

Expanded Community Advisory Panel (XCAP)

October 7, 2020, 3:30 pm

Summary – Regular Meeting (virtual, through Zoom)

1. Welcome and Roll Call

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

Absent:

2. Staff Updates

Chair Naik noted there were two documents in the agenda. They were the response to XCAP's comments/questions which Mr. Bhatia wrote. The second was a draft summary of the virtual Town Hall.

Philip Kamhi, Chief Transportation Official advised Mr. Bhatia pulled together all the things staff responded to last week in written form.

Ripon Bhatia, Senior Engineer explained there was a lot of information provided and updated the tables. This formalized the response in a more systematic format.

Mr. Kamhi indicated XCAP Members should have received the draft community meeting summary from the virtual Town Hall meeting. City staff received this not very long before sending it to XCAP so it hasn't undergone any editing. In Section Two of the report under the Q&A sessions there are links externally to the Connecting Palo Alto website to the questions and answers that were received.

Chair Naik remarked she has only glanced at this report so far, but related there was a lot of feedback.

Mr. Kamhi also noted the level of engagement was remarkable by the community.

XCAP Member Klein was surprised to see the amount estimated to be spent on flagging and asked if that was typically?

Mr. Bhatia responded that one reason could be when the freight line is at grade, Palo Alto would have to pay the railroad to do their flagging and if they continue to run during the construction time, a flagger would have to be provided, which is a railroad employee cost and their costs associated with it.

XCAP Member Burton explained that was the way it was done before automatic crossing gates were used. Automatic crossing gates probably would not be installed for temporary construction.

Mr. Bhatia indicated even if automatic gates are present, during construction the railroad would require a flagger in the construction zone.

XCAP Member Burton continued, the railroad can never assume the tracks are always clear from construction equipment or temporary blockages, etc. For safety's sake flaggers would be needed to protect the active site and if there are multiple construction zones, a flagger would be needed at each site.

XCAP Member Carrasco noted the City will have costs to construct anything with diverted traffic and their own flagmen. He would like some estimate of City costs for that in addition to the actual construction of the tracks. The private sector as well as the public sector costs are not included in these estimates and he would like some kind of estimate of what those costs might be.

Mr. Bhatia responded that typically project-related construction services would be under contractor services, with oversight of the City, and would include all the flagging costs required, construction for a roadway and railways, any assistance required such as school crossings in the construction zone.

Chair Naik questioned if in gross terms, those would be already included in the buckets on Page 5?

Mr. Bhatia answered yes.

XCAP Member Carrasco remarked that helped, but he was a little suspicious not everything was included.

Mr. Bhatia advised in this planning stage it is a bundled-in number. This would be a line item on the contractor's scope of services as part of the bidding costs. The staging and the other phases would develop as part of the construction design elements, and more concrete locations would be developed where flagging and detours would be needed.

XCAP Member Klein understood the need for flagmen, but was shocked by the cost and number of hours.

Mr. Bhatia offered to look into getting more details about the construction flagging costs from AECOM.

Mr. Kamhi commented it shouldn't be assumed those are only hourly costs associated with that.

3. Oral Communications

Keri Wagner noted some years ago the City created the Oregon Expressway which turned into a significant divider for the City and the City is still sensitive to that. She urged care not to divide the City even more. With new housing going in, such as in North Ventura, a good east/west connection is needed for bikes and pedestrians and favored the Loma Verde under or overpass.

Karen Kalinsky did not believe that some homeowners might be thinking of selling and would be happy to have their properties acquired. If a particular alternative design included property taking, those properties could change as the design crossing are further developed. For some affected homeowners, it would not be just the matter of receiving a fair monetary compensation. There is no way to compensate for having to move away from your neighborhood. She urged XCAP to consider property acquisition as a strongly negative factor when deciding on a recommended alternative.

4. XCAP Member Updates and Working Group Updates

Chair Naik advised she and XCAP Member Carrasco have to finish their opinion about the viaduct at Churchill and she with Members Carrasco and Reckdahl are working on their position on the Churchill elements.

XCAP Member Burton asked if anyone had read the Chapter 4 draft. He hoped to finish it with a final submission this coming week.

XCAP Member Carrasco indicated he had glanced at it and the organization was really well done.

XCAP Member Brail inquired about writing something for the report about Churchill. He asked if anyone was writing about the majority of Members voted for, to explain why?

