

Expanded Community Advisory Panel (XCAP)
September 30, 2020, 3:30 pm
Summary – Special Meeting (virtual, through Zoom)

1. Welcome and Roll Call

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

Absent:

2. Staff Updates

Philip Kamhi, Chief Transportation Official advised they don't yet have the final report from the virtual Town Hall. His staff met with the Safe Routes to School Transportation Safety Reps last week and gave them a presentation and overview of the different alternatives.

Chair Naik asked if they gave any feedback, would there be a report done?

Mr. Kamhi noted they could summarize what feedback was obtained from that meeting. There was no specific alternative suggestion or recommendation from them, just some questions.

Ripon Bhatia, Senior Engineer remarked most of the questions pertained to how the routes would be handled and addressed. They were satisfied with the presentation and answers to their questions. Some questions pertained to the traffic control devices that might be needed in the future phases. They were requested to give any feedback or comments or additional questions. Mr. Bhatia indicated if any feedback or comments were received by that group, they will be shared with XCAP.

Mr. Kamhi reiterated that group's questions were aimed at understanding how the alternatives worked. Some had interacted with the virtual Town Hall.

Chair Naik advised it would be interesting to know more about the what the questions were from the Transportation Safety Reps. She assumed these were people who were used to looking at these types of drawings and if they had questions about a particular area, that might signal there is either something missing in the drawings, some additional labels were needed. She asked Mr. Kamhi and Mr. Bhatia if they noticed a pattern of questions, that would be helpful.

Mr. Kamhi explained they were hoping to record the presentation and that didn't work, but they will send any information they can to the XCAP.

Mr. Bhatia responded there was feedback about the length of the Churchill tunnel, and they would like that to be wider.

Chair Naik remarked on the consent calendar there was Section 130 money which is grade separation money the City had received previously which related to upgrades around Churchill. The report mentioned there were some improvements that were taken out but not explained and she asked about that. It looked like many safety improvements were kept but possibly a two-way bike plan that was taken out.

Mr. Kamhi advised the main part of the plan that was removed from the grant would have required removal of parking from in front of homes on Churchill between Alma and Emerson and install a two-way cycle track. That would need to have been done in the next year because these were grant funds that needed to be expended this year. It was very unlikely that could have been done during this year. There was confusion about whether the project was being modified in relation to the grade separation project, and that is incorrect. This project is happening despite the fact that there is grade separation and recognizing there would be benefits from the safety improvements coming from this Section 130 Project in the meantime. These are things that would provide benefit until the time this intersection becomes grade separated.

Chair Naik asked if it included adding that extra right turn westbound Churchill making a right onto northbound El Camino?

Mr. Kamhi did not know.

Sarah Wilson, Administrative Assistant advised she had a message that a community member had gotten an audio reply that the XCAP@cityofpalalto.org mailbox was quarantined and she forwarded that to IT. Ms. Wilson did get about 40 to 50 emails in the inbox this week.

Chair Naik shared that she had many email messages addressed to XCAP that were going into her spam folder and she encouraged XCAP Members to check their spam folders.

3. Oral Communications

Drew spoke about the four tracks. Everyone is aware of the high-speed rail versus Caltrain regarding the four tracks and even if high-speed rail will ever arrive. He has followed this for several years and the high growth plan for Caltrain in many ways will also potentially require passing tracks, even if there is no high-speed rail because of clock-face scheduling versus express trains. Also, there is talk of a second trans-bay tunnel between San Francisco and Oakland which would also include the same tracks as Caltrain, so there could be trains coming from the East Bay or Sacramento. This is long-term, 30 to 50 years out, but it is good to keep that in mind.

Keri Wagner remarked regardless of the type of rail separation, she would like some kind of separated bike and pedestrian crossing in South Palo Alto near Loma Verde. That would really help mitigate a lot of the issues with massive amounts of bikes at Charleston and at Meadow. It would also be a good way to get new housing in North Ventura to be able to get to midtown.

Kathy Jordan asked XCAP to consider adding an asterisk to recommendations they made because of COVID-19. She read that someone had said there is no question that circumstances will return to pre-COVID situation and she had a few data points regarding that. The MTC is considering adding to its Bay Area Plan mandating a certain percentage of remote work, telecommuting, for companies of 25 employers or over. That's an interesting data point to add to the number of companies that now are permitting continued 100 percent remote work as well as companies that are permitting remote work on an extended basis. Also, 30 Bay Area cities lost population in the last year and Pinterest will not be leasing more office space in San Francisco. According to Gaertner 80 percent of companies will permit parttime remote work, 40 percent will permit 100 percent remote work.

4. CAP Member Updates and Working Group Updates

Chair Naik advised XCAP Members they should have a final report chapter tracker and a feedback tracker. At the bottom of the agenda, tentative upcoming XCAP meetings, hopefully at the October 21 meeting consideration of the final report will be done. If there are edits to the chapters turned in thus far, she asked those be returned by tomorrow at 10 AM.

XCAP Member Brail asked on chapters with incoming feedback, is it Members' responsibility to incorporate and then send another draft?

