

Expanded Community Advisory Panel (XCAP)

July 22, 2020

Summary - Special Meeting
Virtual - Zoom

1. Welcome and Roll Call

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

Absent: Judy Kleinberg, Meghan Kanne, Patricia Lau

2. Oral Communications

Kathrine Jordon reported that Caltrain's Business Plan did not match up with its ridership demands, Caltrain has admitted that the Business Plan is no longer valid, and there will be no increase in trains. She summarized that it is premature that the XCAP is making recommendations to City Council with an outdated Business Plan.

David Kennedy acknowledged the hard work of the XCAP, but is concerned that all the alternatives do not seem to fit the grade crossings they are assigned too. He urged the XCAP to take advantage of the slow down that COVID-19 has caused and look for better alternatives.

3. Discussion/Action: Review Hexagon Final Traffic Report

Gary Black, Hexagon, noted that the difference between this report and the prior report is that Hexagon added analysis to the Partial Underpass Alternative for Meadow Drive and Charleston Road to allow U-turns at the Alma Street Plaza. He mentioned that the XCAP had requested a left turn lane pocket onto Alma Street from Meadow Drive, but Hexagon discovered that a left turn is feasible without adding a lane pocket. He confirmed that the new Traffic Report did include an increased number of trains, but it did not make much difference to the analysis.

Chair Naik asked if an increase in trains made a larger impact if the City did no improvements to crossings. Mr. Black confirmed that is correct.

XCAP Member Burton commented on the U-Turn at Alma Plaza and asked if there are any restrictions on the kinds of vehicles that can make that U-Turn. Mr. Black noted that the U-Turn can be made by cars and large trucks would not be able to make the U-Turn; including fire trucks.

XCAP Member Shen inquired about Page 3, the Churchill Avenue Closure operating at a Level of Service C, and if that referred to the turning movements that remain. He also wanted to know what caused the Level of Service to be a B for the AM period for the Partial Underpass and why the Viaduct is the worst option. Overall, he wanted to know why the surrounding intersections were not being analyzed. Mr. Black concurred that is correct for turning movements that remained. In terms of a Partial Underpass, there is only southbound control at Alma Street by the signal with northbound being

not controlled. The Viaduct maintained the four-way intersection while the Closure or the Partial Underpass Alternative made the intersection a T-intersection. Mr. Black answered that there is an Appendix Study that shows surrounding intersections that the XCAP has reviewed months prior.

In terms of the Meadow Drive and Charleston Road, XCAP Member Shen asked why the Viaduct is much worse than the Partial Underpass. In terms of the graphics it seemed that there is traffic from Meadow Drive that is getting routed to Charleston Road. Mr. Black restated that with the Viaduct, all existing traffic and turning movements are still there. In terms of the graphics, Mr. Black reiterated that those graphics did not include the U-Turn or a left turn from eastbound Meadow Drive to northbound Alma Street.

XCAP Member Brail voiced his concern about creating cut-through traffic in terms of the addition of the U-Turn and left-turn lane regarding Alma Street and Meadow Drive. He wanted to know if the hybrid option on Meadow Drive or the Partial Underpass Alternative on Charleston Road alleviated cut-through traffic. Mr. Black opined that the XCAP could use their judgment on where cars would be rerouted too.

XCAP Member Brail requested that an updated Figure 9B be drafted that included the added U-Turn and left turn. Mr. Black predicted that the only figure that would be of concern with the U-turn and left-turn is Figure 9B and 9E. XCAP Member Brail plugged that a hybrid at Meadow Drive and Partial Underpass at Charleston Road would fix Figure 9B and Mr. Black answered yes.

Mr. Black summarized that with the Partial Underpass Alternative all the movements are allowed at Charleston Road with six out of the eight movements allowed on Meadow Drive.

XCAP Member Carrasco inquired if bicycle numbers have been integrated into the calculations for Charleston Road and Meadow Drive as well as if the XCAP should refer to the graphics that AECOM has drafted to find where bicycle and pedestrians travel. Mr. Black noted that the bicycle calculations have been incorporated into the operations of the intersections. In terms of where bicycles would go under the different Design Alternatives, the graphic did show that.

