (Apex Strategies, Meeting Facilitator), Rob De Geus, Deputy City Manager, welcomed everyone and provided introductory remarks. The facilitator then explained the content of the evening's presentation as well as the future community meeting topics. The series of three community meetings include the following topics:

Community Meeting – August 23, 2018

- Why separating the road from the tracks?
- Review current design ideas

Community Meeting – November 28, 2018

- Feedback on the refined project ideas
- Develop pros and cons
- Traffic impacts and construction staging
- 3D photo visuals

Community Meeting – January 23, 2019

- Feedback on preferred solutions
- Refined 3D visuals
- Next Steps

After some additional topics were covered by the facilitator, Joshua Mello, Chief Transportation Official, gave a brief summary of the recent history of the project and the whittling down of 34 ideas down to 8 ideas, shown in **Figure 1**. Eddy Mercurio, AECOM Project Manager, then spoke to a PowerPoint presentation. The presentation oriented the attendees to the purpose of the project, project objectives, constraints that informed the project ideas, and the proposed ideas for separating the railroad tracks and the local streets at Meadow Drive, Charleston Road and Palo Alto Avenue. The presentation also touched on the citywide tunnel examples. The PowerPoint was intended to be high level overview of information presented at each of the stations. The proposed ideas that were discussed in detail are listed in **Figure 2**.

Connecting Palo Alto: Rail Program
Matrix of Ideas for Alternatives for Study – Approved by City Council on June 19, 2018

Type of Separation (Alphabetical Order)	Citywide	Palo Alto 2017 ADT (vehicles/day) = 16,200 (+ 550 bikes)	Churchill 2017 ADT (vehicles/day) = 9,200 (+ 1,020 bikes)	Meadow 2017 ADT (vehicles/day) = 8,900 (+ 900 bikes)	Charleston 2017 ADT (vehicles/day) = 17,900 (+ 240 bikes)
Closure		Palo Alto Ave Closed, Add Improvements (PCX)	Churchill Ave Closed, Add Improvements (CAX)		
Hybrid (Road over Rail)				Meadow + Charleston Shallow Trench, Loma Verde Bike/Ped (MCR)	
Hybrid (Road under Rail)		Palo Alto Ave Hybrid (PAH)		Meadow + Charleston Hybrid, Loma Verde Bike/Ped (MCL)	
No Build / Do Nothing					
Rail under Road (Trench)				Meadow + Charleston Full Trench (MCT)	
Rail under Road (Tunnel)	City-Wide Tunnel within Palo Alto (WBP)				
Rail over Road (Berm/Viaduct)				Meadow + Charleston Viaduct (MCV)	
Road over Rail					
Road under Rail					

APPROVED BY CITY COUNCIL ON JUNE 19, 2018

Figure 1. Matrix of Ideas - Approved by City Council on June 19, 2018

Ideas to Review – Finding Solutions

Meadow / Charleston Hybrid

- Partially lower the roads and partially elevate the tracks at Meadow and Charleston

Meadow / Charleston Viaduct

- Raise the railroad above the roadways at Meadow and Charleston on structure

Meadow / Charleston Shallow Trench

- Partially elevate the roads and partially lower tracks at Meadow and Charleston

Palo Alto Avenue Hybrid

- Partially lower the road and partially elevate the railroad at Palo Alto

Meadow / Charleston Full Trench

- Lower the railroad below the roadways at Meadow and Charleston

City-Wide Tunnel

- Lower the railroad below roadways, structures and waterways within the City of Palo Alto City limits

Figure 2. Ideas to Review

The PowerPoint Presentation and the Exhibit Boards used at the stations can be found on the Connecting Palo Alto website at www.cityofpaloalto.org/connectingpaloalto under the Community Outreach tab. The meeting was videotaped, however, due to technical difficulties, only the video was recorded and there is no audio. The video (without audio) of the meeting can be accessed through a link to MidPen Media Center who taped the meeting here: <http://midpenmedia.org/city-council-152-082318/>. See also **Appendix C** for MidPen’s explanation of the technical difficulties and their apology.

There was a half hour question and answer period immediately following the PowerPoint presentation. The comments and questions asked by the public are captured in **Section 2** below.

After the question and answer session, attendees were asked to meet with City staff and the Project Team at the exhibit boards set up in stations around the room to get their more detailed questions answered. The stations included:

- Ideas Not Under Consideration
- Palo Alto Avenue (Hybrid)
- Meadow Drive/Charleston Road (Hybrid, Shallow Trench, Full Trench, and Viaduct)
- City-Wide Tunnel
- Traffic

It was noted that Meadow Drive and Charleston Road are being studied together because they are close to one another and therefore need to be designed together.