Chair Naik responded she and Member Klein are responsible for that section but have not gotten to it yet. She noted since the last meeting, the City Manager indicated that no matter what report XCAP comes up with, it is the next Council that will be dealing with this but she would like to stick to the current timeline if possible.

XCAP Member Burton commented, in light of what Chair Naik just said, he would like to wait a week before submitting the final version of Chapter 4 to give Members a little more time to read the report and offer feedback.

XCAP Member Templeton asked if there would be more conversation about the schedule, possibly having an off week.

Chair Naik replied if a vote on Meadow/Charleston is done today, then the Group could potentially take a week off to write.

XCAP Member Templeton advised it sounded like there were things Members wanted to read and do and she wondered if there would be some conversation about the pace at which the group is moving.

Chair Naik noted the Group was committed to moving forward and coming to a decision and unless Members are uncomfortable making a decision, this pace will have to be maintained.

5. Continue Deliberations – Meadow/Charleston

Public Comment

Cedric de la Beaujardiere noted there was an option that showed a roundabout on Meadow or Charleston in the Bicycle Advisory Committee meeting and that Committee was pretty much unanimous in feeling that option was bad for bicycle safety. The two-lane roundabout is very dangerous for bikes. The entrance and egress through the bike/ped tunnel being all on one side of the street is dangerous because a street crossover is needed. He urged the Group not to go with that option or would seek more input from the Bicycling Advisory Committee. He thought the viaduct was the best option. It is further from the houses along Park. It has the least vibration of all the options. Both the tunnel and the trench are terrible because of their impacts on the creek and high costs.

Jordan Fester recalled a conversation from last week regarding the underpass at Charleston and Meadow. She sent an email to XCAP and the City and hasn't heard anything back. She took issue with the misrepresentation that anyone on the Charleston corridor got anything, a phone call, an email, a paper tag on the doors. She wanted to be very clear, nobody on the Charleston corridor who would be affected by the underpass received any type of communication. She has met with everyone who would be impacted on her street and they are not interested in selling and don't want their homes taken from them. The cost of the trench is an issue. The underpass will disturb their area in South Palo Alto for a long time for something they don't want. She encouraged the Group to investigate the trench option with someone independent for the right pricing. As it stands, it is a misrepresentation of the value add and the cost of the trench. Property values will be impacted on the whole corridor. XCAP should know, before making a decision, to send a recommendation to City Hall, that those residents were never told about the impacts and never was a conversation.

Stephanie Martinson related that she and her neighbors do not want to consider an underpass. More information and evaluation are needed on that. Some residents were interested in the viaduct and she hoped XCAP Members would take into consideration the people living the closest to those streets. She does not like the viaduct. She would like more information on the underpass.

Deborah Ju stated she sent a letter where noting she didn't understand why the consultant said the viaduct would not be louder than putting the train underground. Just from her experience, the noise is louder on the second story of her home than the ground level. It made sense when she realized they were only looking at the first two rows of houses. In her neighborhood there is only one row of houses. She lives in a one-story overlay neighborhood. The assumption the consultant used was that two-story homes would block the noise from the raised train. She felt the consultant never came to her neighborhood. The information in the consultant's report does not reflect the reality of her neighborhood. She also feels strongly there is need for a different financial assessment of the different alternatives. It seems other communities have been able to build trench or tunnel projects faster and at less cost.

Chair Naik advised the list of comments received is released weekly. She noted there were several speakers who said they had not been contacted by the City. Her understating was that no one has been contacted at this very early level of engineering, because the lines on the map are extremely fluid. A deeper level of design is needed to understand which properties would actually be impacted. The underpass idea came up at a public meeting and the City made an effort the day prior to alert as many properties that may be impacted.

Mr. Kamhi agreed with Chair Naik. There was an earlier iteration of the project and has evolved somewhat. At that time there was an effort by the City to get out messages to all of the properties that could be impacted. There certainly is opposition by some members of the public to having their properties discussed as part of a negotiation. Clearly there are some property owners who would like to keep their property. The City would not be notifying property owners of proposed impacts that might not go into an actual environmental phase. At this point this might go into an actual environmental design phase, so it would be determined at a later time if this move into a further state where this is something that could be considered more real and understand more precisely what property impacts could be associated with that project.

