

Expanded Community Advisory Panel (XCAP) November 13, 2019 Special Meeting Summary

Subject

Connecting Palo Alto
Palo Alto Grade Separation Study

Meeting date and time

November 13, 2019
4:00pm-6:00pm

Location

Palo Alto City Hall
Community Meeting Room
250 Hamilton Ave, Palo Alto

Prepared by

Chantal C. Gaines, City of Palo

Meeting called to order at 4.00 pm

XCAP Member Attendees

Gregory Brail (after roll call)
Phil Burton
Tony Carrasco
Inyoung Cho
Larry Klein
Judy Kleinberg
Pat Lau
Megan Kanne (after roll call)
Nadia Naik
Keith Reckdahl
David Shen
Cari Templeton

Excused

Barbara Best
Adina Levin

Meeting Agenda Recap: The Meeting Agenda included:

1. Welcome and Roll Call
2. Oral Communications (15 minutes)
3. Action: Adopting an XCAP Screening Process for the XCAP to Consider New Ideas/ Iterations (10 mins)
4. Action: Review and Screen New Ideas by the XCAP (30 minutes)
5. Action: Review the 2017 City Council-Adopted Rail Problem Statement and Offer Recommendations for Updates Based on Where the Project is Today (18 minutes)
6. Action: Review the 2017 City Council-Adopted Rail Evaluation Criteria and Determine Recommendations for how to Quantify and Qualify the Criteria (30 minutes)
7. Update on XCAP Working Groups Related to XCAP Conceptual Workplan (10 minutes)
8. XCAP Member Updates (15 minutes)
9. Staff Updates (3 minutes)
10. Adjourn

There is video of the meeting presentations and the PowerPoint is archived on the Connecting Palo Alto website. They are not re-summarized below. Video link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0CgL1iwScJ8>.

General Questions with Responses:

- Questions on the location of the Churchill viaduct. Can we look at can it be further east?
 - Staff will look into this and follow up.
 - Treatments and options to address the issues of distance between vertical structure and back fences as well as vegetation/landscaping are things that will be deeply studied later but we will work with AECOM to see how best to bring that back to XCAP.

- What kind of trees are allowed with a Churchill viaduct?
 - The sunlight is on the side of the structure so the shadow would not be cast since the viaduct is on the west side. And the specific type of tree would be decided later as the conditions are further studied far later in the process.
- Will the XCAP be able to see the most recent traffic study soon related to the Churchill Closure?
 - Staff will check with AECOM and follow up with the XCAP.

Oral Communications:

2 members of the public addressed the XCAP

Discussion and Action Items

Agenda Item #3: Action: Adopting an XCAP Screening Process for the XCAP to Consider New Ideas/ Iterations

Overview: The XCAP needs to do further technical review of the 7 current options as well as any consideration of any new ideas. On the new ideas portion of this, the Chair/Vice Chair and staff looked at a few options for the XCAP to think about in terms of the process of how/if to look at new ideas and how to consider them. Also, there have been discussions about some retired civil engineers that will help in the review process which Chairperson Naik explained is 4 people thus far who have volunteered to help out.

The work of the retired civil engineers sounds like it would be similar to the previously proposed design workshop (which was permanently postponed), where AECOM can present and share their work and then the retired engineers can provide feedback on the existing alternatives as well as any new ideas. Something for the XCAP to consider during this agenda item is how much stock will be placed into the feedback from the engineers as well as how the feedback would be factored into XCAP decision-making and discussion.

The XCAP Technical Working Group is Keith, Phil, Tony, and listening in is Nadia.

Process Idea: The retired civil engineers will meet with AECOM after they review the concepts with the XCAP Technical Working group. The goal is for this to occur before the December 4 City Council meeting. They would also review the Caltrain information and any new ideas that come up today.

Initial Concept of the Pre-Screening Process:

Step 1: Some number of the XCAP have to say that this is worth the discussion of the committee

Step 2: The XCAP will hear the proposal in some depth at the XCAP before giving it to consultants; need consensus of the XCAP to further move it forward.

Step 3: Technical review (from volunteer engineers and maybe others); bring feedback back to the full XCAP.

Step 4: Discussion in XCAP and then XCAP decide whether to recommend this to Council or not.

