

## Expanded Community Advisory Panel (XCAP)

### THIS PACKET INCLUDES:

A compilation of emails (public comments, etc) submitted to the XCAP email box, [XCAP@CityofPaloAlto.org](mailto:XCAP@CityofPaloAlto.org), between **August 12 and August 26, 2020 at 12:00 pm approximately.**



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:** [Ken Joye](#)  
**To:** [Expanded Community Advisory Panel](#)  
**Subject:** Re: layout doc missing profiles  
**Date:** Wednesday, August 12, 2020 6:01:09 PM

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On Aug 12, 2020, at 3:10 PM, Ken Joye <[kmjoye@gmail.com](mailto:kmjoye@gmail.com)> wrote:  
The agenda for the 12 August 2020 XCAP meeting contains an Informational Attachment entitled "[Layouts – Churchill, Meadow & Charleston Underpass](#)"

I would expect that document to have a profile for each of the three intersections, yet there is not one for the Meadow undercrossing. I have raised concerns about the lack of a profile given the addition of bike/ped bridges over Meadow Dr; when will that profile be available? The addition of bridges will affect the gradient of the ramps, yet it has not been possible to assess those.

Please ensure that the public is able to assess the proposal, a profile is necessary to do that.

Following my public comment during the 12 August 2020 XCAP meeting on this topic, my wife provided me a pointer to a document which has part of what I described:  
<[https://connectingpaloalto.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/2020-07-29\\_Item-3A\\_Layouts.pdf](https://connectingpaloalto.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/2020-07-29_Item-3A_Layouts.pdf)>

However, I am surprised that the “Ped/Bike Profile from Park Blvd to Emerson St” does not include the two “Ped/Bike Bridge” features which are depicted in the “Meadow Dr Profile”. I am alarmed that the “Ped/Bike Profile” shows only an 8’0” minimum vertical clearance at one point and concerned that a minimum vertical clearance is shown neither for the depicted “Ped/Bike Bridge” to the west of the tracks nor the undepicted “Ped/Bike Bridge to the east of Alma.

How are community members supposed to assess the pedestrian/bicycle facilities of this design with those elements missing?

When will this information be included in the documentation for the Undercrossing proposal?

thanks for you attention to this matter,  
Ken Joye  
Ventura neighborhood

**From:** [Phil Burton](#)  
**To:** [Expanded Community Advisory Panel](#)  
**Cc:** [Shikada, Ed](#); [Kamhi, Philip](#); [Bhatia, Ripon](#)  
**Subject:** Yet another project in the US employing the box jacking method  
**Date:** Monday, August 17, 2020 12:21:30 PM

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<https://floridapolitics.com/archives/307958-orlando-to-miami-higher-speed-passenger-train-project-getting-real>

Phil Burton

**From:** [Ken Joye](#)  
**To:** [Expanded Community Advisory Panel](#)  
**Cc:** [Transportation; Shikada, Ed](#)  
**Subject:** vrpaloalto virtual townhall -- first impressions  
**Date:** Wednesday, August 19, 2020 5:07:52 PM

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I took my first look at the virtual townhall meant to gather input from residents for grade separation.

I have done only two things so far:

- (1) viewed the 9:54 video of "Meadow Dr and Charleston Rd Underpass Alternative"
- (2) clicked on the TOWNHALL FEEDBACK link on the bottom of the screen, where I wrote this: "This feedback widget is hopefully not the only way to respond. I would have expected that I could virtually put a post-it note on any element of any of the alternatives. The first impression I have is extremely discouraging."

As stated in that comment, I am flabbergasted by the apparent lack of ability to offer specific feedback.

I hope that there is more than I am led to believe.