XCAP Comments

XCAP Member Reckdahl noted two weeks ago he presented a chart that showed the different costs of the trench and compared them to AECOM's. Last week staff provided some reasons why they thought those were not comparable. He presented slides to explain his view. Staff explained there were two major reasons for the higher costs for Palo Alto. The first was that the Bay Area was 20 percent more expensive than L.A. The other item were some cost escalations. Member Reckdahl looked through the data for the cost differentials and presented this on his first slide. His second slide presented a Carlsbad/Palo Alto Trench comparison. He did explain there were some things such as shoofly tracks which, in the hybrid the cost was \$20 to 25 million. He still could not figure out why there was such a difference in the two projects. If the cost for the Palo Alto trench stays up around \$800 to 850 million, there will be a lot of resistance. This is a critical piece of data and there is no way XCAP can make this decision without further engineering on the trench to get closer to the real costs.

XCAP Member Carrasco remarked this bothered him when the cost estimates were looked at months ago because they seemed high; however, when looking at the other options, they all seemed equally inflated. When looking at the alternatives in relation to each other, these issues seemed to be consistent through the cost estimates.

XCAP Member Reckdahl argued it is different because this is talking about a factor of three. When looking at the hybrid with a ballpark cost of \$300 million. If that was looked at by a factor of three, it would be about \$100 million but there is not a factor of three in the hybrid.

XCAP Member Carrasco responded when looking at the tunnel the Hatch Mott MacDonald estimate was about 40 percent of AECOM's estimate. AECOM is probably being cautious.

XCAP Member Reckdahl emphasized Carlsbad was much more in line with the other trenches that were actually built than AECOM is.

Mr. Kamhi replied he did not believe the Carlsbad trench included right-of-way and support costs. Also, the 20 percent mentioned was salaries and that was a salary difference in 2012. He also pointed out Carlsbad is not in Los Angeles and it has a cost differential to Los Angeles. He and Mr. Bhatia have looked at these numbers with AECOM and this estimate was why AECOM was hired. Sometimes estimates can be high or low, but they feel this is a reasonable cost estimate for this project. He reiterated a portion of this project cost cannot be compared to the full project cost, and the dollar cost in Carlsbad cannot be compared to the dollar cost in Palo Alto.

XCAP Member Templeton asked Member Reckdahl if the Carlsbad project had the utilities issues and the underground creek rerouting issues? If they don't, might that explain the difference in costs?

XCAP Member Reckdahl responded Carlsbad had a lagoon, but they don't have anything equivalent to Adobe Creek. He could not believe any site-specific differences could cause that large of a discrepancy.

XCAP Member Burton indicated the soil conditions might be different and the fact that there is an active railroad right-of-way for which service needs to be maintained could also be a cost driver.

XCAP member replied they have to construct shoofly tracks and they lose some parking lots because they move the shoofly tracks.

XCAP Member Burton continued, possibly the soil conditions because Palo Alto is in earthquake country, and the water table.

XCAP Member Brail also noted, where the trench is located does make a difference.

Mr. Kamhi reiterated the three-fold difference is not the full cost. He did not think the Carlsbad cost was the full cost in comparison to the estimate of the full cost for Palo Alto. Looking at just construction the Palo Alto project is around \$500 million.

XCAP Member Reckdahl reiterated Carlsbad was in family with Reno and San Gabriel and in family with Sky Harbor.

Mr. Kamhi advised they were not escalated and were not apples-to-apples projects.

XCAP Member Cho noted this is a guess and there is a time difference. The consultants hired should be trusted. Also, this might change by the time this could get built.

XCAP Member Reckdahl believes that by having the \$800 to 950 million estimate, AECOM has effectively vetoed the trench.

XCAP Member Brail suggested imaging the \$800 million AECOM trench is a \$400 million somewhere else trench. Does that mean the \$400 million viaduct is really a \$200 million viaduct, and the \$200 million hybrid is now a \$100 million hybrid?

Chair Naik reported the general feeling of the retired civils was that the above-ground items were underpriced and the below-ground items were overpriced. If the trench goes from \$800 million to \$400 million but the hybrid goes from \$200 million to \$400 million and all are \$400 million, then what is the answer?

XCAP Member Carrasco did calculations for the tunnel using Hatch Mott MacDonald's cost estimate which showed it was around \$1.2 billion for the entire length of Palo Alto. AECOM's number was about \$3.2 million. Maybe Hatch Mott MacDonald's were just construction costs and did not include all the administrative costs.

Chair Naik advised part of the reason these costs were as ambiguous as they were was because there were so many outstanding questions from Caltrain. If this was done after Caltrain did their long-range study of grade separations the estimates may be more refined.