Chair Naik responded if there was feedback from one person, that is not as difficult to handle as feedback from many people.

XCAP Member Klein added if you really disagree with a proposed revision, that should be known. You, as the initial author should respond.

XCAP Member Brail clarified he could accept the changes and send a new draft.

XCAP Member Klein answered yes.

XCAP Member Brail remarked that many of Member Burton's comments on his chapter were asking where the references were. That leads to the question of reference format, because there are many references in that document. Does every reference need a footnote? How should that be handled?

Chair Naik thought there would be footnotes to an appendix at the end.

XCAP Member Klein agreed with that.

XCAP Member Burton remarked between now and Friday he was hoping to have a final draft of Chapter 4, but the format that Megan created and he has been following is footnotes page by page. He didn't know if he would have the time before Friday to put the footnotes in the appendix.

Chair Naik clarified for now it's a draft and moving the footnotes can be figured out later.

XCAP Member Burton inquired about adopting a common style of citations or will each Member use their own style?

Chair Naik related in her experience, she preferred when there is a webpage link in footnotes, the webpage is written out.

XCAP Member Brail indicated the source saw asked for in one of the things in his report. It was something that was in Pat's original report and she was an expert on safety. He might say in a footnote, former XCAP Member Pat Lau.

Chair Naik noted Ms. Lau could be asked for her source if needed.

5. Continue Deliberations – Meadow/Charleston

Public Comment

Arnout Boelens pressed the XCAP to not choose the bike underpass option. Some of the U-turns would be impossible for his cargo bike. The other options leave the cycling and car routes intact, so considerations would be cost and aesthetics. The trench is probably the most visually appealing but costly. The viaduct is visually unappealing. He argued the most visually appealing and cost-effective alternative would be the hybrid.

Keri Wagner encouraged more study of the trench option especially after XCAP Member Reckdahl's updates on possible savings. It would not tear up the neighborhood. She looked forward to hearing from the engineering firm about reasoning for their cost estimates. Regardless of the option chosen, she wanted a protected underpass or overpass for bikes and pedestrians somewhere in South Palo Alto.

Staff Updates

Chair Naik related many members of the public talk about their cargo bikes and she asked if anyone would send a description of the turning radius of that type of bike. information would be useful in the underpass.

Mr. Kamhi addressed the cost differences identified from the trench option. He talked with AECOM and they could still supply more information on this. Specifically, regarding the comparison to the San Gabriel Project, the bid occurred in 2013/2014 and the EIR document listed the project as \$495 million. He is trying to track down the estimate Member Reckdahl found so see if it included costs outside of construction as there is some conflicting information about this. That project does have some significant differences from the Palo Alto trench project. Three tracks were constructed, but it is a single track, non-electric train that operate there, so to do the construction, they only required the single-track shoofly, which they did within their right-of-way. They owned enough right-or-way that they could do all the construction within their right-of-way so no additional right-of-way was required. Also, it was a very competitive bidding environment at that time and this project was part of a much larger regional project, which leads to cost efficiencies. The cost escalation can be noted that is necessary to compare costs, but that doesn't account for the Bay Area

labor and expenses which are much higher. Back in 2012 he was told this was 20 percent for the Bay Area over Los Angeles. The Reno retrack project was the project that was used as the cost basis for the cost estimate for the Palo Alto project. The \$282 million cost for the Reno is believed to be only construction costs.

XCAP Member Carrasco thought the costs were equally evaluated across all the options.

Mr. Kamhi thought Member Carrasco's question was when AECOM did their cost estimates, did they use the same type of escalation and equation in order to calculate their estimates and the answer was yes.

XCAP Member Brail asked Mr. Kamhi and Mr. Bhatia if they thought AECOM was not estimating properly or were somehow biased in favor of one alternative over another and inflating costs deliberately? He related he had received many emails over the last week implying AECOM was somehow biased.

Mr. Kamhi related he and Mr. Bhatia talked about this and initially did not think about the Bay Area labor thing until afterwards, but he recognizes that is a real fact. He did not think AECOM's cost estimates were unreasonable. This is a lot of money so he understood why there is apprehension about accepting these numbers. He believes these estimates have been arrived at using the best available information available currently.

Mr. Bhatia also explained at this planning level there are many unknowns, so usually the planning level estimates do include contingencies. In the San Gabriel environmental document, they estimated about \$500 million in 2011 for the design and construction costs. If everything is accurate, \$200 million reflects off the cost that was less than they anticipated in the environmental document phase. It could have gone up, depending on the time of the bid, the competition and the prices of the commodities which can severely affect the cost of the project. They are reaching out to the San Gabriel engineers to get more information about their actual costs. He believes the consultants are unbiased and provide fair information based on their professional opinions. It is in the interests of the City that the costs shown are represented professionally.

XCAP Member Burton referred to the term shoofly, which generally means a temporary bypass during construction. The San Gabriel built just one track through even though they had room for three. Is it possible the second track was actually used for passing operations?

