

Expanded Community Advisory Panel (XCAP)

December 2, 2020, 4:00 pm

Summary - Regular Meeting (virtual, through Zoom)

1. Welcome and Roll Call

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

Absent:

2. Staff Updates

Philip Kamhi, Chief Transportation Official, noted on Monday the Palo Alto City Council adopted a resolution opposing the VTA Measure B Ten-Yea Base Scenario.

XCAP Member Burton asked what the practical impact of that action was.

Mr. Kamhi replied the impact is to be determined. Currently, there hasn't been any formal action. There was an informational only item the VTA said was for discussion purposes that provided their ten-year outlook for the Measure B funds. The Palo Alto City Council essentially took an official stance of opposition, and the resolution essentially asked for the VTA Board when looking at things, to first reject that Base Scenario as it is going to be presented to them possibly tomorrow. Also, for them to balance all the different funding programs.

XCAP Member Burton asked who was behind the proposal to redirect VTA funding to BART?

Mr. Kamhi answered he was not sure if it was VTA staff or BART, but it came from VTA staff. Their argument was not that they would redirect funding, but they just haven't figured out where they will put all the funding. The reality is that they front-loaded the BART funding so much that there is not enough funding left available to fund all the other programs.

Chair Naik believed this is part of the budget fight that will really begin in earnest in February to have everything ready for their May budget.

Mr. Kamhi affirmed that. He did not know if VTA staff anticipated that this would be hit with such opposition from the county and cities, not just Palo Alto; however, the cities that are connected to the BART project more directly will probably be more in favor of it.

XCAP Member Klein remarked that this is a long-standing fight. The fact is that San Jose has a little more than half the population of Santa Clara County so they have more political clout. For many years the San Jose leaders have had the dream of making downtown San Jose into a real downtown appropriate for a city that has a

population of more than a million people. That is the driving force behind bringing BART to San Jose and the downtown area in a very expensive manner. Previous sales tax measures for transit have been raided when the BART expansion has gone over budget, so the negotiations for Measure B language was imposed on San Jose residents that if they really wanted the support from the rest of the County, they had to have some very tight restrictions to make sure that other parts of the County got money out of the sales tax increases and it didn't all go to BART. This is just the latest effort for San Jose to try to raid the sales tax money to make sure that BART ultimately comes to downtown San Jose at some point.

Chair Naik advised she and Member Klein discussed with staff when XCAP's report is expected to go to Council. Currently, this is targeted for the meeting on February 8. That means the report would have to be submitted and finalized by January 25. Everyone has been working hard over the Thanksgiving Holiday and will be doing so over the Christmas and New Year's Holidays as well. She noted it is hard when managing this many chapters to get the formatting correct and get the graphics in. She recognized the budget is tight but asked Mr. Kamhi if it would be possible to get some assistance, hire someone to help with the final formatting to get the report done on time and make it legible, usable and professional.

Mr. Kamhi replied the budget is nearly expended and there is no one currently under contract to help with that type of work in his department, but there may be in other departments. He will look into that, possibly the Office of Communications may be able to help.

Chair Naik said she had a lead on someone if the Office of Communications can't do it. She also remarked that the XCAP studies to date have been funded out of the other bucket of Measure B money used for all the AECOM work, and she wondered if there might be any money there for this.

Mr. Kamhi advised that money was the only fund source for all of the XCAP-related consultant work and he wasn't sure if that budget had any remaining funding that isn't allocated directly to the consultant work.

3. Oral Communications

None.

4. XCAP Member Updates and Working Group Updates

XCAP Member Brail remarked that he now felt better about the chapter that discussed Meadow and Charleston. He hoped for something other than offering a lot of information to the Council and they should figure it out.

XCAP Member Burton wanted to reinforce Chair Naik's point about needing a copy editor. He has been reading all the other sections besides the ones he has written and has seen a lot of redundancy and believes at some point soon revisions and streamlining need to be done.

Chair Naik felt the repetition was due to everyone working on their own segments and when they see something for the first time, they feel it needs to be defined.

XCAP Member Burton reiterated it will probably take more time given the number of separate authors.

Chair Naik noted she realized there wasn't a spot for Member Carrasco's alternative for the round-about at Embarcadero that XCAP moved forward but the Council shut down. She didn't know if that was considered a discarded alternative.

XCAP Member Burton remarked about the discarded alternatives and Chair Naik indicated she wanted a report for somebody who has never been to an XCAP meeting. For those people, the distinction between something discarded prior to XCAP and something discarded by XCAP is a fine point that may be lost. There may need to be a subdivision between prior and post creation of XCAP.

