

Expanded Community Advisory Panel (XCAP)

THIS PACKET INCLUDES:

A compilation of emails (public comments, etc) submitted to the XCAP email box, XCAP@CityofPaloAlto.org, between **May 1 and May 6, 2020 at 12:00 pm (noon)**.



Note: This PDF contains bookmarks separating each email in this compilation. If you'd like to see the bookmarks but your internet browser doesn't show them, download this PDF from your browser, then re-open it in a PDF reader (such as Adobe Reader, Foxit, etc) and make sure your bookmarks panel is open.

From: [Arthur Keller](#)
To: [Expanded Community Advisory Panel](#)
Cc: [Council, City](#)
Subject: Churchill Railroad Crossing Proposal
Date: Friday, May 1, 2020 6:31:51 PM

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Dear XCAP members and Council members,

In reviewing <https://connectingpaloalto.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Item4-REVISEDattachmentA-4.22.20-sm.pdf> I have several observations.

In summary, I support moving forward with studying the partial Churchill Ave underpass as proposed. I have several refinements that may make the XCAP-proposed alternative feasible without impinging on the Caltrain right-of-way.

1. Considering that there is only one northbound lane over Embarcadero, it seems logical to me that there could be only one northbound lane at surface at Churchill. Eliminating the extra northbound lane could allow the entire structure to be shifted eastward (away from El Camino Real) by about 10 feet.
2. The northbound shoulder in the underpass could be narrowed. That might save around 5 feet (to allow a 13 foot area just in case). Again that would allow shifting the structure eastward.
3. Although not ideal, the ramp to the underpass under Kellogg could be placed where the bike path is now with bicyclists and pedestrians going down then up. Since there is already encroachment, then Caltrain should not object to continued encroachment.

Finally, these adjustments are suggested for the purpose of demonstrating feasibility in the event that Caltrain does not allow access to the additional right-of-way. During a later design phase, these issues can be worked out and the proposal cited above (without these changes) might be adopted instead. Caltrain does not appear to have sufficient right-of-way to build their four track option in this area without eminent domain. It makes more sense for Caltrain to use the sufficient area between the Castro Street (Mountain View) station and Oregon Expressway, where there is already sufficient right-of-way if four tracks are in fact needed in the future.

This is the type of proposal we get from our community when we unleash citizen committees and allow them to drive the process. I would like to see a similar citizen-led and driven process occurring with the NVCAP committee as well.

Respectfully,
Arthur Keller
(not in any official capacity)

From: [Gary Lindgren](#)
To: [Expanded Community Advisory Panel](#); [Gaines, Chantal](#)
Subject: Possible Solution for Palo Alto Grade Separation
Date: Friday, May 1, 2020 11:25:12 AM
Attachments: [palo_alto_ave_underpass_4_28_2020.bmp.png](#)

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Hello XCAP Committee,

Attached is a diagram for a possible solution for the Palo Alto Ave. grade separation and it comes with synergy.

The steps are:

1. Close off the entrance/exit to Palo Alto Ave. from/to El Camino Real.
2. Close off Alma going to El Camino at Palo Alto Ave.
3. The new road from/to El Camino and Alma starts at a point opposite the main entrance to Stanford Shopping Center on El Camino.
4. The road goes through the now parking lot for El Camino Park and under the train tracks via an underpass.
5. There is no change in elevation for the tracks.
6. The intersection at Alma and Hawthorne would turn into a roundabout and would be lowered slightly.
7. Traffic would flow into the roundabout.
8. This grade separation would look very much like the hybrid solution for Charleston and Meadow. Tracks in this area are quite a bit higher than Alma.
9. El Camino Park parking lot would move slightly to the north.
10. The soccer field would also move slightly to the north.

Synergy:

1. People can enter El Camino Park from Alma.
2. The El Palo Alto Park can be expanded as the present road is removed.
3. No potential harm to El Palo Alto tree.
4. Most of the construction can be done without traffic interruption.

At some point in the future the Palo Alto Ave. grade separation will come up for study, something to think about.

Take Care ,
Gary

Gary Lindgren
585 Lincoln Ave
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@garyelindgren

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Be Like Costco... do something in a different way

Don't trust Atoms...they make up everything

A part of good science is to see what everyone else can see but think what no one else has ever said.