In addition, planning staff from Caltrain were available to hand out meeting notices and factsheets for their community meeting regarding Caltrain Electrification, which is scheduled for August 28, 2018 at the Lucie Stern Community Center, Fireside Room in Palo Alto.

After a half hour of station time, the facilitator gathered the attendees back to the seats to hear a report out from the Station Leads and to take a Community Questionnaire about the meeting. Report outs from each station are included in **Section 3** and the results of the Community Questionnaire are summarized in **Section 4**.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:00 p.m.

2. Question and Answer Session

Questions asked during the Q&A Session are noted below. The Project Team has made every effort to summarize the questions asked at the meeting. However, the video and audio recording is typically used to verify this, but that is not possible due to the technical difficulties. Any omissions are not intentional.

- Clarification of the Role of the Community Advisory Panel (CAP)
- Question regarding how to contact the CAP members
- Question about the timing of the Caltrain electrification project and any grade separation projects and whether the grade separations could be done ahead of the electrification to prevent waste
- Questions about aesthetics and privacy of backyards in elevated options
- Clarification of tunnel construction
- Questions about noise
- Questions about construction traffic impacts
- Clarification about how neighboring cities are solving the grade separation challenges
- Questions regarding project schedule and funding
- Suggestion to have the graphics be more specific about where the shoofly would start and end related to local streets on the appropriate side of the tracks
- Question regarding who the “stakeholders” are (referred to in the factsheet)

- Questions about options for Churchill Avenue
- Clarification regarding why the citywide viaduct was not still in consideration
- Questions about relative costs of the various designs with a statement urging the community not to just pick the cheapest one, but instead the best solution
- Questions about traffic impacts both permanent and during construction
- Question about safe pedestrian and bicycle routes to schools
- Statement regarding the observation that a viaduct option (including the overhead lines) would further divide the city and an observation that Oregon Expressway currently divides the City

3. Station Report Outs

Station Leads reported out on comments and questions received at their stations.

Ideas Not Under Consideration

- Questions regarding why the Citywide viaduct was removed from consideration
- Comments and questions about north versus south Palo Alto options not seeming to get equal treatment and consideration
- Bicycle and pedestrian circulation questions
- Desire to quantify the quality of life costs (health, noise, and other impacts) into a number

Palo Alto Avenue

- This idea was generally well received
- Concern expressed about the bicycle and pedestrian impacts of a 7% grade since Palo Alto Avenue is a major east-west route
- Desire for the sidewalks to be more elevated in the design/separated from roadway

Meadow Drive/Charleston Road

- Preference expressed for the trench/tunnel to “put the train underground”
- Concerns expressed regarding costs
- Questions about drainage of the creeks
- Desire for the City to speak with Union Pacific to eliminate the freight
- Questions about the impacts to creeks
- Would like the graphics to better express the height of the options
- Questions about driveway and property impacts
- Questions about impacts to Park Boulevard
- Concerns expressed about noise and visual impacts
- Desire to improve the current traffic patterns

City-Wide Tunnel

- There was a desire to consider ideas where the freight would be kept at grade

- Tunnel/trench Alma Street not the tracks
- Questions regarding how Union Pacific railroad and Caltrain influence the design of the tunnel
- Desire to leave the tunnel option in consideration
- Questions about ground anchors
- Support for cut and cover technology over the tunnel boring machine in order to keep the tunnel shallower
- Request for more information about how a boring machine works
- Requests for more information about impacts to stations

Traffic

- Attendees had questions about the proposed street closures
- Advocacy for evaluating whole neighborhoods not just streets in traffic study
- There was an observation about how Churchill is coded in the VTA traffic model which needs to be looked into
- Request to look at Galvez/Alma intersection
- Request for shuttle service during construction for east-west connections
- Request for more information regarding construction staging
- There was a suggestion to increase the lanes on the underpass especially during construction
- There was concern about east-west connectivity

4. Community Questionnaire

The community members in attendance were asked to respond to an online poll. Six “yes” or “no” questions were asked and one open-ended question requiring a short-phased answer. Hardcopies of the questionnaire were provided to those without an electronic device to respond to the online questionnaire. Approximately 41 participants responded online and 15 using hardcopy, resulting in a total of about 56 respondents. The results of the poll are summarized in **Table 1** and **Table 2** below and include the online and hardcopy responses. More detailed Community Questionnaire data is included in **Appendix D**.

