

Expanded Community Advisory Panel (XCAP)

January 22, 2020, 4:00 PM

Special Meeting - Summary

Community Meeting Room

1. Welcome and Roll Call

Present: Gregory Brail, Phil Burton, Tony Carrasco, Inyoung Cho, Meghan Kanne, Larry Klein, Patricia Lau, Adina Levin, Nadia Naik, Keith Reckdahl, David Shen, Cari Templeton

Absent: Judy Kleinberg (excused)

2. Oral Communications

A male speaker announced that he is concerned that the XCAP Committee is not being objective enough when it comes to members stating that they are not supportive of an alternative.

Ms. Jordan agreed with Chair Naik's statement that all the alternatives stink, that Churchill Avenue should not be closed and that no decision has been made in terms of Palo Alto Avenue. She noted that the electrification of trains will not lead to more traffic on the train tracks.

Rob Levitsky stated that Mike Price's design for Churchill Avenue mitigates many of the concerns regarding left turns and from a traffic standpoint he believed the model was the best approach.

Neva Yarkin, 135 Churchill Avenue, announced that Pally High School is not being studied thoroughly and that Churchill Avenue should be the main access for bicycles and pedestrians into the school.

3. Discussion: Update on City Council Feedback

Chair Naik advised the XCAP Members to watch the recent video of the City Council meeting. The two alternatives that moved forward via majority vote by City Council are the Constant Flow Underpass for South Palo Alto as well as the Churchill Partial Underpass.

XCAP Member Templeton believed Tony's concept regarding Embarcadero Road did not pass due to it not being tightly related to the railroad.

Chair Naik summarized that City Council's concerns regarding Tony's concept for Embarcadero Road are what are the limitations and what is AECOM going to come back with. She asked what the timeframe is for work to come to the XCAP Committee from AECOM.

Ed Shikada, City Manager, disclosed that Staff needed to assess the scope and budget impacts of how the work would proceed. He announced that he wanted to get

feedback from XCAP Members regarding the XCAP Work Plan so that it can be passed on to AECOM.

XCAP Member Brail commented that the XCAP Members could not discuss either Churchill Avenue or South Palo Alto until AECOM completed their work.

Chair Naik disclosed that City Council had asked if XCAP Members could remove some alternatives from the list. She expressed to the City Council that there was not enough time to have a discussion and vote on removing any of the alternative.

XCAP Member Burton reported that XCAP Member Klein gave great advice to the City Council in terms of not rushing the process.

Mr. Shikada advised the XCAP Members to discuss how next steps will proceed in terms of the Committee's work. He asked if XCAP Members felt strongly about not moving forward with evaluations for the seven alternatives until AECOM's results are concluded for Churchill Avenue and Palo Alto Avenue.

Chair Naik suggested that the work plan should be agenzied. She summarized what the upcoming presentations are for the Committee.

XCAP Member Burton wanted to start the process of evaluating the seven alternatives.

XCAP Member Brail disclosed that a ranking of the alternatives might be helpful.

XCAP Member Reckdahl wanted to know what the XCAP Members are trying to get out of the Town Hall meetings, if there are questions that the XCAP Members would like to ask the public, and how that information is digested.

Mr. Shikada remarked that it is a good topic for the XCAP Members to discuss regarding information that comes out of a Town Hall meeting.

XCAP Member Carrasco asked when the downtown portion of the plan would be ready.

Mr. Shikada reinforced that the City has not proceeded with initiating the work on Palo Alto Avenue, but the City is discussing the topic with stakeholders. The plan is to start that work after the conclusion of the review of the existing crossings. He shared that he did not foresee Staff advancing an alternative that would close Palo Alto Avenue and believed that any advanced alternatives would avoid any spillover of traffic from Palo Alto Avenue to surrounding streets.

Chair Naik questioned if Stanford or other stakeholders were interested in what was happening at Embarcadero Road and Churchill Avenue.

Mr. Shikada answered not that he knew of and Stanford's interest is more focused around access to the transit center.

Chair Naik plugged that City Council could choose to close Palo Alto Avenue.

Mr. Shikada opined that it could happen but he did not foresee that happening.

XCAP Member Reckdahl inquired if Stanford had any opinions regarding Embarcadero Avenue and El Camino Real.

