

# Expanded Community Advisory Panel (XCAP) December 4, 2019 Special Meeting Summary

## Subject

Connecting Palo Alto  
Palo Alto Grade Separation Study

## Meeting date and time

December 4, 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  
Quorum obtained at 4:10 pm

## XCAP Member Attendees

Phil Burton  
Larry Klein  
Patricia Lau  
Megan Kanne (after roll call)  
Nadia Naik  
Keith Reckdahl (after roll call)  
David Shen  
Cari Templeton

## Excused

Gregory Brail  
Tony Carrasco  
Inyoung Cho  
Judy Kleinberg  
Adina Levin

## Meeting Agenda Recap: The Meeting Agenda included:

1. Welcome and Roll Call
2. Oral Communications (15 minutes)
3. Discussion: Review Upcoming Schedule and Deliverables
4. XCAP Member Updates and Working Groups Updates (15 minutes)
5. Action: Re-review and Screen New Idea from Elizabeth Alexis (5-minute presentation; 15- minute discussion)
6. Action: December XCAP Update to City Council (20 minutes)
7. Action: Review the 2017 City Council-Adopted Rail Problem Statement and Offer Recommendations for Updates Based on Where the Project is Today (20 minutes)  
**continued from November 13, 2019 XCAP meeting**
8. Staff Updates (3 minutes)
9. 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=2mvTwtf76gk>.

## General Questions with Responses:

- Upcoming Presenters:
  - Caltrain Sebastian Petty
  - Hexagon Gary Black (traffic study)
  - Property Impacts Attorney Norm Matteoni
  - Robert Scarpino or Ken Deuker regarding safety

**Oral Communications:**

4 members of the public addressed the XCAP

**Discussion and Action Items**

**Agenda Item #3: Discussion: Review Upcoming Schedule and Deliverables**

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

Links to Item Materials:

- [Item 3: Upcoming Schedule and Deliverables](#)

Overview: This information is duplicative of the information shared at the November 7 Community Meeting. Staff wanted to share it to make sure that everyone is aware of the timeline and when information will be shared with the XCAP and the broader community. This will help with getting more people in the public to share their perspective. The second slide (slide 10) shared has to do with the work required after a preferred alternative is chosen by the City Council. There are many steps after the actual decision. It is a multi-year process for the work after a preferred alternative is chosen.

<b>XCAP Questions/Comments:</b>	<b>Responses</b>
What is left for the XCAP to do between now and April 2020?	This is up to the XCAP and making sure that the XCAP is able to deliberate before your decision.
For Palo Alto Avenue, is this the Downtown Coordinated Area Plan?	More to be defined on this but it is the work related to the Downtown Coordinated Area Plan. It is all of the pieces previously explained as the concept.
What are we polling on? Is it connected to grade seps or the general public?	It is intended for us to hear from the broader community specifically about rail. It is still be further defined.
Who does what piece on the work that comes after a preferred alternative is chosen?	It depends on which piece it is. Many of the steps will require further agency agreements with Caltrain, etc.
Could a closure of Palo Alto Avenue change the mitigations proposed for Churchill Avenue area if we also closed Churchill Avenue as well?	It is hypothetical at this point, but likely, no. The mitigations proposed for Churchill Avenue area are to mitigate traffic changes there. But in reality, there is not a high likelihood that both Palo Alto Avenue would be closed if Churchill is closed.

## **Agenda Item #4: XCAP Member Updates and Working Groups Updates**

1 member of the public addressed the XCAP on Item 4.

1. Patricia Lau: Has communicated to Ken Dueker about speaking at the XCAP. Also had interest in Robert Scarpino (Caltrain Operations Manager) coming to speak as well. It will be up to the XCAP as to whether we bring them in and when.
2. Megan Kanne: Met a few times with Professorville residents. There is some concern about the traffic study. There have been requests from these residents to have individual meetings about the traffic study with XCAP or others.
3. Dave Shen: Spoke to Norm Matteoni and he is interested in coming to speak with the XCAP in January. Stay tuned.
4. Phil Burton: The Technical Working Group had a meeting with 3 retired Civil Engineers about the alternatives. They expressed some concerns but we will have another meeting tomorrow. I am also studying vertical clearance information. Also, we need to consider additional ways to get the word out about the project.
5. Nadia Naik: Hoping to have Sebastian Petty of Caltrain to come to XCAP in January. Also, let's start doing 3 hour meetings instead of 2 hours so we can get XCAP work done.

## **Agenda Item 5: Action: Re-review and Screen New Idea from Elizabeth Alexis**

3 members of the public addressed the XCAP on Item 5.

Links to Item Materials:

[Item 5: Updated New Idea from Elizabeth A.](#)

This item was continued from the last meeting. It is an opportunity for New Idea Proposer, Elizabeth Alexis, to present more information about her concept.

### **Proposal (further refinement from her November 13, 2019 Proposal):**

Presenter: Elizabeth Alexis

Crossings: Meadow and Charleston

Type of Grade Separation: An Underpass at Charleston and one at Meadow

Proposer's Description of Concept:

- Idea is to keep the rail in the same place. Says other agencies prefer that.
- Cost could be lower than the cheapest alternative currently being considered.
- In this concept, there is an underpass in the middle of Charleston and then drivers would do a U-Turn on the east side of Charleston to get back to Alma in place of making a left turn from Charleston to Alma.
- The idea is that the concept would allow for normal turns on and off of Alma similar to today. It would just look more like a T intersection.
- Another consideration is access for Park Boulevard. A slip ramp could be considered there.
- Bike/ped access: separated 2 way bike path (on the north side of Charleston and the south side of Meadow).
- Her calculation is that the biggest traffic turn movements needed are for going from northbound Alma to westbound Charleston and the numbers are lower for the other turn movements.

