

## **Expanded Community Advisory Panel (XCAP)**

**July 8, 2020, 4:00 PM**

Summary – Special Meeting (virtual, through Zoom)

### **1. Welcome and Roll Call**

Present: Gregory Brail, Phil Burton, Inyoung Cho (arrived late), Larry Klein, Nadia Naik, Keith Reckdahl, David Shen, Cari Templeton (left early)

Absent: Tony Carrasco

### **2. Oral Communications**

Kathryn Jordan reiterated opposition to any recommendation to close Churchill Avenue and brought up the question of grade separation. She referenced the XCAP memo from the Chair about the draft outline of the XCAP report, the first item of the draft is "why do we need separations". It's referenced that the reason for that is the increased number of trains and references Caltrain's business plan. According to Caltrain on its webpage, that business plan is paused and Caltrain is focused on recovery planning due to COVID-19. That means that business plan is no longer operative considering Caltrain's ridership is down 97 percent currently. That business plan being paused brings up the need for grade separations and also the previously very optimistic service increases that were based on the very optimistic tripling of ridership projections that are no longer valid since Caltrain says its business plan is paused and considering it has lost 95 percent of its ridership. Pre-COVID Caltrain ridership has been flat since 2016 and lost riders in 2019. Pre-COVID the Bay Area population was (lost audio). So, discussions about traffic congestion, long commutes, etc. are no longer aligned with reality. When talking about the need for grade separations, those things need to be considered.

Teri Llach noted the previous speaker's comments were interesting and she understood what she was trying to say. Fundamentally though, if a decision is made on Churchill and the options are on the table, the only one that makes sense is closing Churchill. The fact that the Fire and Police say it's fine, the traffic report from Hexagon said it was fine, it will cost much less, and many less years of building, it is the only solution if something is going to be done. There is no reason to spend many millions of dollars on something that is not needed. The means some people will have to drive a little farther, but taking people's property and land to do some of the options is a nonstarter. It is not right. Don't do a partial underpass or viaduct.

David Kennedy pointed out that the City's Comprehensive Plan says that the cross connections between the community should be maintained and enhanced, and closing Churchill would not do that. He also asked that XCAP spend more time looking at the ped/bike interface. He either walks to drives anywhere and notes it is quite dangerous walking through an underpass where bikes are. He also remarked at the last meeting there was some questions about whether XCAP should proceed with recommendations or not. He urged the XCAP present recommendations for these crossings. Grade

separations should have been done years ago. If these are not done immediately, there will at least be a plan to forward when funding becomes available.

Lisa Nissim lives in Southgate and supports connectivity and connectiveness. The railroad tracks already cut them off and she urged XCAP to do anything but close Churchill.

Susan Newman wanted to clarify the point about whether the traffic analysis that has been done did, indeed, show things will be fine if Churchill is closed. She believed closing Churchill will result in a Level F and worse at Oregon and El Camino. Many who head south on Alma now will need to take that route when coming out of Southgate. Closing Churchill is not okay and many residents don't feel comfortable accepting the projects even on the other intersections that were studied. She agreed with Ms. Nissim's comment about the prospect of being separated from the rest of Palo Alto and having only one route out of the neighborhood. That would hurt residents in Southgate and harm the neighborhood.

Inder Monga encouraged the XCAP not to close Churchill. The traffic surrounding the high school will not lessen and closing Churchill will spill traffic to other intersections and cause issues there. This is not so much about destroying a neighborhood as it is about making things flow easily from north to south. He urged XCAP to look at other creative options such as the partial underpass and the grade separation. The issues about taking land are solvable problems.

Eduardo Llach (audio issues) commented the current data on mitigation at Oregon and Embarcadero with the closure of Churchill continues to point to better traffic throughout the City. Palo Alto has about six or seven crossings east and west and all the cities north and south have significantly less. From a community perspective it is clear that the other cities are managing fine with far less crossings east and west. Because of that, he urged XCAP to focus on what makes sense for the whole City, and the mitigation studies done and traffic analysis point to fixing Embarcadero and Oregon and closing Churchill. That would increase the safety of the children and everyone in the neighborhood. There will also be a great improvement in noise, not having the train whistles at Churchill.

Adrian Brandt noted he is the Vice Chair of the Citizens Advisory Committee for Caltrain and keeps abreast of what's going on with the train. Last week Caltrain reported ridership had doubled from the lowest point but it is still a small number. He also observed in following this process, it is important to preserve community connectivity and at-grade connections that are very bike and community and pedestrian friendly. To that end, if cost was not a factor, he sees the viaduct as the most attractive approach for Churchill, because it does not involve any property to be taken, it is twenty-feet high in the worst possible configuration at the crossing. There is landscaping and trees and heavily planted neighborhoods on both sides of the right-of-way in Palo Alto, the visual impact would be limited. It would have no impact on creating barriers to connecting the two sides of the community. There is space beneath that could be activated and no substantial sound difference.

