

Expanded Community Advisory Panel (XCAP) April 22, 2020

Special Meeting Summary

Subject

Connecting Palo Alto
Palo Alto Grade Separation Study

Meeting date and time

April 22, 2020
4:00pm-6:00pm

Location

Virtual Meeting – Zoom
Palo Alto, CA

Prepared by

Mary Lynn Porter, Cybertary

Meeting Called to Order at 4:05 pm

XCAP Member Attendees

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

Excused

Patricia Lau

Meeting Agenda Recap:

The Meeting Agenda included:

1. Welcome and Roll Call
2. Oral Communications (15 minutes)
3. Workplan and Estimated Timeline Updates in Light of COVID-19 (45 minutes)
4. Discussion: Presentation by AECOM of Layout and Typical Sections for Churchill Partial Underpass (45 minutes)
5. Action: Amendment to the XCAP Report Draft Outline (7 minutes)
6. XCAP Member Updates and Working Groups Updates (5 minutes)
7. Staff Updates (3 minutes)
8. 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://midpenmedia.org/palo-alto-expanded-community-advisory-panel8-4222020/>.

Next XCAP Meeting

Next scheduled meeting is May 6, 2020, 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
Virtual Meeting – Zoom, Palo Alto, CA

Agenda Item #2: Oral Communications:

6 Members of the Public addressed the XCAP.

Discussion and Actions

Agenda Item #3: Workplan and Estimated Timeline Updates in Light of COVID-19 (45 minutes)

Ed Shikada, City Manager, commented regarding the impacts of COVID-19 on meetings, finances, and long-term initiatives.

Presentation: Information presented by Philip Kamhi, Chief Transportation Official. He provided an overview of the PowerPoint Presentation available online here: <https://connectingpaloalto.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Item3-MemoandAttachmentA-EstimatedXCAPschedule.pdf>. This presentation goal is to review tasks, proposed meetings, and analysis.

Presentation: Information Presented by Millete Litzinger, Project Manager at AECOM. She provided an overview of a virtual Town Hall. This presentation goal is to learn about a potential virtual Town Hall.

Discussion of Workplan and Estimated Timeline Updates in Light of COVID-19 and a Virtual Town Hall

1. Will a virtual Town Hall be available one time or for an extended period?
 - a. It will probably be available for review over an extended time.
2. Will questions and answers from a virtual Town Hall be made available to XCAP members?
 - a. Yes.
3. What is the cost of a virtual format?
 - a. \$7,000-\$10,000, about the same cost as a community meeting.
4. What is the definition of shovel-ready plans to obtain stimulus funding?
 - a. The definition varies and is usually determined by the program or agency.
5. Concern about public input at virtual meetings.
 - a. The Council should provide its expectation of how community engagement should factor into the XCAP's recommendation.

4 public speakers addressed the XCAP on this item.

Agenda Item #4: Discussion: Presentation by AECOM of Layout and Typical Sections for Churchill Partial Underpass (45 minutes)

Presentation: Information Presented by Peter DeStefano, Engineer at AECOM. He provided an overview of the PowerPoint Presentation available online here: <https://vimeo.com/410341197/40ab91155d> and <https://oemmndcblldboiebnladdacbfmadadm/https://connectingpaloalto.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Item4-REVISEDattachmentA-4.22.20-sm.pdf>. This presentation goal is to understand the diagrams and traffic flow for a partial underpass at Churchill Avenue and Alma Street.

Discussion of Layout and Typical Sections for Churchill Partial Underpass:

1. On northbound Alma, the S curve for the inside lane to merge with the at-grade lane appears too sharp.
 - a. It is acceptable for speeds of 30-35 mph.
2. How long will there be only one travel lane on Alma Street?
 - a. At this time, there are no estimates for construction time, but the minimum time would be 6 months. Construction may be staged to minimize traffic disruption.

