

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

**September 16, 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, Keith Reckdahl, David Shen, Cari Templeton

Absent:

### **2. Staff Updates**

Philip Kamhi, Chief Transportation Official reported full data from the virtual Town Hall was not yet available. During the first 6 days visitors could not be counted, but the feedback forms from visitors was received. After the first 6 days, the Town Hall received 1,006 unique visitors and over 600 feedback forms. There were many questions and comments received and feedback was received from most neighborhoods. The virtual Town Hall is still up to visit, but the feedback form is no longer available. Feedback can be submitted through an email to Transportation, the XCAP or City Council.

Ripon Bhatia, Senior Engineer, advised the XCAP updated board was scheduled at 5:45 on September 21, 2020.

Chair Naik asked if a summary of the feedback would be given at that City Council meeting.

Mr. Kamhi replied staff is preparing a full report and it would not be ready by that time.

Chair Naik then asked when that report might be available.

Mr. Kamhi related it would probably be sometime next week. He did note there were only 220 respondents who said what neighborhood they came from.

### **3. Oral Communications**

Yoriko Kishimoto called attention to 2 letters she sent to XCAP and the City Council. The most recent one she sent today is a report commissioned to Dr. DeRobertis (phonetic), Ph.D., a licensed traffic and civil engineer who was asked to review the traffic report that was the basis of XCAP's recommendations. There were a number of notable remissions. One was that it failed to analyze the capacity of the Embarcadero Road underpass. It only looked out 10 years and it was an old-fashioned traffic study which only looked at automotive traffic at intersections. It omits looking at the level of service and operating conditions for the proposed new signal light intersection at Embarcadero and Kingsley. It also pointed out with all the minor mitigations that were

postponed to be analyzed, it is likely the impact of the mitigations cannot be understood and recommended more clarity on exactly what the impacts were before an alternative is selected. Ms. Kishimoto also encouraged XCAP and staff to review an article she included.

Kathy Jordan spoke about the process of deliberations. Many people think that is premature at this point in time, considering work changes, concern about the health and safety of public transportation, Caltrain pausing its business plan, the study Caltrain itself will be doing on grade separation and the uncertainty of future conditions. She asked XCAP to consider passing on all the information they have acquired.

Keri Wagner referenced the general engineering plans. In the Town Hall it mentioned the bike and pedestrian crossings are not fleshed out because that was premature. She disagreed with that and noted there are a high number of bikers and pedestrians in Palo Alto. One of the first Churchill mitigations was an underpass, but there would then be 5 underpasses in north Palo Alto, but in south Palo Alto the bike/pedestrian traffic plan adopted in July 2012 proposed an undercrossing at Matadero Creek which has never been given any attention. She would like consideration of that as mitigation for whatever plan is recommended. That underpass is needed for south Palo Alto.

Ellen Hartog pointed out 2 above-grade underpasses are being proposed within a block of each other and closing Churchill and didn't understand that. The time for construction will be doubled for Charleston Meadows and will ruin the connectivity in Charleston Meadows. That neighborhood will be destroyed and this will create a very dangerous situation.

Susan Newman had a question about last week's meeting and discussions related to Churchill closure. She had hoped for much more clarity about how the mitigations would be treated in the recommendations to Council. There didn't seem to be a shared understanding about the current mitigation plan. XCAP Member Templeton said the current mitigation plan is not baseline, but falls below minimum standards and needed to be rethought and other members seemed to feel the mitigations needed to be reconsidered. She asked for more understanding about how this will be treated in the report to Council and how this could be recommended with the lack of clarity about what needed to happen to make closing Churchill feasible.

Ken Joye echoed previous speakers regarding the traffic report is deficient in addressing bike boulevards. He suggested when XCAP makes its recommendations, anything done has to take into account the bike network in Palo Alto. Park, Castilleja is a designated bicycle boulevard on which bikes should be given priority. Proposed mitigations affecting bikes need to be done carefully.