Rob Levitsky remarked that Embarcadero and Oregon are not broken and it is unfortunate that so many people who want to close Churchill are blaming

Embarcadero or seem to think that Gary Black has some magic bullet to fix things. Mr. Black's own study said that two-thirds of the cars that would normally cross Churchill would probably come to Embarcadero and about a third would go to Oregon. It is not fair to dump the cars from closing Churchill onto Embarcadero or Oregon and put a signal at High Street. This would be a fourth signal within about a quarter mile between Embarcadero, Town and Country. Regarding fewer crossings in Menlo Park, Menlo Park is half the size of Palo Alto and doesn't have as many commuters coming in every day. He felt Churchill should not be closed.

### **3. XCAP Report Outline**

Chair Naik advised at the last meeting the decision seemed to be to keep going and try to get to a final report. With the loss of several members, she tried to reassign sections to everybody. She announced that XCAP received an email today that Adina Levin will be leaving XCAP. She heads up Friends of Caltrain and also works with many other transportation nonprofits. She is trying to keep transit funding among other things. She thought she could have attended some meetings, but not all and since this will go into deliberations, she didn't think it would be an effective way for her to participate. In the memo to XCAP, Ms. Levin was listed as helping XCAP Member Shen, so that will have to be figured out. XCAP Member Templeton was moved to the analysis section. XCAP Members Reckdahl and Burton were asked to work Ms. Kanne's draft. XCAP Member Brail was added to other considerations.

XCAP Member Templeton remarked the work she is doing on the matrix fits naturally into the section she has been assigned.

XCAP Member Reckdahl advised he can do whatever needs to be done.

XCAP Member Brail noted he has the draft from Ms. Levin. His concern is that it is very long and needs to talk about the key points to get across in that sections. He would like to see safety included in section about the need for grade separation. The safety statistics for Caltrain, especially in Palo Alto are pretty bad and he would like to remind the community of that.

Chair Naik replied adding a 1.5 that talked about safety would be fine.

XCAP Member Burton volunteered working with XCAP Member Brail on that.

XCAP Member Brain indicated he wasn't sure what to do in section 6.2. He asked if there was someone in staff to coordinate with to help consolidate the things received and he would write a summary about that.

Chair Naik responded there was a letter received from PAUSD and there has been input from a bicycle coalition. That would require gathering things more than writing.

XCAP Member Shen advised he would share the working outline with XCAP Member Templeton that is more expanded. They will try to finish up as much as possible by August 12, when school starts again.

XCAP Member Burton referred to the schedule and noted he was listed for items 1.2, 1.3 and 4. He thought it might be a better use of his time and skill set to do 3.2 and have somebody else to 1.2 and 1.3.

Chair Naik referred to 1.2 and didn't there were any directions from City Council and there is a draft for 1.1 that could be tweaked. She thought 3.2 could be a compilation of things drawn on the matrix document that showed things that might require a design exception.

XCAP Member Reckdahl advised he could help XCAP Member Burton with 3.2.

Chair Naik asked staff for help figuring out the best way to share with XCAP members eventually and entire draft that could be seen? Can XCAPers work off line on the drafts without violating the Brown Act?

Mr. Kamhi responded he would have to check with Legal for that answer. He thought the best way was would be to share the draft at each meeting. If all the chapters were separated into groups, it should be okay, but once it spreads through the whole XCAP it probably needs to be a public document.

Chair Naik specifically noted Google Docs allows a link that is visible to anyone who has the link but cannot edit. In using that link you can see version history, so as long as in the comments, there is no deliberation with one another, the edits and suggested edits could be seen along the way.

Mr. Kamhi replied possibly that link could be made available to the public at each meeting. He will check with Legal on that.

XCAP Member Burton asked about 3.2, is this talking about just the recommendations, or all the different alternatives under study?

Chair Naik thought it was all the different alternatives. Part of this is laying out for Caltrain all the places there were issues, like design exemptions being needed. That is helpful when Caltrain is thinking about their entire process. There may be less on the South Palo Alto tunnel which it was agreed the Group would not focus on. But on anything else, the more details about the issues or constraints, the better. What could be included are the emails from the civil engineers who volunteered and gave their perspective on water issues and storm issues.

#### Public Comment

No speakers.

#### **4. Presentation by Sebastian Petty of Caltrain**

Chair Naik clarified this is not a presentation, but a discussion with Sebastian Petty.