- Also looked at the Jefferson Avenue in Redwood City. They have a steeper grade there (bad for bikes but good for a grade separation). Some similar grade differences could be considered here.

Recap of Proposer’s Goal from the Last Meeting: 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.

<b>Questions/Comments on Alexis Proposal:</b>	<b>Proposer’s Responses</b>
Why not do a jug handle?	It could involve more property impacts.
What about a traffic circle instead of the U-Turn bay?	The only turn needed is the U-Turn is why I proposed it as a U-Turn bay instead of a traffic circle. Maybe you could consider a roundabout at Alma to slow traffic but that is not required for this concept.
How does this work for bikes and peds?	They could have their own dedicated lane where they don’t have to interact at all with cars.

**XCAP Decision:**

Initial Step – does this concept merit further discussion? At the November 13, 2019 Meeting, there were about 6 XCAP members who wanted to move forward for further discussion of this concept. (Though the item was continued to this December 4 meeting to see if it passed the second step to get further technical review).

Second Step (considered today) – does this concept go to the Technical Working Group? Yes. Approved by 8 XCAP members. XCAP asked to see more details on the merge and the level of cars that the U-Turn Bay could handle.

**Motions:**

Nadia Naik moved that Elizabeth’s Idea gets reviewed at the next Technical Working Group Meeting. Seconded by Cari Templeton.

Explanation of Motion: There are many traffic engineering considerations that need to be reviewed on this but it is worth pushing forward.

8 XCAP members (Burton, Klein, Lau, Kanne, Naik, Reckhdahl, Shen, Templeton) want this concept to go to the Technical Working Group.

**MOTION PASSES**

**Summary Recap of the Proposal and the XCAP Decision:**

<b>Proposer</b>	<b>Initial Merit?</b>	<b>Send to Technical Working Group?</b>	<b>Idea Eliminated?</b>
Elizabeth Alexis	6 XCAP members raised hands to keep it (at Nov. 13, 2019 Meeting)	Yes. Approved by 8 XCAP Members want to move this forward.	Not eliminated

## **Agenda Item 6: Action: December XCAP Update to City Council**

4 members of the public addressed the XCAP on Item 6.

Materials for this item:

- [Item 6: XCAP December Update to City Council](#)

Overview: The Chairperson will be presenting to the City Council on December 9 for a brief update on the XCAP process and where things are. There is also a staff report that gives the update that the Rail Blue Ribbon Commission (RBRC) is no longer being considered. It also asks City Council if they want to have a City Council member liaison to the XCAP. The item today is intended for the XCAP to review the draft update and approve it to go to the City Council.

Motions:

Larry Klein moved to accept this report and send it to the City Council. Dave Shen seconded the motion.

Motion amended to include additional speakers for January. The new list is:

- Caltrain Sebastian Petty
- Hexagon Gary Black (traffic study)
- Property Impacts Attorney Norm Matteoni
- Robert Scarpino or Ken Deuker regarding safety

**Votes:**

Yes: Burton, Klein, Lau, Kanne, Naik, Reckhdahl, Shen, Templeton

No: N/A

Abstain: N/A

Absent: Brail, Carrasco, Cho, Kleinberg, and Levin

## **Agenda Item 7: Action: Review the 2017 City Council-Adopted Rail Problem Statement and Offer Recommendations for Updates Based on Where the Project is Today (continued from November 13, 2019 XCAP meeting)**

4 members of the public addressed the XCAP on Item 7.

Materials for this item:

- [Item 7: Memorandum Regarding Problem Statement](#)

Overview: The Problem Statement was adopted by the Rail Committee and the City Council in 2017. The intended focus of this conversation is to be able to modernize the problem statement into something shorter that reflects where we are in the process now. Any recommendations from the XCAP would have to go to the City Council for approval since this problem statement was originally approved by them.

**Motion:**

Dave Shen moved (second by Nadia Naik) that the XCAP recommend to the City Council for their consideration the approval of this new problem statement with the following additional language:

- ...impacts, and that protects the character of our residential and business communities.”
- Add the word “the” in front of the Caltrain
- Change “may” to “will” in the second sentence

Kanne friendly amendment: add the word “the” in front of the Caltrain (Shen and Naik accepted)

**Vote:**

**Motion fails. 2 in favor; 6 against.**

Yes: Naik and Templeton

No: Shen, Burton, Kanne, Reckdahl, Lau, Klein, and Naik

**New Motion:**

Keith Reckdahl moved (seconded by Patricia Lau) recommends that the XCAP adopt this problem statement as the goal of the XCAP. The motion is for the XCAP to approve the new problem statement as guidance for the XCAP with the following additional language:

- ...impacts, and that protects the character of our residential and business communities.”
- Add the word “the” in front of the Caltrain
- Change “may” to “will” in the second sentence

Explanation: This is a way to get XCAP work done but it doesn’t require City Council action.

Nadia Naik **friendly amendment:** change “that protects” to “is in harmony with” neighborhood character.

**XCAP decided to table the item to a date uncertain when more XCAP members are present.**

**Agenda Item 8: Staff Updates**

1. The foundations for electrification poles have been being installed. You will see some night closures for the installations.

Adjourned at 6.18 pm

**Next XCAP Meeting**

Next Scheduled is December 18, 2019, 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

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