Fred Coleman commented on the impact closing Churchill will have on his neighborhood of Southgate. Southgate is a small community but is part of Palo Alto and closing Churchill will completely isolate that neighborhood. That will be detrimental to their quality of life and the value of the homes. It also makes it more difficult for emergency vehicles to access that neighborhood. He felt the underpass was a reasonable compromise, but believed none of the options was necessary. Even with all of the extra trains it wouldn't be worse than rush hour is currently and this could be

mitigated with computerization to control the traffic lights when trains passed. That would be an inexpensive way to solve the problem.

Chair Naik advised she had a discussion with staff about the Matadero crossing which is really the Luma Verde bike crossing. It was suggested in 2012, and was part of the rail corridor plan in 2014. When CAP, the predecessor to XCAP started meeting it used to be Meadow, Charleston and a crossing at Luma Verde, all 3 considered together. In 2019 Council took a vote to remove the Luma Verde bike path into the discussion related to the North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan, the Fry's site. The reason was the proximity to that project. The NVCAP was focused mainly on housing issues and there hasn't been much discussion related to that crossing.

XCAP Member Reckdahl, also a member of the NVCAP Group did not recall that being discussed with NVCAP and no attention has been given to that.

Chair Naik noted that will be part of the discussion when talking about south Palo Alto, but that may need to be officially returned to XCAP by Council.

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

Chair Naik referred to a memo regarding the sections that have been turned in and which have been uploaded today. The idea is to turn in edits to Sarah Wilson by Friday, September 18 at 10 am. She and XCAP Member Klein are responsible for putting all the sections together and will do that after all sections are received.

XCAP Member Burton mentioned he received some email feedback on his chapters but hasn't had time to respond. He will try to update Chapter 1 by Friday, but Chapter 4 will take much longer. He also spoke to the issue of the future of the Caltrain business plan and the work of XCAP. First, this is a long-term project. The detailed design will take at least a year and then environmental reviews. If XCAP waits until everything is fully clear, a lot of design windows might be missed. Second, the U.S. economic history is very informative. This Country has endured worse downturns than the current one and the Country has always recovered in some fashion. That has to apply to the Caltrain business plan. Third, there are many technology trends that companies embrace as fast technology fixes. The latest is working from home. Inevitably, after a trend gets hyped to the peak, it goes into the trough of disillusionment. Companies are the beneficiaries of working from home, not employees. The basic economic drivers of the Bay Area are still in place, so ridership will return. It is still reasonable, within the limit of forecast precision, to proceed on this path.

Chair Naik clarified members should send their sections to Sarah Wilson.

#### **5. Finish Deliberations – Churchill**

Chair Naik reiterated this is a continued item so public comment has been taken previously. Those who have not spoken on this item may speak now.

## Public Comment

Arnout Boelens thought option 2 was the best option because vehicles would not have to cross Alma with extra traffic lights and risk of collisions between bikes, pedestrians and cars. It also offers a straight shot under Alma and the train tracks.

Ken Joye is a member of the Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee. They have looked at the crossing at Churchill and are aware of the behavior of the high school students but there are many members of the community who also use that crossing. He believes the sight lines are the most important safety factor for outweighing the problem of bike speed. Everyone would be safer in the tunnel if they did not have to make the turn. He feels option 2 is the best choice.

Dexter Girton lives on the corner of High Street and Embarcadero Road. He notes before the shelter-in-place order, traffic jams occurred almost every day at the 2 peak times at High Street and Embarcadero Road, extending toward the bay. The traffic jams will recur if traffic returns to what it was pre-COVID-19. There will be even more traffic jams if another 7,000 vehicles per day are redirected from Churchill Avenue to Embarcadero Road. The traffic consultant stated the bottle neck is at Embarcadero, for Embarcadero traffic it is at El Camino, not due to the high school or the Town & Country shopping center. The proposed mitigations simply redirect about three-fourths of the traffic from Churchill onto Embarcadero Road. In addition, the proposed new traffic lights will further slow traffic. He asked for XCAP to look for a better way than completely closing Churchill Avenue at Alma.