Chair Naik related in 2017 the City Manager, Ed Shikada invited the project manager for the entire Alameda Corridor east which included the San Gabriel trench. On the XCAP website under meeting materials, at the top, related items, there is a presentation called the Alameda Corridor east, San Gabriel Valley presentation which has a lot of information. She shared information from that presentation. Palo Alto needs two operating electrified trains on a passing track.

XCAP Member Reckdahl noted that information related the San Gabriel project took six years. His information about this project said it was done in under four years.

Mr. Kamhi advised he and Mr. Bhatia found a lot of conflicting information as they went through documents. Their information was from a follow up after the project was completed, so that would probably be relatively more accurate.

XCAP Member Reckdahl's question was how long would construction actually interfere with Alma.

XCAP Member Carrasco found the construction estimates were very accurate in terms of categories evaluated and across the options they seem to be consistent. If there is disagreement about costs on any option, that would be the same disagreement on any of the other options. He felt the estimates were conservative making costs a little bit higher.

Mr. Kamhi agreed with Member Carrasco's assessment and is equitable across the different alternatives

Chair Naik believed one assumption was that they have to leave the right-of-way to be able to do the trench. She asked if that assumption could be negotiated with Caltrain? Is the position of the trench movable east to west so there is no encroachment on Alma? One questions from last week was, what are the main cost drivers for each alternative, how can cost be driven down?

Mr. Bhatia answered they ask AECOM and preliminarily they gave some major costs and drivers. Right-of-way is always a cost driver and if the City's roadways are used as a shoofly, those costs are not accounted for. In AECOM's estimates of major cost drivers for the trench and underpass were retaining wall and groundwater cutoff wall construction. For the hybrid it would primarily be permanent and a temporary shoofly track that was needed. For the viaduct is primarily the structure.

Chair Naik asked if AECOM was able to identify what assumptions were driving the costs in certain areas?

Mr. Bhatia moved to the second question from last week regarding assumptions that could change that might significantly lower the costs or reduce the complexity. Right now, the projects were designed to meet Caltrain's specifications for the most part. All of the design criteria need to be further along if Caltrain would have any modifications or considerations. Additional variances or additional technical studies may be required.

Chair Naik felt for certain assumptions there are certain design things that are really the ones that would cut the cost in a way that is more significant than others.

Mr. Bhatia responded that typically everything is designed to the minimum level of design efforts, so if anything had to be changed, which could be grade, right-of-way, shoofly, vertical clearances, anything that relates to the design elements of the structure will all affect costs. All that analysis requires redesign or realignment to some level to understand the cost variances. When looking at certain elements, then you look at what other design features will be negotiated in order to accommodate this particular action, and that is what causes looking at design exceptions needed.

XCAP Member Burton asked Mr. Bhatia if he knew to what extent AECOM had even information communications with Caltrain because Caltrain may have told AECOM about how to align a trench to allow them to go to a four-track structure in the future?

Mr. Bhatia explained he has only been with Palo Alto for three months and is not aware of what happened before that.

XCAP Member Burton noted the design standards wouldn't necessarily say, if you have extra right-of-way you have to center the trench within that total right-of-way width.

Mr. Kamhi also shared that he wasn't in Palo Alto when the trench was initially designed. AECOM did have Caltrain's design standards at that time. He did not know if the four-track issue came up until later.

XCAP Member Burton was concerned because Caltrain's position in the letter received a few months ago was very conservative.

Chair Naik thought typically when the City signs a contract with AECOM, there are various teams. AECOM is a very large multi-national company. The AECOM people who built the Long Island Rail Road with the jacked box is not the team working in Palo Alto. Technically the teams working with different cities are not the same as the one partnered with Caltrain for their own internal designs.

Mr. Kamhi agreed they are not the same team. They have a separate person who is the cost estimator on the team. This is not the team that worked with Caltrain on any of their projects specifically. The question was, did AECOM have Caltrain's design standards at the time.

Chair Naik did not think Caltrain has a four-track design standard because they have not solidified their agreement with high-speed rail.

Mr. Kamhi agree with that.

Chair Naik summarized Caltrain and high-speed rail have been arguing about this since 2012. They have an MOU based on a generic understanding of operations, but they have never gone through the technical review necessary to design whatever the four-track requirements would be, so it's not possible that any AECOM designs were influenced by some internal standards that Caltrain has. Caltrain has said they don't know yet what any of this will look like and it will take at least two years to figure this out. Moving to last week's questions, Number 2 had a specific question about whether reducing freight train speed would change the vertical curve?

Mr. Bhatia answered that would be more like previous answers such as a change that Caltrain would want to be considered, like any changes to the Caltrain standard must be considered an area that is careful, deliberate and fully and fairly evaluated for its benefits and consequences and undertaken on a system-wide bases. That would be something that would have to be, at the planning stage could not be evaluated, but if needed would require a design variance and a lengthy process that might have technical studies associated with this.

Chair Naik asked Mr. Burton if he has sent in his calculations on the vertical curve previously.

Mr. Burton replied previously he had submitted them to the Group and one of the AECOM engineers sat down with him and said first, the distances involved were only half the ones he calculated. Second, he had reasons they couldn't be done. This was an information calculation with sketches.

