

Expanded Community Advisory Panel (XCAP)

September 2, 2020, 4:00 PM

Summary – Regular Meeting (virtual, through Zoom)

1. Welcome and Roll Call

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

Absent:

2. Staff Updates

Phil Kamhi advised that last week staff recorded a question and answer session on You Tube Live regarding Churchill. That can be found, when entering the virtual Town Hall, vrpaloalto.com, that link is on the left. There has been a very good response so far with over 400 unique visitors. Tomorrow they will do a session on Charleston/Meadow and encouraged participation.

Chair Naik asked about the general tenor of the questions from the previous session.

Mr. Kamhi responded that there was a wide range of questions ranging from general to specific questions about the alternatives at Churchill. There had been 116 views of the session with 16 questions. There has been a jump in the number of visitors to the virtual Town Hall since that session was recorded. For the You Tube session that will be recorded tomorrow, they have received almost double the questions from Churchill.

Ripon Bhatia added that all the questions asked through the You Tube session were added to the Connecting Palo Alto website.

XCAP Member Carrasco asked if there was data available regarding where the questions came from, spread around Palo Alto or focused areas.

Mr. Kamhi replied they share the information about which neighborhoods are providing feedback.

XCAP Member Burton observed that IP addresses in Palo Alto are linked to addresses outside Palo Alto because of the way ISP has structured their physical network.

Mr. Kamhi explained respondents were asked what neighborhood they lived in.

XCAP Member Burton asked if there was any feedback from respondents not being able to point to something specific?

Mr. Kamhi had not heard or seen any comments about that. There was one comment about sticky notes that had come from someone who hadn't seen the tutorial.

XCAP Member Brail asked if there was sentiment analysis or tallying being done from what the public is saying and at what point will XCAP have that information.

Mr. Kamhi replied information was shared in the You Tube Live presentation about information received from Churchill and the same will be done for Charleston/Meadow. All the information received will again be shared at the end of the virtual Town Hall and the Power Point from that will also be posted.

3. Oral Communications

Keri Wagner thought the virtual Town Hall was well done, especially the animation with narration. She remarked regarding Charleston, Arastradero, one of the options stated that construction would happen simultaneously. She encouraged when construction happens at both Meadow and Charleston, that there is at least one road open for bikes and pedestrians and vehicles. She also noted for that construction, one of the things happening first is an underpass and she noted there were no underpasses planned for South Palo Alto and she hoped that would be the first thing done. Currently there are four underpasses for North Palo Alto and zero for South Palo Alto and after construction there would be five for North Palo Alto and still zero for South Palo Alto.

Steve Carlson commented on the traffic study. He has heard it said that the traffic study shows that Churchill can be closed with mitigations which avoid creating traffic congestion for the community at large. He pointed out two important limitations to that statement. First, the Hexagon report showed that with closure and mitigations, two major intersections are impacted, El Camino and Oregon with a level F and cannot be mitigated. Also, El Camino and Embarcadero falls four seconds short of being a level F. The bigger issue is the use of 2030 projections, which include about 5 percent traffic growth for Palo Alto. Caltrain's projections are 40 percent corridor growth by 2040. What would happen if at some point there is 10 percent or 15 percent growth? If the Churchill closure is completed by 2025, it would be on the basis of projections looking out five years. How far out should a major infrastructure project be looked at? Is it worth the risk of eliminating a major east/west artery without data showing it could be done without creating major traffic congestion and gridlock throughout the City? He encouraged XCAP to look at the traffic study as it pertained to Churchill with transparency and in the context of the limitations.

Rachel Kellerman commented about the video recorded Churchill Town Hall. She was disappointed that the Town Hall for the Churchill crossing was not interactive. Follow-up questions could not be asked nor engagement with the experts. Since the pandemic the public has not been able to talk personally to experts from City staff or AECOM and this is frustrating. Also, the choices for Churchill in the Town Hall exclude an option presented to Council in 2018, the "no build with safety upgrades". It was noted the "no build" was addressed in the environmental impact report. She believed despite the City and XCAP's efforts to engage the community, the public and important stakeholders are still not focused on the real crossing agenda or the details of the environmental impact report process. No including the "no build, safety upgrade" option in the virtual Town Hall does not give the public an accurate view of the choices currently available for this crossing.

Susan Newman remarked she is concerned about the XCAP and City Council taking opinions and concerns expressed in the Q&A too seriously, without understanding more about how outreach was done. She did not realize the virtual Town Hall had been up until five days after it started and there was very little time to promote the question and answer session before it started.

4. Draft of XCAP Update for City Council

Chair Naik clarified the date this will go to City Council will be September 28. She asked if XCAP should review what she has written currently and then update it closer to September 28 or can an addendum be sent after the meeting.

Mr. Bhatia this could be done similar to what was done in the past. Any changes can be brought back to XCAP.

Chair Naik requested comments from XCAP Members.

XCAP Member Burton thought the update was well written. He was concerned about September 28 because that is Yom Kippur and he would not be able to attend the meeting virtually.

XCAP Member Carrasco also felt it was well written. It was very comprehensive and captured not only the local, but the big picture and how that affected Palo Alto.

XCAP Member Reckdahl remarked that it was highlighted the business community and PAUSD have not been involved. He asked if that would be rectified in the near future or proceeding without them?