Ken Joye  
Ventura neighborhood

**From:** [Ellen Hartog](#)  
**To:** [Expanded Community Advisory Panel](#)  
**Subject:** Concerns regarding Charleston Underpass traffic patterns  
**Date:** Friday, August 21, 2020 9:37:11 PM

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Hi, I am very concerned regarding the Charleston underpass. The renderings produced do not show the impact to the surrounding neighborhood and if it does it is concrete and asphalt and confusing - going north bound on Alma there is no right turn to go to Arastradero~! Traffic will be diverted to East Meadow!!!! more traffic on Wilkie Way going both directions!! I have animals and children cross the street anywhere at any time due to the park connection through Wilkie - The solution is so ugly and damaging to our neighborhood, Charleston Meadows. North Palo Alto will get a park at Churchill closure but South Palo Alto loses houses for concrete - no landscaping or ADA ramp!! I am elderly and can not cross Alma on foot if it is more than 5% - what are the local benefits except for losing connectivity and quiet neighborhood. The traffic report does not express that traffic will shorten its path through the adjacent neighborhood (Charleston Meadows) here. The patterns of traffic will change at the expense of the branch streets being impacted to avoid the 1 mile detour to turn left!! Please fix this problem. It has been discussed but I see no work towards any mitigation measures to be told of. This solution has flaws and needs to be addressed before moving forward.

Thank you for your consideration,  
Ellen Hartog  
330 Victoria Place

**From:** [Michal Sadoff](#)  
**To:** [Expanded Community Advisory Panel](#)  
**Subject:** Palo Alto Rail options - comments after watching animations  
**Date:** Sunday, August 23, 2020 2:05:01 PM

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To XCAP members:

Thank you for the PA Connects website with rail animations. Here are some comments after watching some of them. The project website asks for feedback but does not allow the kind of feedback and questions I had, so I decided to write to you.

I watched three options completely - Trench, Hybrid, Viaduct - and the tunnel options and underpass briefly. I did not watch tunnels or underpass fully b/c I have the impression those are the most expensive. With what I watched, I came away with an impression that Hybrid is best, because the outcome is pleasing visually, and the disruption is less than others including tunnels. I think it prioritizes the acceptability of the final outcome while balancing the amount of disruption and cost. I don't like the Viaduct, although I had thought when watching a previous set of animations that it was might be worth trading a negative visual impact for less impact during construction and lower cost.

The animations are fairly helpful. But mainly I came away with more questions than answers, a bit frustrated. Questions like - what does the finished Trench option look like - not clear to me where the train goes and where the cars go and how it will really look overall. What noise impact will there be with any of these options, once increased train traffic occurs. (I live a half mile from the tracks.) What is ranking of estimated costs of these options (and magnitude of difference between them?) What is the benefit of spending so much money for a tunnel and leaving freight at ground (I get that freight trains are less frequent and thus less disruptive to cross traffic but still it seems a lot of \$ and disruption to have a tunnel and then have only some of the trains use it.) A chart that compares the options in terms of cost, disruption to creeks, disruption to commute, relocation of utilities would be helpful.

Thank you to each of you for doing the work of understanding these options more thoroughly than I have time to do, and for helping the council make the best decision on behalf of all of us.

Sincerely,  
Michal Ruth Sadoff

To: Expanded Community Advisory Panel (XCAP)  
and Philip Kamhi, Chief Transportation Official, City of Palo Alto  
From: Karen Kalinsky, Fairmeadow resident  
RE: Feedback on "Connecting Palo Alto: Virtual Town Hall"  
Date: 8/24/2020

I visited the Virtual Town Hall and was very impressed with how easy it is to navigate and how much useful information on the various alternatives it has.

I recall an XCAP meeting where there was some discussion related to Cari Templeton's matrix which mentioned tracking various "personalities" for those who provided feedback/preferences on the rail grade separation alternatives, e.g. cyclists.

In order take more advantage of the feedback submitted at the Virtual Town Hall, I would like to make a few suggestions on the questions asked in the "Alternatives Feedback" and "Town Hall Feedback" forms.

**Alternatives Feedback:** Includes ranking of the three most important factors in evaluating the given alternative, but not which neighborhood you reside in.

Suggest adding questions:

- In which neighborhood do you reside? (with link to map showing neighborhoods)
- How far do you live from an at-grade crossing?  
( ) Within 5 blocks ( ) Within 1 mile ( ) Greater than 1 mile
- Please mark the modes of transportation you use-- with most frequent=1, 2<sup>nd</sup> most frequent=2, 3<sup>rd</sup> most frequent =3, 4<sup>th</sup> most frequent=4, and not used = 0.  
( ) Car ( ) Bicycle ( ) Walk ( ) Public transportation

**Town Hall Feedback and Comments:** Includes selection of one preferred alternative for Churchill and one for Meadow/Charleston; and asks in which neighborhood do you reside?