Mr. Bhatia addressed question 4. For the cost per linear foot, he did a calculation based on what was given in the fact sheets. He can send this to Members.

XCAP Member Carrasco noted what he was also suggesting was making transparent the cost per foot for different kinds of components such as the ramp has a different kind of cost than the structure. The question is there are several really smart people in this City that could look at these things and make minor adjustments and save costs.

Mr. Bhatia agreed. Usually at this stage it is a cost estimate and when moving on to the next stages, there would be more development of alternatives and the engineering and more refined cost estimates. There would be a preliminary budgetary cost estimate and that would be refined as the project moved forward with known quantities and known and better information. Those estimates would also reflect the newer prices of materials and labor.

Chair Naik readdressed question 3, did AECOM have suggestions of things they would recommend asking Caltrain about besides the design variances already identified in the matrices

Mr. Bhatia replied right-of-way is one of the significant elements, if the shoofly can be located within the railroad right-of-way. Also mentioned were vertical clearances, maximum grades allowed, shoofly operations.

Chair Naik believed the current assumption is two shooflies in each place, but possibly there could be a way to make it one shoofly for a very limited zone, and that could have significant cost impacts. That goes back to why Caltrain is looking at this entire thing across all of its operations, not just Palo Alto.

Mr. Bhatia continued, even limiting the grades on a single shoofly would have an effect and be helpful. Going to question 6, being able to raise the tracks by one to two feet, that would definitely be feasible. If that is done it would lower the grade from 5 percent to 4 percent at Charleston and also the same two feet would result in a flatten grade for Park Avenue. That could be done just on the west side. Moving to the next question, they have designed the alignment based on the current Caltrain standards, so they have taken into account any reverse curves or elevations and grades. If it is consistent with their design standards, then Caltrain would typically approve those designs.

Chair Naik explained her question was, because they were trying to ensure the possibility of four tracks, the lateral movement along the tracks is different. So, just

because it meets their current standards, it doesn't mean it meets their four-track potential standards.

Mr. Bhatia agreed.

Chair Naik wanted to make clear for everyone that makes it possible that the position of the viaduct may have to stay in its current position. Her concern was that the video and all the images shown reflect a potential position of the viaduct that may not be one that is allowed.

Mr. Bhatia moved to the last question regarding the light planes. The alignment that was prepared for a viaduct is accurate to what is known to day. There would usually be minor changes as this is refined in the next design phases, but in general that alignment accurately shows what is known of the design currently. If that is an important consideration to the community, that could also be included in the environmental process. That could be a recommendation or suggestion that light planes be calculated or identified in the next steps in the environmental documentation with review to show the impact that would have.

XCAP Member Carrasco suggested including something like that, it uses the zoning ordinances daylight plane and that the structure should be outside of that plane to be acceptable.

Chair Naik advised it could be requested but ultimately Caltrain decides where the structure goes.

XCAP Member Burton noted from his experience with viaducts, light plane is a big issue for vertical structures and community acceptance in addition to noise. He doubted Caltrain would allow a single-track shoofly because in the rush hour they need to have passing trains and a single shoofly track would not work.

Chair Naik remarked there was a member of the public who calculated the light plane and sent their best guess calculations on that.

XCAP Member Klein thought AECOM was going to be asked about the environmental issues, such as the siphon looked like a more satisfactory solution that what AECOM had suggested.

Mr. Kamhi replied they did not see that in the questions, but he wasn't sure if that could be answered at this phase of the design.

Chair Naik noted at the top of the document there were issues that needed more information, geotechnical soil analysis, groundwater flow, considerations regarding leakage, understanding flows, siphons and pumps.

XCAP Member Klein remarked XCAP had received many emails suggesting getting an "independent analysis" of the costs. AECOM is independent and has given their best professional opinion. People may be suggesting a second opinion, but that is different than an independent opinion. He saw no evidence that AECOM had a particular result in mind. Also, he is concerned about where this Group is going. He appreciated

Member Reckdahl's report which is in writing. XCAP's report will live for a very long time and will be considered by the City Council, which will have at least two new members in January and the Council may not get to this in 2021. It is imperative to have everything from this Group in writing and there should be something that either confirms or rebuts what his findings were. He would like the information received from Mr. Kamhi and Mr. Bhatia today in a careful report by them. That is essential so someone reading this in the future will have a complete picture of what really was there.

Mr. Kamhi agree with Member Klein and staff will put that information together in a document in writing for the Group.

XCAP Member Brail noted the Burlingame project is a comparable project in the Bay Area where they are doing some construction on Caltrain separations.

Chair Naik thought they were out of money and the project was on hold.

XCAP Member Brail indicated there seemed to be economy in scale in having these projects be somewhat coordinated and there is frustration with the inability to coordinate this regionally. However, waiting years to make any decision is not necessarily better.

