



Community Advisory Panel (CAP) Meeting #6 Summary

Meeting name

CAP Meeting #6

Subject

Connecting Palo Alto
Palo Alto Grade Separation Study

Meeting date and time

February 13, 2019
4:00pm-6:00pm

Location

Palo Alto City Hall
Community Room
250 Hamilton Ave, Palo Alto

Prepared by

Eileen Goodwin, Apex Strategies

Other Speaker Attendees

Rob de Geus, Deputy City Manager (PA)
Chantal Gaines (PA)
Ety Mercurio, Project Manager (AECOM)
Millette Litzinger, Dep Project Manager (AECOM)
Peter DeStefano, Engineer (AECOM)
John Maher, Engineer, (AECOM)
Nayan Amin (TJKM)
Ruta Jariwala (TJKM)
Hugh Louch (Alta Planning)
Eileen Goodwin (Apex Strategies)

Project Team in Attendance

Wayne Tanda (PA)

CAP Member Attendees

Mandar Borkar
Gregory Brail
Phil Burton
Tony Carrasco
Megan Kanne
Christine Logan
Nadia Naik
Parag Patkar
David Shen

Not Able to Attend

Inyoung Cho
Kari Hodgeson
Pat Lau

Ref	Action
01	City staff to always post the door of the location if cancelling a meeting. City cannot rely on social media alone to get the word out.
02	Research Josh's PowerPoint for slides to use to give background for the need for the grade separation effort.
03	The Stanford issue should be folded into the financial update discussion.
04	Caltrain electrification funding should be discussed and clarified as part of the community meeting agenda—to help clear up confusion.
05	A property transfer tax should be part of the financial discussion.
06	City to post the email comments and inquiries to the project website and send link to CAP Members once posted.
07	City Staff to coordinate with first responders regarding project options and response time impacts.
08	Provide a list of existing and planned renderings below.
09	City to arrange renderings in one easy to find location on the website without having to go through various presentations.
10	Provide cost estimate for the tunnel at the March CAP Meeting.
11	City to send CAP members a link to the existing conditions report when available.
12	Add a list of traffic improvements the TJKM Traffic Team will be looking as mitigations.
13	Review previous PPT illustrating gate down time to determine what may still be applicable.

14

Agenda

The Meeting agenda included:

- Welcome and Introductions
- Community Conversations
 - CAP Community Conversations
 - Emails to the City
 - Public Presentation by Stuart Hanson
- City Council Meetings Debrief (December and January)
 - List of Alternatives Still Part of Current Effort
 - Outstanding Requests (Renderings)

- Review of Citywide Tunnel Video (North Portal)
- Churchill Pedestrian Crossing Update
 - Alternatives
 - No Partial Closure
- Traffic Information Presentation and Discussion
- Financial Update (Deferred to March CAP Meeting)
- Overview of March 27th Community Meeting Agenda
- Summary of Action Items/Next Meeting—March 13, 2019 4pm-6pm
- Adjourn

There is an audio tape of the meeting presentations and the PowerPoint is archived on the CAP website. They are not re-summarized below.

Next CAP Meeting

Next Scheduled is March 13, 2019, 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
 Palo Alto City Hall, Community Room, 250 Hamilton Ave, Palo Alto, CA

Comments/Questions

Below is a summary of the comments and questions received and the responses provided. Action items from these comments/questions are summarized above.

Table 1. Summary of Comments/Questions and Responses

Comment/Questions	Responses
Introductions	
<p>Rob De Geus deferred the financial conversation to the March CAP Meeting. He announced there would be a meeting with VTA staff to discuss the grade separation funding category now that the lawsuit for Measure B has been cleared and the tax has been validated. He also announced his departure from the City to become a City Manager in Southern California and introduced Wayne Tanda as his temporary replacement.</p>	
Community Conversations	
<p>Saint Andrew’s parish office is not very interested in the project because their parishioners are not from Palo Alto. They did express a desire not to “gold-plate” whatever project moves forward.</p>	
<p>Support expressed for the decision to put the Palo Alto crossing in the coordinated downtown plan effort. Concerns expressed about making Embarcadero and Alma crossings more pedestrian friendly. Questions from the community about whether High Speed Rail or Caltrain are requiring the 4 -track scenarios. CAP members will be presenting to the Chamber and Downtown Businesses on February 25th.</p>	
<p>Hosted a meeting for the Downtown North Neighborhood. A dozen people attended. Confusion regarding need for any grade separations. Advice to the project team to keep stressing the need for the projects. Questions about why Palo Alto Avenue was</p>	
<p>Advice to be clear about the role of high-speed rail as well as electrification and the project requirements/need. (04)</p>	<p>Due to recent decisions by the Governor, this message also needs to be included in the flyer for the next community meeting.</p>
<p>Some members of the community showed up at Mitchell Park for the community on 1/23.</p>	<p>City sent out an e-blast and the website was updated with new dates. However, there was a</p>