Not everyone who visits the "Alternatives Feedback" form will click on the link to provide "Town Hall Feedback and Comments," so I think it is important to ask which neighborhood you live in on the "Alternatives Feedback" form as well. I also feel it is important to provide a link to a map of Palo Alto neighborhoods (showing names and boundaries) since not everyone knows what their neighborhood is called.

Thank you to XCAP, the City of Palo Alto Office of Transportation, and to AECOM,

Karen Kalinsky

kalinsky@stanford.edu

**From:** [Karen Kalinsky](#)  
**To:** [Expanded Community Advisory Panel](#); [Transportation](#)  
**Subject:** Feedback on "Connecting Palo Alto: Virtual Town Hall"  
**Date:** Monday, August 24, 2020 11:27:50 PM  
**Attachments:** [Kalinsky to XCAP Feedback on Virtual Town Hall 20200824.docx](#)

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To: Expanded Community Advisory Panel (XCAP)  
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Thank you to XCAP, the City of Palo Alto Office of Transportation, and to AECOM,

Karen Kalinsky

[kalinsky@stanford.edu](mailto:kalinsky@stanford.edu)

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Karen Isaacs Kalinsky

[kalinsky@stanford.edu](mailto:kalinsky@stanford.edu)

**From:** [Eric Seedman](#)  
**To:** [Expanded Community Advisory Panel](#)  
**Subject:** Against Churchill closure  
**Date:** Tuesday, August 25, 2020 3:29:37 PM

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I implore you all to NOT close Churchill at the train tracks. It will undoubtedly cause major traffic issues and public safety issues.

As a resident of Palo Alto for over fifty years, I ask that you not make this irrevocable error.

-Eric Seedman, 1535 Portola Ave., Palo Alto

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Daja Phillips](#)  
**To:** [Expanded Community Advisory Panel](#)  
**Subject:** Another Southgate owner in favor of keeping Churchill crossing OPEN  
**Date:** Tuesday, August 25, 2020 8:22:02 PM

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Hello XCAP members,

Let me begin by saying that you have my heart-felt gratitude for sheparding this very important issue for Palo Alto. We in the Southgate neighborhood know that you value community involvement and thus, I am reaching out to you.

While you have already seen the results of the Southgate Survey-which shows a strong majority of residents oppose complete closure- I know that voicing our position at the upcoming XCAP meeting is also crucial.

Unfortunately, I am unable to make it in person due to family illness, so I am writing to you to reiterate the importance of keeping the Churchill St crossing open

Best regards,  
Daja Phillips  
450 Sequoia

Pecked out with fat fingers on my cell...

**From:** [Gregg Cook](#)  
**To:** [Expanded Community Advisory Panel](#)  
**Subject:** Churchill Ave Partial Overpass  
**Date:** Tuesday, August 25, 2020 3:44:14 PM

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Dear XCAP Committee Members,

We are writing you today to voice our strong support for the Churchill Avenue partial overpass option.

Sincerely,

Gregg & Dana Cook  
1630 Escobita Avenue (Southgate Neighborhood)

**From:** [Michael Brozman](#)  
**To:** [Expanded Community Advisory Panel](#)  
**Subject:** Churchill Closing  
**Date:** Tuesday, August 25, 2020 4:42:46 PM

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Hi XCAP,

As a resident of Southgate I wanted to express my strong opposition to closing Churchill. I do not believe the case for closure is strong enough to warrant the problems it will cause.

Regards,

Michael Brozman  
1652 Castilleja Avenue  
Palo Alto, CA 94306  
[mbrozman@gmail.com](mailto:mbrozman@gmail.com)

**From:** [Jim Cornett](#)  
**To:** [Expanded Community Advisory Panel](#)  
**Subject:** Churchill Crossing  
**Date:** Tuesday, August 25, 2020 3:26:25 PM

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Dear XCAP Members,

Thank you for all your many efforts and the many hours you have given in service to this important topic.

I'm writing here to express my support for the partial closure option for the Churchill crossing. I find this to be the most workable available option.