XCAP Member Klein was concerned about dealing with things that are not knowable right now. He would like to hear staff's detailed response which may not agree with Member Reckdahl's report. He acknowledged on the San Gabriel report he was pretty much satisfied with the report that staff gave today in response to Member Reckdahl's report. He would like staff to provide a critique to what Member Reckdahl proposed today. He would be willing to go another round of Member Reckdahl's proposal and staff responding to it, but after that he would like the Group to move forward to reach a recommendation.

Mr. Kamhi noted it is unlikely that at this level of design, that any of the cost estimates will get shifted. Staff's response to Member Reckdahl will probably be the same as it was today. He also shared that the Carlsbad area is very different from Palo Alto. AECOM was hired to do cost estimates and staff feels they did a good job. These numbers could go up or down.

XCAP Member Reckdahl agreed with Mr. Kamhi that any reply from staff will settle this. There will still be the uncertainty and the question is, what should the Group do with uncertainty. A reasonable approach could be to wait for Caltrain's final data, then costing of the trench can be revisited, given the constraints Caltrain might have at that point.

Chair Naik noted what she heard Member Reckdahl say was because the Group is waiting for some technical answers from Caltrain that may or may not help clear the creeks, which could then significantly change the cost, that is the biggest driver and that may come as a result of the Caltrain grade separation process.

XCAP Member Reckdahl reiterated anything XCAP chooses now will not be built anytime soon. Almost certainly this will have to wait for the Caltrain study and that will affect the recommendation. If that is the situation, why have Mr. Kamhi come back with updated estimates, when they will still just be estimates.

Mr. Kamhi emphasized there would probably not be anything he would look at over the next week or longer that will affect the trench costs and reduce them by three-fold.

XCAP Member Klein related Chair Naik said retired engineers thought the cost estimate might be too high for the underground alternatives. He recalled those engineers also said there would be more uncertainty when going underground than above ground.

Chair Naik agreed and reported one of the other things they talked about was the fact that what is nonsensical about what XCAP is doing is that all these projects have to be grouped together, so looking at them individually and thinking there is a price for each grade separation is not how these things are done. Caltrain has proposed now looking at this as a corridor which confirms that because it is no longer grade separation by grade separation. She now proposed each Member make their comments if they have a first choice right now and why but also if they have a close second choice and why.

XCAP Member Brail replied there are many uncertainties and didn't know when the uncertainties would be over. With all the public pressure it is unlikely the Council will do what XCAP recommends. He felt there was a need for the Group to report clearly on the pros and cons and all the things learned in the duration of this project. To work at all, the peninsula would have to get together and approach this in a coordinated way. Even if XCAP came up with an alternative that realistically would cost \$200 million, Palo Alto doesn't have \$200 million. He spent a lot of time writing the Public Safety Chapter, so his feeling is still biased on what the Group could do that would actually eliminate grade crossings, increase safety and remove the noise of the train horns. All of that led him to think the logical solution is the hybrid. The main disadvantage of the hybrid is that people have to see it. In some cases, it reduces the noise because it acts as a barrier between Alma Street and houses that are on the other side of Alma Street. In general discussion has been about replacing diesel trains that blow their horns at each grade crossing four times with electric trains that don't. The difference is the noise between a hybrid, trench and viaduct, which according to the noise report will be almost impossible to tell. He feels the hybrid is the most logical choice, however, the viaduct would sit farther away from homes and there didn't seem to be a reason why Caltrain would say no to that until the four-track question came up. The viaduct also reduces vibration significantly compared to the other alternatives and the viaduct has less construction noise than the hybrid and the viaduct takes less time to build than the hybrid and is farther away from houses. The main disadvantages of the viaduct are the visual impact and it is much more expensive than the hybrid. He still believed a trench is more expensive than a hybrid, viaduct is more expensive than a hybrid and it is likely that a trench is more expensive than a viaduct. If he had to make a recommendation right now, he would be on the fence between the viaduct and the hybrid, because he is very much in favor of the option that will cost the least amount of money that could actually be built in Palo Alto to eliminate the dire safety problem here.

XCAP Member Cho thought none of the options were very welcomed by the community. Her preference would be the trench first, then the underpass, then the

viaduct. She concurred that people who lived near the viaduct would have their views destructed and their lives and it is unfair. The viaduct would destroy the feel of the community. She likes the idea of the underpass, even though there is a raised part of the track and there is the issue of Eminent Domain which is unfair.

