

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

**September 9, 2020, 3:30 PM**

Summary - Special Meeting (virtual, through Zoom)

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

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

Absent:

## **2. Staff Updates**

Ripon Bhatia, Senior Engineer, reminded everyone that the virtual Town Hall has been extended to September 14, 2020. He then presented information regarding the questions about the Churchill options. The tunnel width in option one is 10 feet in most places except when it crosses under the railroad tracks where it is 20 feet. The height is 8 feet at the side walls and center height is 10 feet. The slopes shown in the concepts are 8 percent maximum which is divided into 30-foot sections. At every 30 feet there is 5-foot landing area which is flat. That averages out to 6.86 percent slope.

XCAP Member Reckdahl asked if the ramps were on Caltrain right-of-way?

Mr. Bhatia replied for Option 1 they are on the Caltrain right-of-way.

XCAP Member Carrasco inquired if the 10-foot wide ramps were for bikes and pedestrians and in both directions?

Mr. Bhatia answered yes.

XCAP Member Brail remarked there has been mention of box jacking. He asked for options 1 and 2 how disruptive is the construction of the tunnel under the Caltrain tracks on neighborhood operations and Caltrain operations?

Mr. Bhatia advised this question also came up regarding the Meadow/Charleston session. This is shown in the YouTube video as well as the response from AECOM. His understanding was the box jacking prepared both sides of the railroad tracks in advance of the jacking of the boxes beneath the tracks. It takes significantly less time but he did not know the exact amount of time.

XCAP Member Burton explained in addition to the prep time which could be months, the actual jacking, which closed the area, could take place over 1 or 2 days at the most.

Chair Naik noted the building of Homer included a coordinated shutdown with Caltrain for a scheduled shutdown that Caltrain already had and worked it into a weekend closure. She asked if there was a construction video for how this ramp would get built.

Mr. Bhatia reiterated there is no construction video for this option. He continued with option 2 which had similar parameters. General width was 10 feet and also 10 feet wide at the undercrossing. The ramp slopes were also 30-foot segments with 8 percent slopes and 5-foot landings every 30 feet with 0 percent slope. The side wall height is 8 feet with center at 10 feet with an arched design. He indicated he had received the existing conditions for the California Avenue undercrossing which were width of 8 feet including under the crossing. The ramp slope was 12% maximum slope. Height was 8 feet.

XCAP Member Burton asked if these were design drawings or the as-is conditions?

Mr. Bhatia explained there were more likely the as-built measurements but they were measured in field to confirm the measurements. At the Homer Avenue undercrossing the tunnel width under the tracks was 20 feet. The ramp slope was about 8.33 percent on the plans, but actual measurement was about 7.34 percent. The ramp width was 8.5 to 9.5 feet at most places and the height for the vertical clearance was 8 feet.

XCAP Member Carrasco pointed out that the one-way ramp was 8 to 9 feet and it was not a long distance to go down an 8 percent ramp.

Mr. Bhatia confirmed the ramp lengths were 97 to 99 feet. He reported there was another question regarding the slopes, if the slope was reduced to 4 or 5 percent, how would that affect the length of those ramps. His graph showed at 5 percent the ramps would be 300 feet, at 4.5 percent ramp length would be 333 feet. He clarified the one shown at about 6.86 percent factored in the 30-foot ramp with 5-foot landings at 0 percent slope. Mr. Bhatia continued with the costs related to the projects and based on the AECOM previous analysis, the cost for option 1 was \$17 to 21 million and option 2 was \$22 to 27 million. He also noted there was a question about a feasibility analysis done for Seal Avenue, Kellogg. He related they could find no written document for that, but the street width was about the same as Churchill, so technically it should be feasible, but the impacts would have to be looked at.

XCAP Member Reckdahl commented the ADA requirement is no more than 5 percent grade, but with the periodic landings that could to up to 8.3 percent.

XCAP Member Brail noted that was how it worked at the East Palo Alto bike crossing.

XCAP Member Burton asked when there would be a similar report on the Meadow/Charleston crossings.

Mr. Bhatia replied there is more detailed information available on the Meadow/Charleston profiles.

Chair Naik inquired if any work has been done on the Loma Verde bike crossing that would be useful in terms of understanding bike-ped issues on these discussions?

XCAP Member Reckdahl replied work had been done but NVCAP did not received that because it was determined to be outside their scope.

Chair Naik asked for any work that might have been done on that.

Philip Kamhi, Chief Transportation Official replied he was not aware of anything currently.