Ed Shikada, City Manager replied it wasn't really inaccurate that they haven't been involved. The Chamber of Commerce declined and their representative left the XCAP. It was also PAUSD's decision to step away from XCAP. Mr. Kamhi did make a presentation to the City School Liaison Committee recently.

XCAP Member Reckdahl remarked he sat in on that presentation and felt they had no idea what was going on and not engaged with the process.

Mr. Shikada replied PAUSD was specifically asked if they wanted to have the presentation go to the school district and the response was that they would get back to us. The level of engagement of the district, will probably not be more than what has been received. With respect to the business community, the Town Hall has been pushed as a way for them to get engaged in whatever manner they would like. There has not been a great response.

Mr. Kamhi shared staff has reached out to the Stanford Research Park to get the people commuting there to get involved. Regarding schools, staff has reached out to the schools, not just through the schools but also the superintendent and the Safe Routes to Schools Committee.

Chair Naik inquired if there might be more formal comments coming from the school district or feedback on the bike/ped plans from the Safe Routes to School Committee?

She also clarified that her report noted there hasn't been public comment received specifically from the business community. She specifically asked XCAP Members for feedback about the details of the bike and ped options and the Committee and community seem to be seeking a level of detail that isn't possible, given time and fiscal constraints.

XCAP Member Brail felt it was important to make clear decisions will not be made on specific details of the bike and ped paths.

XCAP Member Burton noted a certain minimum was needed to be done to assess the costs.

Chair Naik also explained the presentation by Mr. Petty from Caltrain was long and she tried to put that into policy buckets for City Council. She noted the deadline to get her presentation into the City Council packet is September 17.

Public Comment

None

5. XCAP Member Updates and Working Group Updates

XCAP Member Brail acknowledged he had XCAP Member Klein's edits.

Chair Naik asked XCAP Member Klein if he had any comments on the chapters received so far.

XCAP Member Klein had no comments.

6. Continue Deliberations – Churchill

Chair Naik explained that public comment on this subject was taken last week, but anyone who missed that opportunity and wasn't heard from last week will be heard now.

Tom Kellerman remarked the proposed mitigations associated with the Churchill closing proposal were expressly designated as conceptual by Hexagon. In addition, in 2018 the City Council adopted a resolution that specifically requires that any Churchill closure include mitigations that address redirecting traffic into adjacent residential streets. Hexagon informed XCAP that their conceptual mitigation proposal focused solely on level of service so other factors will still need to be taken into consideration. It is important the XCAP report clearly informs the City Council of which factors are incorporated in their recommended actions and which have not been addressed. He recommended, as part of this report, the XCAP adopt an approach that incorporates the following elements: First, studying a Seal bike/ped tunnel as an alternative to the Churchill bike/ped tunnel. This has been discussed but never studied. It would be safer than a crossing at an intersection with a traffic light, which is proposed for Churchill. Second, redesign and implement the Kingsley/Embarcadero bike/ped pathway that was designed in 2016. Given the high volume of bike and pedestrian traffic on the north side of Embarcadero and the significant increases in vehicular

traffic on this corridor that would result from the proposed Churchill closure, additional safety measures will be essential along this pathway. These improvements would not only improve bike/ped safety, but also improve level of service on Embarcadero Road for car traffic. Finally, he recommended adopting the “no build, safety upgrade” option that was proposed to the Council in 2018. If a bike/ped tunnel is constructed at Seal, then closing Churchill becomes fairly easy because another bike tunnel would not be needed. Delaying a decision on closing Churchill would allow the City and the Planning and Transportation Commission time to carefully study and adopt a more comprehensive solution in accordance with the requirements adopted by the City Council.

Neva Yarkin lives on Churchill Avenue. In her opinion, the viaduct was not worth talking about because of its impact on properties and the cost. The partial underpass option could take partial property acquisitions on Alma and across from the PALY track on Churchill. On Kellogg Avenue, properties would lose street parking. Also, if the Castilleja expansion is approved, there will be more traffic on Kellogg which will change the dynamics of the partial underpass option. Caltrain is reluctant to consider giving the City any of their right-of-way which could jeopardize the partial underpass option. The high cost is also a factor. The cheapest option is the Churchill closure with mitigations.

Eric remarked in the XCAP report regarding the partial underpass, if the bike underpass could be constructed without the actual remainder of the project which could be done at a later time. The bike underpass without the remainder of the partial underpass is a popular option and might be able to be separated from the rest of the project.

XCAP Member Deliberations on Churchill

Chair Naik indicated last week the pros and cons of all the alternatives were discussed. By her tally, it seemed like there was not much support for the viaduct with few pros. She asked if there was anyone who felt strongly that the viaduct should be the only alternative that should be pursued, or should attention be focused on the partial underpass and the closure plus mitigations?

XCAP Member Carrasco felt at this stage of the design process a lot of information has been received and he believed all three options encompassed all of the different ways of doing this. There are several good things and bad things in each of them. It is unknown what the configuration will be on the north side of Embarcadero. If it is a viaduct then the cost of going up and down the down cost is eliminated and the viaduct will cost about half as much as proposed going just over Churchill and come down at 1.6 percent before Embarcadero. Another issue is that Embarcadero needs to be updated in the next thirty years. Removing the constraint of the Caltrain or high-speed rail line there will be very difficult in the future. He felt the viaduct should be looked at in more detail. There may be alternatives to the viaduct allowing bikes and peds and cars at Churchill. Maybe look at bikes and peds and look at cars in a different way. It suggested recommending to City Council that this needs to be studied in more detail, landscaping, bikes and peds.