Chair Naik agree with Member Burton.

XCAP Member Reckdahl felt that some of this is showing what the group did and the things discarded before the group started should not expect to have the same detail and analysis, so the distinction in that sense is important.

Chair Naik noted the title of the chapter is Ideas Discarded Before XCAP Began so these ideas were not investigated by XCAP.

XCAP Member Burton noted the South Palo Alto only tunnel, which was discarded.

Chair Naik explained that is described in the South Palo Alto section.

XCAP Member Templeton noted the scope has already been expanded to talk about things that happened before XCAP and she was concerned about adding more. She asked if the previous CAP group did any documentation on these.

Chair Naik replied when XCAP asked for new alternatives a year ago, Member Carrasco put forth a concept for Embarcadero and there was also the Elizabeth concept and the Mike concept. All XCAP Members voted to take all those concepts to Council and then Council voted to move forward with three and did not decide to move forward with Member Carrasco's idea.

XCAP Member Templeton reiterated that happened during XCAP. She remarked it was okay to have a short report of what happened before XCAP to get the reader caught up, but did not think more needed to be added to that.

Chair Naik responded there isn't anything written about Member Carrasco's concept that was taken to Council but then didn't more. She asked Member Templeton if she was making the argument that it shouldn't go in this section, but should go someplace else?

XCAP Member Templeton responded yes.

XCAP Member Carrasco agreed with Member Templeton.

Chair Naik affirmed it should go in the section Members Cho and Shen were working on.

XCAP Member Klein thought it should go into the section on Churchill. It gets mentioned but was quickly discarded.

XCAP Member Reckdahl asked if CAP did any wrap-up documentation?

Chair Naik answered no. She then advised she had done a master timeline that started in 2008 and continued to the present. She thought it should go in the appendix. She asked that as Members are working on their sections, if they believe there is a critical milestone, they can make sure it is on the existing timeline. She then noted she and Member Klein worked on the Executive Summary and there is a second section which is Findings, Future Areas of Studies and Additional Recommendations. This goes to having a section of the report that is useful for policymakers on how to move forward. The question was, if a policymaker reads maybe the Executive Summary, if the recommendations are upfront, some are so technical or need further explanation, at this point there is not enough information to understand what they are. The decision needs to be made if they should be at the beginning of the report or at the end.

XCAP Member Brail felt the Executive Summary should be just that. Some of the recommendations are very detailed but the deep, technical information should go in the report, but will not help Council. High level recommendations should be bullets upfront.

Chair Naik suggested recommendations for policymakers and recommendations for technical people. The Rail Corridor Report format had at the end almost a spreadsheet with different columns with policies and how the recommendations fit in with policies which becomes one list. That list could be included in verbiage and words in the Executive Summary.

XCAP Member Carrasco thought Member Templeton's and staff's matrix was very useful with the information that led the group to decide the recommendations. He did not see where those two matrices were in the summary or anywhere else.

Chair Naik advised the matrices done by AECOM will be in the appendix. The dynamic matrix by Member Templeton was supposed to be for XCAP's deliberations.

XCAP Member Templeton replied that the process was not completed. It would be hard to include everything. A subgroup could go over it and agree what those are before presenting it to the whole group for approval to include it in the report.

Chair Naik reiterated that any documents created by AECOM will be in the report. She agreed with Member Templeton that at this point it is just more work.

XCAP Member Carrasco noted omission of the recommendation to have an urban designer's input.

XCAP Member Brail related it originally came in the document written on the viaduct which was not able to be fully incorporated in the current chapter. The idea was these are public amenities and much of the reaction to the elevated options were that these would be ugly, and no opportunity was given to think about what it actually might look like.

Chair Naik responded she would put a placeholder now in the general recommendations section regarding urban design.

XCAP Member Cho asked if the urban designer would offer some information on usage of the area under the viaduct?

Chair Naik assumed Member Carrasco meant when looking at all the design, there should be some input from an urban designer.

Member Carrasco replied yes.

Public Comment

None.

5. Writing and Editing of Final Report

Chair Naik thanked everyone for all the work they did over the Thanksgiving break.

XCAP Member Burton expressed that whatever process is being used to make the PDF is not working. Clearly there is a font mismatch with the PDF conversion.