### **3. Oral Communications**

Kathy Jordan remarked about the consensus recommendation XCAP has been requested to give and the underlying assumptions for the recommendations have changed. Caltrain's business plan is on pause. There has been a change with remote work, health and safety concerns about using public transportation and lack of Caltrain ridership as a result. These present new realities which change underlying assumptions. Caltrain is planning a grade separation study which may influence future grade separation plans along the corridor. At this point it is unlikely there will be an infrastructure plan passed at the Federal level. Regarding a consensus recommendation, obviously major things to consider are east/west connectivity, convenience for accessing the school district schools, adding to emergency response times and any costs that would include all the mitigations required for each option. She suggested XCAP pass on all the knowledge they have gained and consider not making any recommendations.

Arushi Agarwal (phonetic) is a graduate of Gunn High School and lives in Charleston Meadows. As a student, she strongly believes the trench option where the train would go underground is the best option out the four presented. This is because of the heavy bike and pedestrian traffic that passes through Charleston Meadows and that is very important for students trying to get to the library, Mitchell Park, El Camino or the JCC. The underpass option would disrupt daily life because there would not long be availability for people to walk or bike easily through the crossings at Charleston Meadows.

Susan Newman commented on the bike tunnels. Her reaction to this information was a 10-foot tunnel for both bikes and pedestrians and she suggested looking at the PAUSD's letter about the number of students traveling by bike and pedestrians through there at a given time. She didn't think that width could be adequate for both bikes and pedestrians. The tunnel height sounds claustrophobic.

Keri Wagner clarified the Loma Verde crossing underpass was adopted by the City in July of 2012 as part of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan. She would like the crossing at Loma Verde to be part of the construction mitigation for the work done in South Palo Alto. Many bikers and pedestrians use Charleston and Meadow daily and an additional underpass and protected crossing are desperately needed in South Palo Alto. She is a regular user of the Cal Ave and Homer tunnels. The Cal Ave tunnel is too narrow and too steep. The Homer tunnel is fine.

Jim Silver (phonetic) lives in the Fair Meadow area and they are strongly opposed to the elevated options, the viaduct and hybrid options because those would leave a permanent scar in the area. They like the trench option but if that is not acceptable because of the impact on the creeks, they like the underpass option. If more attention is paid to detail it can be made accessible to bikes and pedestrians.

#### **4. Draft of XCAP Update for City Council (to go to the City Council meeting on September 21, 2020)**

Chair Naik advised she added several lines to the version seen last week to indicate the progress made at the previous meeting. She remarked the Group had originally planned on coming up with a consensus recommendation. There is not a consensus recommendation for Churchill. On the line that said at the September 3, 2020 meeting, XCAP voted, and she wants to put the vote 6-3 with the no's being XCAP Members Burton, Reckdahl and Chair Naik, to recommend closure. She thought it was important that the Council know the vote was not as unanimous as hoped for.

XCAP Member Burton's opinion was that the Council will probably face the same issue when they have the hearings at the time they will vote on these options, so they should know there was not a unanimous view on this.

XCAP Member Carrasco also suggested the three who didn't vote for the closure explain why in some detail because their ideas should not be lost.

Chair Naik acknowledged there will be much more detail in the report. She and XCAP Members Burton and Reckdahl will write their opinion on that.

#### Public Comment

Susan Newman agreed the vote should be described in the report with the dissenting view. She noticed some information she has seen in a recent letter from the PAUSD Superintendent was not included in the description of what the Superintendent discussed. He did not seem to fully understand the alternatives to date because of his concern about student safety related to bike commuters and just exactly how the school will be affected by closing Churchill related to getting to the Churchill side of the school, maintenance vehicles, buses, etc. That needs to be highlighted.

XCAP Member Reckdahl noted the email sent by Don Austin to all parents this week looked like a cut and paste of the letter he sent staff in February. This was not new information from him.

Chair Naik also thought it was a direct quote from his February 26 letter. Her feeling is the part of the report that explained why people voted for the closure despite a letter from the School District is something those who voted yes would have to write.

XCAP Member Templeton agreed that in addition to a dissention opinion, clarification of some of the comments made by the assenters is needed as well. It is understood there will be future more detailed iterations by staff on the mitigations and more opportunity for the public to contribute their input.

Chair Naik advised where she discusses the letter, she could put a hot link into where the letter is on the website so Council Members could read that actual letter. Chair Naik then made a motion and proposed there will be 2 amendments. One is that the second paragraph will be updated to reflect the vote, 6- with no's being XCAP Members Burton, Reckdahl and herself. On the second page at PAUSD outreach, she will place a link to PAUSD's letter.

XCAP Member Carrasco seconded the motion and added a friendly amendment. Regarding the viaduct, he thought the vote was 8-1, he didn't vote for it. He would like to keep some parts of the viaduct proposal alive and he will write his dissenting view.