Sebastian Petty, Caltrain Deputy Chief of Planning explained he is responsible for all planning, including capital planning, operations planning and long-range and policy planning. He related that Caltrain's ridership has been severely impacted by the

pandemic in a way that is similar to commuter rail in other places. This is fundamentally a commuter rail service, a service pattern that is very oriented on getting people go and from work. A lot of the ridership base has traditionally been more white-color workers and many of whom can work from home. In the first several months of the pandemic, service was cut down to about 42 trains, just a local only service and scrambled to make sure safety protocols were put in place for employees and customers. Since the service has increased to about 70 trains per day and that is retaining hourly local service throughout the day and layering in some limited stop service during the day. Looking forward, some service planning is being done about how to adjust that service further and that might happen in the early fall and how to sync that up with a planned service change on BART. It is likely there will be further service changes that will happen before the pandemic ends. It is a significant challenge to Caltrain to lose the majority of riders, in part because the business model as it existed pre-pandemic was about 70 percent reliant on passenger-generated revenues to support the operating budget, such as ticket sales or revenue sources such as parking fees. That is almost entirely gone now which puts Caltrain in a tremendously difficult financial position because it does not have an underlying dedicated source of funding they control. There is no dedicated tax measure that they could bond against. They are relying on federal recovery funding made available to transit agencies through the CARES Act. That funding flows into the region through MTC. In the first wave Caltrain did relatively well, receiving about \$50 million and that is paying the bills now. They don't expect to get as much from the second outlay. A term that came along with the CARES Acts was that they were asked very strongly to not lay off or furlough anyone and they have not. That is one of the reasons they are running a fairly high level of service currently, labor costs are relatively fixed and fuel is cheap. Depending on the second influx of funding, they are looking at late fall when money will run out. They are looking at various options where funding could come from in the immediate term and the longer term and looking at their cost structure to try to understand the options available as money runs out and service is cut. This was intended to provide a context of where Caltrain is right now and what they are focused on. In terms of what Caltrain is thinking of in terms of grade separations, they are actively involved with a number of grade separation projects along the corridor. Most of those projects are being funded typically from outside sources, such as a county sales tax, Mountain view has been funding much of the work and leveraging some VTA funding. Caltrain is planning to proceed with the corridor-wide grade separation study and the funding for that was secured in the past year's capital budget. They have been publicly committed to that project and the long-term future of the corridor.

XCAP Member Reckdahl asked how Caltrain is funded, what is not obtained through fares?

Mr. Petty responded they have an operating budget and a capital budget that are passed every year. The operating budget in past years has been about 70 percent funded with mainly fares, a small amount from parking and some amounts that come from things like rental income and advertising income at the stations. The remainder of the operating budget comes from some outside grant sources, state funding that can be flexed between operating and capital. The balance of the operating funding comes from the three counties that Caltrain runs through, who are the members of the

Peninsula Joint Powers Board. On the operating budget that is based on a formula that relates to boardings. Those contributions are negotiated on an annual basis and historically has been the lowest straw that sets the level for everyone. The capital budget conceptually thinking has having two parts. The first could be called minor improvements and state of good repair. Cyclical capitalized maintenance, minor improvements that will be fully funded in a year that will not have their own funding plans. That amount is generally pretty steady year to year and much of that money comes from the Federal Government and some fixed contributions from the counties. The second part of the capital budget is big projects and looking at past budgets those amounts vary hugely. That variance us related to using a particular year's budget to issue a major contract, such as electrification, grade separation.

XCAP Member Burton remarked it was his impression SamTrans did not directly manage the employees. There is a third-party agency they contract with. How has COVID impacted that relationship.

Mr. Petty replied the operations of Caltrain, including the engineers, conductors, basic maintenance of the system, such as right-of-way maintenance, vehicle maintenance are contracted to Transit America Services, Inc. They are managed through a third-party contract, most of the employees are part of various trade unions.

XCAP Member Brail inquired if Caltrain is going to make it? He feels the whole region will need the peninsula good passenger rail transportation for decades. What can be done to make sure there will be a Caltrain in a few years?

Mr. Petty responded they are thinking about that a lot. The business plan is paused, it is not going away. Decisions the Board has made have not been voided. One of the reasons it has been paused is because his bandwidth is tapped out doing recovery planning. A lot of effort has been spent thinking about the potential range of futures Caltrain may be facing. Caltrain will do their scenario planning, the degree over time that some of the changes in travel patterns are fundamental and lasting versus somewhat more incremental. The degree of political cohesion and support Caltrain receives and how that translates into monetary support is also of concern. The Federal bailout funding is appreciated but it is not enough for the region as a whole. Also, whether and when there may be further Federal funding coming is unknown. There is still an active conversation about a potential sales tax measure. That is a slightly longer-term option in terms of what that funding would bring in. The railroad is in an extremely perilous position and they are looking at many options. This month they will know for sure how much money is coming through the second wave of the original bailout funding. Decided this month will be if the Board and member agencies are interested in moving forward with a sales tax. It should be known before Congress goes into recess in August if there is any chance there will be another Federal package in the near-term. Options will be laid out and decisions made based on that. One of the reasons some of the recovery-planning efforts were pivoted into the business plan framework is partly because they have set up some pretty robust outreach channels for that effort. As things go along with the recovery planning, and talking about what is happening to the railroad, they will try to have that conversation in public so people can weigh in.