Table 1. Community Questionnaire Summary Results for “yes” or “no” responses

Question	% Responded Yes	% Responded No
1. Do you like this meeting venue/location?	100%	0%
2. Was the format of the meeting easy to follow?	90%	10%
3. Were the graphics effective?	68%	32%
4. Do you know where to find information about the study?	70%	30%
5. Were your questions answered?	34%	66%
6. Do you know when the next meeting is?	62%	38%

Online and Hardcopy Short-phased Responses

Traffic, how construction disruptions are going to be addressed. Pros and cons for disruption and associated costs for the 8 (6) options for RR crossings

How do we give effective feedback to this committee and also the feedback to Palo Alto City Council

For each location and alternative relevant

Creek solutions

Height of Rail cars + towers and how far apart

Cost for each alternation at each location + alteration city wide cost

Will study be done on impact of viaduct traffic lanes running up to four minutes apart on neighbors, neighborhoods of the town.

Consider leaving tracks untouched

Tunneling and deep trenching (with coves) are the only acceptable options. I am utterly opposed to any viaducts. I am concerned that you are trying to railroad an approach which will be much more expensive than advertised. The City of Palo Alto will have extremely negative environmental and social impacts.

Cost of alternative

The facilitators did not know answers to questions at this time

Cost and funding. Also slow down, it's a lot of information

Four lanes for Embarcadero

Impact to residents beside railroads

Charleston - meadow options

More audience input

Appendix A – Meeting Notice



Connecting Palo Alto

Help Design the Future of Palo Alto's Rail Corridor

Community Meeting

We want your input!

Join us to help evaluate potential railroad crossing **grade separation** ideas throughout Palo Alto. Specific ideas related to separating the street from the railroad will be presented for Churchill Avenue, Charleston Road and Meadow Drive, and Palo Alto Avenue. There will also be further discussion of the Citywide tunnel and trench ideas.

Your **feedback** and ideas will be used to help identify the universe of grade separation ideas to be considered when shaping the citywide solution. Your opinion matters.

The community meeting will start with a presentation including specific engineering graphics, followed by a brief question and answer session. Participants will be asked to give input in small groups about the potential ideas presented.

Learn about this important effort and give us your feedback on existing conditions and issues, as well as your suggestions on the ideas that are presented.

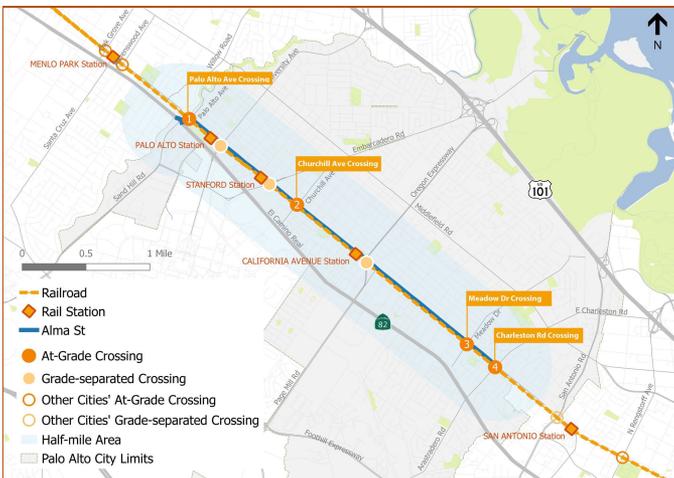


Community Meeting on Rail Grade Separation

Thursday, August 23

6 p.m. - 8 p.m.

Mitchell Park Community Center
3700 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto



For more information:

Visit www.cityofpaloalto.org/ConnectingPaloAlto

Contact the City at:

650-329-2520

Send questions or feedback to:

transportation@cityofpaloalto.org

DRAFT

Appendix B – Sign-In Sheets

Community Meeting Palo Alto Rail Program Management Services

August 23, 2018
Sign-In Sheet

Name and Affiliation (If Applicable)	Address	City, Zip	E-mail
Ellen Hartog			
Raul Perez			
Gerry Masteller			
MARY LAUTNER			
EUSA DAVIS			
hinda haCount			
July Welch			
P. Ashbeck			
Stuart Hansen			
Allen Wood			
Marybeth Wood			

Community Meeting Palo Alto Rail Program Management Services

August 23, 2018
Sign-In Sheet

Name and Affiliation (If Applicable)	Address	City, Zip	E-mail
Winter Dellenbach			
Gary Mahany			
Tom Marshburn			
M. GIANNO			
K. GANDHI			
Terry Roberts			
Henry ✓			
Hank Sousa			
Wendy Akers (hose)			
Chris Logan			
Dina Sarti			