Chair Naik noted that would be put into the actual report. This is just an update to City Council on where the Group is.

XCAP Member Carrasco then seconded the motion without that friendly amendment.

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.

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

Chair Naik explained after a discussion with XCAP Member Klein, they will give to staff for release with the next agenda, all of the updated chapters so far. Once that is received by XCAP Members they will be asked for all their edits in writing and send them back. These are Chapters 1, an introduction about this project; Chapter 2, a summary of the process to date; Chapter 6, the safety section.

XCAP Member Klein advised he has worked with the authors of three chapters. Chapter 2 has gone through one round of editing and resubmitted to Sarah, so it is ready to be totally reviewed by the Group. He has given feedback on Chapters 1 and 6. Those three chapters are pretty stable. There is nothing decided by XCAP that will affect those chapters. Chapter 5 reflects what decisions are reached and will be one of the last. Chapter 4 is most confusing because there was an earlier draft by Ms. Kanne and subsequent drafts that need to be merged into one. He was hopeful for a final report by the end of October.

XCAP Member Burton hoped for some public feedback on the parts already published and asked how that could be done.

Chair Naik responded the chapters have been made public and any time during public comment someone wants to give public feedback could be done there or emailing XCAP.

XCAP Member Burton affirmed the public feedback is very important. The Group does not work in a vacuum. Silence does not indicate assent, but non-silence can indicate constructive criticism which he would like.

Chair Naik clarified when these chapters are sent out, if XCAP Members have thoughts they need to be sent back in writing, otherwise it will be assumed Members are okay with what was sent. She and XCAP Member Klein will work to edit and work through those. Another version will be put out and Members can look at those again. She will include a cover note with specific directions on how to do this for Members.

## **6. Continue Deliberations – Churchill**

Chair Naik explained this item is continued from the previous 2 weeks. Public comment will only be taken from those who have not commented on this previously.

### Public Comment

Theodore Nissim ceded his time to Lisa Nissim.

Lisa Nissim thanked XCAP Members for listening to Southgate residents and understand that closing Churchill is not an option. She, her family and community are distressed that the XCAP overall favors closing Churchill and disconnecting Southgate from Palo Alto. They do not want to live on an island. It is not XCAP's job to disenfranchise Southgate by closing them off from the rest of Palo Alto. After the hard work Southgate residents contributed to this process by devising the workable alternative of the partial underpass and conducting a survey showing the overwhelming majority of the Southgate community do not want Churchill to be closed, she is shocked and disappointed that XCAP has disregarded them to support what some have characterized as the easy and cheap option. Was closing the Charleston or Meadow crossings as options because that would be easy and cheap. Important entities such as Stanford and PAUSED impacted by the recommendation have not been involved in the discussion, as well as neighborhoods west of El Camino which will also be isolated from Palo Alto. Has there been consideration of how access to the Stanford campus will be constricted by closing Churchill? Has XCAP offered solutions to the severe problems raised by the District Superintendent. The impact on the district's buses and on PALY merit consideration as well as the challenges Stanford faces in campus access. From the information presented to XCAP it is clear no one can have a full understanding of any of the three options without a comprehensive engineering study of each option. Without greater technical and detailed input, it is impossible to know what is feasible and what is not. XCAP has devoted an amazing amount of time listening to general estimates of the impact of each option, but simply does not have the information to pass judgement on the impact of each option and should let the City Council know this. She is also concerned about the number of XCAP Members who have left the Group in recent months and those with a personal stake would not recuse themselves from the recommendation due to their blatant conflict of interest. If XCAP had a full roster of members and those with a conflict of interest recusing themselves from voting, the decision might be different. She urged XCAP to pass on to the City Council facts about what they have learned which clearly point to the need for more detailed engineering analysis of each options without making a recommendation.

Pete Henry is a resident of Southgate and agreed with the prior speaker. He asked if there had been any estimates of cost and who will pay for it.

Michael Brosman (phonetic) noted this is the first meeting he has attended. He wished to better understand how to make the close Churchill decision independent of knowing how to mitigate the problems. Those should be linked into the decision. He did not know there were members of the committee who lived on Churchill and that seemed like a contrast of interest.

Chair Naik replied to the speaker who was unfamiliar with where the costs are, that information is located at the [connectingpaloalto.com](http://connectingpaloalto.com) website, under the reports is a section called fact sheets and these have the costs for each of the options. XCAP does not deal with where the money comes from. She also noted the virtual Town Hall has been extended to September 14.

Mr. Kamhi added there is the matrix which has a comparison of all the costs of the different alternatives which can be found in the virtual Town Hall and the [connectingpaloalto.com](http://connectingpaloalto.com) website.

