



CITY COUNCIL SUMMARY MINUTES

Special Meeting
March 23, 2021

The City Council of the City of Palo Alto met on this date in virtual teleconference at 5:01 P.M.

Participating Remotely: Burt, Cormack, DuBois, Filseth, Kou, Stone; Tanaka arrived at 6:16 P.M.

Absent:

Study Session

1. Study Session on Connecting Palo Alto Rail Grade Separation: Receive and Discuss Final Report From the Expanded Community Advisory Panel (XCAP).

Ed Shikada, City Manager, reported discussion of grade separations began more than ten years ago and was driven by alignment of Caltrain and California High Speed Rail (CHSR) and Caltrain's electrification. The City evaluated the trenching alternative in 2014 and conducted technical analyses of 34 alternatives in 2018. In 2019, the Council narrowed the alternatives to seven for further evaluation and formed the Expanded Community Advisory Panel (XCAP). The Council identified the project need and hopefully was moving to selection of the alternatives that allowed the City to seek funding. In most cases, agencies did not commit significant funding for detailed design and construction until there was a preferred alternative. While the City expended significant funds to reach the current point, funding was going to increase on the order of magnitudes for next steps. Potential next steps were to review detailed alternatives, invite regional partners to discuss concerns and questions, narrow the number of alternatives, direct Staff to conduct additional studies of select alternatives, and direct Staff to prepare the Project Study Report.

Philip Kamhi, Chief Transportation Official, advised that three of seven rail crossings were already grade-separated. Caltrain electrification was going to increase the frequency of trains and cause gate down times to increase to 15 percent of each hour.

Millette Litzinger, AECOM, indicated three alternatives were being considered for the Churchill Avenue crossing: closure with mitigations, a viaduct, and a partial underpass.

SUMMARY MINUTES

Peter DeStefano, AECOM, reviewed Options 1 and 2 for the Churchill Avenue closure with mitigations. In Option 1, ramps ran parallel to the train tracks, descended into an approximately 45-foot-long tunnel, and ascended on the opposite side of the tracks. The configuration was intended to preserve the existing Embarcadero bike path. In Option 2, a pedestrian path passed beneath Alma Street and the train tracks.

Gary Black, Hexagon Consultant, related that closure of Churchill was going to divert traffic to Embarcadero and Oregon Expressway/Page Mill Road. A study found that Embarcadero was going to need changes to accommodate the increase in traffic.

Ms. Litzinger reviewed the viaduct alternative. Rail tracks began rising near Homer Avenue, extended over Churchill, and returned to the existing elevation near the California Avenue station. This was the most expensive alternative for Churchill, and closure was the least expensive alternative.

Mr. DeStefano reviewed the partial underpass alternative. Churchill Avenue was going to be lowered from east of Castilleja Avenue, extend beneath the train tracks, and form a new T-intersection with Alma Street, which was going to be approximately 20 feet below the existing grade. A pedestrian tunnel was located at Kellogg Avenue.

Ms. Litzinger reported the alternatives for the Meadow-Charleston crossing were a viaduct, a trench, a hybrid, an underpass, a tunnel for passenger and freight trains, and a tunnel for passenger trains with freight trains traveling at grade. In the viaduct alternative, the railroad was going to be elevated approximately 20 feet above Meadow Drive and Charleston Road. In the trench alternative, the rail tracks were going to be lowered into a trench and pass beneath Meadow and Charleston. This alternative required diversion of Adobe and Barron Creeks. For the hybrid alternative, the rail tracks were raised approximately 15 feet above Meadow and Charleston, and Meadow Drive, Charleston Street, and Alma Street were partially lowered.

Mr. DeStefano reviewed the underpass alternative. Meadow Drive was going to be lowered beneath the tracks and Alma Street. A separated pedestrian/bicycle path traveled along the south side of Meadow. This alternative required some partial property acquisitions and two full property acquisitions. Pedestrian bridges were located over Meadow along each side of the rail tracks. Charleston Road was also going to be lowered beneath the rail tracks and Alma Street. A separated pedestrian/bicycle path was located on the north side of Charleston. This alternative required some partial property acquisitions and three full property acquisitions.