## XCAP Deliberations

Chair Naik clarified XCAP has been asked by City Council at this very early stage of engineering and development to highlight which alternatives XCAP would like the City to study further. None of the recommendations from XCAP is the ultimate recommendation for what will actually get built. XCAP is recommending to Council these are the preferred alternatives XCAP would like to see further investigated when further money is available. There will be further study on the proposed alternatives and much more engineering is needed.

XCAP Member Klein explained there are 2 types of mitigations, the ones recommended by the consultant and the ones currently suggested. He encouraged a process by the Members to agree on the new mitigations such as a third category, not endorsing or opposing, but worthy of further consideration.

Chair Naik asked if his suggestion was yes, no or further consideration.

XCAP member responded his first category was the ones proposed by the consultant, the second would be the ones proposed that are worthy of serious consideration, third would be interesting ideas needing more work.

XCAP Member Shen inquired how options 1 and 2 fit into the 3 categories.

Chair Naik proposed if there is consensus around either 1 or 2, then the suggested mitigations would get numbered 2 or 3. She suggested numbering the mitigations on her list.

XCAP Member Brail felt these were useful categories, but XCAP is not designing these alternatives and asked about a category of who should work on these. The public should not expect that XCAP will make all the decisions. He would encourage the Council, when XCAP recommends more work on an option to include specific parts of the community to engage on that work.

Chair Naik worked on her list on the screen to this end and XCAP Members added their suggestions. She did not XCAP was hearing from the community that things have changed, but the Group still is taxed with doing their job and it is recognized that more work will have to be done.

XCAP Member Carrasco encouraged adding a business organization such as the Chamber of Commerce.

XCAP Member Klein suggested number 1, proposed by consultants. Worthy of consideration of further study then define that as, in conjunction, as appropriate, with the following organizations.

Chair Naik questioned if that wasn't true of not just the mitigations but all the alternatives and everything in the report?

XCAP Member Klein did not think Council would want to do further work on all the alternatives.

Chair Naik meant whatever alternatives the Council selected would then need further work.

XCAP Member Brail suggested wording such as, this is our recommendation; in order to implement our recommendation, we think it is vitally important that whoever is taking this forward to the next step involve the following people, and here is a set of things to look into; not including the ones XCAP thinks are bad ideas.

Chair Naik then asked if item number 3 should be either not recommended or recommended by a minority?

XCAP Member Klein felt number 3 should be eliminated. If someone does not agree with an item, they can write a minority report.

XCAP Member Carrasco agreed with Member Klein.

Chair Naik then suggested two categories, 1) proposed by consultants; 2) worthy of further consideration. She thought it was important to include a list of people to liaise with but not confining discussion to just those people.

XCAP Member Carrasco expressed that inadvertently XCAP seems to have ordered its priorities with trains first, cars second, bikes third, pedestrians fourth, trees and

landscaping, sustainability fifth. As a result, the solutions show that priority prejudice. He wondered about asking Council to look at reversing that order to see what happens when putting slow-moving traffic first. Doing that might drastically change several alternatives. Many of the mitigations are bike and pedestrian deficient.

Chair Naik included a sentence regarding that concern. Besides the new alternatives of the partial underpass and the South Palo Alto underpass, not counting closure, but the viaduct and all the South Palo Alto options, bikes and peds were treated equally because there wasn't much change for them. The new designs need more focus but time and money have run out, so it is not possible to give that same level of priority to bikes and peds as was given cars and trains.

XCAP Member Burton's opinion was if that priority was raised, it would have real implications for the raised rail alternatives as opposed to underpass or trench.

XCAP Member Klein felt this was not a comment on mitigation, but was a criticism of the whole concept XCAP has been operating under, that basically the whole process has been flawed and he could not agree with that.