Chair Naik also advised the makeup of the committee was selected because they were people from the impacted areas. That was known when the group began.

Mr. Kamhi related there is only one fund source that has already been identified for this, which is the Measure B which is estimated to produce about \$700 million, over thirty years for eight grade crossings to occur in Santa Clara County, four of which are in Palo Alto.

### XCAP Deliberations

Chair Naik shared her screen which showed a summary of what happened at the last meeting, the votes and the potential mitigations discussed at the last meeting. She hoped for clarification on the ones there were questions about. She asked XCAP Member Shen about what discussion he wanted regarding mitigations and traffic inducements.

XCAP Shen replied there was some thinking if further exploration was done on the partial underpass, that traffic inducement should be studied there.

Mr. Bhatia did not sure if traffic inducement was understood differently by traffic people. Traffic inducement occurs when there is an over capacity created at an intersection or within the roadway system. By replacing an existing infrastructure with less than or equal to, there is no additional capacity that is being created. He did not understand the intent or consideration Member Shen was referring to.

XCAP Member Shen responded it was about the partial underpass on the length of Churchill where, if kept open despite it being closed on the other side of Alma, would it draw more cars there? He did not think the study looked at the fact that if that was open, would it draw more cars there to take advantage of the fact that it was open.

Mr. Bhatia replied currently it is open, so right now it is existing versus proposed conditions.

Chair Naik thought the question related to efficiency. The partial underpass would make that intersection more efficient because there would be no waiting time for the train, so it is a change in condition.

Mr. Bhatia reported there was a discussion on the traffic inducement that those minor improvements did not add significant capacity and, therefore, considered limited capacity at 5 percent or less.

Chair Naik related that Member Shen's question about El Camino/Embarcadero and El Camino, Oregon and Page Mill, related to this. There is an existing bike plan that was approved in 2016 that dealt with bike improvements on the north side of Embarcadero and also had some changes to the Embarcadero/El Camino intersection. She asked staff how those were put together with the traffic study.

XCAP Member Shen thought he brought up a different entrance to Town & Country, so that may be part of that also.

Chair Naik explained in 2016 the Council voted to do concept 2. At Embarcadero there was a question about how that plan went with the alternatives the consultants offered in terms of the intersections related to a closure and mitigations.

Mr. Kamhi advised this project was previously put on hold until a decision was made for grade separation. At the latest budget session, Council elected to remove this from a project being moved forward at this time. This project has been removed from the Capital Improvement Program.

Chair Naik asked what the process would be if someone wanted to resurrect that project?

Mr. Kamhi replied this was similar to any other project in the City. It would need to be a prioritized project the City decided to move forward with.

Chair Naik inquired if that included any improvements to the Embarcadero intersection?

XCAP Member Klein explained the Capital Improvement Program is part of the annual budget process, but is considered separately. Capital Improvement Projects are included on a five-year rolling basis. Right now, some of the projects listed in the Capital Improvement Program would be tentatively scheduled for 2024, 2025. For this program to be deleted from that really means it has been pushed out quite a way.

Chair Naik summarized that any mitigations proposed for the Embarcadero/Emerson High area and for El Camino/Embarcadero should be looked at in conjunction with the now cancelled 2016 bike project.



XCAP Member Burton asked Member Klein, when XCAP gives it report to Council is it possible or likely Council might reverse its decision on removing that project from the CIP?

XCAP Member Klein replied it is possible, but whether it is likely depends on the composition of the City Council. It has been done but it is unusual.

XCAP Member Templeton understood as a stand-alone project it has been cancelled, but if it is included in the XCAP recommended mitigations, portions of that could be implemented.

XCAP Member Klein responded if this is included as a potential mitigation, the Council will consider that along with all the other mitigations suggested to look at.

XCAP Member Carrasco indicated the issue was that it was not compatible with one of the mitigations proposed by AECOM. He felt the area should be looked at more comprehensively. If it could not be done here, it should be looked at in the downtown section.

Chair Naik believed the safety improvements done were basically to improve the bike/ped experience. She thought XCAP was asking Council to take the same concepts that were behind the 2016 bike project and overlay that with the new designs and proposed mitigations that were suggested by XCAP. The City will need to mitigate this and these are places that will need more work. Right now, the 2016 bike plan that has become unfunded does not line up with the designs that were proposed for the mitigations and XCAP still believes there need to be bike/ped improvements to make that safe.

XCAP Member Carrasco thought there were some inequities on the potential mitigations. How equity is looked at is important. The equity of transferring more cars to Professorville and increasing the traffic on the on ramp through Professorville is "taxing the man behind the tree". The other issue is there is a lot of work to be done before coming to any detailed conclusion about who gets taxed and who benefits. He did not think the potential mitigations fully covered the equity issue.