Chair Naik asked for information about the grade corridor study.

Mr. Petty replied that was an effort for the corridor and one of the things that became clear in doing that is that there is a real grade separation question that needs to be substantively addressed. There was work done within the context of the business plan about different dimensions of the scale of the problem, including some kind of corridor-wide rough cost in looking at efforts that are underway as well as crossings where there is not an effort underway but there is a reasonable expectation that someone at some point in the future might want to separate them. The scale is likely in the millions of dollars. Part of that work led them to a place where they felt it was important that grade separations had their own corridor-wide effort to think about this. Previously this had been addressed by the railroad on a city-by-city basis, usually with Caltrain being in a reactive mode. One of the commitments they made as part of the business plan process is to do this effort. In terms of what that effort will entail and what the timeframe will look like, he noted he will be a little vague about the scope because Caltrain needs to go through a corridor and community process to develop the scope of that exercise. They will need to go through an initial phase of the study which will need to involve engagement with all of the different communities and interests that intersect with the issue of grade separation. That would include all the local jurisdictions on the corridor, regional and state partners. Those will all have a role in scoping this process out. The anticipates the first stage of the study will begin sometime this fall. That will be a learning and scoping effort with the corridor and communities. This would be a scope from a technical perspective of what needs to be covered as well as discussion of how a study like this will be governed. Caltrain has a decision-making role and a very specific perspective on grade separations, but communities do as well. These are projects that have multiple beneficiaries, impacts on many people. A challenging issue is how to run a study like that in a way where communities feel like they are having meaningful input into the process and are able to buy into it. But there is a single railroad that is a service provider and also a corridor manager for 50 miles and 21 different local jurisdictions that corridor touches. Also needed to be figured out early in the process is exactly what the contracting mechanism for the study will look like. There is budget authority to hire a position to run this study and he hopes to find that person. It is important to have a single point of contact because it is uncertain that this will be one large contract that goes out. Work may be broken up between multiple contractors and phases. Currently Caltrain has several active contracts that give them a large amount of flexibility to procure people to do this work. There is an on-going grade separation management contract with AECOM, and recently the Board approved many planning on-call contracts. There are six robust teams, well qualified primes and significant subcontractors, including those with international expertise. Caltrain emphasized that thinking about grade separations and grade separation policy was something they were interested in. They do have the ability to RFP or issue smaller source contracts for a specific individual with a lot of expertise.

Chair Naik inquired what the timeframe of that scope of work was.

Mr. Petty replied the hope was to start in the fall and that is probably about a six-month process. The second phase of the study, from a Caltrain perspective are things that they heard or think of as important to look at. It is helpful by reframing the conversation in terms of what are the big questions or issues. Caltrain has seen an unprecedented amount of interest in grade separation from communities along the

corridor in the last five years, since it became clear electrification was moving forward, going into construction. The costs for constructing these projects are rising and that is related to the cost escalation in the Bay Area as a whole, the railroad is getting more complicated with electrified infrastructure, positive train control and more complex systems. There is a growing concern on Caltrain's part that they are seeing the interest go up, not a realistic level of funding to complete the projects. There are not programs outside of local programs that fund these things. There are no meaningful Federal programs currently. State funding for grade separations has been fairly miniscule relative to the size of the project. Construction methodology and standards are challenging. What provoked thinking about the problems seems to be what is happening city-by-city on the railroad and it is not clear this will be a good way to get this done in the long run. It is not necessarily wrong and doesn't mean individual cities can't progress that way as they develop funding. Regarding the core areas to be emphasized in a policy framework, this effort will not try to design specific grade separations or crossings. They do want the process to first look at construction standards and design standards comprehensively, so individual projects are not asked to go through onerous design exemption processes. There is some work around construction sequencing needed and how construction contracting approaches and sequencing approaches can be used to keep costs and impacts under control. A conversation is needed about funding sources and that is why it is important the corridor as a whole be involved with representation from the region and the state. Whether there are novel funding approaches that make sense to explore on a corridor-wide bases rather than a city or railroad acting independently. There is a major component around organization analysis and governance around the delivery of these projects, what it means to manage a corridor as distinct from operating a railroad. What is the structure for administering funding, the structure for making decisions around issues related to grade separations that span the difference something that is clearly a city decision versus a rail decision? There is a lot of work needed on the community side, some relating to what these projects can be beyond grade separations, connectivity, other modes of access in cities, other changes to the transportation network, grade separations as a type of public space. Another reason to approach this from a community level is because there are 21 different jurisdictions on the corridor that are very different. Cities have different capacities to engage in this work. That encompasses the spectrum of what Caltrain is thinking about in terms of this effort.