XCAP Member Carrasco did not think the process was flawed but was slightly tilted with priorities organized in a manner that Council didn't authorize nor did XCAP explicitly authorize. Vehicles and trains are the priority of the current information and slow-moving traffic needs to be looked at as intensely.

XCAP Member Templeton agreed with Members Klein and Carrasco but wondered if there was a better place to capture what the Group's observation has been. These are concepts, not designs, and the Group has observed that the direction has prioritized vehicles.

XCAP Member Brail noted experts have been brought in on a lot of things, but there is probably more expertise regarding cycling infrastructure and safety in Palo Alto than anywhere in the U.S. For the designs going forward, those people need to be incorporated more aggressively.

Mr. Kamhi agree with Members Brail and Templeton. The intention should be the next phase addresses these kinds of concerns and issues. There will be different perspectives on each item. The Office of Transportation has to consider how the suggested routes to school and other bike and pedestrian infrastructure connects to all these alternatives.

Chair Naik remarked XCAP's general organizing principal has been how to build a separation between the train and everybody else. It has not been about the best way to move people across Caltrain.

XCAP Member Templeton disagreed with the statement XCAP hasn't been considering moving bikes and pedestrians across the corridor as well. The designs aren't there to incorporate all the feedback regarding that.

Chair Naik advised moving the discussion to bikes. For bike option 2, the tunnel is in the middle of the road and bikes and pedestrians are separated from both the cars

along Alma and the tracks. One potential alternative for bike option 1 was whether the ramps could be on the east side of Alma. A member of the public asked, the Council criteria says provide clear, safe routes for pedestrians and cyclists crossing the rail corridor and did that mean separate bike and peds wherever possible? Chair Naik understood that to mean bikes and peds may have one route and vehicles may have another, not that all bikes and peds needed a separate route.

XCAP Member Shen preferred no Eminent Domain wherever possible.

XCAP Member Carrasco's criteria would be that it is compatible with the adjacent neighborhood. If the adjacent neighborhood has bikes and pedestrians on separate paths, then ideally the solution should be that separation should continue.

Chair Naik thought in the last meeting there was a pretty strong majority for bike option 2 and she asked if that was still the case.

XCAP Member Reckdahl would like some feedback from the traffic expert regarding bike option 2 with additional closure. Currently there is a lot of traffic from Alma down Churchill to Embarcadero. How many cars per day would be impacted by cutting off that route?

XCAP Member Cho believed the number of vehicles was minimal.

Chair Naik asked Mr. Kamhi if it was possible to ask Hexagon whether a closure on the east side of Churchill between Alma and Emerson would create a significant amount of diversion back onto Embarcadero?

Mr. Kamhi replied the contract with Hexagon is completed, but he could talk to Mr. Bhatia about this.

XCAP Member Shen noted he and Ken Joye had an exchange about straight through underpasses for bikes and pedestrians. From that conversation he understood there didn't seem to be any standards for packs of bikes going through an underpass.

Chair Naik believed the packs were created as a result of bunching at the light.

Mr. Kamhi advised they have visually observed at that particular intersection, the majority of the packs were created when the crossing bars went down and at the lights.

XCAP Member Shen also pointed out if Churchill is closed, a turn around road will be needed to allow people to go down one side of the bike underpass and turn around to the other side and come back out. That is probably possible on the east side, but may not be on the other side.

Chair Naik referenced the Bryant Boulevard where there are barriers for the bikes. These bollards can be moved to allow emergency vehicles to pass through.

XCAP Member Klein felt this was not an issue this Group should be dealing with. XCAP could recommend to Council option 2 with possible mitigations such as closing Churchill on the east side.

XCAP Member Carrasco asked if cars could back out of their driveways with option 2?

Chair Naik agreed with Member Klein that this needs more study.

XCAP Member Cho felt the benefit of option 2 was eliminating the light for the bikes and pedestrians.