Chair Naik explained what XCAP is doing is basically at a high level, advising Council they looked at the three options for Churchill, a viaduct, a partial underpass and a closure, and XCAP ended up with a closure and realizes that needs to be mitigated. In addition to the baseline mitigations provided by Hexagon, XCAP will recommend other things to be looked at. She noted a line was added saying a statement regarding how alternatives considered for grade separations at Palo Alto Avenue could impact traffic patterns at Embarcadero/Alma and Embarcadero/El Camino. There is the recognition that north of Embarcadero, should any different designs be chosen for Palo Alto Avenue and downtown, that could have some collateral effect on this area. Even though that is not in this project, it will be flagged for Council that this needs to be looked at.

XCAP Member Carrasco agreed that partially covered his concerns, but the Embarcadero issue and what that configuration will be is tied to what happens north of Embarcadero.

Char Naik noted a decision was made on the three alternatives, but from thereon, the City is being asked to do further studies.

XCAP Member Carrasco asked that the Embarcadero intersection be revisited once the information is received of where the location of the tracks will be in the northern section. He also believed mitigation was needed for the school district's buses and delivery vehicles.

Chair Naik did not know, outside of the mitigations from the traffic consultant, what else there might be. The traffic report stated the mitigations they proposed would be enough to mitigate the impact on school buses and delivery vehicles. If the Group does not agree with that, there has to be a way to frame those concerns with some pointed suggestions.

XCAP Member Carrasco recommended asking the school district if they have solutions.

XCAP Member Brail saw that as traffic patterns and the idea of the mitigation options are to reduce the impact on the traffic and the school buses and maintenance vehicles count as traffic.

Chair Naik advised the only other thing that could be said is that PAUSD has considered in the past the possibility of relocating their bus depot to an alternate location. That could be put in as one of the things known to have been previously discussed but what PAUSD does with their bus depot is their decision.

Mr. Kamhi wasn't sure about recommending the relocation of the bus depot.

XCAP Member Klein was not in favor of including that comment at all. Even raising that possibility is getting into the school district's business. One of the things in Don Austin's letter was a statement to the effect that this is the City Council's business and whatever the City Council does the school district will have to live with. The school district does have access.

XCAP Member Brail agreed that should be left out.

XCAP Member Carrasco would also leave that out, but would include a statement about mitigating the bus issue, saying the inability to use Churchill for the school district should be considered in the mitigations.

Mr. Kamhi responded regardless of the type of vehicle, the mitigations are the same for traffic.

Chair Naik conceded with Member Klein about not including relocation of the bus depot.

XCAP Member Carrasco felt this needed to be recognized in some way.

Chair Naik replied it was recognized in the traffic report.

XCAP Member Carrasco's next point was also mitigating the on ramp through Professorville.

Chair Naik explained she included unofficial pickup and drop off locations along Embarcadero slip road and possible safety mitigations.

XCAP Member Brail thought that was different, but also important.

Chair Naik asked Member Carrasco if he thought there would be more traffic on the slip road? She thought there were multiple options for the mitigations that could be brought forth.

XCAP Member Templeton indicated the conceptual mitigations that have been shared are not the final solutions or the complete solutions. XCAP has identified many areas that also need attention. It is important to capture that at a conceptual level before getting down to the specific items to be addressed that aren't included in the conceptual mitigations. What is being suggested is the Group wants the problems they identified to be addressed in order for this closure to be effective and not disruptive to the City. There are problems currently and how much more will they be exacerbated when there is additional traffic through these areas and does that change the priority for Council regarding funding. The current proposed mitigations are a beginning and those mitigations need to be improved to meet baseline. She then asked if the Kingsley High/Embarcadero intersection was addressed?

Chair Naik believed it was captured it in terms of the issues with the bikes, but not necessarily the Kingsley High/Embarcadero clover leaf.

XCAP Member Templeton suggested it be addressed to reduce neighborhood thru traffic.

XCAP Member Cho remarked the unofficial pickup/drop off location is an existing problem. It is not from the traffic study but from neighborhood comments. If mitigation is done to improve Embarcadero, will that still be an issue? Is that a current problem that will still exist with improvements?

XCAP Member Templeton advised it exists now with a smaller volume of traffic. If what is done plans to increase that traffic, it changes the risks significantly.

XCAP Member Cho's opinion was if it is too dangerous, that might not be used as a pickup/drop off area.

Chair Naik felt both were true but both needed to be listed. XCAP does not have to come up with the mitigations.