I recognize there still will be corollary traffic issues for Page Mill and Embarcadero with reduced volume on Churchill to Alma that will require further attention/solution(s).

Sincerely,

James Cornett  
420 Sequoia Ave  
Palo Alto, CA 94306

**From:** [Eduardo F. Llach](#)  
**To:** [Expanded Community Advisory Panel](#)  
**Subject:** I'm pro closure - your matrix & traffic point to the best solution w/ least critical impact to neighbors  
**Date:** Tuesday, August 25, 2020 1:38:55 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

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Dear XCAP members, Thank you for the great work researching the options and laying them out objectively.

I encourage you to recommend the Churchill Closure w/ Mitigations. It is by far the best alternative for all of Palo Alto considering the costs, disruption, improved traffic overall, with improved safety of Palo Alto Students biking to and from school. Your analysis (Matrix and Traffic) support this decision.

I hope these reasons to support the Churchill Closure resonate w/ your views and what's best for Palo Alto as a whole:

1. The attached [Matrix](#) (the last one published) shows **Closure** and Viaduct **even** (blue dots – orange dots, skip black dots) but the **Underpass is significantly worse** (far more negative orange dots).
  - a. Churchill Closure with mitigations is 1/3 less expensive and far less disruptive than the underpass to everyone during and after construction.
  - b. Viaduct is 6X more expensive than Churchill and creates a significant set of problems during the construction phase and critically affects neighbors.
  
2. The [Final traffic report](#) shows **closure with mitigation benefits a wider range of citizens** and a wider area with both Embarcadero and Oregon's traffic improved in a very cost effective manner (see table below, and on page 47) vs Underpass or Viaduct which increases traffic on Churchill and still leaves Embarcadero and Oregon w/ the same traffic problems as today.
  
3. The **underpass and viaduct options pose critical problems** to our neighbors in Churchill and Mariposa, their lives and homes are critically affected w/ dangerous traffic or trains overhead. The Closure alternative has the least critical effects to anyone, there are changes in traffic and ways to get around, but nobody's home or life is critically affected, this is an important issue to consider as we look how our neighbors will be affected by the decisions we make. We don't want neighbors critically affected w/ unsafe traffic or trains overhead or large ditches in their street and in front of their homes. Let's be a good neighbor ☺

Thank you, Eduardo

Eduardo F. Llach  
36 Churchill Ave

This is the table showing the traffic improvements across Palo Alto w/ the Churchill Mitigations on Embarcadero & Oregon.

**Table 5**  
**Churchill Closure – Mitigated Intersection Levels of Service** under Existing Conditions

#	Intersection	Churchill Closure - Existing Conditions						
		Peak Hour	No Improvements			With Improvements		
			Traffic Control	Avg. Delay (sec.)	LOS	Traffic Control	Avg. Delay (sec.)	LOS
1	Alma Street & Lincoln Avenue	AM	One-Way	>=50	F	One-Way	5.7	A
		PM	Stop	>=50	F	Stop	21.1	C
2	Alma Street & Embarcadero Road	AM	One-Way	>=50	F	Signal	4.8	A
		PM	Stop	>=50	F		3.0	A
3	Alma Street & Kingsley Avenue	AM	One-Way	>=50	F	Signal	13.3	B
		PM	Stop	>=50	F		18.3	B
4	El Camino Real/Embarcadero Rd*	AM	Signal	>80	F	Signal	67.1	E
		PM		>80	F		61.1	E
5	El Camino Real/Oregon Expwy-Page Mill Rd*	AM	Signal	>80	F	Signal	72.5	E
		PM		>80	F		73.5	E
6A	Alma St & Oregon Expwy WB Off Ramp (Oregon Ave)	AM	One-Way	>=50	F	Signal	6	A
		PM	Stop	>=50	F		6.7	A
6B	Alma St & Oregon Expwy EB Off Ramp	AM	One-Way	>=50	F	Signal	17.9	B
		PM	Stop	>=50	F		16.0	B

**Notes:**  
1. Average delay is reported for the worst approach at one-way stop intersections. LOS F is not substandard unless a signal warrant is met.  
2. Bold indicates substandard intersection level of service.