Mr. Bhatia added regarding the number of vehicles making a right turn on Alma from Churchill, there are about 76 in the morning and 70 in the afternoon per hour.

Chair Naik continued with the deliberation notes, but advised this is not necessarily making a motion because this will be fleshed out in the report and agreed on. She asked if anyone supported option 2 but did not support Seal?

XCAP Member Klein assumed Seal and the other ones listed were suggested mitigations for the Council to consider.

XCAP Member Carrasco did not support either of the bike options. This needs to be looked at by a different entity and he felt there were better options.

Chair Naik clarified this is voting for the closure of Churchill and then identifying where the Group thinks there should be bike/ped crossings and then the best of those. This is trying to get a sense of location and general concept.

XCAP Member Carrasco thought option 2 was better than 1, but neither are compatible with Palo Alto's bike infrastructure. That needs to be looked at for remedies

Mr. Kamhi explained the bike and ped plan needed to be updated, but it did recommend Seal as a crossing. This had gone through the Pedestrian and Bike Advisory Committee and was identified as a location for a ped/bike crossing.

XCAP Member Carrasco believed the more crossings the better, but must be done in a way people will use them.

Chair Naik noted from last week there was a concept that may or may not work which looked at the possibility of emergency vehicles or maintenance vehicles fitting into the tunnels.

XCAP Member Cho thought that was designing the tunnels and the Group should not be doing that.

XCAP Member Brail felt having pictures would be helpful when taking this to the next process.

Chair Naik asked for a vote on bike option 2.

XCAP Member moved that XCAP recommend to the Council option 2 for a bike/pedestrian tunnel if the Council agrees on the Churchill closure

XCAP Member Brail seconded the motion.

Chair Naik explained she is calling this a concept because there is much consternation about design.

XCAP Member Shen moved to add that friendly amendment.

XCAP Member Klein agreed.

XCAP Member Brail spoke to his second. He has been advocating for option 2. It is important that going through all this work and making people's lives change by changing the way the cars go, then the way the bikes go needs to be made as safe and efficient as possible. Making it possible to go under both Alma and the tracks without stopping at a light would be a great service.

XCAP Member Klein agreed with Member Brail.

XCAP Member Shen indicated he could get behind this option if people who took this on found a way to make it wider. That will make it safer and inviting.

XCAP Member Brail voted yes.

XCAP Member Burton abstained.

XCAP Member Carrasco abstained.

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.

This motion passed with 7 yes, 2 abstained.

Chair Naik asked for a motion regarding the potential mitigations.

Discussion ensued regarding adding the pictures.

XCAP Member Shen felt some of the items listed under bike option 2 potential mitigations. Some of these were general mitigations, not necessarily tied to bike option 2.

Chair Naik moved items, listed headings and subheadings and bullets.

XCAP Member Klein felt what is in the report is what XCAP is recommending.

Mr. Kamhi suggested putting the actual things the Group wants in text, not pictures.

XCAP Member Templeton felt the pictures should not be included in what is voted on, but could be put in the material sent along.

Chair Naik related as a Palo Altan she is comfortable that if and when this gets to the next level, there will be some other lengthy and robust process that will have public outreach and feedback from the public.

XCAP Member Klein moved to adopt the list of bike option 2 potential mitigations shown on the screen.

XCAP Member Shen seconded that motion.

XCAP Member Brail voted yes.

XCAP Member Burton abstained.

XCAP Member Carrasco abstained.

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.

This vote passed 7 yes, 2 abstained.

Chair Naik explained what she and XCAP Member Klein will put this into a chapter.

Mr. Bhatia clarified there were 2 figures stated in the traffic volume study. The one with closure option only stated 5 and 7 in the am and pm peak hours making right turns. The 70 and 76 were shown when the underpass option was studied, so all the traffic on Churchill would be making a right-hand turn.

## 6. Begin Deliberations – Meadow/Charleston

### Public Comment

Chair Naik explained public comment on this topic will be taken at this time. Anyone who speaks on this topic today will not be allowed to speak again. Anyone not speaking today will be allowed to speak on this topic at a later date.