Chair Naik related that XCAP is hoping to make recommendations to City Council for the preferred alternative which then says that has to have some further design work on. There are several of the new alternatives where having a different construction methodology could help. The response was to use the most conservative one possible but it is difficult to know what that will be. Second, one of the letters received discussed the rail corridor use policy, the potential of having four tracks somewhere between San Francisquito Creek and she would like to understand Mountain View. The concern was the response was that they might be needed at Churchill where none of the designs even contemplate the possibility of four tracks. They would fit in the south, but in the north, there is a question if they would fit. Any information about that aspect would be helpful.



Mr. Petty responded, on the four-track subject, within the context of the business plan and the long-range service vision the Board adopted, the direction to Caltrain from the Board was to consider the very long-range future of the corridor including the potential to run many more trains and the idea that at some point some four-track sections would be needed. In Palo Alto, those are associated with high-speed rail's proposed use of the corridor. The analysis they did established a broad area of the corridor where four tracks could be needed in the future and the notion that somewhere in that range there would be a smaller section that would need to be four tracks. It is open ended and encoded that into their rail corridor use policy which says be careful of permanently encumbering any land you own because you might need it for a project in the future. It is known that within the segment that is flagged from Palo Alto to Mountain View, there are parts of that corridor where it does not make sense to put four tracks. There is work needed to be done with both communities to narrow that range down and think about where that infrastructure could realistically fit. He emphasized they are not trying to tell communities at this point that it needs to go in a place where communities have established that it didn't look like it would work. Regarding Caltrain's land policy perspective, they are still very conservative. Caltrain starts to talk about what the next steps in Palo Alto's process might be and it may come out that that becomes a very important thing for Caltrain to reach a determination on of what areas it might be acceptable to continue thinking about four tracks versus areas where it clearly will not work.

XCAP Member Burton inquired about timing and asked when the study that could start near the end of the year and continue into 2021 might be concluded?

Mr. Petty replied in terms of the overall conclusion of the study, that is probably a multi-year effort, so about two to two and a half years total.

XCAP Member Burton also asked assuming Palo Alto came up with some preferred alternatives it would like to see done and the rationale would be more than Caltrain, and through some unknown mechanism money was available to move forward, did Mr. Petty see any impediment to Palo Alto doing their grade separations or do all the grade separations up and down the peninsula have to be done about the same time?

Mr. Petty responded if all grade crossings suddenly became funded, it would be a significant challenge in constructing them. One scenario could be if Caltrain wanted to proceed simultaneously with doing all the work, they would need to look at a different approach to construction and some severe impacts to service during the period of construction. If the money appeared, they would figure out a way to make it work. If there is a desire to have a lot of construction going on concurrently on the corridor, that will not work in terms of the way they currently do construction and operate service. To be prepared for that scenario, they would need to do a lot of planning work ahead of time.

XCAP Member Burton asked if Palo Alto somehow came up with all or most of the money necessary for doing one, two or three grade separations and had a design plan for that, and that put them ahead of all the other jurisdictions, would Caltrain be receptive to that?

Mr. Petty replied that is how it works currently. Whenever a project gets its funding together and gets close enough Caltrain says okay, the railroad can support a certain amount of construction at a time, and will plan for a certain time when there will be intensive construction going on in this region. That will probably be how it will continue to work. If it was just Palo Alto that suddenly had its funding, Caltrain would look closely at the designs and construction methodology, understand how that would affect their operations and the timing would depend on what other construction projects Caltrain had already committed to. That can't be locked in until they get designs and some degree of certainty around the majority of funding is looking real and then assign dates.

XCAP Member Brail wondered if Palo Alto should stop its work and wait for Caltrain's multi-year study? If Palo Alto had the money, how would they find out which designs are acceptable or not to Caltrain. Would this process create any economies of scale? Is there any way the whole peninsula working together on grade separation could find a place to execute each project more efficiently or find ways to look for funding in a more coordinated way? Are there any ways that by working together, the cost could be reduced or a better chance of finding the funding needed?

Mr. Petty thought there may be approaches where Palo Alto can do both. He wasn't sure XCAP needed to stop what they were doing and only focus on a corridor-wide effort. In terms of economies of scale, that is why Caltrain is intending to do this work. Right now, because of the governance and the underlying funding, these things are being done in the slowest most expensive way possible. The areas to look for some economies of scale were around designing and construction outcomes. Caltrain knows there are valid questions about construction standards and methods. They would like to dig into those comprehensively and on a corridor-wide basis, so it is not a situation where Palo Alto or a different city is asking if they can get a design exemption on something and an analysis is done. That would, hopefully, translate to some outcomes that yield construction savings or the potential for designs that are maybe more desirable from a community perspective. The other economies of scale are looking at construction. There are questions that are important to ask and answer, if one crossing is grade separated, is it important to do the one next to it at the same time versus leaving that for the future. How does that translate into thinking about how you would actually deliver work from a contracting perspective? In talking with people in other parts of the country and around the world who have done this, the highest factor in their prioritization of when they are doing these things is how they can group them together for contracting purposes. The last point is about funding. When cities that have done grade separations in the last few decades have been very reliant on county funding and Caltrain has seen a lack of success is going after Federal funding for individual grade crossings. At that level, these projects are not competitive for those sources. There is a lot of power in working together as a corridor in terms of advocating for new sources of funding to be created or in a way they are able to articulate benefits of projects more comprehensively.