Chair Naik advised there is nothing raised in the current underpass alternative.

XCAP Member Cho remarked the trench is very expensive, but the actual cost is not known. The trench is also a problem because of the duration of construction and the shoofly track. If the cost is not considered, she felt residents liked the trench the most so that was first for her.

XCAP Member Shen did not like Eminent Domain, so whatever option is ultimately chosen he would like that considered. With respect to unknown data, the best XCAP can go is lean towards an alternative. A decision will not be made now and that language is coloring what people's perception is about a recommendation. The best XCAP can do is lean towards something, given what is known and acknowledge what is not known. He agreed with XCAP Member Brail that out of all the options, he would lean towards the hybrid. Every option has negatives and ultimately the least negative option will probably be chosen and he believes that is what the hybrid delivers, but there are still many unknowns. He did not lean towards any of the other options as a second choice.

XCAP Member Templeton agreed with much of what Members Brail and Shen said. She is struggling, though, with the process because there are so many open questions about the Charleston and Meadow alternatives. There had not been the same depth of discussion as there had been for Churchill. Some of those alternatives were underdeveloped which would make it hard for the Group to choose because there would be less information on some alternatives and they might be eliminated prematurely. She would like to refer to the matrix and use that, but there hasn't been a discussion or consensus on how each of these were rated. Looking at it now with the information from staff, the hybrid and viaduct had the most beneficial ratings but she didn't feel that matched what the Group has heard from the public and warrants more discussion. The underpass was promising, but currently problematic. She did not feel XCAP was a week or two away from coming to a good recommendation on these two crossings. If the Group is not ready what good would a rushed decision be without all the appropriate information to make a recommendation? There have been some good public comments over the last three or four weeks specifically focused on this part of town. She is also concerned about the pace and not having enough time to study the information and write the chapters. She did not feel weekly meetings were working. She had not made a choice and did not like the options. She thought a stacked ranking would be more likely to happen than the Group making a recommendation of one alternative.

XCAP Member Burton thought awhile ago Mr. Shikada said something like, these alternatives all have their issues and there is no obvious choice. It is like the least bad or least offensive. If cost was not an issue, he would probably like the trench. It has issues but ultimately, it has the least disruption to the existing roadways and the community, but cost is an issue. With the underpass, he was enthusiastic about the box jack method for construction, but the underpass has some really significant

issues. Eminent Domain is one; second, the lack of some turning movements; third, the issues around bicycle and pedestrian safety. He did not believe that the Eminent Domain will be restricted to just the five or so houses shown now. This is the only alternative that has Eminent Domain issues and that worries him. Moving to the hybrid and viaduct, the viaduct has some advantages over the hybrid because it disrupts the roadways less, but there are emotional issues surrounding a viaduct structure. It is not just the visuals or the fact that is only ten feet higher than a hybrid, it is the visual of a viaduct. There has been a very visceral reaction by residents against the viaduct. That leaves the hybrid. It isn't perfect but that is his lean. It offers some better soundproofing. It is the least awful alternative. He does feel the group is rushing toward a decision. He suggested getting the report written, all Members read that report and then make the decisions and possibly revisit Churchill; however, he is concerned about burnout. He would like to see something sent to Council that has a decent chance of getting voter approval.

Chair Naik asked Member Burton if he thought it was a matter of deliberation or that some key answers are missing on technical things? She asked him about a stacked ranking.

XCAP Member Burton reiterated his Chapter 4 has an amazing amount of detail that is available to him but not everybody else, unless it is read. He felt if everyone had Chapter 4 in its final form, the Group could do something like a study session and that might clarify some issues or make it easier to give arguments to Council. He thought the stacked ranking was okay, but questioned what it would be based on.

Chair Naik thought a stacked rank was about not being able to come to a single decision, so the alternatives were ranked based on what is known.

XCAP Member Burton replied more might be known in a few weeks, after reading each other's chapters. He would be upset if Council said they were disbanding XCAP and would go with AECOM.