XCAP Questions/Comments:	Responses
When will Caltrain give us the information that we need to better understand whether they will allow our design exceptions or not?	AECOM has been working with Caltrain on Design Criteria and it has not been finalized yet in terms of trying to get feedback. Caltrain shared a How they will do the review/process design exceptions. That document will be shared soon. The design criteria information will be shared once it is finalized. Cost estimates is the other part that AECOM has been working on with Caltrain. They want to make sure there is no disagreement between AECOM and Caltrain. The City has to make sure we maintain the relationship with staff, our consultant, and Caltrain.
If we are waiting for information from Caltrain about if our designs are okay, did we just make up the information to make the videos / animation?	The videos shared thus far are based on everything that is a Caltrain standard unless it is outright noted by AECOM as something outside of the criteria.
Can staff please provide the Technical Working Group with the engineering specs and cost estimates information from Caltrain and AECOM? Will this information be given to the XCAP before Friday?	This information will be provided to the Technical Working Group this week before your meeting on Sunday.
Any submission between today's XCAP meeting and the next XCAP meeting?	Nadia Naik: No. They would have to take their ideas straight to Council on Dec. 9 because our timeline does not allow for more time on this.

3 members of the public spoke to the XCAP on this agenda item.

Motions:

Motion made by: Larry Klein; **Seconded by:** Tony C.

Step 1: Hear any proposals

Step 2: For the XCAP to consider it, at least 2 members of the XCAP say "let's consider that idea."

Step 3: Discussion

Step 4: then a preliminary vote or consensus to see if there is enough there to give it to the technical team for technical review [either retired civils, working group, and maybe AECOM]

Step 5: Technical review comes back to XCAP at the next meeting and then the XCAP decides if there is merit for a full technical review by the City Council and spend consultant money

Amendment: Change 2 to 4 XCAP members (Made by Dave Shen and seconded by Judy Kleinberg)
Dave Shen/Judy Kleinberg changed amendment from 4 to 3. **(Larry Klein and Tony Carrasco accepted the amendment and the main motion is now changed from 2 to 3 members).**

Vote: MOTION PASSES

Yes: Brail, Burton, Carrasco, Cho, Klein, Kleinberg, Lau, Naik, Reckdahl, Shen, Templeton

No: n/a

Abstentions: n/a

Absent: Best, Levin

Agenda Item #4: Action: Review and Screen New Ideas

Links to Item Materials:

- [Item 4: Memorandum Regarding New Ideas](#)
- [Item 4, Attachment 1: New Idea Proposal to Consider-Michael](#)
- [Item 4, Attachment 2: New Idea Proposal to Consider-Roland](#)
- [Item 4, Attachment 3: New Idea Proposal to Consider-Tony](#)
- [Item 4, Attachment 4: New Idea Proposal to Consider-Elizabeth](#)

__ members of the public addressed the XCAP on Item 4.

New Ideas Proposed (in order of presentations): Each presenter has 5 minutes to present.

1. Tony Carrasco: Online Proposal #3: Embarcadero Designs (Attachment 3)
2. Michael Price: Online Proposal #1: Churchill Underpass Concept (Attachment 1)
3. Roland Lebrun: Online Proposal #2: South Palo Alto Tunnel Modification (Attachment 2)
4. Larry Klein Proposal – verbal proposal: Churchill Underpass Concept (No attachment)
5. Elizabeth Alexis: Online Proposal #4 (not included in the packet; presentation uploaded after the meeting): Underpass concept

Discussion by Proposal:

First Proposal:

Presenter: Tony Carrasco (partnered with Jason Matloff, Dave Shen, Nadia Naik, Yuriko Kishimoto, and others on the concept)

Crossing: Churchill Area

Type of Grade Separation: Two Proposals:

- Roundabout with Embarcadero back at grade with a viaduct
- Slight modification of the roundabout; has bike/ped doing the roundabout motions, keeps Embarcadero and Alma as is, adds access points to Town and Country as well as Palo Alto High School

Proposer’s Description of Concept:

Option/Proposal 1: Bring Embarcadero back to grade and put in a roundabout. Requires a viaduct to be able to lift the train from down below.

Option/Proposal 2: Other option: A hybrid of the roundabout with a bike/ped going around like the roundabout, but Embarcadero keeps operating underneath and Alma on top. We are open to tweaks to this concept. It makes is easier to walk from Professorville to Town and Country and Palo Alto High School could have another entry way if they were interested. Give you the chance to have traffic go directly into Town and Country as well.