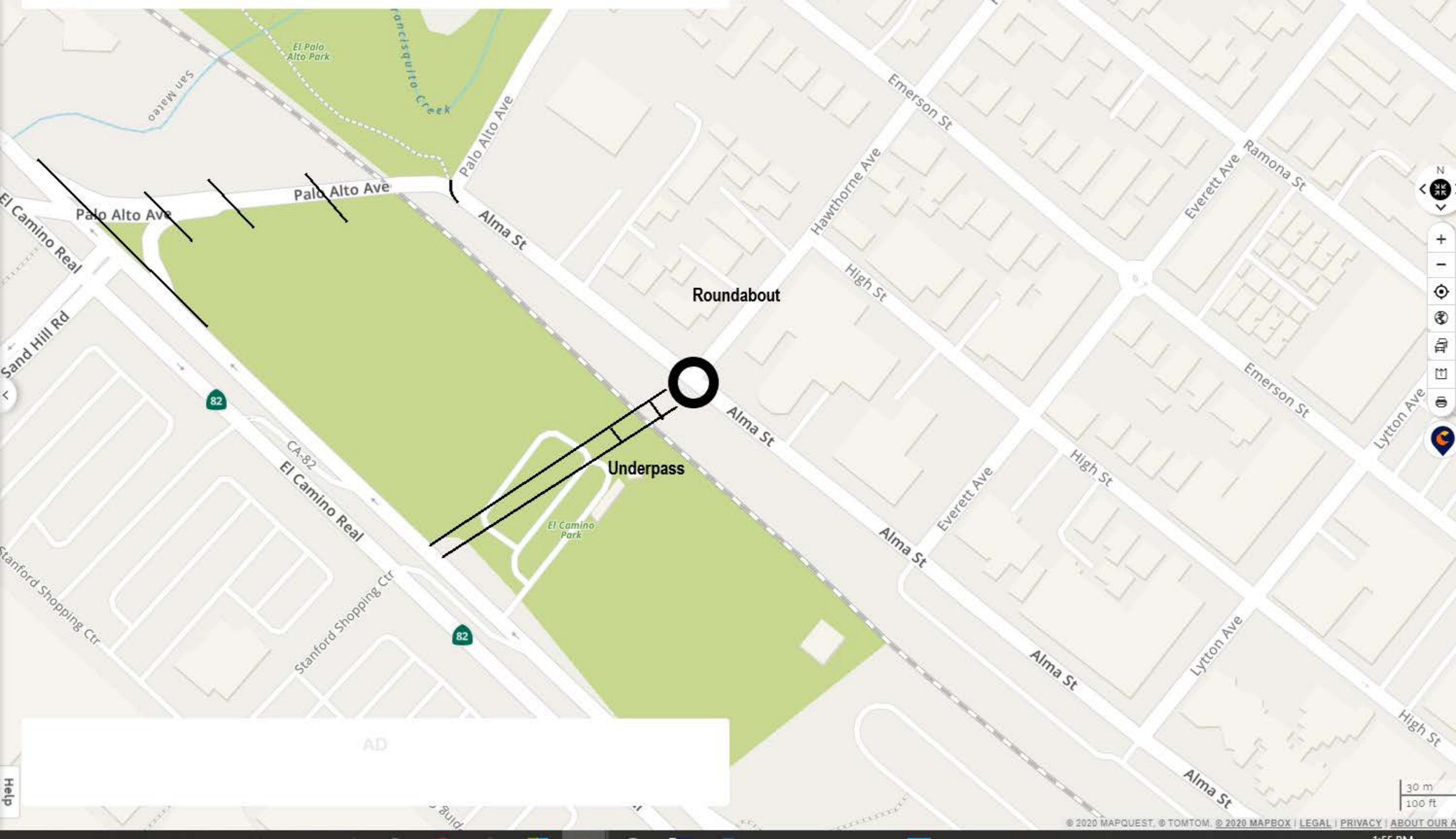
The difference between being very smart and very foolish is often very small.

So many problems occur when people fail to be obedient when they are supposed to be obedient, and fail to be creative when they are supposed to be creative.