XCAP Member Carrasco spoke to Member Templeton's remarked amount of known information and the ability of the Group to make decisions at this point. He feels if the matrix could be used give some sort of rankings, the choices would be clearer than just debating it. What worries him about the trench is the siphoning, the cost is almost equal to that but mostly the five to six years of construction and this is being built during gridlock. It was said that it is not customary to cost out private costs, the amount pushed out to the private sector and that worries him. The first problem with the underpass is the takings. There were several options with the underpass that could alleviate the takings and make it a good place rather than an ugly place. There were some worries about whether Caltrain would approve a box jack or would require shoofly tracks. The bikes and peds, with this option have to go underground. He feels the hybrid is the ugliest of all the options. It has walls going down and up and he didn't feel that was much better than the trench because it would take almost as long to construct this as the underpass. He thought the viaduct had the took the least time and that was a big benefit for him. His biggest problem with the viaduct for him was the location and appearance were unknown. About 80 percent of people commenting on this said it was ugly. It would be really ugly for the about 52 properties along that right-of-way. At the tapering ends of those 52 properties, the viaduct tapers down

gradually, so it's really about 30 to 35 properties. He feels the visual issue can be modified with clarity about where the viaduct would be located. He suggested XCAP locate it further than a 45-degree angle starting at the property line and going up 45 degrees to the top of the sound wall, so none of this would be any different than if there was a house behind the property. The light plane then should work as described in the zoning ordinance. He estimated that would be about 25 feet away from the property line and, subject to Caltrain, trees could be planted there and that would make the viaduct disappear. Drawings and more accuracy are needed about where the trees could be planted and where the viaduct would be located. It is flat for bikes and pedestrians. His preference is the viaduct when looking at cost and construction duration of about 2 years. His second choice would be the underpass because there is a lot of potential with that, but it is not great as currently shown.

XCAP Member Klein reiterated there are no good solutions and that is contrary to human nature. The preference would be something everyone could be enthusiastic about. That is why the Group is grasping for the idea that there is some additional information which would really help. He did not think there would be any additional information that would turn any of the alternatives into some type of magic solution. When talking about wanting to get more information, this is probably just expressing frustration that there is not a better alternative, even though intellectually everyone knows there isn't. When looking at all the alternatives, the factors that stand out most to him are cost, property takings, aesthetics and time of construction. Regarding cost, he felt there were only two sources of funding for whatever the City ultimately chooses. One is the City itself, second is the rest of the world, the County, regional government or federal. For the external sources, an argument is needed as to why something other than what looks to be the least expensive choice was chosen. The idea of getting funding from an external source to fund a more grandiose project is wishful thinking. The best that could be done is if the City chose an alternative other than the least expensive, the external sources may say they will fund on the basis of the least expensive, and if the City want to do something in addition to that, it would be on the City. That helped him think about what the Group would want to do in these situations. When talking to an external source, there may be various other things that may be wanted. When the Oregon Expressway was built, the City was able to negotiate a series of improvements through the Oregon Expressway with the County once the decision was made. What should be kept in mind when thinking about ways to improve the aesthetics of the hybrid or the viaduct is that the City may be in a better negotiating position if the preferred alternative has been the same for the City all along. When going through the alternatives he went from bottom up. The easiest for him to eliminate was the partial underpass. After getting more information, the more problems it had and he did not feel additional work would resolve those problems. The trench has a certain amount of appeal, but he did not think the cost was justified no matter how much it was. He was also worried about the environmental problems with the trench. That leaves the viaduct and the hybrid and he thought the hybrid made more sense. The only problem with it is that it would take four years for construction, and the viaduct would take two years but savings of the hybrid speaks more loudly and also, while not beautiful, he would rather live with the hybrid than the viaduct. His ranking would be hybrid first, viaduct second.

XCAP Member Reckdahl lives in Charleston Meadows and many of the neighborhood houses are single-story Eichlers with floor-to-ceiling windows. Because of that the City decided to protect the neighborhood and made it a single-story overlay. A two-story house cannot be built in that neighborhood. So, given that zoning constraint, it would be hypocritical for the City to endorse an elevated rail structure that, in effect, does the same thing they are prohibiting private citizens from doing. The only reason to consider an elevated structure is if there were no other alternatives, but there are other alternatives. The trench is over priced and having another consultant look at it and price it out would prove that it either is higher or give a lower cost. His first choice would be to do more work on the trench. The hybrid and viaduct are not good options for a second choice. The current underpass design is not good, but has the idea of separating the vehicles from the bikes and peds. If the Safe Routes to School Group had been engaged with XCAP, they would be very concerned about all the Junior High students going up and down Charleston and Meadow and riding right next to vehicles. Separating bikes and peds from vehicles would be a smart thing to do here. This is a powerful idea but a bad design and he would like this looked at more closely. It would be worthwhile to go back and ask for an underpass design that is better and that would have the potential for being the lowest cost. When asked about the ranked stacking, he didn't think anything would be done until after Caltrain's study, so ranking the ideas would be a reasonable thing to do, because after Caltrain is done, some group will go back and ask what XCAP recommended and how that fit with the situation at that point. The problem is people rank things differently. His thinking is wait till Caltrain is done with their study, then when the money is available do additional work on the trench and the underpass.