Proposer’s goal: What is the DNA of Palo Alto that feels comfortable for us. We went to this roundabout concept where bikes and peds dominate more than cars.

Questions/Comments on Carrasco Proposal:	Proposer’s Responses
Did you consider using the simpler is better concept?	Our goal is to make the solution much more acceptable for the neighborhood.
Can Town and Country still go west in this design?	Yes. We think the design will make it more walkable to Town and Country.
Does your design assume a viaduct that lands before Churchill?	The crossing at Churchill would remain. But if you go straight and curve near Embarcadero then you can make it. We would want the technical group to go into more detail on this.
If we have funding for a grade separation treatment but use the money for this roundabout concept, would we be able to use the funding for concept?	This can be addressed later if it makes it through.

XCAP Decision:

Initial Step – does this concept merit further discussion? There were about 7 XCAP members who wanted to move forward for further discussion of this concept.

Second Step – does this concept go to the Technical Working Group? Yes. 10 XCAP Members agreed to this concept moving into further in the process to the Technical Working Group.

Second Proposal:

Presenter: Michael Price
 Crossing: Churchill
 Type of Grade Separation: Underpass

Proposer’s Description of Concept:

- Leave one lane of Alma (right hand northbound) at grade and do an underpass right next to it. This keeps driveway access for the homes on Alma. The left-hand lane and left-hand turn lane onto Churchill go into an underpass.
- Eliminated right turn lane from Alma to Churchill.
- Bike/ped traffic has their own area to go through as a bridge then a tunnel. They will not have to interact with the roadway at all which increases safety.
- Concept preserves the ability for the bulk of the traffic (on El Camino that uses Churchill to get to Alma) to still do that motion with some added restrictions to that movement without taking private property. This concept encroaches in Caltrain Right of Way which will need to be further discussed.

Consequences:

- Can't get from west side of Churchill to east side in this concept.
- People who want to go through Churchill from El Camino Real to Embarcadero east would have to turn onto Alma and then take another street.

Proposer's Goal: to not have to close Churchill; avoid taking private properties; keep Caltrain at grade, and to keep with current street widths.

Questions/Comments on Price Proposal:	Proposer's Responses
Is there a traffic light at the bottom of Alma in the underpass?	Yes.
Is there traffic control at the top near bikes/peds?	Yes, there would need to be something.

XCAP Decision:

Initial Step – does this concept merit further discussion? There were about 7 XCAP members who wanted to move forward for further discussion of this concept.

Second Step – does this concept go to the Technical Working Group? Yes. Nine (9) XCAP members agreed to move it forward.

Third Proposal:

Presenter: Roland Lebrun

Crossings: Meadow and Charleston

Type of Grade Separation: Modification to/Revisiting the South Palo Alto Tunnel

Proposer's Description of Concept:

- Reduce the size of the tunnels.
- Don't take the tunnel down until you are 200 feet north of Matadero Creek which helps us avoid the utility relocations .
- The shooflys will go outside of the existing train and not into Alma. thus not impacting it.
- Showed an example in London.
- Barron Creek, you would be going underneath it.
- Costs: he shared the Deutsche Bahn costs for a recent train.

Proposer's Goal: Not impacting Alma (loss of one lane in each direction, less impact on creeks and vegetation, avoid utility relocation and have different costs.

Questions/Comments on Lebrun Proposal:	Proposer's Responses
How can you verify the claims related to the creeks and utilities work?	They are based on my calculations.
Why should Deutsche Bahn costs be relevant?	It was for example purposes only. I regret not showing you London numbers which seem more relevant.

XCAP Decision:

Initial Step – does this concept merit further discussion? There were about 5 XCAP members who wanted to move forward for further discussion of this concept.

Second Step – does this concept go to the Technical Working Group?

Fourth Proposal:

Presenter: Larry Klein

Crossing: Churchill

Type of Grade Separation: Full Underpass under tracks

Proposer’s Description of Concept:

In addition to Mike Price idea which goes back to Hatch Mott MacDonald, consider making Churchill a full underpass under the tracks. Are there alternatives to the previous Hatch Mott MacDonald design by narrowing the road so there are less property impacts. Are there ways to get appropriate driveway access with the underpass idea? Could also consider lowering Alma if you needed to.

Proposer’s Goal: Old principle of the ‘best solution is the simplest’ that doesn’t require all the additional work and other pieces included in other proposals. Looking for ways to reduce costs while also reducing the property impacts with a simpler concept.