XCAP Deliberations

Chair Naik advised the thought was to be able to use the dynamic matrix to get down to the specifics of each of the alternatives, a better way to have a more structured conversation. She thought it might be helpful to look at the parts where people get stuck in the evaluation criteria and look at the differences. That might be a good place to start filling things in. The Group had decided to eliminate the tunnels from the deliberations because it was too impactful and expensive to be realistically considered. The remaining options are the trench, the hybrid, the viaduct and the underpass. She started the deliberations with her struggle with I. Minimize visual changes along the corridor. She is clear that people prefer a trench visually to a hybrid or the viaduct, but she does not know what's worse, the hybrid with a wall feature, or the viaduct which can contribute to an undesirable location under it.

XCAP Member Carrasco asked how the matrix in terms of its ratings match with what staff and AECOM have presented, which is more a color rating?

XCAP Member Templeton replied she did her best to match what their recommendations were and the comments staff made can be seen. That is where the sub comments came from and were broken out by line items to understand it evenly across all the options. Other comments could be added to understand the recommendation. This matrix contains everything that was the original version of staff and AECOM's matrix has been captured here and then broken out into line items.

Chair Naik explained she envisioned as the Group goes through this, listing every suggestion to make the trench as good as possible, the same with the hybrid, the viaduct and the underpass. Member Carrasco's comment about the visual plane could

be listed as a new line item. When looking at item I. currently, what suggestions are there generally to improve some of the alternatives from the designs seen?

XCAP Member Carrasco clarified he was referring to the daylight plane in the zoning ordinance.

XCAP Member Burton asked if the daylight plane was an issue when a project comes up before the Architectural Review Board as an acceptable design?

XCAP Member Carrasco replied it doesn't come to the Architectural Review Board or the Planning Commission unless it meets the daylight plane.

XCAP Member Burton continued, if this were not a rail project the daylight plane would definitely be a key consideration?

XCAP Member Carrasco agreed with Member Burton.

XCAP Member Cho asked where the daylight plane was calculated from?

XCAP Member Carrasco there is a definition in the Zoning Ordinance.

Chair Naik advised there is probably something in the Zoning Ordinance that covers this. There would have to be some density to it. A pole probably wouldn't count, but the actual structure of the viaduct would.

XCAP Member Carrasco indicated the pole also has some dimensions. It cannot go past a certain height.

XCAP Member Cho reported if that was the case, there is no way they could meet the daylight plane to her backyard.

Chair Naik responded XCAP can't control that. Caltrain can do what they want on their right-of-way. XCAP can make suggestions based on the Zoning Ordinances, but Caltrain is not required to follow that.

XCAP Member Reckdahl agreed that was correct, but the Group has the power of selecting the alternative.

Chair Naik explained the viaduct is five feet higher than the hybrid. She did not know how to capture the opinion of many have that the hybrid feels like a wall and makes people feel more divided than a viaduct where you can see underneath.

XCAP Member Carrasco's opinion was if you have a very wide viaduct, four tracks, it will look awful. A two-track viaduct will allow light through the middle. It also depends on what happens underneath. The City should have public access under the viaduct. If it's fenced off it is hard to police and that may not work.

XCAP Member Brail noted there would be a public art program for the hybrid, but there is more opportunity for community participation with the viaduct if Caltrain would allow Palo Alto to have some control of that land under the viaduct.

Chair Naik thought that would be part of the negotiations with Caltrain.

XCAP Member Carrasco had a comment about line 40. That could be okay if it complies with the daylight plane.

Chair Naik disagreed and thought that was a significant change.

XCAP Member Templeton explained the viaduct cannot stay in the daylight plane. It is really tall.

Chair Naik remarked there is no break because this is a continuous structure.

XCAP Member Burton added that even if the building code didn't require that a moving train be considered part of the daylight plane, it is hard to imagine that morally speaking, the shadow of a moving train could be ignored. There will be trains and they will cast a shadow which will affect the ground plane and that must be considered.

Chair Naik questioned how the potential for four tracks will be handled. Is XCAP assuming that every recommendation made is on the assumption of two tracks, because that is all that has been looked at. Is it worth going through the exercise of what this would look like if it was a four-track viaduct?

XCAP Member Brail asked what the category would be for support the possibility of Caltrain's four tracks. Would it be D. on the matrix? He thought at some point the Group needed to be record what is easier to eventually four tracks in the Group's opinion.

Chair Naik related that Caltrain has said specifically the four tracks in this part of Palo Alto are only needed because of high-speed rail.

XCAP Member Klein believed XCAP could stop talking about four tracks, and instead a paragraph with an asterisk saying all considerations through this time have been on a two-track and if four tracks were brought in, much more work would be needed.

Chair Naik remarked the only alternative that XCAP is currently looking at that is not impacted by four tracks is the underpass because the tracks are not moving. There were at least two Council Members who offered their concern about XCAP even deliberating considering the four-track issue is out there and if it would make sense for XCAP to keep going but there has been no official direction from Council.

XCAP Member Klein advised that Caltrain has had a representative at most if not all the meetings, and no one from Caltrain has ever said XCAP is wasting its time because there will be a four-track requirement. For XCAP to start considering a four-track possibility, when the consultant has never been asked about it, it is not included in any of the other considerations would be impractical. A disclaimer in the report is the only thing that makes any sense.