XCAP Member Cho remarked she did not think the stacked ranking meant anything, because Members felt differently and the average would have the same weight. One person's favorite is someone else's least favorite.

XCAP Member Brail was not sure what additional information he would want. He was concerned the Group would be able to come to a consensus about a recommendation and, therefore, the stacked ranking would be meaningless.

Chair Naik struggles with, regardless of how the Group feels about four tracks, the fact is that Caltrain is saying they are land banking for four tracks and the onus would be on the City via conceptual designs that the potential four-track segment would not be precluded in any of the designs. That is difficult because it is not known if any of the designs would preclude four tracks. The only way that goes away is if high-speed rail defines the passing tracks in their EIR which the City and Caltrain has asked them to do, but they are not there yet. Or if high-speed rail magically goes away any time soon and that isn't likely the timeframe being looked at. In terms of further engineering work, she disagreed with Member Klein, having been part of the technical group. The technical group didn't even want to release the designs for Meadow, because there had not been a full discussion. The first pictures drawn by the consultants were not even the original design proposal and time ran out to be able to consider those further because it was at the start of the coronavirus and there was no more money available. It isn't that there haven't been suggestions on ways to improve that. The Group was not able to get any of those suggestions and work with AECOM to draw those pictures out. She sees the default, if the Group cannot all agree

on something, is that has been done in every other City, which is a hybrid. She feels the underpass needs more work and the City Council has given guidelines to minimize Eminent Domain, but didn't prohibit it. It is incumbent on any further work on that design to try to minimize any Eminent Domain that would be part of that. The bike/pedestrian stuff is not there either. This is at the beginning of the conversation of that particular design option and it has merit. It was put forth because everyone disliked the elevated alternatives, and everyone worries about the environmental impacts of the trench. Her concern was, even if the trench price came down to the same price as a viaduct or an underpass, there are still significant concerns about the environmental impact of the trench. She felt the elevated options were terrible, but is would be more in favor of the viaduct than the hybrid, if you can push it away from the homes, it does feel less imposing to those houses, it is flat for bikes and pedestrian, it does provide a better feeling of connectivity. She would want to look further at the underpass. She did not want Members to feel forced to make a decision if it was not something they could recommend. She is mindful this process has gone on for a long time and does not want to lose two years of work. She is comfortable is listing the pros and cons and laying out for Council the very specific things that a Caltrain study should be looking at and the biggest questions that might change opinions between alternatives and not necessarily making a recommendation as a Group.

XCAP Member Brail remarked he would like to know what is going to happen with four tracks and if there will be a peninsula-wide effort regarding a grade separation project that might produce some economies of scale and possibly some additional funding. Both of those answers will take two years if not more. The Group needs to do the best it can with what it has, the best recommendation and expect the process will continue. Public opinion among people who write and call to XCAP is very clear, they hate elevated options. However, in the report this week, there was a survey that was done at the Town Hall in which more people say they were in favor of the hybrid than any other option. It should not be assumed that writers and callers to XCAP will necessarily have the same opinion than all of Palo Alto if asked to vote on spending money on something.

XCAP Member Carrasco also suggested looking at landscaping and the issues about how far the tracks could go out to alleviate some of the visual problems which were the most quoted issues about dislike for the viaduct.

Chair Naik advised Member Klein noted there are none of the alternatives that everyone loved. She asked how the Group felt about thinking about how to improve the alternatives that were not liked. That might help think about whatever critical answer is needed to get behind things.

XCAP Member Reckdahl affirmed a fundamental problem with public works projects is that people who are impacted the most are in the minority. Those who are impacted very little if at all, are in the majority. It means that if something is feasible that meets the requirements of those nearby, it should be done. The trench and potentially the underpass both could meet the neighborhood's requirements and the City's requirements and more should be done to make those work.

XCAP Member Cho showed the pole that can be seen from her backyard every day and she could not imagine a structure like the viaduct being hidden by trees.

6, Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 5:39 pm