Community Meeting Palo Alto Rail Program Management Services

August 23, 2018
Sign-In Sheet

Name and Affiliation (If Applicable)	Address	City, Zip	E-mail
Greg Braun			
Marilyn Keller			
David Collins			
Jennifer Gray			
PATRICIA LAU (CAP)			
Susan Newman			
DAVID HERZL			
Rachel Croft			
Greg Schacter			
PARAG PATKAR			
Cindy Lawrence			

Community Meeting Palo Alto Rail Program Management Services

August 23, 2018
Sign-In Sheet

Name and Affiliation (If Applicable)	Address	City, Zip	E-mail
Davina Brown			
Dan Xu			
Shashank Joshi			
Stephanie Masterson			
Joan Holtzman			
Mary Shaw			
Bob Shaw			
Elizabeth Alexis			
Rick Rairden			
Adra Leung			

Community Meeting Palo Alto Rail Program Management Services

August 23, 2018
Sign-In Sheet

Name and Affiliation (If Applicable)	Address	City, Zip	E-mail
JAMES ERON			
Rorel Kleckner			
+ MITAI JAKE MELVIN			
David Vander-Wilt			

Community Meeting Palo Alto Rail Program Management Services

August 23, 2018
Sign-In Sheet

Name and Affiliation (If Applicable)	Address	City, Zip	E-mail
TOMY GARRASO			
Doug Burns			
Larissa Hunt			
Barbara Hazlett			
Elizabeth Greenfield			
Yijun Chang			
Mandar Borkar			
Nirav C.			
Roger Petersen			
Arthur Keller			
Barbara Brown			

Community Meeting Palo Alto Rail Program Management Services

August 23, 2018
Sign-In Sheet

Name and Affiliation (If Applicable)	Address	City, Zip	E-mail
GARY LINDEREN			
MARSHALL WALLACE			
MIKE FORSTER			
Megan Kanne (LAP)			
Howard Cohen			
Charles Kingsley			
John Harrington			
Lisa Knox			
Ken Knox			
Sandy Rosenberg			
Ken Joyce			

Community Meeting Palo Alto Rail Program Management Services

August 23, 2018
Sign-In Sheet

Name and Affiliation (If Applicable)	Address	City, Zip	E-mail
Ronald Etherington			
Karen Brannon			
Margaret Henriksen			
Jim Silver			
Becky Epstein			
Xiao Jin			
Florence Kelles			
Ivy Li			
Jennifer Hetterly			
Anhui Qiu			
Ed Berkowitz			

Community Meeting Palo Alto Rail Program Management Services

August 23, 2018
Sign-In Sheet

Name and Affiliation (If Applicable)	Address	City, Zip	E-mail
Nadia Nait			
BRIAN KILGORE			
LEN FILIPPU			
David Lam			
Peter Streiff			
JACK SWEENEY			
Bruce Arthur			
Richard Placore			
Philip BURTON			
KATH HODGSON			
LINDSAY JOYE			

Community Meeting Palo Alto Rail Program Management Services

August 23, 2018
Sign-In Sheet

Name and Affiliation (If Applicable)	Address	City, Zip	E-mail
Lee Law			
Barbara Kingsley			
Tom Richardson			
MARY Anne Dererlein			
Richard Rosaly			
Robert Ohlman			
Lorraine Brown			
JERRY DELSOW			
Craig Moore			
Jeff Greenford			
Diana Collins			

Appendix C – MidPen Email

DRAFT

From: Dave Sorokach [<mailto:dave@midpenmedia.org>]
Sent: Monday, August 27, 2018 6:35 PM
To: Mercurio, ETTY
Subject: August 23 Community Outreach Meeting Recording

Hi ETTY:

I wanted to get back to you once I was able to have the matter looked into and confirm the situation: I sorry to have to let you know that the August 23 Community Outreach meeting held at Mitchell Park Community Center was not successfully recorded: We have picture, but no sound.

The operator was able to check the video equipment this morning at Mitchell Park, and confirmed the issue was due to operator error. A small "audio mute" button had, for some reason, been activated which the operator had missed, and although the operator saw a graphic display indicating that audio was being received by the system, sound was not being recorded. Nor, unfortunately, was a test recording made and checked prior to the actual event.

With the examination of the equipment and procedures, we have a better understanding of how to avoid this issue in the future, but as for the meeting of the 23rd, we have regrettably failed.

Please contact me with any questions you may have regarding this.