Chair Naik inquired if he was proposing that the viaduct would not necessarily be the only option, but he would feel comfortable recommending two or more and the viaduct would be one of those.

XCAP Member Carrasco replied yes.

Chair Naik asked other members if two alternatives were pushed, the viaduct would be one of those alternatives?

XCAP Member Brail could not get past the cost, but if not for that he could probably say he would strongly prefer the viaduct over the partial underpass. Based on current information, he would not put the viaduct in his two preferred options.

XCAP Member Templeton remarked at the level the viaduct has been evaluated so far, she agreed with XCAP Member Brail. It would be hard to put that in her top two. She did understand XCAP Member Carrasco's opinion.

Chair Naik related that early on it was said, even if it was decided not to pursue any alternative, there would always be the possibility XCAP would make recommendations to Council and Council picked something else. It is incumbent for XCAP to capture the two years of work and put as much institutional knowledge into the report for Council's consideration. She proposed if there was support for removing the viaduct, here would be a place to send a strong message to Council about how XCAP felt about the fact that Churchill was divided off of the discussion from Palo Alto Avenue.

XCAP Member Burton wanted to draw a distinction between the tunnels that were rejected for clear obvious reasons and the viaduct in which case the decision is less striking.

XCAP Member Klein felt there needed to be cleaner, more cogent recommendations to Council. He had no trouble discussing the two "finalists", he hoped there would be one recommendation to the Council. He felt the City and residents expected one recommendation for each site, if at all possible. To move the discussion along, the viaduct should be eliminated. He moved XCAP reject the idea of recommending the viaduct in the same manner as the tunnels in South Palo Alto.

Chair Naik asked for a second?

Chair Naik did not hear a second. She noted XCAP Member Klein may be losing support when stating it as being as opposed to the viaduct as the opposition was to the tunnels. The difference is with the current information, the XCAP just can't come to a strong conclusion.

XCAP Member Klein replied with the current information, he thought his view was appropriate for the level XCAP is operating under, which is true for all three sites. The opposition to the viaduct may not be as strong as the opposition to the tunnels, but that doesn't make any difference. It is the idea that the XCAP is supposed to make recommendations, and the field needs to be narrowed.

XCAP Member Carrasco clarified he didn't think there should be a viaduct in the backyards of Mariposa, but there could be a better closure option than the current one.

XCAP Member Templeton asked if money was the only reason to reject the viaduct?

XCAP Member Brain replied the viaduct seemed to be uniquely unpopular. Given that, there would have to be a very good reason to recommend the Council pick a viaduct over the other alternatives.

Chair Naik thought XCAP Member Carrasco was saying he would be more in favor of the viaduct, but his version not the one being looked at. His version is tied to what is happening in the north and that part of the process has been cut off to the XCAP. She asked if the group would be comfortable removing the viaduct from consideration, but to make it clear in the report that should there be a viaduct selected for North Palo Alto, that the Council may have to consider where it would go down near Embarcadero and how that might have an impact on whatever gets suggested for Churchill.

XCAP Member Carrasco agreed that would satisfy him.

XCAP Member Shen suggested making a notation saying that whatever decision XCAP makes it is noted that this is what the XCAP has done to this point and this is all that can be decided on. The decisions will be based on that.

XCAP Member restated from his motion that the XCAP delete from further consideration the alternative of the viaduct, with the understanding that there will be a discussion in the final report regarding the pros and cons so the Council and residents have a full understanding of XCAP'S reasoning.

XCAP Member Carrasco felt that was reasonable, but he would add that XCAP accepts that traffic will move from that intersection and be exported to other neighborhood streets and that is okay. He was not sure he could vote for that yet. There should be further study in any design process. At this point, the weaknesses and strengths of each option were looked at but not in the detail needed. This could be done after XCAP, a new committee that would look at options in more detail and modify these options.

XCAP Member Templeton inquired if after this deliberation process, column F is completed and the evaluation of the viaduct is recorded to justify the decision. She understood this would be marked as not recommended and she would second XCAP Member Klein's motion.

Chair Naik clarified Member Templeton's question arose from her assistance in taking notes inside the dynamic matrix she made. A copy of that matrix with notes will be provided to staff so it can be made public at the next meeting.

XCAP Member Templeton related that XCAP Member Carrasco's comments helped crystalize her position and helped her understand the viaduct in connection with North

Palo Alto when and if that is discussed outside the scope of this project. She is comfortable removing it from consideration for the scope XCAP has been assigned.

Chair Naik explained part of what XCAP committed to as part of this process is that as it gets closer to taking votes, checking if anyone will be forced to vote on something even if they are holding back thoughts. Now would be a good time to voice those concerns.

XCAP Member Cho responded she felt the Group should move forward and if something is not popular or there are cost issues, maybe this could be simplified. There are problems with the current choices, but eliminating an alternative would contribute to simplification.

Chair Naik asked for a vote to support XCAP Member Klein's motion.

XCAP Member Brail voted yes.

XCAP Member Burton voted yes.