XCAP Member Brail has observed that Caltrain seemed to have a lot of accidents and that has to affect the level of service that can be delivered to the customers.

Mr. Petty replied when you put some of those on an individual crossing level, those kinds of delays into a cost/benefit analysis, it doesn't come out as being something that makes the project clearly pop out as an obvious choice for funding.

XCAP Member Brail responded if looking corridor wide at the number of incidents along the Caltrain that might be reduced if there were no grade separations at all, you would have an easier time defining something.

Mr. Petty explained it is when you talk about corridor wide, you can talk about it in terms of other benefits, like the actual benefit of what you can do with a grade separated corridor in terms of moving people. There are the safety benefits, but also things like time savings.

XCAP Member Burton asked for an explanation of sequencing, either in a Palo Alto only context or a corridor context.

Mr. Petty advised at a high level, it is how you're contracting for these things or as individual projects, issuing a contract to do multiple projects, changing the service pattern to accommodate the construction of multiple projects versus doing them one at a time. In a Palo Alto context there is the opportunity to clearly think about all the ones within Palo Alto, but there are many places in the corridor where there may be two very close grade separations that straddle a city line. There are benefits to thinking about the sequencing of these from a construction standpoint, how it affects railroad operations, but also how contracts are packaged.

XCAP Member Burton then asked if high-speed rail made the assumption of a completely grade separated corridor or will high-speed rail accept a transitional period with some crossings still in place?

Mr. Petty answered it did not make the assumption of a completely grade separated corridor. On the Caltrain-owned corridor, the assumption is they would be operating at 110 miles per hour blended with Caltrain's service. The criteria for when a grade separation is required on a speed basis is 125 miles per hour. They have not made grade separations part of their plans. They are looking at measures like quad gates and other kinds of safety improvements, but not grade separations.

XCAP Member Burton noted Mr. Petty mentioned how the railroad industry is very conservative, but by looking at Caltrain's standards and the documentation, they all point back to larger, more comprehensive industry standards or government standards like AREMA or AAR or similar bodies. He asked if Caltrain would be comfortable changing or modifying or departing from those standards?

Mr. Petty advised there are many standards that Caltrain probably won't be comfortable changing but there are some that have consistently been asked of Caltrain, such as what grade is acceptable, that don't relate to an AREMA standard. They relate to the relationship with freight on the corridor and how that is looked at. This somewhat goes back to the economy of scale question. When looking at each of these one by one, it is a conversation about an exception and what would be tolerated within a particular context. At a corridor-wide level, there may be an opportunity to

have that conversation in a fuller way. What would make the most sense for the corridor as a whole and is there a way to make UP whole and comfortable with that.

XCAP Member Burton indicated UP was looking to sub out their operations to a short-line operator and asked for any new information on that.

Mr. Petty replied there is no major update other than there is a lot going on right now with COVID and the economy.

XCAP Member Burton then asked if Caltrain planned to engage with the local House of Representatives at the Federal level as part of this governance issue?

Mr. Petty answer yes, but not necessarily just the governance issue, but to the issue of grade crossings as a whole. They engage with the Federal delegation regularly and at times have advocated for increased funding of grade separations. As this gets going, it is absolutely something they would make sure their Federal delegation was aware of. He hoped a potential source of funding for grade separation in the corridor might be from the Federal Government in the future.

XCAP Member Reckdahl asked about Caltrain's comfort level with shoofly tracks, the safety impact and the schedule impacts.

Mr. Petty answered he is probably not the best person to answer that question, but that is the methodology that, if asked to build a grade separation tomorrow, they would need a shoofly track, it would be electrified and trains would run over it. Currently, shoofly tracks not electrified are being used in San Mateo and that is the methodology used to build them. They are built to the standards required and there is a tremendous amount of due diligence that Caltrain does to make sure they are safe and acceptable. If it is part of the corridor, yes. If it was a mega project to simultaneously retrofit the entire corridor, that is a different story.

Chair Naik inquired about Caltrain's role in helping cities choose preferred alternatives. She feels Palo Alto hasn't had the relationship with Caltrain that they have had with other cities.