Chair Naik asked if there are inducement numbers in the projects for the future. Mr. Black answered that the analysis is analyzed with existing counts as well as the 2030 Volume Forecast from the General Plan. The 2030 Volume Forecast assumed no train interruptions, so the numbers would never be higher than the 2030 numbers. Chair Naik stated that the model cannot account for a person's free will and how they may avoid certain intersections during certain times of the day.

Chair Naik thought that the Appendix the XCAP had received at a prior meeting discussing how an increase or decrease in cars causes a Level of Service change at an intersection is very helpful. Mr. Black summarized that most General Plans have a prediction on how many cars the City would allow on residential streets and having higher volumes of cut-through traffic is going to be noticeable in neighborhoods.

In terms of the traffic volumes on Churchill Avenue for the Underpass Alternative, Chair Naik asked why the numbers for existing volumes and future volumes do not change. Mr. Black was not sure why the numbers did not change significantly.

Chair Naik wanted to know how having only six car movements instead of eight impacted the intersection at Meadow Drive and Alma Street. Mr. Black explained that out of 2,500 cars, 170 would be rerouted depending on their direction of travel.

XCAP Member Burton inquired how the grade crossings could not be constrained in the 2030 Volume Forecast. Mr. Black explained that not constrained, or baseline, meant that they were not modeled with an increase in the number of trains at the crossing.

In terms of the Viaduct or the Partial Underpass, XCAP Member Burton asked where the cars came from or where are they going in terms of the 2030 Volume Forecast projections. Mr. Black noted that whether you have a Viaduct or not, the model is run with the same number and he predicted that induced traffic should not be a concern for the XCAP.

XCAP Member Carrasco mentioned that the Viaduct Alternative attracted more cars and asked where they are coming from. Mr. Black restated that the Viaduct Alternative does not change existing traffic and so the cars would not be diverted to other routes.

Chair Naik questioned if Mr. Black believes the 2030 Volume Forecast for Churchill Avenue Partial Underpass. Mr. Black commented that the 2030 Volume Forecast for Churchill Avenue Partial Underpass did make sense to him.

In terms of Churchill Avenue eastbound Partial Underpass Alternative, Chair Naik asked how many cars could turn north and south. Mr. Black predicted another 200 cars could go turn at that intersection.

Mr. Black and Chair Naik discussed induced travel and why it should not be a concern to XCAP Members. Mr. Black summarized that looking at it granularly, many people did not have a choice in which they travel to and from their daily destinations. So, alternative routes would not be pursued because it made no sense to detour when your normal route has improved. Chair Naik emphasized that Palo Altan's make daily choices on how they will get to their destination and improved intersections with grade separations will attract more people looking for the fastest route.

Chair Naik pointed out that there is an issue with the diagrams not matching what is described in the November report. Mr. Black confirmed that is an error and will be rectified.

Chair Naik requested to see bicycle routes and Safe Routes to School paths and emphasized that the XCAP does not have a clear picture and understanding in that area of decision. Mr. Phillip Kamhi, Chief Transportation Official, announced that he would look into it. Mr. Black added that showing bicycle travel on Alma Street and Embarcadero Street may help.

Public comment:

Edwardo Llach declared that on Page 39 of the Traffic Report there are the numbers of the traffic going in and out of Churchill Avenue. He declared that he supports closing Churchill Avenue and not closing Churchill Avenue will mean that the noise level will increase as well as increase the wait time on Alma Drive.

Jason Sensing (phonetics) assumed that a traffic light is included at Churchill Avenue for the Partial Underpass Alternative, even if Churchill Avenue is closed, which did not make sense, and suggested that the traffic light be removed. He disagreed with Mr. Black regarding induction traffic and he is surprised that was not included in the study.

Teri Llach agreed with Mr. Sensing (phonetics) comment regarding induction traffic and more cut-through traffic will happen. She is in support of closing Churchill Avenue.

Drew reported that a diagram showing the Undercrossing Alternative, a red arrow is drawn wrong, and there is no way to make a right turn on Kellogg Avenue from Churchill Avenue.