XCAP Member Carrasco voted yes.

XCAP Member Cho voted yes.

XCAP Member Klein voted yes.

Chair Naik voted yes.

XCAP Member Reckdahl voted yes.

XCAP Member Shen voted yes.

XCAP Member Templeton voted yes.

Chair Naik advised the vote was unanimous.

Chair Naik remarked XCAP Member Klein voiced his idea that XCAP has been given a mission by Council to have a single idea so there should be a push to get to that idea. She asked the other XCAP Members if they were strongly behind that concept or that it is too difficult to choose between the two. She is split but slightly favoring one option over the other, but it is a narrow choice.

XCAP Member Carrasco advised from his perspective there should be one answer.

XCAP Member Templeton shared she felt the report would be delivered with context to come up with a single recommendation.

XCAP Member Brail agreed there should be one recommendation, but there might not be a unanimous decision and that would go into the recommendation.

XCAP Member Burton indicated there should be one recommendation, but felt Council should be provided with the list of pros and cons for each alternative.

XCAP Member Reckdahl did not think there was enough information for a final answer. The closure is the simplest and the cheapest but it does not have neighborhood support. To get that support, XCAP needs to show the neighborhood they did their best to make this work, and he didn't think that was done for the underpass. The Caltrain right-of-way is a make or break for this option and more work needs to be done on this issue.

XCAP Member Cho noted it was said the closure didn't have neighborhood support but she was not sure that was correct because there is some support for it.

XCAP Member Brail related from what he heard the neighborhood is, unfortunately, very divided. From what he has heard the viaduct was very unpopular, but there seemed to be a steady stream of people on both sides of the issue.

XCAP Member Cho indicated it was fair to say they are divided.

Chair Naik asked XCAP Member Cho where she was on the issue of one alternative.

XCAP Member Cho responded she was in favor of one option.

XCAP Member Shen supported having only one option. The decision can only be made on what XCAP has done so far and it will be noted what has been done, what hasn't been done, and the pros and cons based on what it was possible to study. It will be acknowledged there is more work needed to be done on many of the options. XCAP can present recommendations, based on current information, and state it as such. Someone else can take all this information and run with it in the future.

Chair Naik affirmed XCAP Members Carrasco, Templeton, Brail, Cho, Shen, Klein and Burton preferred one option, she and XCAP Member Reckdahl leaned towards presenting two options.

XCAP Member Burton reiterated he favored one option, but there is no alternative without its issues.

Chair Naik asked, at this time who would be in favor of the closure over the partial underpass. She noted XCAP Members Carrasco, Brail, Cho, Klein and Shen did favor the closure and the remaining four members were unsure. She asked for comments about the closure.

XCAP Member Brail indicated for him it was about facilitating movement across the corridor for all modes of transportation, but this doesn't talk about the experience for pedestrians and bikes. Many people encouraged more discussion about bikes and pedestrians. Both options have a pedestrian and bike crossing but the possibility of having a pedestrian and bike crossing at Churchill where it currently is that can be relatively wide is a big plus for the closure. When talking about a partial viaduct the only option is at Kellogg where it is more difficult for bikes and pedestrians. Seal is quite a way from Churchill, but given the value put on bikes and pedestrians in Palo Alto, he wondered why bike and ped crossings at Churchill or Kellogg and Seal are not considered. The partial underpass as a concrete wall down the middle of Alma Street, and for pedestrians and bikes it is worse. Otherwise, the small amount of property

impacts, the construction methods and the costs are secondary considerations to the ease of access across the railroad corridor, especially because of its location across from PALY.

Chair Naik remarked it sounded like of the two bike options for closure XCAP Member Brail favored the one that is in the middle street (Option 2).

XCAP Member Brail favored option 2 very strongly.

Chair Naik also clarified XCAP Member Brail's response as, if an additional bike/ped crossing could be added, exploring Seal as one of those would be advantageous. She also related that part of the reason that is very compelling for her with that argument is that it has been said a closure cannot be tested without building the mitigations first, so the road mitigations would have to be done first. In order to build the bike/ped tunnel at Churchill, you have to close Churchill which means the closure cannot be tested. She heard in the previous pros and cons discussion was the concept of the closure of Churchill being reversible and she didn't think that was possible under FRA rules. However, if the closure of Churchill option was agreed on, if there were two bike/ped tunnels, building the traffic mitigations and a bike/ped tunnel at Seal could be started first. Then the Churchill closure for cars could be tested to see if the vehicle mitigations were correct. If everyone agreed with that idea, she could be swayed to move to the closure option.

XCAP Member Brail's understanding was that the intersection improvements were not tremendously expensive. A bike/ped tunnel probably is not nearly as expensive as some of the other things.

Chair Naik asked for a show of hands of those interested in the concept XCAP Member Brail put forth of also having a bike crossing at Seal.

XCAP Member Klein thought XCAP Member Brail's idea was interesting and it should be included in the report, but making it a conditional vote goes contrary to the idea of coming up with a recommendation. Financing it may be difficult in current times. He would like a crisp recommendation that is realistic.

XCAP Member Cho noted Column H was a poor for closure and it should be poor for cars, but if people are biking and walking, the closure with a bike/ped underpass would be good.

Chair Naik agreed there is a difference for vehicles and bikes/peds.