**Carlin Otto** spoke for 36 people who all live in the Charleston Meadows neighborhood. Their message was - we do not want an elevated rail of any style in our neighborhood. We do not want an elevated train operating through any part of southern Palo Alto. We do not want rail grade options that are called viaduct or hybrid, because these are elevated rails. To summarize – we do not want any type of elevated tracks. Some personal comments, in addition to those who have signed this petition, please keep in mind there have been previous similar petitions and many people have spoke out against elevated options at the various meetings and forums. There have been so many meetings and forums over the past few years that citizens cannot be expected to speak up every time, over and over. Her neighborhood is mostly single family, single story houses with roofs under 15 feet high. Both the viaduct and the hybrid options would have trains running above the rooftops of most houses. The trails will be highly visible for blocks around and the noise will spread widely because there is nothing to block it. The noise consultant, during his verbal presentation erroneously assumed that enough buildings would be high enough to block the noise, so the noise report is not accurate. The noise spread to adjacent streets by the elevated options will be louder than estimated in that report. She thought their opposition to elevated options was made clear many months ago, when over 600 all over Palo Alto signed a petition against elevated tracks. She did not understand why the elevated options were still being considered. Learn from New York City, elevated rail creates acoustical and visual blight and destroys the sense of community. This infrastructure will live longer than a human lifetime. Build something that can be lived with, not hated and resented. Elevated trains divide cities into good and bad neighborhoods. She lives next to the train and does not want her neighborhood to be labeled bad. No elevated train.

**Ken Joye** is a resident of the Ventura neighborhood and more directly affected by the alternatives for Charleston/Meadow. Pre-pandemic he crossed at Charleston about 14 times a week typically by bicycle. It is fair to say the alternatives discussed are mostly geared towards making motorists move across the tracks. That is understandable but the Comp Plan has a policy about complete streets. When things are designed, all modes of transportation need to be considered. Because of that, although there are not good alternatives, he thought the deficiencies of underpass don't meet the Comp Plan policy T-2.4. He is not in favor of that. The cost of the trench and tunnels are prohibitive and he is not in favor of those. That leaves 2 alternatives which are unattractive. To him the least bad answer is the viaduct. That goes against what people have said, but he urged XCAP to figure out which alternative serves the entire community in the best way possible. He understood XCAP was in a position to have to choose something that will upset people no matter what.

**Michael Wessel** commented in its current form, he could not support the Charleston/Meadow underpass options. First, according to an XCAP Member in the last

Q&A session, this solution is only 5 percent engineered before the consultants ran out of steam. Second, the plan requires acquisitions using Eminent Domain, including several family homes and an apartment complex. The public construction time on video does not show any impact on the apartment complex and the family homes taken for the round-about are blurred out in the 3-D renderings. More emphasis is given on the impact on trees and their locations. Third, the idea that impact home owners will get a fair compensation price is flawed. There is no affordable housing in Palo Alto in a similar price range. These families will be forced out of Palo Alto, and the partially impacted houses will drop immensely in property value. Fourth, according to an XCAP Member the impacted owners should have received a letter from the City but this is not the case. No one has received such a letter or a single word from the City. Minimally, the City should start a conversation and think about other plans and potential options for people who will be displaced. Fifth, during construction, the impact to normal traffic patterns will be tremendous and the City will be divided into east and west of Alma. He favors first the tunnel, then the trench, then the hybrid. He did not understand how the tunnel and trench can result in the enormous cost estimates. It is inconceivable how one little creek can provide such an engineering obstacle. The underpass option relies on Eminent Domain. According to the Daily Post, XCAP recommended the Churchill closure because the other options would have required claiming Eminent Domain. He asked that same line of reasoning be applied to the Charleston/Meadow underpass.