XCAP Member Brail suggested a mitigation related to the drop off issue. Since XCAP will be recommending closing Churchill to cars, there is currently a right-turn lane from Alma onto Churchill that will no longer be necessary. This is shown as landscaping on the rendering. Could that right-turn lane be converted into a drop-off zone which would give an additional way to drop off students for PALY without having to go under the tracks?

Chair Naik responded that would be a bike path issue and can be discussed then.

Mr. Bhatia advised clover-leaf is the wrong definition for that. It could be multi-pronged intersection or multi-legged intersection or interchange.

Chair Naik then addressed the next question about moving the entrance of Town & Country to mitigate congestion at El Camino and Embarcadero.

XCAP Member Klein did not think it was appropriate for XCAP to consider. It would need the consent of the owner of Town & Country and would not be within the City Council's total control.

XCAP Member Carrasco and Chair Naik agreed with Member Klein.

XCAP Member Shen explained he added that only as a possible solution to help reduce traffic that is stopped at that additional light and he thought that could be looked at.

Chair Naik suggested the statement "consider mitigations that could help reduce congestion at the entrance to Town & Country"?

XCAP Member Klein noted Mr. Black of Hexagon said what he is proposing would reduce the congestion at the competing entrances to the high school and Town & Country.

Chair Naik responded Mr. Black indicated the main problem was El Camino and Embarcadero south. One thing talked about was whether having a light at Encino would create another available entrance into Town & Country.

XCAP Member Klein remarked he was pointing out the commercial reality of the situation.

XCAP Member Brail felt this was getting beyond the scope of XCAP.

XCAP Member Carrasco agreed with Chair Naik.

XCAP Member Burton advised this was an unfortunate situation partly the result of Judy Kleinberg dropping out of XCAP. If she had remained or been replaced, there would presumably be some business community input. He suggested perhaps doing another outreach to the Chamber of Commerce. Rather than taking that option off the list, rather say XCAP needs the business community's input to clarify.

Chair Naik the suggested the comment "consider working with Town & Country in the future on ideas to reduce traffic congestion".

XCAP Member Klein remarked if he was representing Town & Country, he would say the congestion is due to PALY.

XCAP Member Brail's idea was saying "we encourage the school district and the Town & Country to work together on the traffic issue. He noted something not talked about is on the mitigation plan there is the pedestrian overpass. XCAP may not be able to fix

all the problems in this area, but could state in the report it would be nice to have agreement between PALY and Town & Country.

XCAP Member Reckdahl pointed out the problem is not just PALY. Also, Town & Country has a big incentive to make traffic flow more smoothly because it would help their business so they may not oppose a study.

XCAP Member Klein suggested the wording be "consider working with T&C on reducing congestion on Embarcadero/El Camino".

XCAP Member Cho agreed with that Member Klein's suggestion. There could be many solutions to that problem.

Chair Naik noted a pedestrian overpass was one of the mitigations Hexagon gave.

XCAP Member proposed wording that XCAP had a concern about the pedestrian overcrossing might not lead to improved safety without additional mitigations.

Mr. Kamhi advised this was a location where mitigations such as barriers to encourage pedestrians to use the overpass could definitely be used.

Chair Naik advised the next point was El Camino, Oregon and Page Mill and how the closure affected those areas. She believed the traffic study remarked there was not much that could be done to improve that intersection.

Mr. Bhatia noted there were mitigations that were possible such as adding a right turn.

XCAP Member Brail felt XCAP was saying they recognized there were tradeoffs.

Chair Naik addressed the next point which was a bike/pedestrian crossing at Seal. She felt if a closure was done and mitigations needed to be done first, in order to build the bike/ped tunnel at Churchill, you have to close Churchill and there was no time for children have a safe way to cross during construction. Her proposal was to review the possibility of having the bike/ped tunnel built at Seal along with all the car mitigations first, then the closure could be tested to see if the car mitigations worked and/or start the closure. This would be a bike-ped crossing in addition to the one built at Churchill.

XCAP Member Carrasco suggested looking at a more comprehensive bike/ped plan and that plan should have an urban designer should look at other factors, not only at the geometry of the crossings. It is a bigger issue than just the Seal crossing, but agreed that crossing would be useful.

XCAP Member Templeton agreed with Chair Naik's timing for the crossing.

XCAP Member Brail also agreed with the timing of the Seal crossing but more engineering needed to be done on that option.

Chair Naik pointed out the Safe Routes to School maps are included in today's packet. These identified Seal as a very important connector street to all those pathways. Also included are the excerpt from the Rail Corridor Study she discussed last week which studied how to have the most east/west connectivity across the Caltrain right-of-way. Having a crossing at Seal and also at Churchill are important to the goal of having multiple crossings.