Chair Naik agreed and discussed with members what could be done about that. It was agreed the font to be used going forward is Ariel, 11. Moving to Executive Summary, she agreed with Member Brail about the Executive Summary having the recommendations for policymakers and a separate recommendation for technical people.

XCAP Member Shen remarked this felt really long to be a summary and inquired if this could be shortened in some way?

Chair Naik advised Findings Overview will be moved to a different section.

XCAP Member Cho suggested using similar wording in each chapter.

XCAP Member Templeton suggested rewording some parts of the XCAP Section.

Discussion moved to Impacts of the COVID Emergency. Comments were offered regarding the stakeholder groups and the advantages and disadvantages of the virtual Town Hall meetings.

XCAP Member Klein remarked on the length of the Executive Summary.

Members also discussed the paragraph regarding funding and financing the project.

All comments by Members regarding Executive Summary were discussed.

Discussion then moved to Findings Overview.

Wording and placement of the section were discussed.

XCAP Member Carrasco felt opposing four tracks should be a priority.

XCAP Member Brail noted the controversial comments about some XCAP Members not agreeing with HSR were not included.

Chair Naik explained those comments did not cross over when she was working on this and she worked on correcting that.

All comments from Members were discussed.

The Group moved on to Decisions and Recommendations.

XCAP Member Brail was not comfortable with wording on page 5, 1) little to no enthusiasm.

XCAP Member Reckdahl looked for different wording also for 2) and 3) on page 5.

Some changes were also suggested for numbers 1 through 9 on page 5.

All of these comments and suggestions were discussed by Members.

The section Findings, Future Areas of Study and Additional Recommendations was next discussed by the Group.

Changes to this section were discussed such as placement in this document and dividing this into policymaker and technical sections. Wording in areas of this section was discussed as well as additions and deletions. It was agreed to add a Discovery section and lessons learned.

XCAP Member Brail noted many of the consultants did not understand the high numbers of cyclists in Palo Alto.

XCAP Member Reckdahl reiterated most traffic studies are very vehicle-centric.

All comments and suggestions for this section were discussed.

Chair Naik asked for comments from Members regarding their sections.

XCAP Member Brail noted his section was 60 pages long. He did not know how to tackle getting rid of the last 20 pages.

Chair Naik reported she read part of the IBRC Report which gave some direction to their groups when they were writing and she planned on sending those to XCAP Members.

XCAP Member Brail noted some of the things Chair Naik had incorporated as part of the Underpass Chapter were things he didn't know what to do with and that helped him. He was struggling with the long history of the underpass project and the XCAP and thought about making this an appendix or a separate document. In general, he felt that what he was left with in that chapter was very cut and dried. He suggested something like an advocacy section listing the pros for each alternative.

XCAP Member Burton suggested putting this in the Executive Summary.

XCAP Member Templeton liked the idea of advocacy but did not feel comfortable with advocating for the specific alternatives. She would like to advocate what might be best for each type of constituency group.

XCAP Member Burton suggested to carry forth Member Templeton's idea, a list of constituencies would be needed. This would be a way of focusing the discussion around impacts to specific groups.

Chair Naik thought it was helpful to think of those groups when writing the short advocacy paragraphs, but didn't know if it was worth the trouble of writing something for each constituency group.

XCAP Member Klein noted he and Members Shen and Cho spent a good deal of time on their chapter, and thought it was ready for the full group to look at it and provide edits. He also felt part of their section would respond to some of Member Brail's concerns.

Members discussed how to divide members to work on the chapters.

XCAP Member Klein was worried about the constituency groups and was concerned that the general public has been left out.

The Group discussed future meetings.

Chair Naik suggested everyone turning in what they have by 9 am the Monday before each of the next two meetings, on December 9 and December 16. Then over the holiday break, considering the Brown Act, possibly staff could help get an agenda out for a meeting that isn't happening to make documents public so groups can continue editing.

Mr. Kamhi responded he will check on what staff could do about sending out an agenda for an unscheduled meeting. If XCAP decided the report would not be ready by the end of January, that would be enough time to decide about scheduling it with the Council.

Chair Naik advised Members would basically stay in the existing groups with Member Templeton helping Members Brail and Reckdahl.

XCAP Member Templeton suggested splitting into two groups of four then split the work of those two groups into two parts.

Chair Naik asked Member Burton if he could work with Members Klein, Shen and Cho on Chapter 3.2, Grade Separation Alternatives, Churchill (from Member Shen).

XCAP Member Burton responded he would be happy to.

6. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 6:57 pm.