Comment/Questions

Responses

	breakdown in not placing signage at the facility on the day of the meeting. (01)
Recent experience with rush hour traffic and sitting through multiple cycles of the signal at Charleston. New found energy to promote the grade separation effort as a result.	
Business community is feeling excluded. Suggestion to research a previous Josh PowerPoint that had good slides laying out the reason behind the grade separation effort. (02)	
There was also some information in a Caltrain PowerPoint found on-line discussing the need for grade separations due to modelling results.	
Can the animation of the gate down time help address the signal timing?	Team will review previous PPT to determine what may still be applicable. (13)
Recent experience sitting on Alma with one and half minute delay made CAP member curious about whether the Fire Department and other emergency responders are supportive of the project.	They are and have spoken in favor at previous Council Meetings.
Why was the north end of the tunnel chosen for the video?	It is the most constrained area and we wanted to show the impacts. The video for the community meeting will be for both the north and south parts of the City (within City limits).
What is the ultimate process for the selection of an alternative? What is the CAP's role? Will the City residents vote? In 1957 there was a city vote to grade separate Oregon Expressway.	The CAP is advisory to the City Manager; the City Council will select the preferred alternative. Depending on the funding strategy, there is the potential that a City vote would be needed.
There has been some discussion in the community about a property transfer tax. Stanford should be added to the financial updates. (03,05)	
Public Comment/Presentation: There was a sketched-out option presented at the CAP Meeting that showed the rail at grade on shoofly location and sheltered. The option showed local roads separated by going over or under. The benefit was articulated as easier and faster to construct and less of a visual impact.	Commented noted.
Public Comment: The emergency responders should weigh in about the potential closure of Palo Alto Avenue and be asked to calculate the impacts to response times. (07)	
City reported that emails received from December will be posted to the website. (06)	

City Council Meeting Debrief

It was frustrating to the CAP members that there was no vote at the December meeting. People spent a lot of time to get community members to attend and then nothing happened. Is there any way to know ahead of time?	That decision to defer action to January was a decision made that evening and a surprise to staff as well. Normally one can tell what actions will or will not happen by reading the staff reports.
Are there members of the Council still recused?	Yes. At this time two members live too close to the tracks to be able to vote on the project alternatives.

Comment/Questions

Responses

Is the South Palo Alto Tunnel with freight on top still being looked at?

Council will consider how much it will cost to review such an option. It is not currently budgeted. That decision could be made in March.

This freight on top doesn't meet the definition of grade separation.

That is correct since the freight will still have an at-grade crossing with the local streets.

Would it cost less to just do a photo simulation versus a video?

Yes, but neither are in the budget at this time and these additional requests are not being worked on.

CAP members were caught off guard about the video going to the Council without first going through the CAP. Would like to have input into future renderings and requests. Had we known about all the right-of-way takes required for the tunnel portal we might have recommended that the Council not consider the option.

Comment noted. Staff felt it was important information for the Council to have as they were making some decisions about options.

The sections are not helpful and that might be a cost savings, so we can have more renderings, which are helpful.

Cross sections and engineering drawings need to be created to be able to create the renderings, thus, there wouldn't be a cost savings.

A list of existing and planned renderings would be helpful (09).

For Meadow/Charleston they are located on the website at: (02)

<https://pagradesep.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Meadow-Charles-Hybrid-MCL.pdf>

<https://pagradesep.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Meadow-Charles-Trench-MCT.pdf>

<https://pagradesep.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Meadow-Charles-Viaduct-MCV.pdf>

For each of the 3 Meadow/Charleston alternatives (hybrid, trench, viaduct) the following renderings have been prepared:

- Overview looking southwest at Meadow
- Ground level view looking southwest at Charleston
- Backyard view looking east from typical property west of tracks

Remaining renderings to be prepared for the Citywide Tunnel and Churchill bike/ped crossing include:

- Citywide Tunnel overview at north portal
- Citywide Tunnel street level at north portal
- Churchill bike/ped overview for Option 1
- Churchill bike/ped overview for Option 2

Review Citywide Tunnel Video (North Portal)

What is the difference between a concept and a proposal to the City?