SUMMARY MINUTES

Ms. Litzinger reviewed the tunnel alternative for passenger and freight trains. The rail tracks were going to be lowered into a trench from Oregon Expressway to approximately Loma Verde, extend through a tunnel to just south of Charleston Road, and return to a trench. The tunnel was going to be approximately 34 feet in diameter, and the rail tracks were going to be approximately 60 feet below the existing elevation. This alternative required the diversion of Adobe and Matadero Creeks. The tunnel alternative with freight trains at grade was similar to the tunnel alternative for both freight and passengers trains, but the tunnel was going to be 30 feet in diameter and 70 feet below the existing elevation.

Mr. Kamhi suggested Council invite Caltrain Staff to speak at a future meeting. City Staff planned to meet with Caltrain Staff again in April 2021.

Nadia Naik, XCAP Chair, thanked XCAP members, Staff, consultants, and volunteer engineers for their extensive work on the alternatives. In May 2020, the XCAP learned of Caltrain's new Rail Corridor Policy that impacted the alternatives. Grade separations were critical to improve regional transit and local traffic. At some point, the Council's role was going to change from decision-maker to advocate for the preferred alternative. Caltrain's Corridor-Wide Grade Separation Study was delayed to early 2021 and likely delayed further. The City potentially needed to push Caltrain to provide technical and policy standards prior to completion of the study. While CHSR claimed that passing tracks were not needed, Caltrain claimed two additional passing tracks were needed for CHSR. If there were four tracks, grade separation was required by law, in which case Caltrain indicated CHSR must fund grade separation. Caltrain's Business Plan reflected a four-track segment from the area around the California Avenue station toward Mountain View. A new, more conservative approach reflected a four-track segment from the San Francisquito Creek Bridge to the Mountain View station. Caltrain's Rail Corridor Use Policy (RCUP) indicated that Caltrain must approve alternatives, and alternatives must not preclude the possibility of four tracks. The XCAP did not study four-track alternatives. Because the right-of-way at Churchill was only 72 feet wide, four tracks may not be possible at this crossing. The Palo Alto Avenue crossing was not included in the XCAP's process. Consultants identified El Palo Alto Heritage Tree, the historic San Francisquito Creek Bridge, and the Palo Alto Avenue station platform as constraints for a grade separation of Palo Alto Avenue. Caltrain decided to replace the San Francisquito Creek Bridge, and the replacement project was potentially going to dictate the design of the Palo Alto Avenue grade separation. Thus, the City needed to begin working with Caltrain and Menlo Park.

SUMMARY MINUTES

Larry Klein, XCAP Vice Chair, noted the federal infrastructure program was a likely source of funding for grade separations and urged the Council to begin advocating for the inclusion of grade separations in the program. The XCAP voted 6-3 to support Option 2 of the closure alternative for Churchill because of its lower cost, aesthetic appeal, and improved safety and voted 7-2 to suggest additional mitigations. The Council needed to consider the future of the Embarcadero Road grade separation.

Ms. Naik advised that the XCAP unanimously recommended removing the South Palo Alto tunnel alternatives from consideration due to cost, construction time, and environmental impacts. The XCAP did not reach consensus regarding a recommendation for the Meadow-Charleston alternatives. In fact, a majority of XCAP members did not agree on a recommendation. The XCAP recommended the Council update the alternative selection criteria; review the Comprehensive Plan, 2012 Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan, and 2012 Rail Corridor Study; formalize a system for feedback from key stakeholders; conduct additional community outreach; prepare a noise and vibration addendum; hire an urban designer; continue advocacy with Caltrain; adopt a strategy to ensure safety along the Palo Alto Corridor; and conduct interim technical work regarding the underpass alternative, bicycle/pedestrian crossings, geotechnical and groundwater analysis, and traffic mitigations. The XCAP supported studies of bicycle and pedestrian crossings of Seale and Alma and Loma Verde and Alma. The XCAP suggested the Council utilize Measure B funding to conduct hydraulics and geotechnical studies to narrow alternatives and determine constructability.