The secret to doing good research is always to be a little underemployed. You waste years by not being able to waste hours.

It is sometimes easier to make the world a better place than to prove you have made the world a better place.

Amos Tversky



Roundabout

Underpass

AD

30 m
100 ft

From: [Brian Kilgore](#)
To: [Expanded Community Advisory Panel](#)
Subject: XCAP meeting comment
Date: Friday, May 1, 2020 3:52:47 PM

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Hi,

I am encouraged by the recent alternative plans for the Charleston, East Meadow, and Churchill grade separations. I preferred the trench or tunnel alternative, but acknowledge that those plans presented significant fiscal and engineering challenges.

The elevated viaduct plan presented by AECOM at most of the community input meetings as their unstated, but obviously preferred, solution was opposed by most, if not all, of the residents at those meetings. The hybrid proposal was marginally better. Issues of noise and significant visual blight associated with both the viaduct and hybrid options can not be glossed over with unrealistic 3D renderings of what it could look like, and estimates of sound to be expected by any of the elevated alternatives, are just that, estimates. The Palo Alto community rejected CA High Speed Rail's elevated track plans when they were presented to the city as visual blight and an unwanted source of elevated noise a decade ago. Residents position on these issues then and now appears to be clear and consistent.

I encourage the XCAP members and the city to continue the exploration of the recently proposed rail at grade with road under pass options at Charleston, East Meadow, and Churchill. Incorporating safe accessible paths for bike and pedestrian traffic is an essential part of any grade crossing at each of these crossings. Keeping the rail at grade will prevent a century or more of visual blight bisecting Palo Alto and may represent the best option for preventing future noise from exceeding current baseline measurements. If roundabouts are necessary to facilitate traffic flow at the Charleston, East Meadow, or even the Churchill crossing as a result of the recent rail at grade road under proposals, I would suggest keeping them limited to 1 lane if possible.

Thank you,

Brian Kilgore

From: [Gary Lindgren](#)
To: [Expanded Community Advisory Panel](#)
Subject: Churchill Ave Grade Separation
Date: Saturday, May 2, 2020 4:16:12 PM
Attachments: [Churchill Grade Separation 5 2 2020.pdf](#)

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XCAP Committee,

Attached is an update to my earlier PowerPoint presentation. I have added a slide and updated some of the text. Please carefully review the idea. The Partial Underpass idea works well for the Ventura and Southgate neighborhoods, but what about us on the east side of the tracks. We also need to be able to move right and left onto Alma from Churchill.

Take Care,

Gary

Gary Lindgren
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[@garyelindgren](#)

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Amos Tversky

CHURCHILL GRADE
SEPARATION,
THE PARTIAL UNDERPASS
AND

A 4th Idea

- ▶ Would be a big problem for me.
- ▶ I use Churchill to make left turns on to Alma going South.
- ▶ Price Plan blocks left turns.
- ▶ Only right turns allowed when heading west on Churchill.
- ▶ Right turns onto Alma are easy at any cross street.
- ▶ Construction would halt traffic on Alma.

THE PRICE PLAN OR PARTIAL UNDERPASS

- ▶ If the U-Turn Bay concept works for Meadow and it's 50 foot width.
- ▶ Then it could work for Churchill.
- ▶ Churchill is now 36 feet wide and we would need to add 14 feet in width.
- ▶ That's 7 feet on each side.
- ▶ Property on each side would need to be acquired.