This tunnel design has not been approved and it was an attempt to make that clear to the viewing public, especially those with impacted property.

Why isn't there a South Palo Alto tunnel video?

There will be one to view at the March CAP Meeting. It is important to disclose the impacts of both ends of the project.

Comment/Questions	Responses
Can the boring machine “back out” of the tunnel? Would that make it less impactful?	No, because there would still need to be construction of the transition areas.
What about consideration of a single bore tunnel?	The single bore tunnel would need to be much deeper and have a much larger diameter. It would have bigger impacts.
Will the shoofly at Embarcadero have impacts?	Yes, the clover interchange would need to be redesigned or elevated over the railroad.
Do we have a response back from Caltrain on their electrification design specs?	No, not yet. (04)
How does Churchill avoid property takes?	It is in the area of the bore, not the transition, and there is no driveway access directly onto Alma near Churchill.
Did you look at elevating a shoofly to minimize impacts?	No, we did not look at that option, but that type of design would require the shoofly to be even longer to account for the elevation change.
The City should push back on Caltrain’s requirement for a 22’ height for the wires, there is a historic bridge on the corridor at 19’ and the savings would add up.	There was a design exception to accommodate the historic bridge location. Caltrain is unlikely to give an exception for the entire corridor. Caltrain generally will not grant exceptions for cost reasons only.
Need a visual of the underground station.	Comment noted.
We needed to have a CAP meeting regarding the tunnel. The CAP could have played a role with the Council. The property impacts are large.	Comment noted.
I have historically been a huge advocate for the tunnel design, but these right-of-way impacts are large. What is the cost? Do we have a number?	We will have a cost estimate to discuss at the March CAP Meeting. (10)
When you explain this at the community meeting, please explain that you only considered the tunnel within City limits and why it only cover ¾ of the city.	Comment noted.
Churchill Pedestrian Crossing Update	
What is a lot of bike crossings?	In this case 100 bikes.
Are you looking at using Seale as a crossing?	Yes, it has been discussed.
How would the design work with the tunnel in the middle of the road? Would bikes have to get over to the middle of the road?	Yes.
Are both Churchill and Seale options under consideration?	After the meeting, this was discussed further with City staff and our study will focus on options at Churchill.
Can you break out the options into 3 and 4?	Yes, we can look at that.
Public Comment: Pali kids need to be safe. Seale/Embarcadero might get more traffic which might add more bike/ped traffic and more conflicts.	Comment noted.

Traffic Information Presentation and Discussion

Comment/Questions	Responses
When will we see “future” traffic counts?	We will have those counts at March CAP Meeting.
Does the model of the future traffic demand include all the future development?	Yes, anything in the approved General Plan.
Does the model include the downtown development if the caps are lifted?	No, just approved General Plan.
Will you make the raw traffic data available?	Yes, it will be part of the existing conditions traffic report in the appendix. (11)
The counts should cover a broader area to include the Stanford development.	
Do the 24-hour counts include weekends?	Yes, but the results look at the worse case which are generally the peak commute times on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.
LOS is a good concept. The original destination graphics in this presentation are not community friendly. They are hard to read and understand. You should break out the zones and make them more understandable.	Comments noted.
What are the next steps?	Once we have future counts estimated we will work on various mitigations for the traffic impacts we identify.
Can you give some idea of what types of mitigations you will be looking at?	<p>List of possible traffic mitigation measures include: (12)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roadway improvements (widening, turn lanes, access control) • Intersection control (traffic signal, signal phasing, all-way stop, roundabout) • Operational improvements (signal timing, Intelligent Transportation System, signal systems) • Traffic Calming (speed humps and tables, chokers, bulb outs, diverters, etc.) • Pedestrian/Bicycle (crosswalks, ped signals, bike lanes)
Public Comment: Please do a closure of the road and see what happens.	The City is reluctant to do that because there would not be any mitigations in place and the City would hope to be able to mitigate any impacts prior to putting a closure in effect. Thus, a trail closure wouldn't prove anything and would irritate a lot of people.
Public Comment: What is the City's level of service goal?	LOS D is the standard, which allows for 55 seconds of delay per car per direction.
Public Comment: Has the team looked at the WAZE effect as people cut through our residential streets now led by the driving apps? I like your idea of mitigating for traffic issues.	Comments noted.



Comment/Questions

Responses

There might be something wrong with the PM Counts, they don't seem to add up.

We noticed that too.

Will the community meeting be streamed?

No, but it will be taped.