Sincerely,

Dave

--

David Sorokach
Office Manager

Midpen Media Center
650 494-8686 ext. 10
www.midpenmedia.org
900 San Antonio Road
Palo Alto, CA 94303

DRAFT

Appendix D – Community Questionnaire Data

Community Meeting

7

Polls

56

Participants

50

Average responses

86%

Average engagement

Do you like this meeting venue/location?

<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
54	0
100%	0%

Response options	Count	Percentage
Yes	39	100%
No	0	0%
<hr/>		
Hardcopy Response Options:		
Yes	15	100%
No	0	0%

96%
Engagement
54
Responses

Was the format of the meeting easy to follow?

<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
45	5
90%	10%

Response options	Count	Percentage
Yes	31	89%
No	4	11%
<hr/>		
Hardcopy Response Options:		
Yes	14	93%
No	1	7%

89%
Engagement
50
Responses

Were the graphics effective?

<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
36	17
68%	32%

Response options	Count	Percentage
Yes	27	71%
No	11	29%
<hr/>		
Hardcopy Response Options:		
Yes	9	60%
No	6	40%

94%
Engagement
53
Responses

Do you know where to go to find information about the study?

<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
38	16
70%	30%

Response options	Count	Percentage
Yes	28	72%
No	11	28%
<hr/>		
Hardcopy Response Options		
Yes	10	67%
No	5	33%

96%
Engagement
54
Responses

Were your questions answered?

<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
16	31
34%	66%

Response options	Count	Percentage
Yes	11	34%
No	21	66%
<hr/>		
Hardcopy Response Options:		
Yes	5	33%
No	10	67%

84%
Engagement
47
Responses

Do you know when the next meeting is?

<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
28	17
62%	38%

Response options	Count	Percentage
Yes	18	60%
No	12	40%
<hr/>		
Hardcopy Response Options		
Yes	10	67%
No	5	33%

80%
Engagement
45
Responses

What topics do you want to discuss most?

Hardcopy Responses:

- Traffic, how construction disruptions are going to be addressed. Pros and cons for disruption and associated costs for the 8 (6) options for RR crossings
- How do we give effective feedback to this committee and also the feedback to Palo Alto City Council
- For each location and alternative relevant
- Creek solutions
- Train in a trench
- Height of Rail cars + towers and how far apart
- Cost for each alternation at each location + alteration city wide cost
- Will study be done on impact of viaduct traffic lanes running up to four minutes apart on neighbors, neighborhoods of the town.
- Consider leaving tracks untouched
- Tunneling and deep trenching (with coves) are the only acceptable options. I am utterly opposed to any viaducts. I am concerned that you are trying to railroad an approach which will be much more expensive than advertised. The City of Palo Alto will have extremely negative environmental and social impacts.
- Cost of alternative
- The facilitators did not know answers to questions at this time
- Cost and funding. Also slow down, it's a lot of information
- Four lanes for Embarcadero
- Impact to residents beside railroads
- Charleston - meadow options
- More audience input

What topics do you want to discuss most?

Online Responses

- Cost, shoo-fly construction impacts Freight
- Road closures during construction Impact on creeks
- What are rough costs for each option?
- Cost
- System wide traffic impacts from each alternative
- Options considering creeks
- Costs and who pays
- Construction cost and duration. Also traffic impacts during construction
- Creative ways to raise \$\$ for excellent options.
- What's up with the city-wide viaduct
- Tax business for cost
- How will the project be funded?
- More cost information
- Aesthetic and noise impacts as well as how to
- Preserve and enhance pedestrian and bicyclist pathways at meadow and Charleston
- Earthquake issue been addressed if raised train track will be the option
- Menlo Park & Mountain View thoughts.
- How to manage the water table and creeks. How to manage traffic diverted from Churchill.
- Routes during construction.
- Cost of each option.
- Cost and options for funding/financing
- PL consider a partial (instead of city wide) just under Charleston Meadows
- Thanks so much for all of your hard work! This is a complex issue and I don't think you've gotten enough credit for your expertise and effort. We appreci
- Name things clearly. For "hybrid" say which is up!
- I would prefer that Josh say outright that he doesn't know something offhand, rather than telling people to visit a table to get information, or for ever
- Questions and concerns previously raised, like UP ROW and emergency access, seemed to be forgotten and ignored.
- Privacy should not be a primary concern #antiNIMBY. Trains will be moving at high speeds; you chose to live near the RR with those consequences, and in a
- Consider partial tunnel for s pa
- Approximate costs
- Budgetary cost estimates and how the might be paid for
- Vocabulary of terms
- Aesthetics
- Please give us 3D rendering of the different options, and its pro and cons

62%

Engagement

35

Responses