Questions/Comments on Klein Proposal:	Proposer’s Responses
None	

XCAP Decision:

Initial Step – does this concept merit further discussion? There were 3 XCAP members who wanted to move forward for further discussion of this concept.

Second Step – does this concept go to the Technical Working Group? No. This proposal did not reach a 2/3 majority to move forward.

Fifth Proposal:

Presenter: Elizabeth Alexis

Crossings: Meadow and Charleston

Type of Grade Separation: Some sort of Underpass

Proposer’s Description of Concept:

- Revisit the underpass idea similar to Larry Klein’s Idea.
- Concerned about the existing alternatives especially given the operating nature of Caltrain with narrow work windows.
- Eastbound and westbound single traffic lane with separate bike/ped at a higher level. Maintain driveway access on Alma for homes on Charleston.
- Allow Charleston eastbound cars to U-turn at Wright Place and end Write place to limit cut through traffic (showed an Italian example of a concept similar to this).

- Concept allows for all turns on and off of Alma to be possible and safe. Design should accommodate but not encourage turns from Alma to West Charleston and should minimize conflicts between motor vehicles and bikes/peds.

Proposer’s Goal: Calling this idea a concept as she was unable to bring images of the idea. Wants to make it easier for bikes and pedestrians. Work was done to make Charleston a smaller road and the previous designs do not seem to factor this into the calculations.

Questions/Comments on Alexis Proposal:	Proposer’s Responses
What exactly are you proposing?	To go back to an old concept and further flesh it out. An underpass where you grade separate the streets and Alma and leave at the surface the turns from Charleston or Meadow. Keep the tracks the same.
Which turning movements are removed?	All turning movements remain, they are just done differently. Eastbound Charleston traffic would go under the rail and Alma and go east until a U-Turn area and then come back west to be able to go to northbound Alma.

XCAP Decision:

Initial Step – does this concept merit further discussion? There were about 6 XCAP members who wanted to move forward for further discussion of this concept.

Second Step – does this concept go to the Technical Working Group? Not yet. It was continued to the next meeting.

Further Actions and Discussion:

Mike Price Proposal:

Discussion/Things for the Technical Working Group to Address:

- The piece of Churchill on the west side will be overloaded with traffic and that would be an issue.
- Technical committee has to look at the feasibility of this concept. It seems like a great idea but will only be good if it is actually possible.
- Are there any property takings for this concept?
- What are the costs? Traffic impacts? Construction duration? This information is likely to come later.
- Is there light in the underpass?

9 XCAP members want this concept to go to the Technical Working Groups

Tony Carrasco Proposal:**Discussion:**

- This idea seems like scope creep to grade separation.
- The idea should be further reviewed as it will add an asset to the community in a place that doesn't work well now.
- Are we looking at just engineering? The XCAP will discuss these 5 ideas and look at the clarifying questions with the technical working group.
- This concept shows us another problem in the community that we need to address.
- Is this concept related to the Churchill Closure? Yes.

10 XCAP members want this concept to go to the Technical Working Group.

Larry Klein Proposal:**Discussion:**

- Bring Alma down
- Bring Churchill down; both are below rail tracks.
- The study never looked at lowering the road while mitigating property takes. It is our understanding that other cities are not looking at options that do not move the train tracks at all.
- There is a taking of residential property in this concept but not commercial property.
- In this concept we would want to look at the types of property impacts and not just full takings.
- Are there any turning movements that go away? Yes. There would be no left/right turn from Alma onto Churchill.
- Does the technical group plan to look at ADA compliance of this concept for bikes/peds? That would be something for the Technical Working Group to evaluate.
- The hybrid at Churchill (which was removed by Council) was a similar version to this concept. Council removed it because of the property impacts. Churchill is different than other crossings because the road is so narrow there.
- Not sure that this concept is worth the money it would cost to review it.

2 XCAP members want this concept to go to the Technical Working Group. It did not receive the 2/3 majority needed to move forward.

Roland LeBrun Proposal:**Discussion:**

- This does not seem to be a new idea. It seems like a better variation of the AECOM work on the South Palo Alto Tunnel.
- Is 2,000 linear feet of tunnel worth the expense needed to do the tunnel boring machine?
- Is there a difference in the soil in Palo Alto (rockier) than the soil in London and elsewhere in Europe (fairly soft clay and deeper tunnels)?
- At a high level, we would want to see if the general idea is feasible for the shoofly track location that Roland proposes.
- Would want to see how close the shoofly and trench will be to the homes.