XCAP Member Cho returned to Column H which was poor, but for the pedestrians and bikes is good.

Chair Naik clarified Member Cho's comment that H.04 should be good and she agreed with that.

XCAP Member Shen first commented on the two current bike/ped options, a straight shot through which is one of two options for closure and the only option for the partial

underpass. He feels that one is very unsafe, it would be a narrow tunnel, and the grade, even if it is ADA compliant, would be difficult.

Mr. Kamhi explained the City would not design a tunnel similar to the California Avenue bike and ped tunnel that currently exists. The tunnels proposed in the closure start back further for that reason.

Mr. Bhatia understood it was 5 percent in most places, except at the ramps where it might be more to meet the ADA requirements.

Chair Naik asked if that was the same for Kellogg as well as the two Churchill options?

Mr. Bhatia reported his understanding was that it was 5 percent for the bike paths in most locations except for the ramp locations where it could be 8 percent. He thought the width was ten feet.

Chair Naik inquired if the width of option 1 and option 2 under the bike options for closure were the same.

XCAP Member Shen reported the path going across the road and then underneath, turning 90 degrees is about twenty feet.

XCAP Member Brail's opinion was that the debate about option 1 versus option 2 should be done with the actual facts.

XCAP Member Shen continued the tunnels going straight concern him, especially the width of the tunnels.

XCAP Member Burton asked if the XCAP could make a recommendation to Council to consider expanding the widths.

XCAP Member Shen replied to do that the roads would have to be closed because currently there is one lane each way to either side of the opening.

XCAP Member Brail advised, looking at option 2 for Churchill, there is already going to be no street parking for several houses nearest the bike tunnel. To make it wider the street would have to be one-way or closed completely.

XCAP Member Shen felt a better option was giving the bikers a light to go across, they could turn down to a wide entryway, it could be a 5 percent grade or less, it would go around and under and come back up again, that is safer and preserves the option to reverse the closure. This can't be done with either of the straight tunnels. Regarding Seal, he like the concept of a tunnel at Seal, but he didn't feel a straight shot tunnel was a good idea either. The Churchill tunnel comes up straight back up, but the Kellogg tunnel ends at a T, which is dangerous.

Chair Naik indicated going back to the main concept, the bike part might have to be tabled.

Mr. Kamhi advised the information about the pedestrian/bike ramp for the Churchill closure could be found on the closure with mitigations fact sheet.

XCAP Member Brail indicated this is a detailed conversation about this, but what is the alternative. He suggested imagining there was no bike crossing at Kellogg or Churchill and the only bike crossings were at Seal. That would mean many people who cross at Churchill today would be crossing at Embarcadero, and that would be worse.

Chair Naik offered the Rail Corridor Study from 2014 which showed their general concept for their vision. The entire vision of that report was that the train created an east/west membrane and they tried to recommend as many permeations through that as possible to make everyone connected. Their recommendations were a bike/ped crossing at Seal and at Kellogg if possible. Most of the bikers living north of Embarcadero go through Embarcadero to get to PALY. Those living south of Churchill going to PALY would be served by the Seal Avenue bike path. Seal is one of the main connectors and would connect with the way Safe Routes to School works. If trying to build a closure with mitigations first, a bike/ped path could be done at Seal and that would provide bikers a way to cross before doing the actual vehicular traffic closure.

XCAP Member Cho reiterated that was very good information. Looking at the matrix's column H for the partial underpass, that is actually not very good for the bikes.

XCAP Member Burton reminded everyone pedestrians also use these paths and they are more sensitive to distance.

Chair Naik remarked, if there was enough money to build crossings at Kellogg, Churchill and Seal, where would the majority of bikes be?

XCAP Member Brail shared his Safe Routes to School map which was based on existing conditions. They recommended that students from the north part of Palo Alto cross at the Homer tunnel and ride along the Embarcadero path to PALY and presumably the students from the south part of town would end up on Churchill or possibly California Avenue.

Chair Naik indicated where Pearce Park is, following the line directly to the right to Embarcadero, that is Seal.

XCAP Member Shen pointed out if there was a light at Seal the bikers could cross and a path could be built through the park for bikes/peds to connect to the roads beyond it, an underpass would not be needed but he forgot about the train tracks.

XCAP Member Carrasco added about the experience of the presently planned bike path, it is uncomfortable for pedestrians. Ten feet wide is narrow and there is no room to make it wider. The ramp is 230 feet at 8 percent grade, then a tunnel that is 200 feet long, artificially lit, come out the other side to another 230-foot ramp at 8 percent grade. The part of the closure that bothers him is that the mitigations affect neighborhoods outside of the immediate location. There is some opposition to the seven-lane intersection.

XCAP Member Burton agreed with XCAP Member Carrasco but also, he is worried about traffic projections not going beyond 2030. That isn't to say the traffic mitigations are bad. They are relatively low cost and are probably worthy of standing alone but to move the problems from Churchill onto Embarcadero is not equitable.

XCAP Cho indicated that is assuming traffic in 2030 will be worse, but that is known.

XCAP Member Burton reported looking at the United States economic history, there have been some real disasters and the country has managed to recover after each of these. Also, currently companies are enjoying the idea of working at home and when employees realize when they are not in the office, they can't participate in all the small advantages, they may prefer not to work from home.