Richard Berkey (phonetics) specified that the assumption that all of the through traffic going westbound for the Partial Underpass is going to go north to Embarcadero Road did not make sense. Also, the left hand turns from Seale Avenue and Tennyson Avenue are impossible to make during peak hours. He is not supportive of the Partial Underpass.

Chair Naik agreed that Figure 4A, the turn onto Kellogg Avenue is not possible because there is a barrier there; as well as having no light at Churchill Avenue makes it nearly impossible to make a left out of Old Palo Alto and suggested having a light at Northern California Avenue.

4. Discussion/Action: Review Updated Matrix and Proposed XCAP-Generated Matrix

Millette Litzinger, AECOM, remarked that the first sheet of the page is a summary of the fact sheets. Highlights included updates to the legend, changes to the coloring, adjustments to the font sizes, adding the Caltrain right of way, and a footnote on all of the sheets indicating that the color rating is a comparison between alternatives.

XCAP Member Templeton declared that she liked the improvements.

XCAP Member Shen agreed that the readability has improved greatly. One thing that still confused him regarding the matrix included the Churchill Avenue Evaluation Criteria closure mitigations receiving two oranges but then the Partial Underpass received a three-blue count. Ms. Litzinger explained that the Closure Alternative is ranked lower because there is no crossing that goes across Caltrain as well as pedestrian routes. XCAP Member Shen continued to ask why the Churchill Avenue Closure cost \$50-\$65 million and that is the same orange square that is also given to

the Partial Underpass Alternative this is three times more expensive. Ms. Litzinger agreed that there is an error there.

In terms of Meadow Drive and Charleston Road, XCAP Member Shen asked why Row B, the Trench Alternative to Tunnel Passenger and Freight Alternative, is not three blues. Ms. Litzinger reported that after reviewing the Traffic Report the Underpass did provide a better Level of Service.

Chair Naik opined that it has greatly improved. She agreed with XCAP Member Shen on the Churchill Avenue Evaluation regarding Row A. She advised that the Closure Alternative should be one orange as well as the Partial Underpass Alternative. She asked if adding a lane to the Embarcadero Overpass is included in the mitigation cost and Ms. Litzinger confirmed that it is included.

Chair Naik advised that the language be tweaked to say 'the color of the matrix's comparative between each alternative within the geography at each location.'

XCAP Member Carrasco inquired how the matrix relates to what the next steps are. Chair Naik stated that the AECOM Matrix is to be used by the City as well as at all the Town Hall meetings. XCAP Member Templeton's matrix is to help the XCAP with its deliberations and is not designed to replace AECOM's Matrix.

XCAP Member Templeton shared her matrix with the XCAP. She disclosed that the goal of her matrix is to help XCAP Members make their decisions and document the decisions. She emphasized that the matrix is up for discussion and it is not set in stone. Items that she is seeking feedback on included readability, clarifying the requirements, consistency across alternatives, usability and accessibility, user focus, understanding the criteria, level of impact, and what the XCAP prefers. The matrix included three sections, Council criteria colored-coded in green, engineering challenges color-coded in blue, and the third showing groups of the community who may interested or impacted by the alternative color-coded in purple. She reviewed the interactive model of her criteria.

XCAP Member Shen commented that the black, natural, or no change is a nice addition to the severity. He asked XCAP Member Templeton how the XCAP will receive persona responses. XCAP Member Templeton proposed it be agendize for discussion and public comment.

XCAP Member Burton opined that the addition of personas is greatly helpful.

XCAP Member Brail commented that readability is easier and anyone can read it.

XCAP Member Carrasco declared that the matrix helps with discussion and crystalizes the XCAP's thinking. He requested that the XCAP review the matrix cell by cell as well as use a number rating instead of poor, good, or not so good. XCAP Member Templeton predicted it would take to much time to have an objective score on a subjective item. Chair Naik agreed.

XCAP Member Templeton asked how XCAP Members can provide information for additional criteria. Chair Naik noted that the public will comment on the item and then a discussion with the XCAP Members will take place.

XCAP Member Brail cautioned about using a numerical scoring system and XCAP Member Burton agreed.