Mr. Petty responded there were two different answers. One, in general over the last seven years, Caltrain has laid out their standards, and whatever a city chooses to meet those standards has to be constructible and something that will work for the railroad. They viewed the selection of a preferred alternative as being a community decision. There was a time when Caltrain was talking about an initial version of high-speed rail where it would be a fully elevated, grade separated four-track system. There was a lot of concern along the peninsula about that. As a result, there was a retraction from Caltrain. The question about the relationship Caltrain has with cities doing grade separations, right now there is no dedicated Caltrain money for grade separations, no dedicated money to support grade separation engineering on a case-by-case basis. When other cities have done the work, in some cases cities have asked Caltrain to lead to work because they feel they don't have the staff capacity to do it. In other cases, they have asked for somewhat heightened participation by Caltrain, especially as the project advances. Usually there is funding available to support the railroad's participation.

Chair Naik remarked she imagined one of the byproducts of things that XCAP could talk about with Council is that it would take a commitment of funding to be able to get to the next level.

Mr. Petty remarked on the question of would it make sense for Palo Alto to go their own way or fully jump into Caltrain's corridor-wide project. He thought, as designs advance and move towards construction, the need is there for the railroad to be more heavily involved. This could be a service agreement with Palo Alto directly or a three-party agreement with VTA and Palo Alto if they were contributing significant funding and Caltrain to cover costs. Those costs would be higher if Caltrain needed to do work that is looking at things outside of the normal standards that would generate a lot of work the railroad needed to do. As projects advance, they get more expensive because the level of design increases dramatically, the level of review necessary also increases dramatically.

Chair Naik indicated that it sounded like Caltrain was saying they are excited to discuss grade separations, but they are not quite ready to talk right now. XCAP is struggling with the question of trying to push to be able to look at alternatives now, where, if Caltrain is able to have the corridor-wide study, things like loosening of the percent grade standards might happen automatically, or the jacked box construction methodology used in New York could definitely be applied in the corridor. That might save some future money. However, there has been an effort to say the Measure B money has been raised and if it is not spent, somebody else will take it away. That has added a level of pressure to develop the preferred alternatives and study it further. If all the answers are not known for all the alternatives, it makes a specific alternative harder to support, especially if extra money is needed to even look at it. Is it saying here what the pros and cons are of each alternative and when moving into the next phase offer the recommendations from Caltrain in terms of technical answers needed? Could those be frontloaded first?

Mr. Petty explained what Chair Naik just described could be an approach but he is reticent to commit to that now. He speculated there might be an approach where there may be ways to provisionally select a preferred alternative with an awareness that there is work going on that could allow for a better or more preferable option to emerge that would fit within the preferred alternative. That is easier to do if you are thinking about advancing some work on something that would be more impactful and you may get to a better answer that has fewer impacts and is within the footprint of the design.

Mr. Kamhi remarked these were unfair questions to ask Mr. Petty. Those are the decisions that the City Council needs to make. He would like to see an effort to take to the next phase led by whatever recommendations XCAP makes, but with some sense that this is just moving into the next phase of this project and that next phase will need to be coordinated with Caltrain through their study. XCAP's end product might say, under these circumstances, this is the scenario that is preferred and potentially is Caltrain's study determines that certain things are feasible or recommended, that there may be a different preferred alternative or a priority ranking. That would be staff's recommendation.

Chair Naik thought it was important for the public to hear that even if XCAP doesn't have the exact answer, moving slowly towards the answer even with some caveats is still really progress in this complicated process.

Mr. Petty indicated what Caltrain is not looking at in this study is what should happen geometrically at specific intersections. Clearly, Palo Alto has advanced a lot of thinking about that and that will be important because Caltrain will not be doing that. Having a city process that is thinking about that and advancing choices is critical for Palo Alto.

XCAP Member Klein assumed in the second phase of the study that Caltrain would want to hear from city representatives advocating for various changes or Caltrain adopting a particular construction method over another.

Mr. Petty replied yes, especially things like standards, construction methods. Due diligence is needed to understand what is possible, what the strengths are and to articulate those transparently for everyone. He also noted it is particularly helpful to have people advocate the why. The more these projects are understood as being both a rail project and a community project and have mutual implications, all those perspectives have value and importance and that helps everyone make better decisions.

XCAP Member Brail thought it was a benefit to the City and to Caltrain if XCAP had some clear recommendation on alternatives more preferable based on what is known today than other alternatives. It is not necessarily helpful for XCAP to get into construction techniques or sequencing and could possibly be a waste of time to get too deeply into that before Caltrain is able to do it in a more corridor-wide manner. Rather than give up and come back in three years, XCAP needs to continue the work of coming up with preferred alternatives with the current information to inform the process going forward.

Chair Naik thought she heard if you know there are alternatives you can't get into and there are technical reasons why, understand what they are so when Caltrain is looking at this, they can understand what these are.