**Lisa Marcacci** lives on Park Boulevard and their backyard butts up against the tracks. Their preference is first the trench, then a distant second the underpass. That would be subject to further study and there might be some reduced property impacts. If there were impacts to residents, they would have a caveat that to support that those people would be able to stay in Palo Alto. They view the trench as a long-term project, across generations and viewing it that way, it is the only improvement option over the status quo, which will change because of the expected increase in Caltrain ridership. The trench would leave the community intact and benefit traffic flows. It would not create inclines for people trying to get different places and under different health conditions. It won't redirect traffic, will improve safety and will not create any other barriers to the community.

**Jon (Mulder?)** remarked when this project started, he was in favor of an underground solution, hoping a tunnel would be feasible. The engineering studies have shown that is not feasible within the cost constraints and he has changed his mind. After he reviewed the trench and hybrid options, he noticed there is about 20 feet of space between the existing property fence lines and the new track that would be put in place. He wondered what this space would be. It is not easily accessible from the road, no easily seen. When you raise the tracks on a viaduct, you have clear lines of sight from Alma Street to the fences of the property owners on the west side of Alma. There is the potential for adding a linear park. There is no giant hole in the ground. He requested more information about the visual impact of these 20 feet of space in the case of the trench and the hybrid. In the case of a viaduct, what does landscaping actually look like? Seeing this in practice may change some people's minds. If the tunnel is not available, he favors the viaduct.

**Deborah Ju** lives in Charleston Meadows. Her neighborhood had some meetings when these issues came up and people did not want a raised track. It has been disappointing to her that unelected consultants were able to take that off the table so it wouldn't be considered by people representing the residents. She is unconvinced with the conclusion that the train noise would not be greater by raising the track. When she is on the ground level of her 2-story home, she hears the train. The train noise is much louder when she is on the second floor. Most homes in the neighborhood are single story and there isn't anything to block the noise from traveling. She has seen viaducts in other cities and they are very ugly. She expects a better solution out of Palo Alto, a City of ingenuity and engineers. It is owed to the residents to not put something there that they will hate for 50 to 100 years into the future. Get back to the drawing board and look again at the tunnel and trench to try to solve some of those problems. Putting something all concrete in a neighborhood where people are looking for a residential feel with lots of trees and community is putting an ugly urban solution in a place where it doesn't belong. People really don't want it and think it's ugly. Do you want it in your neighborhood? She and her neighbors would be extremely upset with a viaduct in their neighborhood.

**Renee Hofer** lives on Park Boulevard between Charleston and Meadow. She does not want a viaduct at all. She has listened to many of the meetings. She does not want a cement well behind her house. She has heard at these meetings that a number of people have not commented from South Palo Alto. Her quick neighborhood survey showed about 90 percent are all working families with children and are not able to listen to these meetings. She and her neighbors made themselves heard early on in this discussion that they did not want a viaduct. People have been listening and don't want a viaduct.

**Sandeep Bahl** has lived in the Charleston Meadows neighborhood for 24 years. His children have enjoyed the safe bike and walking school corridor. He requested XCAP to seriously consider the below-ground options. He feels a lot of attention should be paid to this because the design chosen will be around for many years and high-speed rail is also coming. The design chosen could tie the City to certain limited options. The option with the least negative impact is below ground, either the tunnel or trench options. These options have been successful in many parts of the world. Palo Alto should be able to do these options. His concern about the elevated option is that it will be unsightly and noisy. The underpass option limits the road connectivity to Alma and displaces the neighbors. It looks nice in the renderings, but high-speed rail is in the future and 2 tracks will go to 4 tracks. He added that the majority of his neighborhood favors the tunnel option that was taken off the table and should be back for consideration. It gives significant benefits that would be worth the cost if you account for the reclaimed land above and the connectivity of Palo Alto. The other factor is Caltrain ridership has delayed their plan and this gives time for planning and cost sharing with future high-speed rail. Cost-sharing was not considered previously. The below-ground option will not be ugly, will not cause noise, will have the least impact on through traffic, won't displace neighbors, will maintain a safe school corridor and he would like consideration of putting the tracks below ground.