Public comment

Jason Sensing (phonetics) concurred with the comments of XCAP Members regarding AECOM's matrix concerning Churchill Avenue Evaluation Rows A and B. He suggested removing the word corridor and replace it with intersection. He agreed with XCAP Member's comments about funding sources. He loved XCAP Member Templeton's matrix, but one challenge is that the matrix reflects the errors that were made on AECOM's matrix.

Young Jingo (phonetics) explained that she lives in South Gate and she strongly favors the closure of Churchill Avenue with mitigations. She strongly opposed the Partial Underpass and the Viaduct because both would be an eyesore for the neighborhood. In terms of the XCAP Generated Matrix, she suggested that criteria on Page 2, line H.01 and H.02 be changed to need or want instead of a hard constraint that must be met.

Drew proposed to include ADA on XCAP Member Templeton's criteria matrix under personas. Besides bikes, he suggested to include other types of self-propelled vehicles.

Richard Berkey (phonetics) disclosed that on the AECOM matrix in Row A regarding the Churchill Avenue crossing, he has an issue with the assessment of the impacts. He agreed with previous comments regarding funding.

Elizabeth Alexis commented that a potential option for the Noise column for the Partial Underpass Alternative at Charleston Avenue in the AECOM matrix is a low noise barrier. In terms of XCAP Member Templeton's matrix, she liked the addition of personas and to add a direct connection to the City Staff Member or agency who might be in charge of the constraint, need, or want criteria.

Rob Levinsky did not see how closing Churchill Avenue will increase connectivity across Palo Alto.

Susan Newman did not agree to base findings on existing or projected Level of Service at stoplights concerning the AECOM matrix. She predicted that the intersection at El Camino Real and Oregon Expressway will decline in Level of Service if additional traffic is diverted there.

Ms. Litzinger answered that in terms of the funding for Churchill Avenue, she agreed with the comments that Row E should be one orange square for the Closure Alternative, two orange of the Partial Underpass Alternative, and likely three orange for the Viaduct Alternative.

In terms of noise, Ms. Litzinger disclosed that a sentence regarding a noise barrier could be added.

In terms of federal funding, Chair Naik suggested to include a line at the bottom of the page reflecting that federal funding is not usually used for small projects.

XCAP Member Templeton reported that she took notes on public comments and that some of the suggestions may need a full discussion from the XCAP to incorporate those suggestions into her criteria matrix.

Chair Naik asked the XCAP if they are interested in splitting out the Meadow Drive/Charleston Road alternatives. She clarified that there is a difference between a design of Meadow Drive regarding an Underpass Alternative versus the design of an Underpass Alternative at Charleston Road. The XCAP was in consensus that the two grade crossings should be separated.

XCAP Member Carrasco asked if there should be a list of individual modes in XCAP Member Templeton's matrix. XCAP Member Templeton agreed with that suggestion. The XCAP is in consensus in letting XCAP Member Templeton incorporate the comments she has heard in the meeting.

Chair Naik suggested XCAP Member Templeton include 'near an impacted area' among the lives nears tracks or all Palo Alto residents tabs.

XCAP Member Klein had concerns about including ADA because it is already a requirement and XCAP Member Carrasco agreed. XCAP Member Templeton suggested it be included in the note's column. XCAP Member Carrasco expressed that the maximum requirements for ADA are not what engineers try to reach. They prefer to go below the maximum.

XCAP Member Shen and Carrasco volunteered to work with XCAP Member Templeton on the matrix. Chair Naik suggested to reach out to XCAP Member Reckdahl as well.

5. XCAP Member Updates and Working Groups Update

Chair Naik commented that she and XCAP Member Klein have not had the chance to discuss style and font for their section.

Public comment

Eduardo Llach commented that the AECOM Matrix should reflect the price differences between the Churchill Avenue Closure and Mitigation alternatives.

Hudity (phonetics) requested the following change to Chapter 4 be made. Section B on Traffic Congestion, that a Level of Service at all seven intersections would be impacted by a Churchill Avenue Closure which is currently a F or E. Then in the year 2030, with mitigations, the Level of Service on five of the intersections would improve to A, B, and C.

6. Staff Updates

For the meeting on July 29th, 2020, Staff will be sending out Zoom invites on July 27th, 2020 as well as send out all written public comments.

7. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 P.M.