XCAP Member Templeton noted there was one presentation where four tracks were shown in Palo Alto, but it was unclear if that was theoretical or not.

XCAP Member Burton thought it was a conceptual design, not something specific.

Mr. Kamhi thought he heard from Council that this was a reason for XCAP's report to include pros and cons for decisions and different alternatives.

Chair Naik believed XCAP had two newly relevant pieces of data that have shifted the position. The first is the high-speed EIR that has come out which does not have passing tracks. Caltrain's letter and the City's return letter felt passing tracks would be necessary and the location is needed. Caltrain indicated they understood passing tracks would be necessary if high-speed occurred and asked for the location. Second, the Caltrain Board took a Board action to specifically essentially landbank and took a super conservative position, which was not in play when the drawings were started. As City Manager Ed Shikada reported to Council staff and AECOM's team working on this were caught off guard by that move. Once that information became available, emails were received from Caltrain in April indicating things had changed and they were looking at four tracks. Staff asked if they were saying four tracks for South Palo Alto or Churchill. The reply was that they were considering four tracks for Churchill as well until more is known. The City's consultant was following the contract they have with the City, will they suddenly change their opinion and ask if they should be looking at four tracks which would be asking them to do more work which they probably would not be doing. The consultant would have to receive direction on that.

XCAP Member Klein questioned where this was going. XCAP has spent a lot of time on the basis that all alternatives would be two-tracks except the closure of Churchill and the underpass. To now say four tracks should be considered seemed to him to be an excuse for major delay that may never be required. This will end up somewhere down the line in negotiations with Caltrain. There is no question in his mind that Palo Alto does not want a four-track system anywhere in its boundaries. He did not feel talking about four tracks would gain anything.

Chair Naik responded that Caltrain sent emails in April and Sebastian Petty returned again, and the EIR letter showed things had materially changed. It would be unlikely and inappropriate for the consultants to say XCAP should be considering four tracks. XCAP needs to decide if there should be a giant asterisk on whether this is talking about two tracks or four tracks.

XCAP Member Klein replied he had not seen that and it's now six months since April.

Chair Naik noted watching that meeting closely, she thought Caltrain was saying the new policy was that they have to be very conservative and could not give an answer for two years. She wanted to make the point that four tracks are still very much in play. Palo Alto can object to four tracks, but it will be difficult as a City to take a position on creating a pinch point for regional transit.

Mr. Kamhi interjected he thought he heard earlier that the underpass would not be affected by four tracks but that design would have to change to accommodate four tracks as well.

Chair Naik asked what would have to change because the tracks aren't moving?

Mr. Bhatia explained the underpass width would change and that would impact the ramps or grades coming up, so it would have some impacts there. It may not be as drastic as other, but there would be a redesign needed to accommodate four tracks.

XCAP Member Carrasco viewed this as a very different study and would be changed significantly if four tracks were necessary. There is no point in going through this any more if the assumption is four tracks. He suggested finishing this with the two-track assumption. If it is four tracks, then down the road a new consultant will advise looking at four tracks. At this late stage, after two years, to switch to four tracks is extremely difficult.

Chair Naik asked if he was saying there should be an asterisk at the beginning saying this XCAP Group is only going to consider two tracks, and none of these preferences can be related to four tracks.

XCAP Member Carrasco replied you can asterisk something saying it is more convenient for four tracks to work there, but the Group would not look at all of the options and say it is a detriment to choose one option that has only two tracks.

Board Member Brail agreed with Member Carrasco, continue on with the current information. Something could be added saying whether certain options support four tracks. He assumed if the cost of the trench scaled up when going from two tracks to four tracks, the cost of the viaduct and hybrid scale up in a similar way. If the visual intrusion of the viaduct is X with two tracks, it is probably X times? with four tracks and the same for the other options. Otherwise, the Council has to tell AECOM to redo all of their drawings and renderings and plans and estimates, based on four tracks.

Chair Naik suggested one important piece is that Caltrain has argued if high-speed rail is going to come on the Peninsula, they need to pay for passing tracks. It seemed to her the Group can go with what Member Klein is saying to only have a two-track discussion, but there may be an asterisk column that says, if Palo Alto has to accept four tracks, and high-speed is paying for that, then the alternatives may need to be looked at in a different order.

XCAP Member Brail remarked Caltrain may say high-speed rail pays for the construction but he didn't know if that meant Palo Alto would get a free four-track trench if high-speed rail comes in.

Chair Naik noted to be on record to be able to help with negotiations, is it better to negotiate a position that says if in the future four-tracks are necessary, these are the pros and cons for four tracks versus the two tracks.

XCAP Member Klein remarked this is two levels of hypotheticals, which makes it difficult to make a decision. He did not have a problem putting that sentence in, but he would bury it somewhere because it didn't add to the Group's credibility.

Chair Naik indicated the challenge is any of the two-track designs picked have to have the ability to expand to four tracks. Caltrain had made it clear the only designs they will approve will do that. Her concern on the viaduct is that the design shown may not accommodate four tracks because of its position.

(crosstalk)

XCAP Member Reckdahl pointed out the viaduct currently does not baseline shoofly, and four-tracks would need shoofly tracks.