8 XCAP members want this concept to go to the Technical Working Group.

Elizabeth Alexis Proposal:

Discussion:

- A roundabout seems like a big barrier on a residential street. Maybe the roundabout could be relocated elsewhere.
- What kind of traffic throughput can the roundabout have?
- It is hard to visualize what is being proposed.
- If traffic is reduced at Meadow and Charleston, where is it going to go?
- Can we bring this back next time and get more clarification? With some sort of visual?

8 XCAP members want to continue this concept to the next meeting for further discussion hopefully with some visual representation of the concept.

Summary Recap of the Proposals and the XCAP Decisions on Each:

Proposer	Initial Merit?	Send to Technical Working Group?	Idea Eliminated?
Tony Carrasco (Online Proposal #3)	About 7 people raised hands to keep it	Yes. Approved by 10 XCAP Members want to move this forward.	Not eliminated
Michael Price (Online Proposal #1)	About 7 people raised hands to keep it	Yes. Approved by 9 XCAP Members want to move this forward.	Not eliminated
Roland Lebrun (Online Proposal #2)	About 5 people raised hands to keep it	Yes. Approved by 8 XCAP members want to move this forward.	Not eliminated
Larry Klein (No online document)	3 hands raised to keep it	No. Only 2 XCAP members wanted to move this forward.	Eliminated
Elizabeth Alexis (Online Proposal #4)	6 people raised hands to keep it	Item held. 10 XCAP members agreed to move this item to the next XCAP meeting for further evaluation.	Not eliminated

Agenda Item 5: Review the 2017 City Council-Adopted Rail Problem Statement and Offer Recommendations for Updates Based on Where the Project is Today

This item was continued to the next meeting.

Agenda Item 6: Review the 2017 City Council-Adopted Rail Evaluation Criteria and Determine Recommendations for how to Quantify and Qualify the Criteria

This item was continued to the next meeting.

Agenda Item 7: Update on XCAP Working Groups Related to XCAP Conceptual Workplan

This item was continued to the next meeting.

Agenda Item 8: XCAP Member Updates

1. Dave Shen: I have an eminent domain/property impacts lawyer that wants to come to XCAP.
 - a. Please send David all of your questions about property takings and he'll compile them.
2. Judy needs a group to join.
3. Adina Levin: Want Caltrain (Sebastian) to come in January to cover the basics about the Caltrain Business Plan since the service vision has been approved by Caltrain. But he would have more answers to questions likely in March/April but we could have him sooner.
4. Safety: no update (Pat, Greg, and adding Inyoung). They have spoken with Ken Dueker about bringing him to a future meeting. He is the Director of Emergency Services for the City.
5. Technical Working Group: Keith spoke to Valley Water (Kremlin from Valley Water Board of Directors) and tried to know more about what they approve versus other entities.
6. Civil engineers: Ron Owes (tunnel experience in Washington State), Edgar Ugarte (worked for Belmont and Palo Alto and did some Caltrain grade separations while in Belmont), Sreedhar Rao (experience with deep soil mixing which is a process related to tunnels for BART), and Joe Teresi (former City employee with tons of experience with ground water and other types of water).
7. We are interested in seeing the costs further broken down for each alternative at some point in the future. The Technical Working Group may or may not be able to help with this.
8. The Technical Working Group will be meeting on Sunday Nov. 17th.

Agenda Item 9: Staff Updates

1. PAUSD voted at their most recent board meeting and decided that they will no longer have a member on the XCAP, thus Barbara Best is no longer a member. Now the XCAP is a group of 13 instead of 14 total members. PAUSD plans to stay engaged with the process in conversations with City staff in the future. They want to make sure their concerns are heard and understood but do not want to vote on all of the crossings.
2. Thank you for those who came to the community meeting. It was a good turnout and many of the 150 attendees were first time attendees. Staff also has extra fact sheets available in print for those who need them. Looking forward to many more community conversations about this important project.

Adjourned at 6:45pm

Next XCAP Meeting

Next Scheduled is December 4, 2019, 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Palo Alto City Hall, Community Meeting Room, 250 Hamilton Ave, Palo Alto, CA