Tom Kellerman remarked that the XCAP's recommended mitigations for closure of the Churchill crossing did not fulfill the Council's June 2018 Motion, which required the Council to study additional options for addressing traffic in the Embarcadero Road underpass area and commit to adopting appropriate mitigations to address the impacts.

Susan Newman, speaking for Susan Mitchell, Lawrence Lau, Kate McKenzie, Jim Cornett, and Kathy Jordan, noted the XCAP process identified significant problems and unanswered questions regarding grade separations. The issues associated with the Churchill crossing needed an informed discussion of the alternatives rather than a recommendation. The traffic study was inadequate for anticipating the true impacts of closure on vehicular and bicycle traffic. The XCAP did not adequately represent the community. Closing Churchill did not fulfill the key requirements to facilitate movement across the corridor for all modes of traffic and to maintain access to neighborhood parks and schools. She urged the Council to consider all alternatives for Churchill Avenue.

SUMMARY MINUTES

Steve Carlson, speaking for Karen Hohner, Lissa Nissim, Theo Nissim, and Renee Kollias, shared the methodology and results of a second survey of Southgate residents. A majority of respondents opposed closure of Churchill and supported a partial underpass.

Inder Monga, speaking for Barbara Hazlitt, Rachel Kellerman, Sara Girton, Dexter Girton, and Reshma Singh, provided the results of a survey of neighborhoods not represented on the XCAP. A majority of respondents preferred no build with safety improvements, and 90 percent of respondents opposed closing Churchill. He urged the Council to take a holistic view and prioritize solutions for South Palo Alto.

Eduardo Llach supported the closure of Churchill and concurred with Mr. Klein's comments.

Young-Jeh Oh implored the Council to support closure of Churchill with mitigations because it was the most cost-effective alternative, required the least amount of construction and disruption, and provided the best access for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Jason Stinson supported the closure of Churchill and urged the Council to accept the XCAP recommendation.

Keri Wagner was not aware of any of her Charleston-Meadow neighbors who supported the viaduct alternative. She requested the Council study a pedestrian and bicycle crossing of Loma Verde.

Mark Lawrence commented that the Council's highest priority was to improve east-west connectivity for all modes of transportation. There was no reason to close an existing east-west connection. Ten thousand people utilized Churchill Avenue daily.

Teri Llach supported closure of Churchill Avenue as it was the least expensive, best, and easiest alternative. Conducting additional traffic studies was not logical. Traffic on Churchill Avenue was not safe.

Arnout Boelens agreed with the XCAP recommendation for Churchill Avenue if mitigation measures were utilized to prevent additional car traffic in neighborhoods. He urged the Council to study the options for Charleston-Meadow and to involve relevant stakeholders.

Stephen Rosenblum indicated acceptance of recommendations at face value was a violation of the Council's duty. He supported the viaduct alternative because it provided equity for everyone and improved east-west connectivity.

SUMMARY MINUTES

Drew noted the Caltrain Business Plan included a high-growth scenario that could drive a four-track system for passing.

Mohamed Hadidi asked the Council to accept the XCAP's recommendation for closure of Churchill with mitigations. A partial underpass and a viaduct were going to impact the residential character of the neighborhood.

David Epstein stated representation on the XCAP was important, and residents of Southgate, Professorville, and University South were not represented on the XCAP.

David Kennedy believed the XCAP was constrained by several criteria, the most significant of which was the perception that property acquisition was not to be considered. The Council needed to explore modest underpasses at crossings.

James Silver supported the lowered options at the Charleston and Meadow intersections. The underpass was particularly desirable because it minimized environmental impacts. Raised options divided the community and were unsightly.

Michael Price felt the current design of the partial underpass for Churchill Avenue was more appropriate for a freeway than an intersection. Legitimate concerns and uncertainties needed to be addressed with a complete investigation of all aspects of a partial underpass. Moving forward without exploring alternatives thoroughly was a serious mistake.

Anke Faber commented that the Churchill crossing was dangerous and supported closure as the most efficient solution.

Carlin Otto stated the viaduct and hybrid alternatives put trains above single-story homes in the Greenmeadow and Charleston Meadows neighborhoods. The two raised alternatives were going to increase noise and create a huge visual barrier across the middle of the City.