**From:** [Teri Llach](#)  
**To:** [Expanded Community Advisory Panel](#)  
**Subject:** Please consider recommending Churchill Closure  
**Date:** Tuesday, August 25, 2020 9:43:39 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

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Hello

I wanted to take a moment and advocate to close Churchill w/ Mitigations as it is the most efficient, most reasonable approach for all of Palo Alto. If you consider the costs, disruption, improved traffic overall, with improved safety of Palo Alto Students biking to and from school – it really is the best choice. The alternatives analysis (Matrix and Traffic) support this decision.

1. Churchill Closure with mitigations is 1/3 less expensive and far less disruptive than the other alternatives including underpass
2. Viaduct is 6X more expensive than Churchill and creates a significant set of problems during the construction phase and critically affects neighbors.
3. The police and fire departments said closing Churchill would cause no disruption to service.
4. The [Final traffic report](#) shows closure with mitigation benefits a wider range of citizens and a wider area with both Embarcadero and Oregon's traffic improved in a very cost effective manner vs Underpass or Viaduct which increases traffic on Churchill and still leaves Embarcadero and Oregon w/ the same traffic problems as today.
5. Both alternatives create increased through traffic from nonresidents driving quickly which is unsafe
6. The underpass and viaduct options pose **critical problems to our neighbors in Churchill and Mariposa**, their lives and homes are critically affected w/ dangerous traffic or trains overhead. The effect on the others who want a faster trip to the other side of Palo Alto is far less critical.

I ask and hope you decide to close Churchill and keep our small neighborhood street a small neighborhood street.

Thanks Teri

**Teri Llach**  
**p:** 650-575-6913  
**w:** [www.terillach.com](http://www.terillach.com)  
**e:** [llachteric@gmail.com](mailto:llachteric@gmail.com)





**From:** [J Stinson](#)  
**To:** [Expanded Community Advisory Panel](#)  
**Subject:** Churchill Grade Crossing  
**Date:** Wednesday, August 26, 2020 12:04:11 AM

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XCAP Members,

My continued thanks to your challenging work wading through these very controversial issues facing our city.

I'm writing to convey my support for the closure of Churchill and subsequent traffic mitigations at Embarcadero/Oregon as the best of the three options under consideration for eliminating the at-grade rail crossing at Churchill.

As a citizen of Palo Alto, my reasoning is straightforward:

- The Churchill Closure + Mitigations is the cheapest of the three options. It is over 3x lower cost than the Partial Underpass and over 6x lower cost than the Viaduct
- The Hexagon traffic analysis of Closure + Mitigations shows that it does not put a burden on other routes and meets the LOS requirements of the City. The Partial Underpass is roughly equivalent LOS (slightly better). The Viaduct has significantly worse LOS than either of the other two options.
- Traffic impacts during construction are minimized with the Closure + Mitigation option (estimated to be weeks), whereas the other two options are measured in years of construction impacts.
- The Closure + Mitigation is more feasible--it does not require right-of-way (ROW) exceptions from Caltrain. This is a particular sticking point on the Partial Underpass, which requires some encroachment on Caltrain's ROW. Caltrain has been clear that they will not grant that ROW exception.

These are all strong reasons that should resonate with every Palo Alto resident, regardless of where they live in the City.

As a resident of Southgate and living directly on Churchill Ave, my additional reasons:

- No private land seizure or encroachment is required for the Closure + Mitigation. In the Partial Underpass option, a "sliver" is required of private property on Churchill and the residents along Alma will be roughly 5-6' closer to the busy Alma traffic. In the Viaduct option, there is massive structure butted up against the back property of all residents along Mariposa and likely some small seizure of land. These would be \*massive\* impacts on many individuals' homes and lives.
- We have a deep concern that improving traffic flow on Churchill (from the elimination of a rail crossing) will encourage more traffic on the Churchill corridor. While the impacts of traffic on other routes in the case of Churchill Closure was studied by Hexagon, the potential for increased traffic due to less queuing on Churchill as a result of either the Viaduct or Partial Underpass was not studied. This is a critical datapoint that is missing. Churchill is a 300 yard "bypass" route. It dead-ends at El Camino on one side and Embarcadero on the other side (or Alma for most traffic). This means it's primarily used as a cutoff or bypass route--something that was confirmed by Hexagon's traffic study (~70% of all traffic on Churchill is traveling from north/south El Camino to north/south Alma). Common sense would indicate that reducing queuing times will significantly increase traffic.