3. Can trucks and buses negotiate the 11% grade at Churchill and the intersection?
 - a. The 11% grade will extend less than 20 feet and will not be an issue for trucks and buses. It will be a challenge for bicyclists.
4. Will there be a pedestrian path across Alma at Churchill?
 - a. No.
5. Is it possible to separate the bike/pedestrian underpass from the vehicle underpass?
 - a. Yes. Separately, the bike/pedestrian underpass may not be eligible for Measure B grade separation funding, but Measure B funding is available for bicycle projects.
6. Are there any drainage issues with the underpass?
 - a. A pumping plant will remove water at the low point of the intersection and will need additional scrutiny in the next phase.
7. Will the project need additional right-of-way from Caltrain?
 - a. Yes. According to Caltrain, the City's proposal would most likely be found to be an incompatible use of JPB property.
8. What are the impacts to residential properties?
 - a. Some residential properties will be impacted, but there will be no full acquisitions. The planting strip between the roadway and the sidewalk will become roadway.
9. Is the bicycle/pedestrian design at Kellogg similar to the one at Churchill, and how wide is it?
 - a. It is similar to the Churchill Option 2 presented last year. It is 20 feet wide under the tracks and 10 feet wide elsewhere.
10. Can the project be modified to avoid impacting residential properties?
 - a. Without survey lines, the amount of property affected is not known.
11. What is the potential cost of this project?
 - a. \$100-\$150 million for everything
12. Why do the two northbound at-grade lanes on Alma need to merge?
 - a. For traffic safety, lanes typically merge from the right. Currently, the two lanes merge between Melville and the bridge over Embarcadero, and the design does not anticipate widening the bridge.
13. Is a bike tunnel needed at Kellogg or Coleridge?
 - a. Kellogg is a good place because there is space on the west side of the tracks for the ramps to open parallel to the bike path at the school.
14. Have the concerns about turning movements for longer vehicles been resolved?
 - a. Yes, but Caltrain will have to agree to an encroachment into its right-of-way.
15. Is Caltrain's response about its right-of-way open to negotiation?
 - a. The City will need to spend possibly millions of dollars to have a design that can be used to seek Caltrain's permission. The City would have to demonstrate that use of the right-of-way would not preclude a four-track segment.
16. Is it feasible to shift the intersection east to avoid an encroachment into Caltrain's right-of-way?
 - a. To move the intersection to the east would change the dynamic of the alternative and likely require full acquisitions.
17. Where would a pumping station be located, and what is its size?
 - a. The exact location has not been determined, but it would have to be near the undercrossing. A potential location is the northwest corner. It's usually placed on a concrete pad measuring approximately 10' x 15'. A secondary source of power will be needed as well.
18. Is there currently sufficient space for four tracks at Churchill?
 - a. No.

19. Did the Embarcadero improvements include widening the bridge to four lanes?
 - a. Those improvements were part of the Churchill closure.
20. If we widen the bridge over Embarcadero, can we merge three lanes to two lanes instead of two lanes to one?
 - a. Yes.
21. Would use of a jack box reduce the cost and the length of construction?
 - a. Some engineers are reporting it increases costs because of geotechnical issues. More research is needed.
22. Is the bike segment alone in the Caltrain right-of-way?
 - a. Yes.

4 members of the public spoke to the XCAP on this item.

Agenda Item #5: Action: Amendment to the XCAP Report Draft Outline (7 minutes)

Chair Naik and Ms. Kanne presented the proposed amendment to Section 3.3.

1 public speaker addressed the XCAP on this item.

Motion:

- Nadia Naik moved to change the title of Section 3.3 in the proposed Table of Contents for the XCAP final report from "Additional Criteria XCAP Debated During Process" to "XCAP Observations." Motion seconded by Tony Carrasco.

Vote:

Yes: Brail, Burton, Carrasco, Cho, Kanne, Klein, Levin, Naik, Reckdahl, Shen, Templeton

No: none

Abstentions: none

Absent: Lau

Agenda Item #6: XCAP Member Updates and Working Groups Updates (5 minutes)

Chair Naik continued this item.

Agenda Item #7: Staff Updates (3 minutes)

Chantal Cotton Gaines, Assistant to the City Manager, advised that Philip Kamhi will be the point of contact while she is on maternity leave.

In response to questions, staff reported:

1. Caltrain does not have an agreement with Stanford University to provide service to football games.
2. Changes to the Embarcadero bridge will require a CEQA analysis.

Adjourned at 7:05 p.m.