Mr. Shikada reported that Staff is in discussions with Stanford on an ongoing basis when proposals are moving forward, but they have not expressed any opinions.

XCAP Member Carrasco asked how Palo Alto Avenue will be kept open.

Mr. Shikada explained that the design options for Palo Alto Avenue are being worked on.

XCAP Member Kanne wondered what the plan is for communicating the need for acquisitions.

Mr. Shikada responded that all the alternatives describe in detail where property acquisition is necessary. The same level of detail would be done for the two new alternatives.

XCAP Member Lau wanted to know what the role is of XCAP Members in terms of Town Hall meetings.

Mr. Shikada expressed that is a discussion the XCAP Members need to have.

XCAP Member Burton stated that he could not make judgments on visual impacts and other components for each alternative until he has heard the community's input.

Chair Naik commented that she did not want to overburden XCAP Members with requiring them to attend the Town Hall meetings.

XCAP Member Lau specified that she would like to hear the community's feedback regarding safety.

Chair Naik advised XCAP Members to highlight areas they would like to hear feedback on and have Staff present those at the Town Hall meetings.

XCAP Member Brail emphasized that specific communities should be included in the design of the alternatives, but XCAP should focus on the broader decisions.

XCAP Member Templeton encouraged XCAP Members who participate in community conversations to focus on listening and not discuss sensitive topics at open community meetings.

Chair Naik relayed Council Member Cormack's suggestions on what could be included in the XCAP's final report.

4. XCAP Member Updates and Working Group Update

XCAP Member Lau mentioned that Sebastian Petty from Caltrain is going to be addressing XCAP Members at the next meeting and that she would let the other presenters know that they will not be speaking.

Chair Naik added that XCAP Members are not ready to have a detailed conversation regarding safety.

XCAP Member Brail asked XCAP members if there are any topics they are interested in knowing more about in terms of safety and the creeks.

XCAP Member Kanne suggested that all reports and research be included in an electronic folder so that they can be used for future reference.

Chantal Cotton Gaines, Assistant to the City Manager, noted that it is not a Brown Act issue to have an electronic folder unless XCAP Members use the folder to have discussions.

XCAP Member Brail asked if the public had to have access to the folder.

Ms. Cotton Gaines did not know.

Chair Naik suggested using Google Drive and it would include a link to the public as well.

XCAP Member Carrasco commented that the clearer legibility is, the understanding where you are and how you are going to get from one place to another, the safer is it.

XCAP Member Lau agreed with XCAP Member Carrasco.

XCAP Member Kanne reported that the Traffic Ad-Hoc Committee is not working on anything.

Chair Naik announced that Caltrain does have a plan for eight trains an hour, each direction, that would be implemented by 2027 as well as four High Speed Rail trains.

XCAP Member Templeton asked if High Speed Rail is being considered for the peninsula.

Chair Naik confirmed that is correct; High Speed Rail's line runs from the City of Bakersfield to the City of San Francisco.

XCAP Member Brail asked for a fact check regarding the notion that Caltrain cannot increase the number of trains per hour until there are grade separations.

XCAP Member Burton responded that it is not true and that the limitation is the dwell time.

Chair Naik added that if a train travels more than 125 MPH, then grade separations are required.

Mr. Kamhi added that lengthening the trains will speed up the dwell time.

XCAP Member Kanne questioned if the eight train plan assumed that the Downtown Extension is complete.

Chair Naik was not sure but stated she would pass on the report to all the XCAP Members.

Mr. Shikada advised Chair Naik to review the report that the Local Policy Maker Group had received from Caltrain.

XCAP Member Carrasco questioned if the traffic model is using the 16 trains per hour.

Chair Naik remarked that she did not know.

XCAP Member Burton asked if Caltrain has Positive Train Control.

Chair Naik answered that it is being installed with the electrification project.

Several members voiced that it is a federal requirement to have Positive Train Control, with or without electrification.

5. Action: Update XCAP List of Questions and Review of the Staff Responses Related to the Measurable Criteria

Ms. Cotton Gaines explained that the XCAP Members had received a redline version of their questions which included deleted and suggested questions.

In regards to Question 1, XCAP Members agreed to delete the question.

In regards to Question 2, Chair Naik requested that the question and answer been written up and included in the Appendix.

In regards to Question 3, XCAP Members agreed to delete the question.

