

Memorandum

From: Staff
To: Rail Expanded Community Advisory Panel (XCAP)
Date: April 16, 2020
Subject: Amendment to the XCAP Report Draft Outline

XCAP Member Megan Kanne and Chairperson Nadia Naik requested that this item be added to the XCAP meeting agenda. It is intended to get the XCAP to review the report outline and consider the change outlined below from Megan Kanne.

Proposed Change: Discuss renaming or reframing the "Additional XCAP Criteria" section on the report outline.

Background: After some discussion and a draft of this section, it seemed it would make more sense to frame it as "XCAP Observations" or "Things We Learned" or "Findings." This will allow the XCAP to share what the group learned about each alternative with the Council, the public, and posterity. In this section, the XCAP will describe findings related to specific Council approved criteria as well as those that don't explicitly fit into the Council's approved framework.

Attachments:

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Reminder: City Council Criteria

Tier 1 Criteria: Most Important

- East-West connectivity: facilitate movement across the corridor for all modes of transportation
- Traffic congestion: reduce delay and congestion for automobile traffic at rail crossings
- Ped/Bike circulation: provide clear and safe routes for pedestrians and bicyclists seeking to cross the rail corridor, separate from automobile traffic
- Rail operations: support continued rail operations and Caltrain service improvements
- Cost: finance with feasible funding sources

Tier 2 Criteria: Also Important

- Environmental impacts: reduce rail noise and vibration along the corridor
- Environmental impacts: minimize visual changes along the rail corridor
- Local access: maintain or improve access to neighborhoods, parks, schools and other destinations along the corridor while reducing regional traffic on neighborhood streets
- Cost: minimize right-of-way acquisition by eminent domain
- Construction: minimize disruption and the duration of construction

Technical

Financial

Property Construction



Adopted by City Council September 6, 2017

Additional XCAP Criteria

In addition to the criteria provided by the City Council, several areas of concern emerged during this process from concerns expressed by the community.

After some discussion and a draft outline of this section, *the Criteria Working Group believes it would make sense to frame the section as "XCAP Observations" or "Things We Learned" or "Findings."* This will allow us to share what we learned about each alternative with the Council, the public, and posterity. In the proposed section, the XCAP will describe findings related to specific Council approved criteria as well as emergent concerns that don't explicitly fit into the Council's approved framework.

Below we've created an outline from a brainstorm of the learnings the XCAP has compiled from the community, consultants, and other stakeholders. We propose grouping this bulleted list by Alternative then Council Criteria (plus "Other Concerns"), and fleshing out how each learning relates to that Alternative. We've included an example at the end.

Things We Learned

Brainstormed list of things the XCAP learned and which criteria they relate to.

XCAP Action Item: Please let us know if we missed anything!

A: East-West Connectivity

“Facilitate movement across the corridor for all modes of transportation”

- Paly transit yard and concerns about restrictions on large vehicles (describe the letter from district)
- Ability for emergency responders to cross tracks (describe the letter from the fire chief)

B: Traffic Congestion

“Reduce delay and congestion for automobile traffic at rail crossings”

- Potential elimination of Stanford game day station
 - Impact on game-day traffic (community concern)

C: Bike and Pedestrian Circulation

“Provide clear and safe routes for pedestrians and bicyclists seeking to cross the rail corridor, separate from automobile traffic”

- Bike clumping due to traffic lights causing throughput issues in tunnels (leading to reduced usage?)
- Bikeability of tunnels (or need to walk like Cal Ave underpass)
- Bike connectivity and efficiency of routes
- Pedestrian routes: Maintenance of the staircases at the Embarcadero/Alma bridge and addition of ones on the western side of the tracks (community concern)
- Possibility of conformance of the options with previously approved Embarcadero bike/ped plan from August 2016 (community concern)
- Bike/car separation vs class II bike lanes; consider as two different projects?
 - Hexagon’s traffic models account for bikes delaying right-hand turns
- Potential bike/car conflict at tunnel entrance on Churchill; safety concerns (community concern)
- Two-way cycle tracks not possible in some parts of the Embarcadero mitigation; only enough space for one-way

D: Rail Operations

“Support continued rail operations and Caltrain service improvements”