**Ivy Li** appreciated all the time spent discussing this issue. Palo Alto has the best engineers. How can the tunnel not be done; the trench cannot be done? She does not

want future generations thinking about what their parents and grandparents did. She says no vertical but tunnel only please.

**K. Gandhi** lives on West Meadow. She has followed this project for over 2 years. She is in favor of an underground option. A tunnel would be fantastic, but would settle for the trench. Her personal preference for an option is that there would not need to be any Eminent Domain taking. She has a very strong preference that all the turning intersections be accessible by vehicles, bikes and pedestrians. She is not in favor of having any intersection not accessible so it is easy to get from point A to point B by any mode of transportation. She would like to keep the roads at grade level. She does not like the underpass. It seems like it would be too difficult to fit in a good bike/ped option with the underpass and she is against that option. The roads at grade level are very useful to the bikes and pedestrians. If all bikes and pedestrians are put on a path with a grade, that would not be a friendly place to go.

**Alan Lee** lives in Charleston Meadow and was against the elevated rail options, the hybrid and viaduct. The AECOM drawings of these options show the steel Caltrain electrical poles will sit 45 to 50 feet above the roadway and the wires will be suspended between them. After seeing the top-heavy poles being constructed recently, they are not nearly as light as depicted in the AECOM drawings. They are large, green steel columns. The infrastructure will tower over the adjacent residences. They will be 4 times higher than the single-story overlay residences in his neighborhood. The hybrid, viaduct and Caltrain poles will be visible at great distances. This wasn't captured in the AECOM renderings, but is now easy to visualize by driving along Alma and imagine a doubling of the height of the existing Caltrain poles. The potential increase in the distance the train noise will travel is under appreciated. The AECOM noise study says the noise at the first and second rows of houses is fairly similar for all 4 options, but what is not quantified in the report is the effect on houses beyond the first 150 feet. The report acknowledges the viaduct and hybrid may create some increased noise level beyond the first level for diesel freight events. Houses beyond the second row will experience increased noise. The second row of homes to both the east and west receive some acoustical shielding from the first row of homes. In the case of the viaduct hybrid the shielding isn't there anymore. This increased noise is important. Over the 20<sup>th</sup> Century noise sensitivity has increased substantially and is correlated with the decrease in home prices. The people who would suffer from Eminent Domain objections will be made financially whole, perhaps even at above market rates. They will never be made emotionally whole at losing their home. He asked Palo Alto government to consider everyone else. By elevating the rail, the aesthetics and noise will diminish the quality of life for everyone within 1,000 feet of the train. He believes Palo Alto will regret any elevated rail almost immediately.

**Lottie Price** lives in Charleston Meadows and is a frequent biker. She supported the trench option and any other underground options that may return. It is nice to be able to bike on level ground and not go down a tunnel. There are many bikers along Charleston and Meadow, students in the morning.

**Stephanie Martinson** lives on Park Boulevard. She and her neighbors have listened and spoken out and encouraged XCAP to know her community does not want the viaduct. When obtaining signatures on her block the key component to get people to

sign was about the viaduct. Others have spoken about the noise. If another option is required, she supported the underpass if it was better designed. She wants an alternative method that keeps the children and community safe and keeps the trains and cars moving. She favors XCAP asking for a better design on the underpass.

Chair Naik thanked all the public speakers. As Chair she clarified XCAP is not making any decisions, but is simply making recommendations. Some members have spent more than 2 years looking at this and whatever decisions are made will not be taken lightly. XCAP Members have heard the appeals and the strong community support for something below ground and not elevated. The new ideas did come from a lot of the public feedback. There isn't anyone on XCAP who isn't feeling the weight of these recommendations. This still has to go to Council and they have to figure out how to get money to study these things further.

## **7. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 6:54 pm