XCAP Member Burton added the viaduct could certainly be converted from a two-track to a four-track operation by reversing the direction of travel of one of the two-track structures originally constructed. In the realm of things hypothetical, assuming the four tracks don't cost Palo Alto anything, the real issue is, first, can Caltrain physically build a four-track structure? Not around Churchill unless private property is taken. Second, what is the differential impact on light planes or noise? It is not clear that when just two-track alternatives are chosen, that the particular track alternative will present a real challenge when expanded to four tracks. He suggested first ranking alternatives on two-track designs, then see if there are any special four-track considerations.

XCAP Member Templeton noted the Group has no data at all to make any kind of recommendations on four-track alternatives. Also, she did not know if Council's criteria included four tracks or not.

Chair Naik responded not likely because these were from 2017.

XCAP Member Templeton continued, to the point about cost, if the Group wanted to break out Item K into overall cost and cost to Palo Alto, that could be done if it was believed there would be other funding sources that would change how that is looked at.

Chair Naik reported it sounded like there were more members who wanted to just discussed the two-track option and put a big asterisk at the beginning, that is fine.

XCAP Member Templeton asked if this was something that would need to be taken back to Council and asked for updated guidance?

Chair Naik thought the underpass has been under developed and she would like to see more work done on that alternative

XCAP Member Templeton asked if she thought the Group was ready to make a recommendation on this set of crossings?

Chair Naik noted in her mind she is only ready to rank these as far as which alternatives she feels needs more work, that that it is her preference.

Board Member Carrasco agreed with Chair Naik. The underpass has the most potential and could be refined. A member of the community has done a different version of this. He felt this needed to be studied further, just as the mitigations for the Churchill closure. He could not see at this stage of design how something that has that potential could be abandoned. This stage of design is a learning time for all options and then coming up with something that is better for Palo Alto than having to choose between something that is not good for Palo Alto and asking Palo Alto to pay for it.

The options need to be looked at more carefully, especially the underpass which has a lot of potential.

Board Member Brail hoped to get to a discussion about all the alternatives. He has a hard time accepting an alternative that means taking of homes and apartment buildings, unless it is significantly better than the alternatives in ways that make a difference. He feels the underpass option is trading off visual impacts and traffic congestion in one part of town, and moving it to another part of town, it has property impacts and it isn't really significantly less expensive than the viaduct and it is not quieter than any of the options. To him it is a very creative solution and possibly with a lot more work, it could be a better solution. Is there a version that wouldn't have as many property takings? If there isn't, he would have a hard time supporting that. He also would have a hard time supporting the trench, because it is much more expensive. That leads him to either a hybrid or a viaduct.

Chair Naik asked him for more clarity on his comment about moving traffic.

Board Member Brail responded in the traffic analysis there are now cars moving thought the Fair Meadow neighborhood in a cut-through movement that weren't previously there because now not all the turning movements are supported. In the traffic analysis there were traffic impacts on neighborhoods that aren't Alma and Charleston, which are major commuting routes. He was trying to make this about concrete things he could understand and not emotions.

Board Member Templeton explained that with this matrix pieces can be pulled together and have the discussion on a different slice of data. There is a section for this purpose, to talk about how it affects the people who live near the tracks. The light green numbers on the left reflect the concerns of people who live near the tracks. This could help pull those things together and better understand if that has been captured. There are some issues with the underpass that are highlighted and different issues with the other alternatives.

XCAP Member Brail reiterated this segment was very interesting because the dichotomy between the acquisition of private property in F 0.1 and I 0.3 could be seen. The public comments are running about 10 to 1 arguing that the railroad will not be visible is the most consideration in this whole process. He reminded everyone that F 0.1 is talking about acquiring entire homes and businesses. In addition, there is visual impact to the underpass. There are walls, wider roads. The trains and cars will not just disappear. All of the options have visual impacts. Even the trench has a visual impact of a fence that has to be at least eight feet tall or taller. This is a good way to look at that tradeoff of how it looks and what does it do for residents near the proposed construction.

XCAP Member Burton responded this gets very local, the people whose property is complete taken or people living next to someone whose property is taken or your property abuts the traffic circle, there will be a very different value matrix than residents living three blocks away. This is a harsh tradeoff.

XCAP Member Brail expressed the Group needs to be sure to advocate for all those people.

XCAP Member Burton explained what he would do until thinking about the cost, and none of the alternatives can be separated from the cost.

Chair Naik advised not using the word “take” because there are acquisitions, and there a significant number of people, from what she has heard, who are actually interested in the potential benefits for them.

XCAP Member Burton asked if there was any hard data from residents whose property would be acquired be Eminent Domain indicating they would willingly go along with this or oppose this? That data would clarify this moral dilemma.

Chair Naik felt this had to be a discussion between the City, and until the City hears what recommendations there are, it would be difficult to begin a conversation.

Mr. Kamhi advised they have received some concern from people who have properties in the areas that look like they might have property impacts. That is not to say there are not people within those areas that would like to have a negotiation for their properties. Those discussions would not begin at this time.