Chair Naik asked staff why the traffic numbers ended at 2030 and when would that traffic model be updated?

Mr. Kamhi mentioned they are working on the new Sustainability and Climate Action Plan. It is likely that recommendations from that will include recommendations for staff and businesses to telecommute on an ongoing basis. He was unsure when the traffic study would be updated, but that was part of the Comprehensive Plan.

XCAP Member Burton felt as a point of order the XCAP should be on record as saying that while the general public is hearing all these discussions, no formal decisions have been made.

Mr. Bhatia indicated he checked with AECOM on the rates and slopes for the Churchill option. The slope shown on the plan for the bike/ped tunnel for options one and two and the Kellogg tunnel is 8 percent currently at the exits and entries. They are out ten feet wide at the entry and exit points, but it could be wider under the tracks and at the outside of the roadway section. The ramps were set at the maximum ADA allowable but they could be expanded back to accommodate the lower grade.

Chair Naik asked if currently there is an example of a 5 percent grade versus 8 percent grade in the City?

Mr. Kamhi responded it is difficult to compare a short undercrossing to a longer ramp and tunnel where the slope could be spread out.

Chair Naik reported there seemed to be more general interest in closure versus partial underpass. She asked if anyone felt strongly that they could not support the closure?

XCAP Member Burton reiterated traffic is being exported to other neighborhoods and the inability to reverse the closure given FRA's policy.

XCAP Member Carrasco could support the closure but would ask the Council to look at the mitigations and try to find better ones.

Chair Naik asked if, at this stage, it is fair to say any alternative that is recommended, XCAP would say these are the chosen options but there are areas that need more work for these options.

XCAP Member Klein (audio problems) felt it was better to concentrate on the basic issue of whether a two-thirds majority of members support closing Churchill, then move to the question of what type of bike/ped access XCAP could support. He favors closing Churchill because of cost and the aesthetics and there would be much less construction time. There would be some exporting of traffic to other areas, but he believed it would be manageable and traffic would be spread out timewise.

XCAP Member Reckdahl agreed with Member Burton that the traffic would be exported. There is neighborhood support for this. There are deficiencies, aesthetics and cost. Other issues have not been looked at such as raising the tracks several feet.

XCAP Members Carrasco, Burton and Chair Naik agree with XCAP Member Burton.

XCAP Member Cho thought discussion would be focused on current options, not creating new scenarios. At this rate, there will not be any recommendation.

Chair Naik replied regarding the new alternative, money and time are running out to be able to go further. Members Reckdahl, Burton and Carrasco are saying the partial closure has the best possibility and if more time and further engineering is devoted to this, there could be solutions found to some of the reasons why people have voted against it. Also, while Old Palo Alto and Southgate are being impacted, Southgate is impacted the most but there does seem to be some support from that neighborhood.

XCAP Member Cho had a problem with the comments about neighborhood support and traffic issues. The neighborhood is divided and there is a traffic report.

XCAP Member Brail replied all the options have an impact on somebody and it is difficult to find a way to balance those. There isn't any traffic study done that all residents would say is an exactly accurate prediction of the future.

XCAP Member Templeton advised something that has been uncovered through this process is that there are problems with the roads in addition to what is being worked on for the railroad crossings. It is important to emphasize in the report that serious work is needed to fix the safety and flow issues on Embarcadero. Problems have also been identified with the underpasses. These are all valid issues but it is acceptable to tell Council these other major problems have been uncovered and will also need attention separately.

XCAP Member Cho suggested each XCAP Member's comments could be put in the matrix.

XCAP Member Klein indicated, as spoken about before, if there isn't a super majority for one option, then both would go forward, but he hoped on option could be recommended.

Chair Naik replied a more structured form would be to asked what members agreed with and not agreed with.

XCAP Member Cho responded the Group needed to decide what it wants to do. To make the recommendation fair and through members' comments it could be decided what the best option would be.

XCAP Member Shen noted XCAP Members agree on most things, but just a few things that there isn't agreement. It can be noted that members disagree on some items.

XCAP Member Klein thought a vote would be useful to see where everyone stands. He moved that the XCAP's preferred alternative to the Council is the closure of Churchill with mitigations and also with regard to the bike/ped mitigation, that aspect be continue for one to two weeks, waiting for more information from AECOM and staff on the issues raised today.

XCAP Member Carrasco seconded that motion. He thought that was the most reasonable alternative and agreed with XCAP Member Klein's comments.

XCAP Member Klein offered these points. First, he respects the view of the neighbors and he has learned a lot from them, but the decision is not to be made on the basis of public input. Second, whether there are other alternatives or the partial underpass could be improved, those are possibilities, but those improvements have not been forthcoming.

XCAP Member Carrasco thought this was the most reasonable alternative, it has the lowest cost, the mitigations have to be looked at carefully to minimize the amount of impact on adjacent neighborhoods and streets. There are concerns about the residents of Southgate who might have to change their routes to go east, but other neighborhoods do it. The downside is the exporting to Embarcadero and Page Mill, which should be revisited.

XCAP Member Templeton remarked as long as members feel they can express their concerns about the mitigations effectively, so they would be understood to be part of the recommendation, she would be okay with closing Churchill.

XCAP Member Reckdahl felt this was an issue of fairness and the underpass hasn't been given enough consideration. There are a significant number of people on Embarcadero and Southgate who are interested in this. This has been cut off before it has been fully flushed out.