I'm sympathetic to other Southgate residents concerns about northbound access to Palo Alto. I will also miss the faster access. However, both from a City-wide level (cost + feasibility + construction impacts) as well as a neighborhood level (land seizures + encroachment + massive traffic increase), these concerns are simply outweighed by the better option: Churchill Closure + Mitigation.

Thank you for your attention,  
Jason Stinson

**From:** [jason@renovo.auto](mailto:jason@renovo.auto)  
**To:** [Expanded Community Advisory Panel](#)  
**Subject:** Resend: Churchill Grade Crossing  
**Date:** Wednesday, August 26, 2020 10:36:03 AM

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In talking with an XCAP member yesterday, I discovered that my emails from [jstinson1@yahoo.com](mailto:jstinson1@yahoo.com) are going into spam folders. That's incredibly frustrating given the number of emails sent to XCAP over the past months.

Here is a resend of the second of two emails sent last night (sending from my work account)

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XCAP Members,

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Thank you for your attention,  
Jason Stinson

**From:** [jason@renovo.auto](mailto:jason@renovo.auto)  
**To:** [Expanded Community Advisory Panel](#)  
**Subject:** Resend: Southgate Churchill Crossing Survey  
**Date:** Wednesday, August 26, 2020 10:34:58 AM

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-----  
XCAP members,

One more email about the recent Southgate Survey that was presented at the XCAP meeting (8/19).

First, I'd like to acknowledge the hard work put in by the "Southgate Neighborhood Committee on the Churchill Rail Crossing". The group attempted to put together as unbiased a survey as possible, distribute as widely as possible and publish the detailed data in its entirety (mostly).

The challenge, of course, is that surveys inherently reflect the bias of both the authors and the distribution/collection methods. From the poorly named committee (indicating it came from an unbiased source, despite the fact that all committee members are the most vocal advocates of keeping Churchill open) to including questions about the opening of Peers Park (an extremely divisive topic that hasn't been included or discussed as an option by City Council or XCAP) all indicated some bias. The survey is also missing another heavily impacted neighborhood group: our neighbors to the immediate north of Southgate, Old Palo Alto (particularly those near the Alma corridor).

Additionally, while it's important for the City and XCAP to understand the sentiment of neighbors, the final decision needs to be based on the best interests for the entire city.

But I wanted to point out a few add'l things that can be taken from the survey, that weren't highlighted by the "Committee" in their presentation at XCAP (again, b/c they have a specific bias):

- The latest survey results indicated 56% of residents in opposed to Churchill Closure & 36% in favor (8% undecided), with 59% of Southgate households surveyed. In a similar survey by the same group done last year, the results were 60% opposed to Closure, 24% in favor and 16% undecided. The number of surveyed households remained similar (122 in the recent survey and 121 in last year's survey). In other words, on year later, with a much better informed neighborhood, the number of residents in favor of closure has gone up 12 percentage points (50% increase), the number of unsure has dropped in half, and the number opposed has slightly decreased.
- The geographic demographic of both surveys has largely stayed the same: residents along the Churchill and Mariposa streets are generally in favor of Closure while residents deeper in the Southgate are opposed.
- The comments section for Question 3 (Based on your current knowledge, what is your opinion on closing Churchill?) are quite illuminating in the reasons behind the results of the survey. There were

44 comments provided, of which over half (25) didn't give a reason behind their choices (e.g. "I like Closure!"). However, of the eleven responses that gave reasons for their opposition to Closure, 7 cited concerns about worsening traffic elsewhere, 6 were concerned about their personal access, 2 were concerned about isolating Southgate from the rest of Palo Alto and 1 was concerned about safety (many responses gave multiple reasons). Of the eight responses that gave reasons in favor of Closure, 5 cited concerns about project costs, 3 about increased traffic on Churchill and 2 about safety. Since traffic concerns raised by both camps will ultimately be addressed by actual data (Hexagon studies) rather than anecdotal concerns from residents, let's ignore those for the moment. --> The 2nd most given reason for opposing Churchill Closure is a concern by residents about their personal access and commute times. --> The 1st most given reason for supporting Churchill Closure is the significantly lower cost to the City.