Gabriela Hakeman expressed concern regarding emergency response times if Churchill was closed.

Mary Sylvester raised concerns regarding conflicts of interest and equity. A good solution increased connectivity.

Terry Holzemer referred to issues with the analyses listed on Pages 68 and 69 of the Report. The deficiencies needed further examination, particularly geographic equity and the irreversible nature of decisions.

SUMMARY MINUTES

Neva Yarkin supported the closure of Churchill because it increased safety for bicyclists.

Council took a break at 7:49 P.M. and returned at 8:01 P.M.

Council Member Kou acknowledged public comments regarding the XCAP not representing the entirety of the community. She requested Ms. Naik respond to Mr. Holzemer's comments regarding the analyses.

Ms. Naik explained that three members of the XCAP disagreed with the majority opinion, and Pages 68 and 69 addressed the reasons the members dissented. The members believed the traffic studies at that time were not sufficient. The majority agreed in that they supported suggestions to improve future studies. The Embarcadero Bridge was a concern for all XCAP members, but the concerns were not sufficient to prevent the majority from supporting closure of Churchill. The dissenting members felt the underpass was not fully reviewed and discussed, but it was a possible compromise if the design flaws were resolved. Churchill was an east-west connection across Palo Alto, and closing the Churchill crossing meant it was never going to be reopened. Consequently, the dissenting members wanted to consider the impacts on the surrounding area.

Council Member Kou indicated the Council needed to develop other east-west connections before closing Churchill. The renderings of the underpass, especially the southern portion, did not appear to be as accurate as the hand drawings.

Mr. Klein advised that Ms. Naik and her dissenting colleagues were close to acknowledging that the underpass did not seem to be feasible. The majority felt more strongly that it was not feasible and that revising the design was not a good expenditure of public funds. More time was spent on revising the design of the Churchill underpass.

Mr. Kamhi reported the initial underpass proposal was highly conceptual. Staff and the consultants attempted to revise the design so that it functioned within the transportation network. Staff, consultants, and the XCAP's Technical Advisory Committee worked with Ms. Alexis to create a design that worked in the real environment.

Council Member Filseth asked if the XCAP believed the Charleston underpass was worth additional refinement.

Ms. Naik answered yes, primarily because it was the only alternative that did not impact four tracks.

SUMMARY MINUTES

Council Member Filseth inquired whether the XCAP might have reached a majority opinion if land acquisitions were not a factor.

Ms. Naik did not wish to speculate.

Council Member Filseth requested clarification of the dissenting opinion regarding the Churchill closure.

Ms. Naik noted the dissenting members prepared a list of items that improved the underpass if there was time for additional iterations. The minority's main concerns were that the traffic study did not seem to address the entire network. The dissenting members also focused on the Embarcadero and Palo Alto Avenue grade separations because more east-west connections and better connections to Alma relieved enough pressure that the Churchill closure was not as significant. An additional factor for the dissenting members was the fact that relieving problems for one area pushed traffic elsewhere.

Council Member Filseth asked if Caltrain electrification affected gate down times during all or some hours of the day.

Mr. Kamhi did not have that information.

Council Member Filseth assumed traffic volume was greatest at the Charleston crossing.

Ms. Naik replied yes, when compared to the crossings under discussion for grade separations.

Council Member Filseth requested the crossing with the second greatest traffic volume.

Ms. Naik did not remember. There was not a linear connection between train frequency and the length of delay. Before the pandemic, Caltrain was talking about increasing frequency to 16 trains. Under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Caltrain had the right to operate more trains even if vehicular traffic had to wait.

Council Member Filseth suggested criteria to prioritize grade separations may include traffic volume.

Ms. Naik noted the distance between Charleston and Meadow was so small that they had to be considered together. A hybrid and an underpass were the only combination where that was possible.

Mayor DuBois related that Palo Alto Avenue had the greatest traffic volume.

SUMMARY MINUTES

Council Member Stone inquired whether the XCAP began with 14 members, but only nine voted on the Charleston grade crossing.

Ms. Naik indicated that was correct.

Council Member Stone wanted to understand how closing Churchill was consistent with the Comprehensive Plan's statement to prioritize grade separations to improve east-west connections.