XCAP Member Cho asked what kind of attention would be needed to make Churchill clearer?

XCAP Member Reckdahl replied the wild card is if the partial underpass be made small enough to avoid the Caltrain right-of-way. If not and Caltrain won't give up the right-of-way, then that ends it. If the partial underpass can be made smaller and the cost can be lowered or the aesthetics improved would this become feasible? If this is done, it would give a fair shake to the community and if this can't be done, residents would at least feel they have been treated with respect.

XCAP Member Cho noted to do that kind of investigation, the City would have to spend more money.

XCAP Member Reckdahl felt more time and money needed to be spent to study the partial underpass better. This will be shelved for a time and maybe when it is revisited things will have changed. There is enough uncertainty and enough promise in this idea that it should get a fair shake.

XCAP Member Templeton objected to saying the partial underpass hasn't been given a fair shake. This idea has been explored in depth. Research was done and additional funding was asked for.

XCAP Member Brail was not as convinced of the superiority of the bike crossing for the closure option, given the long discussion about grades and percentages and widths, so a final answer right now would be hard for him.

Chair Naik explained there is a motion on the table that the recommendation would be a closure with mitigations, and the bike piece would be brought back at a subsequent meeting with more details. She understands Member Reckdahl concerns. She is struggling to come up with one answer. No matter what the decision is, because of COVID and other reasons, this matter will sit for a while and there may be answers to some of the unknowns without having to do anything. For example, as Caltrain and high-speed rail figure out their issues, they will come to a conclusion about where four tracks can be and the potential of then having some encroachment there becomes a different discussion. She also noted that no one has discussed the possibility that Caltrain has left open that there might have to be four tracks at any of the alternatives that have been looked at.

XCAP Member Brail was sensitive to the points about equity and that will be more strongly felt when South Palo Alto is addressed with more severe property impacts. The mitigations go a long way towards making the closure more equitable but it moves the impacts from one neighborhood to another.

Chair Naik clarified right now it's just figuring out if the votes are there to say the closure is what will be focused on and spend a future meeting filling in the bike piece. Also, doing the best pros and cons and suggestions for both of the alternatives anyway, in case Council doesn't pick what XCAP suggests.

Mr. Kamhi noted what he sees XCAP doing is determining a preferred alternative and explaining what they would like the next phase of the project to look at to try to incorporate. To a certain extent the bike grade and wide can be designed to be what is wanted. There is a cost and length associated with it.

Chair Naik recalled a point where alternatives were being discussed and Ed Shikada noted there could be more study on the viaduct or the partial underpass, but with the closure, given the traffic study done, the mitigations suggested by Hexagon are what they are and it would be closure with the mitigations they suggested. There seems to have been a shift because it was understood the bike plan on the north side of Embarcadero hasn't been clarified and how those meet with the concerns expressed by the bike community. It does not seem to be as strident, that whatever was in the Hexagon report are the only mitigations available unless the Committee asks for more. There seems to be more flexibility and maybe because a recognition that because of COVID this may not be implemented any time soon, that if this alternative

is moved forward, there has to be further study because either traffic numbers will need to be updated, bike/ped plans will need to be updated or there are other concerns from the Committee.

Mr. Kamhi didn't feel COVID has impacted any of this. Further to the point, XCAP will make its recommendation to Council, Council will direct potentially moving forward with an alternative. Different criteria could enter. He understood the mitigations to be the baseline for what would be required in order for it to function that way it is wanted and be optimal.

XCAP Member Carrasco understood the motion to be closure with mitigations, but that the mitigations would be looked at again, not that the existing mitigations are approved.

XCAP Member Klein moved that the preferred recommendation to the Council is to close Churchill with the mitigations described by the consultant, but to be given further consideration with the bike/ped crossing or underpass to be not included in the motion at the present time, but to be studied further at a future meeting, with staff and consultants to provide information on some of the issues raised. In addition, if there can be a quick look at the feasibility of a tunnel at Seal. And it allows for expanding on the baseline mitigations.

XCAP Member Brail voted yes.

XCAP Member Burton voted no.

XCAP Member Carrasco voted yes.

XCAP Member Cho voted yes.

XCAP Member Klein voted yes.

Chair Naik voted no.

XCAP Member Reckdahl voted no.

XCAP Member Shen voted yes.

XCAP Member Templeton voted yes.

The vote was six yes, three no.

Chair Naik suggested discussing what other additional baseline mitigations there could be for closure. She would like there to be some analysis, cost estimate of reopening Park Boulevard for the Southgate residents and whether that makes sense from a transportation perspective. She would like more participation from the neighborhood more extensively and from Evergreen Park.

XCAP Member Brail assumed if XCAP recommends an alternative, that the Council and staff can do more intensive work with the people in the local areas to answer these questions.

Chair Naik reiterated she agreed with XCAP Member Reckdahl. She is concerned with the residents of Southgate who would feel locked out and separated and she is not comfortable with the mitigations. She could move closer to the closure by looking at potentially building the bike/ped crossing possibly at seal and then being able to test the closure to make sure the car mitigations are correct. She also has concerns similar to XCAP Member Burton that this is based on a 2030 traffic study, but looking at 2040 Caltrain numbers and the debate about what the future looks like post pandemic. She indicated she would like to add that potential extra area of study to the possibility of the closure along with the investigation of the Seal bike path.