This last point is a particularly painful one for me. In both City Council and XCAP meetings, residents in favor of Churchill Closure have often been characterized as self-serving and massively biased to their own interests by those opposed ("they just want a park in front of their house" or "they bought onto a busy street and now they want to change it"). While this is a common debate fallacy (Ad Hominem, or "Discredit the Messenger rather than debate the Message"), it's also clearly not accurate according to the survey. Most Southgate resident comments in favor of Churchill Closure cited cost to the City as their primary reason--not that they wanted a quieter street. In contrast, most Southgate resident comments in opposition to Churchill Closure cited their personal access to the rest of Palo Alto as their primary reason.

Ultimately, XCAP and eventually the City Council will need to make a decision based on the best outcome for the entire City. All decisions with respect to the grade crossings will have some impact on individuals and neighborhoods--these are simply too large changes to not have some impact. We need to make the best decisions for the City, hopefully eliminate any massive or major impacts on individuals (e.g. property seizures, major quality-of-life changes), and lastly, minimize the inconveniences to neighborhoods.

Thanks again for your time and work,  
Jason Stinson

**From:** [J Stinson](#)  
**To:** [Expanded Community Advisory Panel](#)  
**Subject:** Southgate Churchill Crossing Survey  
**Date:** Wednesday, August 26, 2020 1:37:00 AM

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XCAP members,

One more email about the recent Southgate Survey that was presented at the XCAP meeting (8/19).

First, I'd like to acknowledge the hard work put in by the "Southgate Neighborhood Committee on the Churchill Rail Crossing". The group attempted to put together as unbiased a survey as possible, distribute as widely as possible and publish the detailed data in its entirety (mostly).

The challenge, of course, is that surveys inherently reflect the bias of both the authors and the distribution/collection methods. From the poorly named committee (indicating it came from an unbiased source, despite the fact that all committee members are the most vocal advocates of keeping Churchill open) to including questions about the opening of Peers Park (an extremely divisive topic that hasn't been included or discussed as an option by City Council or XCAP) all indicated some bias. The survey is also missing another heavily impacted neighborhood group: our neighbors to the immediate north of Southgate, Old Palo Alto (particularly those near the Alma corridor).

Additionally, while it's important for the City and XCAP to understand the sentiment of neighbors, the final decision needs to be based on the best interests for the entire city.

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"Discredit the Messenger rather than debate the Message"), it's also clearly not accurate according to the survey. Most Southgate resident comments in favor of Churchill Closure cited cost to the City as their primary reason--not that they wanted a quieter street. In contrast, most Southgate resident comments in opposition to Churchill Closure cited their personal access to the rest of Palo Alto as their primary reason.

Ultimately, XCAP and eventually the City Council will need to make a decision based on the best outcome for the entire City. All decisions with respect to the grade crossings will have some impact on individuals and neighborhoods--these are simply too large changes to not have some impact. We need to make the best decisions for the City, hopefully eliminate any massive or major impacts on individuals (e.g. property seizures, major quality-of-life changes), and lastly, minimize the inconveniences to neighborhoods.

Thanks again for your time and work,  
Jason Stinson

**From:** [rapurkey@aol.com](mailto:rapurkey@aol.com)  
**To:** [Expanded Community Advisory Panel](#)  
**Subject:** Support the Closure with Mitigations option for Churchill crossing  
**Date:** Wednesday, August 26, 2020 1:20:50 AM

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Dear XCAP Members,

I am writing to support the Closure with Mitigations option for the Churchill rail crossing. The Closure option best facilitates movement across the rail corridor in this part of the city at the lowest cost. While this option closes Churchill to vehicle traffic, the intersection and roadway improvements proposed for intersections on Embarcadero Road and Oregon Expressway will allow these arterials to carry the diverted vehicle traffic without significant impact to vehicle flow across the corridor. This option includes construction of a pedestrian and bicycle underpass that maintains the existing pedestrian and bicycle crossing at Churchill, but safely grade separated from both trains and vehicle traffic in one option. I strongly urge the XCAP to identify the Closure with Mitigations option as the preferred option for the Churchill crossing.