In regards to Question 4, Mr. Shikada asked who the consultant is for historic designation and Chair Naik answered AECOM had stated that the Embarcadero Bridge is historically eligible. XCAP Member Cho did not understand why the question was important. After further discussion, the Committee decided to keep the question.

XCAP Member Brail remarked that Question 7 is duplicative. The XCAP Members agreed to remove the question.

In regards to Question 5, XCAP Members agreed that it should be removed from the list.

In regards to Question 11, XCAP Members agreed to remove it.

XCAP Member Templeton expressed that funding is not part of the Committee's scope and did not believe that a question discussing funding should be included. XCAP Member Kanne answered that it is in the criteria, but it is not within the scope of the Committee to find the funding. The XCAP Members decided the question should ask what funding is available and that details be supplied.

Chair Naik summarized that Questions 2, 4, 6, 10, and 12 are to be kept on Page 1.

XCAP Members agreed to remove Question 17 and Question 22 under process.

XCAP Member Templeton advocated that there should be an educational campaign that warns the community when there is going to be more trains introduced on the tracks.

XCAP Member Carrasco wanted to see a question regarding handicap accessibility. Chair Naik suggested that be included in recommendations that go to City Council.

Chair Naik summarized that Question 13 and Question 23 are to be kept under process.

In regards to Question 12 under Viaduct, rephrase it to read Palo Alto Zoning Codes applicable to any of the alternatives. XCAP Member Carrasco reported that the Zoning Code does not cover the railroad.

Chair Naik summarized that Question 5 Under Viaduct should be removed and Question 12 should be rephrased.

In terms of Question 4 under Viaduct, XCAP Members discussed the difference between drawings, renderings, and 3-dimension perspectives. They agreed that the word Churchill be included in the question.

Question 16 is to be kept on Page 3.

In regards to Question 8 under viaduct, XCAP Members discussed having a bicycle and pedestrian crossing at Seal Avenue.

In regards to Question 22 under Viaduct, XCAP Member Shen announced that the question pertained to the Churchill Viaduct.

In regards to Question 26 under Hybrid, XCAP Members agreed to remove the question.

Regarding Question 27 under Trench, Chair Naik believed that the question is out of scope and that it should be removed.

XCAP Member Kanne wanted more clarification on at what point can they switch to no tie backs on the sides of the trench and that it be included in the drawings for the public to see. After discussion, the Committee formatted a question that asked if it is feasible to engineer a trench without tiebacks and what is the impact on expense.

Under General, remove Question 34, 36, and 38.

Under Revisions as of January 16, 2020, XCAP Members requested to add 'who pays' to Question 40 and describe maintenance costs as well as pumping costs, etc.

The discussion commenced regarding water and how a trench could cause new flood planes to be established. Mr. Shikada suggested that the Committee discuss water issues and invited members of the public who wish to weigh in on water issues to the meeting.

Regarding Question 3 under Groundwater, the Committee decided that it should be integrated into previous questions.

Mr. Shikada asked if any traffic questions should be suspended until after the traffic consultant's presentation.

Regarding Question 41 under Revisions as of January 16, 2020, XCAP Member Brail suggested it be removed as it is his question.

Regarding Question 44 under Revisions as of January 16, 2020, XCAP Member Burton stated his concern is regarding vertical curves. Chair Naik suggested that XCAP Member Burton reword the question and present it to Caltrain.

In terms of Question 47 under Revisions as of January 16, 2020, XCAP Members decided to remove the question because it is redundant.

In regards to Question 46 under Revisions as of January 16, 2020, several XCAP Members and suggested that inconvenience costs be removed from the question.

Chair Naik asked Staff what the feedback loop is between the City and Palo Alto Unified School District. Ms. Cotton Gaines reported that she will add additional questions and feedback onto the list after she reviews her notes. XCAP Member Reckdahl opined that now is the time for the school district to state their piece on if Churchill Avenue should stay open or not.

Regarding public safety Questions 7 and 8, XCAP Members discussed if 7 is too lengthy and the decision was made to shorten Question 7. Chair Naik added that a question to Caltrain is what are the standard safety measures that are being assumed on grade separation and right of way projects along the corridor. XCAP Member Klein suggested adding 'particularly those in excessive code' to Question 8.