XCAP Member Burton asked not even a preliminary query that the City is considering what is your initial idea?

Mr. Kamhi replied that would not be appropriate. They have notified property owners and have received concern from people who were notified or those who saw their property was included in the impact section.

XCAP Member Burton asked when XCAP would get the Town Hall feedback?

Mr. Kamhi advised they were hoping to have it this week, but hopefully by next week.

XCAP Member Burton inquired if that would be in a form that could be downloaded or otherwise read it.

Mr. Kamhi replied yes.

XCAP Member Brail noted early on the Council said there would be no impact on property. Member Burton argued that there might be the case that some impact on private property is worth the tradeoff. The current design for the underpass seems to have impact on a reasonable number of properties. It’s not just one property or part of a driveway and that is the sticking point. If XCAP was extended for another two years and did more work on the underpass, would that number come down to something like all Members would feel the tradeoff is worth the visual impact. To him, that would have to be a really low number. He is sensitive to visual impact but also to all the other things being talked about. What does more work on the underpass mean, more work on paths for bikes or envisioning a new way to do this?

Chair Naik responded XCAP could theoretically say they were really intrigued by the underpass option, but they would like to see further iteration of design to reduce Eminent Domain, reduce cut-through traffic or anything else.

XCAP Member Brail affirmed Eminent Domain is the most important part of that particular option.

Chair Naik indicated there is a tradeoff with the bike widths versus the property impacts. There are many things “squishy” there. The Group could theoretically say, XCAP is really intrigued with this alternative and think it needs more work, then decide on the other three.

XCAP Member Brail remarked that was why he was suggesting a hybrid at Meadow, underpass at Charleston, because the property impacts at Meadow were especially bad.

Chair Naik replied it was explained that the two different alternatives would not work.

XCAP Member Templeton responded to Member Burton’s question about getting feedback without doing surveys. She thought the way XCAP was formed addressed that. People were brought in from different neighborhoods and different perspectives. The loss of some members is an issue, but the function of XCAP was to represent points of view and perspectives, especially have empathy with the community. She hoped the Group had captured at least some community perspectives and feedback.

XCAP Member Burton agreed and added through public comment empathy has been brought to XCAP by the nature of the public comment and all the emails.

XCAP Member Templeton point out there wasn’t just a category of “lives near the tracks”, but also “all Palo Alto residents”. When going through this discussion, if the Group thinks more granularity is needed, that is something that could be adjusted. It would be nice to be able to roll it up and compare for the ones who live near the tracks, here’s how the options prioritize. For the ones in a different location, here are the options.

XCAP Member Brail noted he might add a paragraph to Member Burton’s chapter. He tried to add safety as one of the reasons grade separation are needed. Also, train horn noise might be considered a reason for grade separation.

XCAP Member Burton replied to Member Brail and the reason he wrote what it did was to capture the motivations as they were articulated.

Mr. Bhatia replied to Member Brail’s question of using the hybrid and underpass options. It could be done but it would need some additional analysis and design.

Board Member Carrasco’s view was that there is an option combine the hybrid and the underpass. He thought there was an uneasiness about Caltrain saying they don’t want a shoofly track in order to build a push box. That complication worries him and the push box should not be assumed an important aspect of this design. The hybrid in combination with the underpass has a lot of potential and that should be explored. The tracks may have to be raised to accommodate a flatter grade for the bikes and peds.

XCAP Member Brail thought that was the kind of engineering more work would fix, whereas eliminating all the property impacts sounds like a totally different design. Meadow has fewer turning movements in the underpass design and some of the traffic impacts would also be mitigated.

Chair Naik asked where Member Brail would prefer a hybrid and where an underpass?

XCAP Member Brail answered a hybrid at Meadow, underpass at Charleston. The reason is that at Meadow there is an apartment building.

Chair Naik noted one possibility that was raised is that the City could acquire the apartment complex, build what is needed then redevelop that property. So, there may be a temporary loss of the housing stock, but potentially it could be put back. That is an important item when talking about property impacts. There is the potential to be able to alleviate the problem for the current residents, but still be able to modify the property and sell it back and not have an entire property acquisition.

XCAP Member Carrasco clarified he didn't mean Meadow gets a hybrid and Charleston gets an underpass. He meant the hybrid and the underpass can be combined for a new hybrid underpass.

Chair Naik responded the problem becomes the key feature of the underpass is that the bikes and peds are in their own tunnel. In order to maintain the movements of the hybrid, when going down lower they intersect right under ground.

XCAP Member Carrasco agreed there are several conflicts.

Chair Naik remarked the differentiating factor of the underpass is that the bikes and peds are completely separated from Alma. You cannot mesh the hybrid and underpass in such a way because that would run into the underground bike and ped path.

XCAP Member Reckdahl indicated that with the underpass you have so many school kids going back and forth. They are separated from traffic and they don't have to wait at the light. That separation of bikes/peds and vehicles is the only thing that is missing with the trench alternative.

Chair Naik explained the next meeting will allow each XCAP Member to free talk about how they are feeling in terms of the alternatives.

6. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:47 pm