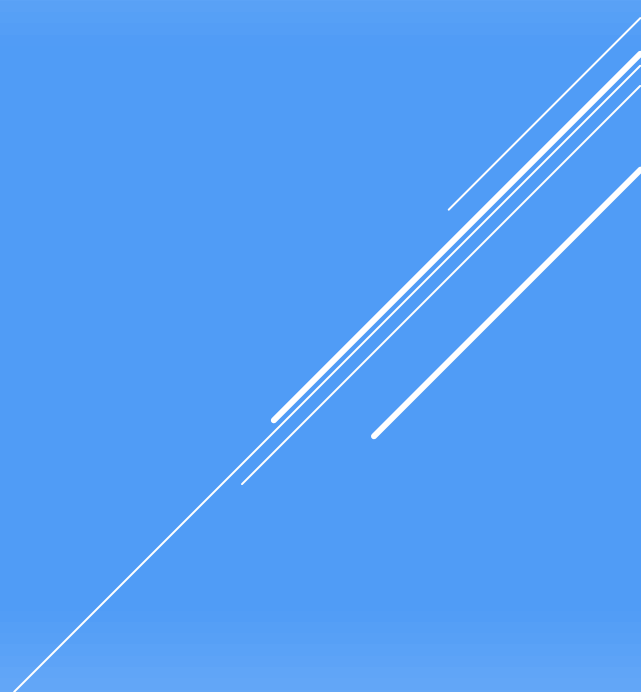
A 4TH IDEA

- ▶ The round-about would be at Emerson.
- ▶ The underpass for the tracks and Alma would be 2 lanes each way.
- ▶ East of Alma there would be one lane each way and widen when approaching the underpass.

CONCEPT FEATURES FOR CARS

- ▶ Bikes and pedestrians would enter a tunnel near the sidewalk on Churchill.
- ▶ The bike and pedestrian path would then drop down and go under the right lane for left and right turns onto Alma.
- ▶ The path would then open next to but above the traffic going under Alma and the tracks.

CONCEPT FEATURES FOR BIKES AND PEDESTRIANS



Jefferson Ave. Underpass in Redwood City

Benefits

- ▶ No viaduct next to homes.
- ▶ People could turn both left and right onto Alma.
- ▶ People could drive straight through Churchill and under both Alma and the tracks at anytime of the day.
- ▶ No more “left-turn only” on school days.
- ▶ Railroad tracks would stay at grade.



PLAN FEATURES

- ▶ Traffic interruption should be minimal for Alma.
- ▶ Two weekend closures should take care of building temporary bridge for Alma.
- ▶ The same interruption in service would be for the track's temporary bridge.
- ▶ After that that, the tracks and Alma would be fully open for service.
- ▶ Churchill would be closed for 6 months for underpass excavation and installing the permanent underpass.

PLAN FEATURES DURING CONSTRUCTION

- ▶ The Ventura and Southgate neighborhoods or those living on the west side of the tracks at Churchill see an upside with the Partial Underpass.
- ▶ They can turn left or right onto Alma and also enter Churchill with ease from Alma.
- ▶ Residents on the east side of Alma have limited movement as only right turns are allowed.
- ▶ The needed solution must benefit those living on both sides of the tracks.

NEIGHBORHOOD BENEFITS

- ▶ Suggest that the final decision for the Churchill Ave. grade separation be delayed while plan details are worked out.

THE DECISION

From: [Gary Lindgren](#)
To: [Expanded Community Advisory Panel](#)
Subject: Navigating Around the U-Turn Bay
Date: Sunday, May 3, 2020 11:42:30 AM
Attachments: [Elizabet Alexis Idea 5 1 2020.pdf](#)

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Be cautious of opening attachments and clicking on links.

Hello XCAP,

Find attached a .PDF description of the U-Turn Bay that Elizabeth Alexis brought to our attention. I describe what an U-Turn Bay is and why it is useful. I also describe how to navigate from/to Alma and to/from Churchill. This document can also be used for Meadow and Charleston in describing navigation needs.

One other note, in my PowerPoint describing how we could implement the U-Turn Bay for Churchill, I mention that property would need to be acquired, actually, the city would acquire it's own. In most places in Palo Alto, the city property line goes 12 feet from the curb. We only need 7 feet and so 5 feet is left. So hardly any property would actually need to be acquired.