XCAP Member responded it sounds like perhaps there would be a situation where the recommendation was what is wanted but it may not be possible because of Caltrain's restrictions, so the second best is taken.

### Public Comment

Barbara remarked the COVID virus has created a fundamental change in many aspects of life. Virtual space is being swapped for physical space and Silicon Valley is embracing work at home or anywhere. This shift clearly says this grade separation exercise along the corridor needs to be put on pause. It is a waste of time, money and destruction of a town to address an issue whose underlying assumptions are obviously no longer valid.

Adrian Brandt commented on the question regarding the number of incidents that Caltrain has experienced. Easily over 90 percent of the incidents are suicides and Caltrain has made an effort to not publicize them. Many suicides happen at stations.

There needs to be clarity about the number of incidents and the fraction that are actually avoidable by grade separations. As long as there is access to the tracks at stations versus modern systems where there are platform screen doors, he felt about 90 percent of the incidents are not avoidable with grade separations.

262 caller Roland remarked there is a lot going on with MTC (phonetic) and that should be looked at, Planned Bay Area 2050. They decided to break this up between currently and 2035, the second period between 2035 and 2050. There are many projects advancing through period one and the grade separation would not make it. He suggested watching the planning meetings on Friday. They say if you adopt a period two project, you can currently begin an advanced true project development phases and seek environmental approvals. This says that projects in period two cannot advance directly which means you can't start building this. There is a caveat, once you get the environmental clearance, you will be able to advance a project from period two to period one on two conditions. First is somehow magically all the money shows up. The second is figuring out a way to make this project more acceptable and cost effective.

Eduardo Llack related that he has seen a train hit a car on Churchill. There is a significant safety issue with having at-grade crossings. He encouraged XCAP to continue their work. Because of COVID the pendulum has swung towards working at home, but in the long term, there may be 10 to 20 percent more people working from home that before COVID, but many things will go back to normal. The work being done currently will probably not be helpful in a year or two, but will be in five, ten or more years. He urged XCAP to think long term about this.

Chair Naik remarked she had a conversation with Ms. Levin about the Planned Bay Area about the phase one and phase two projects. She asked if that was a potential funding source to keep an eye on?

Mr. Petty answered what is important to understand is that grade separations are generally included programmatically in the plan. Where the phase one and phase two things are critical is around transit mega projects. It is a convoluted process at the best of times and has become more complicated with COVID and questions about faster Bay Area. It is a vehicle for how Federal and State funding would potentially flow into the region and how MTC is designating that. It does not produce funding on its own. Caltrain had initially submitted a large corridor-wide number of grade separations, and that was fiscally constrained out of the plan. Eligibility for grade separations as part of the plan are programmatically eligible. They generally haven't been major recipients of discretionary Federal or State funding previously, but there has never been a question about their eligibility to proceed forward.

Chair Naik noted presumably if after the two years of this corridor-wide project there was the one giant mega project that had a price tag, that would be the type of thing that could fly?

Mr. Petty advised that might need to be amended into the plan. If it was something that was coming with its own funding source, it would need to be part of the conversation. It is not necessarily something that will either enable or impede progress.

XCAP Member Brail indicated looking at the spreadsheet he did of all the rail accidents at grade crossings in Palo Alto since 2003, with one possible exception, the ones that resulted in a fatality were by the FRA ruled as suicide; however, that is less than 50 percent of all the grade crossing accidents in Palo Alto. He wanted to be careful about ruling that grade crossing safety is less of a problem because many are suicides. There are some safety issues in Palo Alto to address.

## **5. XCAP Member Updates and Working Groups Updates**

Chair Naik noted XCAP Member Templeton had to leave for the PTC Meeting. She is doing a spreadsheet where she has been able to take some of the criteria and break it down by what the general gist of the criteria is and creating a document that is modeled on a Swiss document done for Caltrain. It talks about constraints, wants and needs, what are must haves, what is nice to have, etc. Hopefully that will be available to discuss next week. The matrix will probably be back on the agenda as a discussion next week.

## **6. Staff Updates**

Mr. Bhatia indicated he had an update for a question raised at July 1<sup>st</sup> meeting, regarding if the underpass and hybrid options could be mixed and matched between Meadow and Charleston. AECOM clarified that the roadway improvements can be accommodated at each grade separation separately. Either one of the options could be chosen for the two grade locations; however, both Meadow and Charleston would require some kind of rail grade adjustment in their elevations. The reason is that when the tracks are raised fourteen feet on one, the transition that is required to come back to the original grade is more than the distance between the two intersections at the grade that is acceptable to Caltrain. Based on current methodology, the project would require longer shoofly anticipated just for one grade separation only.

Chair Naik requested a memo from either Mr. Bhatia or AECOM stating that information. The next meeting is scheduled for July 15 at 3:00 PM and then July 22.

## **7. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 6:11 P.M.