XCAP Member Shen indicated if option 1 was chosen, it's possible this could be built without closing Churchill first, then close Churchill.

Mr. Bhatia advised a condition could be added that the Churchill ped/bike pathway should be built and traffic remain open on Churchill Avenue.

Chair Naik clarified she was suggesting the Seal crossing should be built no matter what, and an added benefit would be it provides an additional crossing during construction.

XCAP Member Cho favored the addition of the Seal crossing. Many people she talked to would like to have a crossing there.

Chair Naik noted for the record, it does not need to go to the public for a vote because it is not taking away park land because that would be considered an improvement to the park. A pedestrian/bike path is consistent with park use and can be done on dedicated park land.

Chair Naik moved to the next point which related to the study of whether Park Boulevard should be reopened between Southgate and Evergreen Park, which is popular for some, unpopular for others. That is a possible mitigation and should be looked at in the future when considering the whole bike/pedestrian/car connections.

XCAP Member Carrasco thought that should be kept, but XCAP should not ask for solutions.

XCAP Member Brail remarked that closure was probably there because they didn't want people cutting over to Churchill. If Churchill is closed there would be no reason to go there.

XCAP Member Reckdahl reported there could still be people cutting through to drop off children on Churchill so he felt neighborhood outreach should be included in the study.

Chair Naik questioned Member Reckdahl about his observation of children climbing on the landscaping around the Embarcadero underpass and asked if he had a mitigation for that?

XCAP Member Reckdahl shared a screen looking towards PALY and Town & Country. Students are dropped off at the slip road and go right up the slope. He suggested putting a stairway there to make it safer.

Chair Naik affirmed wording such as “consider stairs on northwest corner between Embarcadero and Caltrain”. The next point was the concern about how the impacts at Palo Alto Avenue might change traffic flows and consider they are connected.

The group moved to bike alternatives.

Chair Naik reiterated the information received from Mr. Bhatia earlier regarding the dimensions of the tunnels. She noted she spent a lot of time talking to bike folks and looking on the internet for what is considered the best bike design for underpasses. She learned access to adjoining streets should be as direct as possible, designs should minimize conflict points at entrances and exits, space should be continued throughout the facility, extra consideration for lighting and security. Basically, the bigger, the wider, the better lit, the more pleasant the bike experience. Circuitous routes that may achieve a bike/ped connectivity with ADA compliance work, but are not exactly bike and pedestrian friendly. She preferred the path in the center of the road because it was wider but there could be a circumstance where bikes coming out of the tunnel have to merge with cars, or bikes need to cross to the center to go down. She wanted to discuss making Churchill a dead end at that point which could significantly reduce the potential for the bikes, peds and cars to intersect there. She proposed putting a light somewhere in Old Palo Alto to allow for unsignalized left turns.

XCAP Member Brail responded that option 2 has more potential to be a wider bike tunnel. He had not thought of Chair Naik’s idea.

XCAP Member Shen agreed making the tunnel wider and closing off Churchill would afford a wider entrance. He asked about the lack of access to the driveways of the affected houses?

Chair Naik thought if it was a dead-end street, the residents could still drive on their street and have access to the driveways, but there would be fewer cars. Option 2 gives the opportunity to separate the bikes and pedestrians from both Alma and the tracks. If there was a similar design at Seal, there would be faster and more comfortable ways to get across the tracks.

XCAP Member Shen explained the tunnel was made as wide as possible, removing on-street parking on Churchill with one lane one way on each side of the tunnel opening.

Chair Naik remarked if the curb is removed there is a lot of flexibility to be able make the movements needed.

XCAP Member Brail suggested on the PALY of Churchill there are 2 pedestrian stairways with a 10-foot bike tunnel down the middle. On the other side of Churchill would there be room with Chair Naik’s suggestion, to have pedestrian staircases as well. That would make it possible to have the part of the tunnel that goes under Alma and the tracks be 20 or 30 feet wide.

Chair Naik added as shown on a slide from Mr. Bhatia, to make the grade more comfortable, the bike/ped tunnel would be extended further into the block. To decrease the grade from 8 percent to 5 percent would need about another 150 feet, which would not be a lot if that is a dead-end street just for residents.

XCAP Member Carrasco felt this was getting too detailed. Neither of the options are currently adequate, but XCAP needs to ask Council to study them in more detail to look for other ways to do it.

Chair Naik related when she and Member Klein met with staff, it was clear that as much of the decisions XCAP agreed on to give to Council would be helpful. If there are more Members who are interested in option 2 than option 1 and there are additional ideas, that would be helpful.