Take Care,
Gary

Gary Lindgren
585 Lincoln Ave
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Amos Tversky

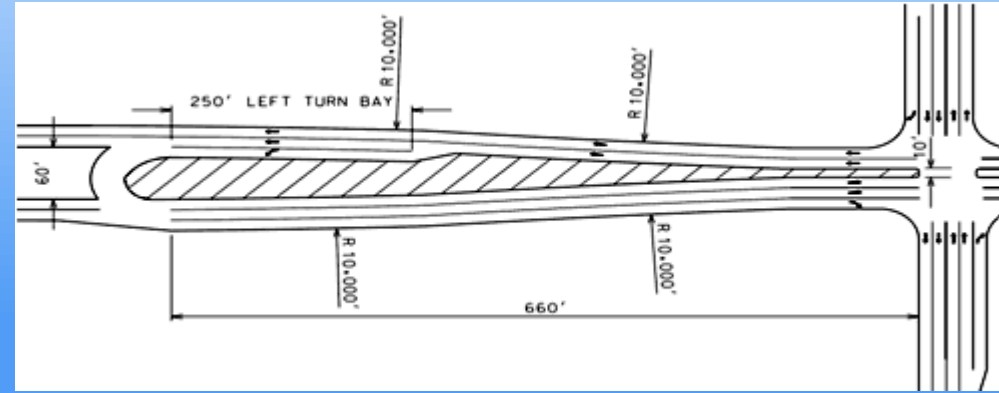
NAVIGATING THE FULL UNDERPASS AT CHURCHILL

A 4th Idea

- ▶ At Churchill Ave and this also includes Meadow and Charleston, space is very limited, no room for ramps to go from Alma and the cross street underpass and also from the underpass to Alma.
- ▶ Suppose you have 2 busy streets that cross each other and you don't want to use signal lights that would allow vehicles to make left turns. Signal lights slow up traffic.
- ▶ The solution is to use an U-Turn Bay or a space to make an U-turn. The vehicle that wishes to go in left direction on the cross road crosses the road and then makes a U-turn in the space designated and then turn right and merge in the traffic on the cross road.

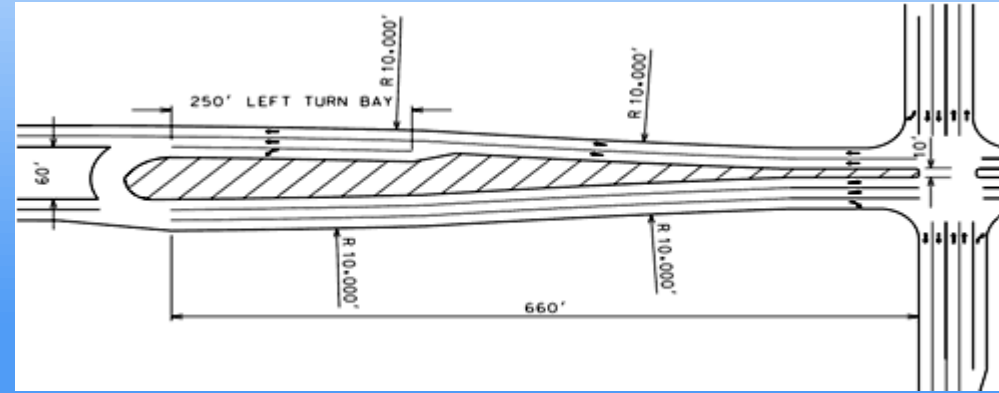
WHY WE NEED AN U-TURN BAY

- ▶ An U-Turn Bay is shown in figure to the right. A place to make an U-turn and then turn right on the cross road.
- ▶ In our case we use a roundabout as the U-Turn Bay.
- ▶ As we are going to have only one U-Turn Bay, signal lights will be needed on Alma in order to allow left turn from Alma onto Churchill and also from Churchill onto Alma.



