Expanded Community Advisory Panel (XCAP)
JANUARY 13, 2021
Summary - Special Meeting (virtual, through Zoom)

1. Welcome and Roll Call

Present: Gregory Brail, Phil Burton, Tony Carrasco, Larry Klein, Naida Naik, Keith Reckdahl, David

Absent: Inyoung Cho

2. Staff Updates

Ripon Bhatia, Senior Engineer, updated that all proposed changes will be made to the matrix and fact sheets and those documents would be forwarded to XCAP Members. Staff has compiled and condensed all large files and those will be sent to the editor who will include them in the Appendix.

Chair Naik confirmed that XCAP did receive a letter from the Superintendent of Palo Alto Unified School District and that letter would be forwarded to Council as well as added to the Appendix.

3. Oral Communications

Roland Lebrun updated the XCAP regarding Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA). He disclosed that the new Chair of the VTA Board is the Vice Mayor of Sunnyvale and the Vice Chair of the Board is the Vice Mayor of San Jose. Supervisor Simitian was not appointed to the VTA Board because the new Chair appointed a Sunnyvale Supervisor instead. City Council took steps and elected Pat Burt to be on the VTA Board. VTA had submitted an application for the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) project. Federal grants were committed toward the project at $2 billion and was to be spread out over 15 years, but the project’s total was close to $900 million.

4. XCAP Member Updates and Working Group Updates

Chair Naik announced that the document was almost complete. If any members had substantive changes, they needed to announce them before the document is sent to the editor.

XCAP Member Carrasco points out that the general feeling was that there was no consensus among members on a preferred alternative for any of the grade crossings. He agreed with the Palo Alto Unified School District’s observation that XCAP should not take a position on any one of the alternatives.

Chair Naik explained that the report is to summarize the XCAP process and there was a 6-3 vote on a preferred alternative for Churchill Avenue. She felt that the Palo Alto Unified School District’s letter was addressed to Council, not XCAP.
XCAP Member Carrasco agreed that the report represented the process the XCAP took very well.

5. Writing and Editing of Final Report

Chair Naik disclosed that the Churchill Avenue and Meadow Avenue sections included small changes as well as two new substantive items which were the dissenting opinion and the history of the underpass.

Chair Naik asked if there were any substantive changes for the Executive Summary.

XCAP Member Burton shared that many of his comments are editorial comments. He disagreed with the idea of having a new study be conducted for a four-track system.

Philip Kami, Chief Transportation Official, agreed with that disagreement.

The discussion commenced among the XCAP and Staff. There was consensus that if four tracks are needed, a significantly revised XCAP type study would likely have to be undertaken.

XCAP Member Burton indicated that the next substantive change was to change the word can to needs to on Page 4 of the Executive Summary.

The discussion commenced and there was consensus among XCAP to change the word can to needs to on Page 4.

Chair Naik informed the XCAP to share all edits with herself and she will make all the changes.

XCAP Member Burton commented that in Chapter Two, the link in Footnote Number 5 was not working.

Chair Naik thought that the history of how grade separations were funded in the past should be included in the document because now that grade separations were train-centric, funding would be different.

XCAP Member Klein believed it should be removed because the XCAP’s charge was not to be concerned about financing and history was irrelevant. He advised any language that disclosed what the City might do should be removed as well.

Chair Naik emphasized that XCAP had agreed at a prior meeting to leave in the section regarding what the City might do in terms of funding sources.

XCAP Member Burton asked what happened to Council appointing a separate group to look at funding.

Chair Naik disclosed that it never came to fruition.

XCAP Member Carrasco shared that funding and cost was a big influencer of the XCAP’s decision making. He wished to see language explaining that but not to full detail.
XCAP Member Klein agreed that cost was a major factor in the decision-making process but added that cost and funding are two different things.

Chair Naik commented that she would shorten the section regarding funding and bring it back to the next meeting for the XCAP to review.

XCAP Member Reckdahl suggested moving the history of funding to the Appendix. There was agreement among the XCAP to make the suggested change.

Chair Naik asked if XCAP agreed with Mr. Bhatia’s language regarding long-term maintenance in Chapter 3.

The discussion commenced, edits were suggested and made, and there was agreement on the language among the XCAP.

Chair Naik announced that she was waiting for more information from AECOM regarding the closure plus mitigations options for Churchill Avenue.

Mr. Bhatia advised adding in Oregon Expressway, El Camino Real, and Embarcadero Road under closures plus mitigations for Churchill Avenue.

Chair Naik mentioned that High Road and Kingsley Street would have impacts and those were different than saying just Embarcadero Road.

Mr. Bhatia indicated that those intersections would be included in the Impact Report.

XCAP Member Carrasco emphasized that the traffic impact section was a very high-level guess.

Chair Naik confirmed that Staff is waiting for AECOM to address the Caltrain right away and the language would be available at the next meeting.

XCAP Member Shen disclosed that he may insert more language regarding Palo Alto Unified School District once he reviewed their letter.

XCAP Member Klein wished to see the school district’s December letter included in the Packet that is presented to City Council.

Mr. Kami announced that Staff had just received the final draft of the letter and it will be sent to Council.

XCAP Member Shen indicated that the word traffic had been changed to vehicular to indicate what type of traffic was being focused on for Churchill Avenue, headline traffic moved elsewhere can be mitigated.