XCAP Member Brail would like to see more detailed schematics and profiles, if available, for the Churchill bike crossing options. It would help considering the long debate about what the grades were.

Mr. Kamhi responded he would send whatever exists. They won't be able to provide a feasibility study on the tunnel by next week.

XCAP Member Brail also asked if it would be possible to get the dimensions of the California Avenue bike tunnel and the East Palo Alto bike bridge.

Mr. Kamhi indicated he had Homer and California Avenue on his list and he will see about the Palo Alto bridge.

XCAP Member Cho expressed for the partial underpass she would also like that information. However, the pros for the closure are the cost, the construction time and safety. Even if the partial underpass is made smaller and more beautiful, the cost, construction and bike/ped safety issues are still there.

Chair Naik clarified the vote just taken showed a 6-3 preference of the group for the closure. The current discussion should encompass what additional mitigations besides the baseline mitigations for closure would the Group be interested in. A more detailed discussion of the partial underpass will take place in the future.

XCAP Member Shen would like the dimensions of what AECOM had delivered for clarity of the renderings. Regarding additional mitigations for the closure, he would like to get information about traffic inducement on Churchill, Embarcadero and Oregon Expressway.

XCAP Member Carrasco would like information about a tunnel at Seal and a Homer-like underpass at Churchill but correcting some of the defects of the Homer underpass.

Chair Naik explained the reason for the Homer configuration is because the tracks are raised there. Raising the tracks at Churchill would require shoofly tracks and currently there are no shoofly tracks as part of the closure. That would change the cost and the construction elements.

Discussion ensued about the ability to do a tunnel under the tracks without a shoofly track.

Mr. Kamhi indicated this would be completely up to Caltrain, but it would be unlikely that they would be interested in doing that on an active railway.

XCAP Member Carrasco remarked a Homer-like tunnel may be possible because currently there is no left-turn lane from Alma south to Churchill west, so there may be the ability to move the road somewhat to get a little more comfortable bike path that is out in the open and easy to see.

Chair Naik clarified what she thought she was hearing from XCAP Member Carrasco as part of the mitigations was more in the bike improvement category, which will be discussed at a future meeting.

XCAP Member Templeton agreed with all the items brought up for discussion. She added the Lincoln High, Emerson at Embarcadero/Kingsley area which is very dangerous with putting more traffic through those areas and would like a closure look at those mitigations to make sure all the safety issues are addressed there.

Chair Naik agreed the bike/ped plan for that area has to be reviewed.

XCAP Member Templeton also noted there are some unexpected behaviors, unplanned behaviors happening at those intersections regarding school pickup and drop off and a better solution is needed and planned for.

XCAP Member Brail affirmed parents were stopping in various unsafe places at the Embarcadero/Alma complex to drop the children off for PALY. If the recommendation is to close Churchill, should there be some way to have a drop off on that side of the tracks near the Churchill undercrossing?

Chair Naik suggested adding looking at unauthorized or unsupported pickup and drop off locations and mitigating that appropriately.

XCAP Member Reckdahl related currently when children are dropped off on the west side of the tracks, they go on the Embarcadero sidewalk towards Town and Country, then go up the dirt side wall. Stairs there would be much safer and orderly.

XCAP Member Brail noted the mitigation plans in the past looked at a pedestrian crossing over Embarcadero going to the Town & Country side, but students will cross at the light if it's shorter.

Chair Naik suggested for the next meeting XCAP Members could come with their lists of thoughts about the closure and the partial underpass.

XCAP Member Templeton supported Chair Naik's proposal of the bike/ped path built at Seal first the trying the closure at Churchill.

XCAP Member Brail remarked there may be private money available for a tunnel that benefited the safety of children and the cost was more reasonable.

Mr. Kamhi agreed with the phasing and if the closure was the option, that the bike/ped elements were done before the closure. He cautioned not separating those

into two separate things, but consider them as one project because for funding purposes.

Chair Naik shared another way to mitigate the pressure that builds on Embarcadero and El Camino is the answer of what happens at Downtown Palo Alto Avenue. If there is a viaduct Downtown, that would significantly change the traffic patterns and that could potentially be thought of as a way to help mitigate some of the pressure at Embarcadero as a result of the Churchill closure.

XCAP Member Shen noted something talked about in the past was moving the entrance to Town & Country and he would like to add that. The bike/ped underpass that goes across first at a light could also be built beforehand. Potentially as a staging element, the Embarcadero mitigations could be done before the closing.

Mr. Kamhi understood the mitigations needed to be finished before the closure occurs, otherwise there is failure at other places.

Chair Naik raised the issue that many vehicles use the Churchill light to make unsignalized left turns. If Churchill is closed is that area still the right place to have the signal or would it be better at a place like Northern California.

XCAP Member Shen remarked if the option for the bikes and peds to go across first, a light will still be needed, however it could be a light just for bikes and peds.

Chair Naik asked if Mr. Kamhi could return with information about if the grades are changed, how much further back the entrance would have to be. She asked XCAP Members to return with pros and cons of the alternatives that would help in writing the remainder of that section in the report. The bike/ped items for Churchill will be discussed when staff returns with that information.

The meeting adjourned at 6:50 PM