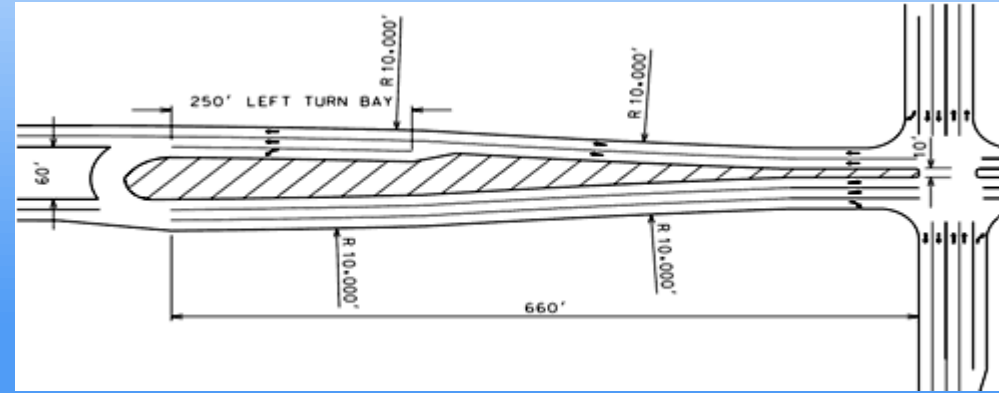
THE U-TURN BAY

- ▶ Visualize Churchill as the horizontal road in the figure on the right and Alma going vertical.
- ▶ Think of the intersection as the underpass going under Alma and the train tracks.
- ▶ Churchill will have 4 lanes east of Alma. Two going under Alma and tracks and two at same level as Alma for right and left turns.



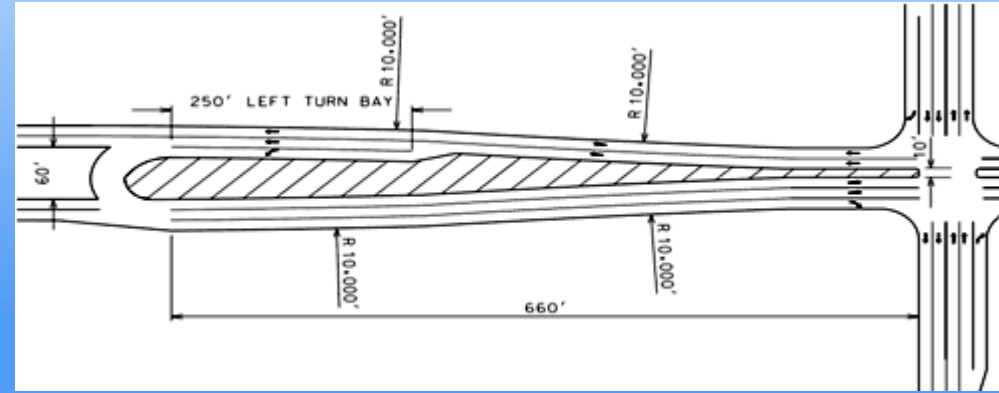
NAVIGATING AROUND CHURCHILL AND ALMA

- ▶ You are on Churchill going east and want to go south or north on Alma.
- ▶ Take the underpass and then make a U-Turn at the roundabout and come up to Alma and wait for the green light to turn.



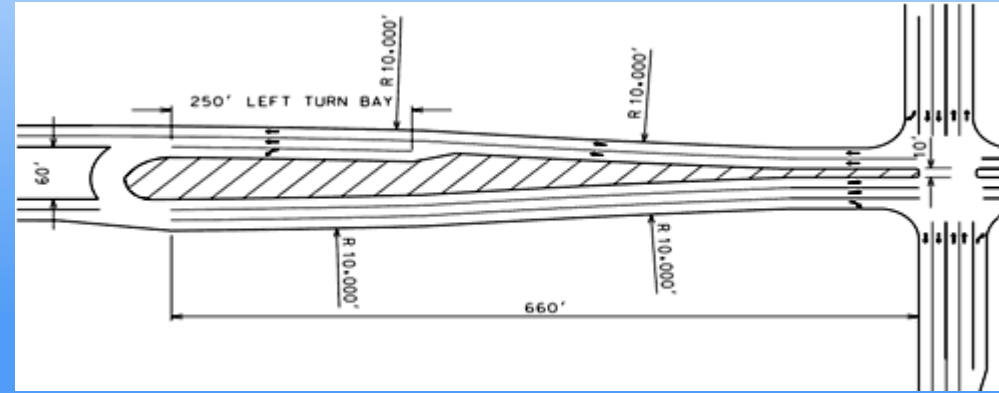
NAVIGATING AROUND CHURCHILL AND ALMA

- ▶ You are going south on Alma and want to go west on Churchill.
- ▶ Get into the left turn lane at Churchill and wait for left turn arrow.
- ▶ Make your left turn and then use the roundabout and get into lane for the underpass.