XCAP Member Carrasco wanted the language to be clear that traffic can be mitigated, but not all mitigations might happen because of it.

Chair Naik noted to remove the minority opinion section from the Churchill Avenue draft.
XCAP Member Shen predicted that the Partial Underpass and the Viaduct should be removed from the Churchill chapter.

Chair Naik disclosed that XCAP Member Carrasco’s paragraph would be added to the minority opinion.

XCAP Member Carrasco explained that he did vote for the closure at Churchill but he could not support the mitigations that the closure imposed. For those reasons, he suggested his opinion should be included in the minority opinion and he agreed that a reference to that opinion should be listed in the report.

The discussion commenced on how to memorialize XCAP Member Carrasco’s opinion on the viaduct option for Churchill Avenue. XCAP Member Klein announced he would wordsmith the viaduct paragraph and return with new language at the next meeting.

The XCAP agreed to discuss the minority opinion for the partial Churchill underpass at the next meeting.

There was agreement among the XCAP that under the Meadow and Charleston Hybrid option, a 6-foot sound wall barrier is the appropriate name.

XCAP Member Carrasco stated that the sound wall could be higher but agreed to the proposed language.

Wordsmithing took place among the members regarding fencing height for the trench option.

There was an agreement to delete the paragraph discussing neighborhood impacts for the trench option because it was referenced in a different section.

XCAP discussed XCAP Member Shen’s language regarding a shoo fly that was listed under support continued rail operations and Caltrain service improvements.

XCAP Member Shen advised to remove the language around a shoo fly and include it under construction.

XCAP Member Burton wanted to emphasize that the global benefit of gate noise, bell noise, and train horn noise would be eliminated among all the alternatives. Under trench advantages, he suggested adding language regarding cost, unknown additional issues, and technical issues for the above trench improvements.

XCAP Member Klein wanted to see the bullet point about community support removed in the Meadow and Charleston section.

Discussion took place and the XCAP decided to change the word community to neighborhood.

Discussion took place regarding property acquisition or eminent domain under underpass disadvantages for Meadow and Charleston. The XCAP agreed with the proposed language of potentially significant property acquisitions or eminent domain.
The XCAP removed the sentence regarding property value impacts under underpass disadvantages for Meadow and Charleston.

Discussion continued regarding traffic impacts for the underpass disadvantages at Meadow and Charleston. The XCAP decided to remove the bullet point from the document.

XCAP Member Burton called out the hybrid specific study areas and the bullet point regarding Charleston/Arastradero. He asked what that bullet point meant.

Chair Naik explained that there have been designs included on the roads to ensure that traffic flowed at a particular rate that made it acceptable for bikes and pedestrians.

Mr. Kami confirmed that the Hexagon Study did consider the Charleston/Arastradero project.

Chair Naik wanted to see a reference made to a broad general statement that all the traffic analyses did not provide a network impact indication for any of the alternatives for Charleston.

XCAP Member Reckdahl shared that he would provide footnotes to Chair Naik to be included in the Meadow/Charleston section.

XCAP Member Klein wanted the document to reflect that any alternative for any grade separation required Caltrain approval and some approvals may be difficult to achieve.

XCAP Member Burton proposed to remove the first bullet under questions for Caltrain under Meadow and Charleston grade crossing options.

XCAP decided to wordsmith the first and second bullet and Chair Naik requested that XCAP Members return with specific language.

Chair Naik and XCAP Member Klein would meet with Staff to go over any issues Staff had with the report and bring those points to the next XCAP meeting.

XCAP Member Carrasco suggested incorporating XCAP Member Reckdahl’s questions for AECOM regarding the trench option for Meadow and Charleston in the Appendix.

XCAP Member Reckdahl suggested to remove his questions about AECOM design and include his presentation and questions on the matter in the Appendix.

Chair Naik recommended that the XCAP discussion recommendations and lessons learned at the next XCAP meeting. She wanted to understand where XCAP wanted to locate that chapter within the document.

XCAP Member Carrasco disclosed that XCAP learned that the grade separations are going to be built during a time when there is gridlock because Caltrain at that point may have increased their trains to 12 trains per hour. He wanted policymakers to understand that point.
Chair Naik agreed to include a bullet regarding that concern in the lessons learned section.

XCAP Member Burton summarized his editorial edits for the Glossary.

XCAP Member Klein asked where in the document is there a reference to the California Public Utilities Commission.

Chair Naik explained they are mentioned in the section that talked about funding that comes from the California Public Utilities Commission. The document also mentioned that California Public Utilities Commission requires that if there are four-track, that there must be a grade separation.

XCAP Member Carrasco suggested including a definition for uncurable ques in the glossary.

Chair Naik announced that the next meeting is the last meeting of the XCAP and any edits should be sent to herself or Staff before the meeting.

Roland Lebrun mentioned that the four-track section language is correct in the document. The reference link for four-tracks was in the Caltrain Engineering Standards, Chapter 7. Caltrain will have to design and pay for four-track crossings. He believed that there was a City policy that would not allow four-tracks to be within the City limits. He concluded that Caltrain only has the environmental clearance to run six trains an hour.

6. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 6:30 P.M.