Ms. Naik reported the XCAP reviewed the Council criteria and policy documents. Ultimately, the vote represented the members' thoughts based on their application of factors. The criteria were separated into tiers, and the XCAP discussed changing that but did not present anything to Council. The XCAP tacitly agreed to ignore the tiers and apply the criteria. For a subset of the majority, the low cost was the primary criteria.

Mr. Klein commented that in some ways the Comprehensive Plan and the Council criteria were not consistent. There was never going to be a perfect alternative. The majority viewed the cost, aesthetics, an improved bicycle and pedestrian crossing in Option 2, and increased safety as supporting closure as the best alternative.

Council Member Stone asked if traffic signals were required at the intersections of Oregon Expressway, Kingsley, and Embarcadero with Alma under the partial underpass alternative for Churchill.

Ms. Naik explained that the consultant did not propose traffic mitigations because the partial underpass did not divert traffic as the closure did. The XCAP generally believed that many mitigations at the main intersections were needed whether or not grade separations occurred.

Council Member Cormack noted the six XCAP members who were unable to continue serving on the XCAP. Ms. Naik and Mr. Klein were models of cordial disagreement. She inquired whether the XCAP felt the reasons for grade separations were clear to the community.

Ms. Naik remarked that the community's understanding had progressed considerably since 2009. The conversation was becoming more sophisticated, but community education needed to continue.

Mr. Klein added that without grade separations, there was going to be uncurable traffic queues.

Vice Mayor Burt recalled that the initial alternatives for Churchill were proposed in 2017, and in 2018 the community opposed the hybrid

SUMMARY MINUTES

alternative because of significant property acquisitions and traffic inducement. He asked if that was an accurate characterization of the reasons for eliminating the hybrid alternative.

Ms. Naik responded yes, but a proper traffic study had not been conducted to consider changes to the design of the hybrid alternative. The City's first traffic consultant found no impacts resulted from the closure of Churchill.

Vice Mayor Burt commented that support for the closure alternative seemed to be a reaction to the hybrid alternative. He inquired whether a no-build alternative with mitigations was ever considered, whether it met the City's needs in the medium-term, and whether it allowed the Council to delay a decision regarding the Churchill crossing to the end.

Mr. Kamhi reported a no-build alternative was not presented to the public. A no-build scenario was included in environmental studies of the preferred alternative.

Council Member Tanaka inquired about the extent that funding was a constraint on the XCAP's discussions.

Ms. Naik noted that the Council directed the XCAP not to consider funding.

Council Member Tanaka asked if cost was a factor in the XCAP's deliberations.

Ms. Naik explained that the cost of the South Palo Alto tunnel and the environmental impacts and property acquisitions associated with the two South Palo Alto crossings forced the XCAP to realize those alternatives were not feasible.

Council Member Tanaka inquired about the use of federal stimulus funding for grade separations.

Mr. Shikada understood federal funding was going to be expended in the next few years. Constructing the grade separations in the next few years was not possible.

Mr. Kamhi added that once a project was defined, Staff planned to compete for federal funding.

Council Member Tanaka inquired about funding sources for the millions of dollars needed for grade separations.

SUMMARY MINUTES

Mr. Kamhi advised that the City was slated to receive Measure B funding for grade separations. Staff intended to leverage that funding for additional funding.

Council Member Tanaka inquired whether the Santa Clara County Transportation Authority (VTA) still planned to utilize Measure B funding for the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART).

Mr. Kamhi replied no.

Council Member Tanaka requested Staff's perspective regarding public comment about freeway-like exits from Churchill.

Mr. Kamhi related that the exit ramps were not conservative but designed to operate within realistic operational situations.

Ms. Litzinger clarified that the ramp design was based on local street standards.

Mayor DuBois remarked that the report was an extensive record of years of work. He inquired whether CHSR was presented as a two-track system in 2011.

Ms. Naik advised that CHSR presented a four-track system in 2008. The 2012 blended system was primarily a two-track system with passing tracks.

Mayor DuBois asked if the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was based on a two-track system with passing tracks.

Ms. Naik replied yes.