NAVIGATING AROUND CHURCHILL AND ALMA

- ▶ You going north on Alma and want go west on Churchill.
- ▶ Take a right turn at Churchill and then take the roundabout and get into lane going under Alma and the tracks.



NAVIGATING AROUND CHURCHILL AND ALMA

From: [Kellerman, Thomas W.](#)
To: [Expanded Community Advisory Panel](#)
Cc: [Shikada, Ed](#); [Council, City](#)
Subject: Letter regarding Connecting Palo Alto
Date: Tuesday, May 5, 2020 12:55:49 PM
Attachments: [XCAP Letter May 6 2020.docx](#)

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Please see attached letter.

Thomas W. Kellerman

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**Thomas W. and Rachel H. Kellerman
1129 Emerson Street
Palo Alto, CA 94301**

May 5, 2020

Rail Expanded Community
Advisory Panel of Palo Alto

Re: Agenda Item #4 for May 6, 2020 Meeting

Dear Members:

We are writing with respect to the agenda item regarding traffic questions for the upcoming XCAP meeting.

First of all, we want to thank Megan Kanne for her service on the CAP and XCAP. During the CAP process, Megan took on the huge task of facilitating rail-crossing communication between city and council leadership to all the neighborhoods north of Embarcadero. She was the only citizen assigned to this large diverse area between two thorny railroad crossings while other areas had multiple people engaged. While serving on the XCAP, she expanded her focus community-wide while continuing to bring our specific neighborhood concerns to the attention of city and civic leaders and design consultants. We wish her all the best as she brings her talent for civic leadership to Washington DC. We will be curious to know if she finds Palo Alto or DC more challenging.

This is indeed a very difficult time for all, and we appreciate the service of all the XCAP members, city staff and the consultants as they attend to this specific issue. Given that everyone's attention is fractured in so many areas and priorities have shifted so dramatically in the last few months, we offer the following brief comments with regard to Action Item 4-traffic questions.

1. The traffic consultant's redirection plan drives more traffic to the 1100 block of Emerson. This increased traffic will endanger the students, pedestrians and bicyclists who follow the busy Kingsley/Embarcadero route that runs perpendicular to Emerson Street. We request that XCAP endorse changes to the traffic redirection plan as follows:
 - a. Ensure that any traffic redirection redesign include a Kingsley/Embarcadero bike/pedestrian route that is safe enough to qualify for "safe route to school" designation. Pay special attention to the crossings at Emerson and High Street as these are the most perilous. It is likely that the proposed Kingsley/Embarcadero light will not be able to accommodate all of the redirected traffic, resulting in increased traffic through Professorville streets. This might require

abolishing the right-hand turn from Emerson to Embarcadero that today functions as a speedy onramp for cars and large trucks traveling south on Emerson and west on Embarcadero. I'm sure that everyone agrees that any rail crossing plan that doesn't include a safe route to school on both sides of Embarcadero is not in the community's best interest.

- b. Study queue-length on Embarcadero. In normal peak-hour traffic times, the traffic on Embarcadero moves glacially, especially through the tunnel. The addition of a light at Kingsley and Embarcadero may not be able to accommodate the required traffic flow without creating gridlock on Embarcadero. These traffic volumes need to be studied and modeled before this measure is presented for approval. Embarcadero is also a residential artery and should be analyzed differently than Oregon Expressway, which is a different roadway category.

2. The definition of mitigation that appears on a slide 5 of the January 8, 2020 traffic presentation is as follows: "Street system changes that would allow additional capacity to accommodate diverted traffic." We don't believe that definition of mitigation aligns with the Council's intentions when they required mitigation of traffic in surrounding residential neighborhoods as a condition to approving a closure of the Churchill crossing. The definition proposed by AECOM appears to focus exclusively on the volume of vehicular traffic that can be accommodated by an existing street. This definition does not take into account the nature of the street in question (purely residential v. arterial), or the effect on pedestrians and bicyclists. More study and design efforts are required for this area before the Council votes on the options for the Churchill crossing.

Thank you for your service and attention to these important issues.

Sincerely,

Tom Kellerman
Rachel Kellerman

cc: Palo Alto City Council
Ed Shikada, City Manager