XCAP Member Carrasco referred to Member Shen's remarks about the intricate dimensions and if there was a sidewalk or the ability of cars to back out from their driveways. There are problems with both solutions that need to be studied with someone who knows how to do these things.

XCAP Member Cho initially was interested in closing both sides, but after hearing the comments from residents she was leaning the other way. If she lived on Churchill, she would rather that be closed and safer for the bikes. She did not think the dimensions were the problem.

XCAP Member Carrasco believed dimensions would be a problem and the 10-foot wide opening for bikes and pedestrians going in both directions is inadequate. There are many problems that this Group cannot solve. He did not have a preference for either option, but both should be looked at.

XCAP Member Cho also felt 10 feet is narrow. Currently there are two crossings at Churchill with a traffic light stopping all the bikes, then they access the crossings. It seems to be working and if there is no light stopping them, 10 feet might be enough.

Chair Naik remarked the argument for the center tunnel is that it is a constant flow, so there is no bunching.

XCAP Member Klein favors option 2. He was intrigued to read the material provided by Chair Naik from the bike community where one criterion was straight shot access. He would prefer direct access instead of jogging right and back for himself and the children going to PALY. He doesn't feel more expert input is needed. He proposed endorsing option 2 and suggest to the Council that they look at Chair Naik's proposal of closing Churchill. He couldn't fully endorse it yet because it hasn't been fully vetted, but liked the idea of exploring it further.

XCAP Member Brail prefers option 2, even as currently designed is the best crossing option for Churchill. He is interested in further developing Chair Naik's ideas about finding a way to enlarge the tunnel with more lighting.

XCAP Member Shen noted if the options look as they currently do, he would still support option 1. As a bike rider, having gone through California Avenue, 8 feet is too narrow, and another 2 feet will not make that any better. Going in a straight shot, bikes will not slow down. For option 1 there is potentially the opportunity to make that ramp wider. There is no perfect solution but with option 2 there is the loss of some on-street parking. Closing off Churchill has some advantages but brings up the



comment about not having enough information to pick an option or more about encouraging more study on both options.

XCAP Member Templeton agreed that neither option is ideal. She feels both have issues that require further iteration, so it is hard to choose one. The only consideration she had was the distance of the path, so the straight shot would be preferable with the caveats that the recommendation is sent with the strong urgency of improving the design before implementing it.

XCAP Member Cho preferred option 1. She would not feel safe using the long tunnel at night.

Chair Naik reiterated this is not selecting option 2 the way it was proposed. This is asking if, between the two options, is there a strong favorite, if so why, and what other suggestions might there be. She prefers option 2 because it doesn't cause users to bunch and grade separates bikes and pedestrians from Alma. If it is agreed that a critical thing is making a bike/pedestrian crossing at Churchill should also separate bikes and peds from Alma, does that help the decision moving forward. The recommendation to Council could be, when looking at the bike alternatives, other parts of the design need to be improved.

XCAP Member, after Chair Naik's clarification, changed to option 2.

XCAP Member Reckdahl preferred option 2. Blocking Churchill to reduce traffic would be good. His concern about option 1 is the turns, with many people now having cargo bikes and trailers plus there would be a wait for the light.

XCAP Member Burton agreed with Member Reckdahl and supports option 2.

XCAP Member Shen would like to hear what the Safe Routes to School and bike people have to say about these options before making a recommendation.

Chair Naik talked to someone who helped found the Safe Routes to School Program and she noted one thing for consideration, especially when discussing the Seal crossing, is that little kids have smaller legs and smaller wheels, so even though 8 percent is the ADA requirement, flatter is better. If the traffic on Churchill is restricted that allows the start of the tunnel further back which affords less of a slope. She would be very interested to have the consultants figure out if it could be wider at the bottom.

XCAP Member Carrasco pointed out discussion about the bike plans should not have been left to the end. AECOM is not an urban design consultant. Quantum means it is an interwoven set of priorities that all influence each other.

Chair Naik reiterated this is not suggesting the Group has nailed a design. What she hopes for is agreement on the importance of having a bike/pedestrian alternative that separates the bikes and pedestrians from Alma and the train which is superior to just the train. More alternatives could be explored. If a crossing at Seal is also agreed on, already in the mitigations is to consider this as part of an entire network that should

be reviewed. The concerns about making sure there is more design is hopefully captured in the mitigations above and reiterated in whichever alternative is chosen.

XCAP Member Carrasco explained he is not sure either option with 10-foot wide, 2-way underpasses work for bikes, pedestrians and handicapped.

Chair Naik suggested notes that the XCAP wants to explore wider, taller and fully lit crossings? In closing, she indicated these notes will be available at the next meeting and they will be made public and put out as part of the agenda for next week.

## **7. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 5:58 PM