Two other options for the crossing at Churchill are under consideration. Neither of these options offers better flow of traffic across the corridor, but each carries a substantially higher price tag. The underpass and intersection improvements in the Closure with Mitigations options are estimated to cost between \$50 and \$65 million. The Partial Underpass option, estimated to cost between \$160 and \$200 million, is three times the cost of Closure option. The Viaduct option, estimated to cost between \$300 and \$400 million, is six times the cost of the Closure option. Neither of these options offers any better movement of vehicle, bicycles or pedestrian traffic across the rail corridor that would justify the significantly higher expenditure of funds to construct them.

In addition to its higher cost, the Partial Underpass option has several other downsides, particularly for the Old Palo Alto neighbor where I live. First, the proposal will result in a more dangerous sidewalk along Alma on the blocks north and south of Churchill. The proposed design requires that the existing roadbed of Alma be substantially widened to accommodate the retaining walls and traffic lanes of the underpass. While the railroad track remains at its current location, the northbound lanes of Alma are moved 10 to 15 feet eastward for most of the four block stretch of Alma between Melville and Lowell. The Fact Sheets and Summary documents mostly treat this result as a "visual" change due to the loss of trees and planting area. But more important is the loss of the existing 10 foot buffer between the northbound traffic lanes and the sidewalk for these blocks. The traffic lanes are to be 10 to 12 feet wide with no space for parking area or bicycle lanes. From the drawings it then appears that for nearly four blocks, the typical 5 foot wide sidewalk is on the curb, with no buffer between speeding traffic and pedestrians. Alma Street in this area is posted for 35 mph speed, a speed regularly exceeded. The absence of a buffer, or room to build a wider sidewalk without taking property, will make this stretch of sidewalk less safe.

And I am sure the homes facing Alma on these four blocks will not appreciate having the northbound traffic lanes moved closer to their front doors.

Second, the Partial Underpass option eliminates the traffic signal for westbound Churchill at Alma, and with it, the only signalized left-turn lane to southbound Alma from the Old Palo Alto neighborhood. The Final traffic study by Hexigon Transportation Consultants dated July 15, 2020 states that westbound left-turn traffic on Churchill at Alma “is expected to use another of the neighborhood streets to access Alma.” (page 2) But all these streets have no signal. As anyone from the neighborhood can tell you, it is nearly impossible to make a left turn from any of the neighborhood streets to southbound Alma during either the morning or evening rush hours, and if you try, you take your life in your hands. Looking north or south, there is no signalized left turn onto southbound Alma from either Embarcadero or Oregon Expressway. So, this traffic will wander the neighborhood looking for a way to access southbound Alma, but will not find one during the rush hours.

Finally, the expected 2.5 to 3 year construction period to build the Partial Underpass will prove a nightmare for the Old Palo Alto neighborhood. The build process would reduce traffic lanes on both northbound and southbound Alma for most of the period, and for a substantial period reduce Alma to only a single northbound lane. Existing Alma traffic will need to find alternative routes, and those routes are likely through the streets of Old Palo Alto.

In addition to being the most costly option, I oppose the Viaduct option because of the visual and noise impacts caused by raising the railroad tracks 20 feet above current grade to cross over Churchill.

I live on Tennyson Avenue near Emerson about a block east of Alma and the railroad tracks. My home is not directly impacted by any of the options being considered. But I do have a keen interest in insuring that traffic movement across the rail corridor is smooth, efficient and safe. A member of my household works at Stanford and crosses the rail corridor five days a week or more for work. My three children attended Paly, and crossed the rail corridor at Churchill every school day. I often cross the rail corridor several times a day to shop on California Avenue, Town and Country, the Stanford Shopping Center and other points north and south. Palo Alto has four at grade crossings that will need to be addressed. While we can expect that a substantial portion of the funds to address these projects will come from Federal, State or Regional sources, we should also expect there will be a need for local contribution. The Closure with Mitigations option provides the best outcome for all modes of traffic at the lowest cost of the options examined. For these reasons, I strongly urge you to recommend the Closure with Mitigations option as the XCAP's preferred option for the Churchill rail crossing.

Sincerely,

Richard Purkey  
167 Tennyson Avenue

Palo Alto, CA 94301