- Potential need for a 4 track section of passing tracks north of San Antonio
 - Only if HSR happens; discuss COVID impact on the future of transit

E: Cost

“Finance the project with feasible funding sources”

- Potential Caltrain comprehensive plan for grade separations including funding (Caltrain letter/presentation)
- State or federal funding? Yes, but easier if it's Caltrain doing the asking for all grade separations in the corridor (Caltrain letter/presentation)
- Previous grade separation funding has mostly come from counties (Caltrain letter/presentation)
- Ability to eliminate need for shoofly tracks significantly reduces cost

F: Acquisition

“Minimize right- of-way acquisition”

- No pools or pool removal due to subsurface easements
- Property acquisition/easement from Paly required
- Property acquisition/easement from Caltrain required
- Full property acquisitions “easier” than partial because it's so hard to calculate a dollar value loss due to a partial take (backyard loss, underground easement, etc) (Norm Matteoni materials/presentation)
- No compensation for loss of value unless your property is taken/modified (Norm Matteoni materials/presentation)
 - Those near the tracks but not directly impacted are not compensated

G: Reduce Rail Noise and Vibration

“Reduce rail noise and vibration along the corridor”

- Distance sound will radiate from raised structures or from a trench (community concern)
- Paly's proximity to tracks (district request for sound mitigations)
- [More noise information coming from consultants]

H: Local Access

“Maintain or improve access to neighborhoods, parks, schools and other destinations along the corridor while reducing regional traffic on neighborhood streets”

- Traffic inducement on neighborhood streets due to better ease of movement due to grade separations (community concern)
- Cutting off Southgate and University Terrace (community concern)
- Potential for cut through traffic for the Charleston/Meadow underpass (community concern)

I: Visual Changes

“Minimize visual changes along the rail corridor”

- Aesthetics: Very high fencing required around the trench
- Vegetation: Inability to have trees or other deep-rooted plants above tiebacks
 - Community reaction?

J: Construction

“Minimize disruption and the duration of construction”

- Construction staging [More info coming soon]
- Unknown traffic delays due to construction. Esp Alma. (community concern)
- Impact on business during construction (Town and Country mentioned specifically)

Other community concerns we couldn't directly relate to a Council criteria

- Use of land under viaducts (or above tunnels) (community concern)
 - Explain that this will be a negotiation with Caltrain/City. Highlight suggestions/concerns we heard about this
- Need for traffic mitigations regardless of grade separations
- Contingent recommendations to Council: “Suite of things that together make it better”; “enhancements”
- Privacy of raised options overlooking backyards (community concern)
- Safety of raised options and potential derailments (community concern)
- Removal of parking to make space for bike/ped paths (community concern)
- Driveway access for houses (community concern)
 - On Churchill on both sides of the tracks
 - On Embarcadero/Kingsley with light and queuing cars
- Ability to model is only as good as data. PA land use data to 2030. ABAG to 2040. VTA to 2040. Uncertainty of GUP.
- Signal timing in the Embarcadero area and ability to reclaim the El Camino intersection from Caltrans
- Palo Alto Ave & University throughput and impact of the Downtown Plan on Embarcadero and Churchill
- Faster timeline: 8 trains per hour by 2027
- No plan to remove freight from the Caltrain corridor
- Distance of raised structures from homes. Can they be closer to Alma? (sort of visual impact but also noise and privacy) (community concern)
- Feasibility of Caltrain needing to use construction techniques they aren't familiar with for some of the options

Partial Example of Proposed Section

A few example snippets to give you an idea of what the proposed section might look like.

Alternative: Meadow/Charleston Tunnel

I: Visual Changes

Vegetation

The tunnel requires tiebacks to hold up the walls of the ramps into and out of the trench. No trees or other deep-rooted plants can be planted above the tiebacks. So vegetation options around the trench will be limited. The same will be true for private back yards that abut the trench.

Aesthetics

The trench will require very high fencing surrounding it. While the train itself will not be raised, the fencing may have an aesthetic impact. As noted above, trees will not be able to be planted around parts of the trench, meaning that the fence will always be visible in certain locations.

Other Concerns

Land Use

Land use around a trench will be a negotiation between the City and Caltrain. We heard some suggestions and concerns about land use. These include the maintenance of vegetation, possibilities to activate the space with art or vendors, etc...