Regarding Question Number 2 under water-creeks, the Committee agreed to have it removed.

Chair Naik requested that Norm Matteoni's presentation be transcribed verbatim as well as for the presentation by Sebastian Petty.

Chair Naik asked what the implications are if the Committee needed to have a general noise and vibration analysis to decide on an alternative. Ms. Cotton Gaines reported that a noise analysis is going to be conducted and that Staff will discuss it with AECOM. XCAP Members requested noise mitigations for electric trains as well as diesel trains.

XCAP Member Lau announced that Question 2 under Caltrain can be removed.

XCAP Member Carrasco stated that Questions 1 and 2 can be removed and Chair Naik suggested moving Question 3 to the traffic section.

Public Comment on this item.

An unidentified male asked if the questions that were eliminated from public safety were answered somewhere else. Chair Naik answered that it is in a document that is available on the website.

An unidentified male stated that tie backs for a trench could be eliminated if compression members were used across the top.

XCAP Member Klein put forward a motion to adopt the list of questions as revised and agreed too.

XCAP Member Burton seconded the motion.

The motion was passed unanimously.

6. Action: XCAP Recommendation to the Traffic Consultant – Requests for Additional Analysis to Decision

XCAP Member Brail cautioned the Committee about asking a lot of traffic questions because not all the questions may be answered as well as the community may not believe the answer. He did want to know what the impact would be if more trains were running.

Chair Naik asked if the model could assume 8 trains per hour, each direction, and report back what that looks like.

XCAP Member Carrasco agreed that the model should model the most up to date data.

Chair Naik noted that Caltrain is expecting to run 8 trains per hour all day and she wondered if new peak hours would be created because of that new schedule. The traffic study needed to model this new Caltrain schedule.

XCAP Member Templeton asked how Caltrain's plan of 8 trains per hour plays into the Committee's decisions.

Chair Naik opined that it helped the community better understand the reasoning behind grade separating.

XCAP Member Shen remarked that speed of construction might be a factor if the plan is coming soon and that could potentially affect the Committee's decision.

XCAP Member Reckdahl emphasized that City Council needed to understand the schedule for Caltrain and that a phased process for construction might be a bad idea.

XCAP Member Kanne advised XCAP Members to think about what additional work needed to be done by the traffic consultant and present those to the consultant.

Ms. Cotton Gaines noted that Staff is doing a Traffic Analysis for the two new ideas that City Council had introduced.

XCAP Member Carrasco disclosed that any train service can increase their capacity as they need to and do not need local approval.

XCAP Member Burton suggested that XCAP Members write up questions for the traffic consultant and submit them to staff via email.

XCAP Member Templeton suggested the Traffic Ad-Hoc Committee be tasked with drafting traffic questions.

Chair Naik agreed that it is a good idea.

XCAP Member Cho announced that she would help XCAP Member Kanne and XCAP Member Carrasco draft questions for the traffic consultant.

XCAP Member Reckdahl wanted to know how much it would cost to do every iteration for all three alternatives for Churchill Avenue.

XCAP Member Burton did not believe that is necessary.

Chair Naik restated that several City Council Members want to explore the possibility of phasing a closure at Churchill Avenue and they would need all that data to understand if that idea is feasible.

XCAP Member Shen expressed that keeping Churchill Avenue open could mean that nothing happens at Embarcadero Road and the Committee needed to understand the consequences of that.

XCAP Member Reckdahl shared that one question for the traffic consultant should be about inducted demand on Alma Avenue and how accurate that calculation is.

An unidentified male cautioned that people make independent decisions and most models do not mimic that.

Ms. Yarkin disclosed that the Committee should look at accident data for each crossing because a lot of cars turn right onto the railroad tracks; as well as yearly data on kids biking to and from Pally High school.

XCAP Member Brail stated that traffic accident data is available on the University of Berkeley's website but it may be limited to accidents reported only to the police.

An unidentified male wanted to know what the impacts would be if traffic is directed onto Kingsley Road and if the Price Proposition would increase traffic on Churchill Avenue west of the tracks.

XCAP Member Cho proposed that the Committee be polled on what alternatives they are leaning toward.

Chair Naik liked that idea but expressed that it is something that needed to be discussed offline.

7. Staff Updates

None.

8. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 7:00 P.M.