Mayor DuBois requested the date that four tracks became an issue and the rationale for AECOM not including the four-track system in its analysis.

Mr. Kamhi indicated he became aware of the four-track system when Caltrain notified the City that any design for grade separation was not to preclude the possibility of a four-track system.

Ms. Naik related that the track system was undetermined until Caltrain's Business Plan clarified that passing tracks were needed for CHSR only.

Mayor DuBois inquired whether the decision on a two-track or four-track system was years away.

Ms. Naik reiterated Caltrain's requirement for grade separation designs not to preclude the possibility of four tracks. The City was allowed to design a

SUMMARY MINUTES

two-track viaduct or hybrid, but it had to demonstrate that the design accommodated four tracks. Caltrain also told CHSR that CHSR had to pay for the design of four tracks. In order to accept CHSR funding if CHSR failed, Caltrain had to show good intent for CHSR to operate on the Corridor. There were several political issues for the Council to address.

Mayor DuBois asked if the CHSR EIR was invalid with the change to four tracks.

Ms. Naik indicated the EIR found four tracks were not needed because Caltrain had to wait. Caltrain then indicated it was not going to wait. CHSR was seeking funding from the Legislature, and the Administration was friendly to CHSR. The situation was filled with complexities.

Mr. Shikada noted the City commented on the EIR and called attention to the problem.

Council Member Kou recognized Michael Price, Michael Chacon, and Elizabeth Alexis for proposing alternatives and concepts. She inquired about a possible timeframe for Caltrain and Union Pacific to provide information that clarified design criteria.

Mr. Klein commented that the Council had to apply pressure on them and the Legislature.

Council Member Kou suggested Vice Mayor Burt was going to begin working on the issues at meetings of the Local Policy Maker Group (LPMG).

Ms. Naik indicated the upcoming Grade Corridor Study was an opportunity to ask questions. In the past, Former Mayor Klein and Vice Mayor Burt were actively engaged in discussions with the community, jurisdictions, and Caltrain regarding grade separations and CHSR. Other jurisdictions also understood the necessity for information and the small details that increased costs by millions of dollars.

Mr. Kamhi noted Caltrain provided design criteria, and the process allowed the City to seek an exemption from design criteria.

Council Member Filseth asked if a second bicycle and pedestrian tunnel was needed in all the alternatives for Churchill.

Ms. Naik clarified that a second bicycle and pedestrian tunnel was needed for mitigation.

Council Member Cormack inquired about the XCAP's proposed revisions to the Council criteria.

SUMMARY MINUTES

Ms. Naik reported provisions of the Comprehensive Plan seemed to conflict with respect to the importance of vehicles and bicycles and pedestrians. Policy makers and Staff needed to explore the nexus between grade separations and policies. Otherwise, the XCAP did not have specific suggestions.

Council Member Cormack expressed concern regarding the opposition to property acquisition resulting from the cost to the City rather than the impacts to residents. The Council needed to determine that cost was a primary driver.

Mr. Klein related that the XCAP did not rule out property acquisition but considered it a factor.

Ms. Litzinger advised that the Churchill hybrid alternative significantly impacted 14 residential properties and required 8 driveway modifications. The reverse hybrid alternative significantly impacted 43 residential properties and required 3 driveway modifications. The pedestrian undercrossing did not need to close for a significant period of time during construction under the closure and viaduct alternatives.

Ms. Naik asked if that pertained to Options 1 and 2.

Ms. Litzinger answered yes.

Council Member Stone asked if Level of Service (LOS) applied to all modes of traffic.

Mr. Black indicated motor vehicles only. Other measures applied to the quality of service for pedestrians, bicycles, and transit.

Council Member Stone asked if the existing studies provided information about motor vehicles only.

Mr. Black related that existing quantitative data applied to motor vehicles only. The traffic studies discussed qualitative analysis of impacts to bicycles and pedestrians.

Council Member Stone requested the rationale for the traffic studies ending in 2030.

Mr. Black explained that it was just a name because of the 2030 General Plan build out.

Council Member Stone requested the rationale for studying only six of the eight intersections that the XCAP recommended.

SUMMARY MINUTES

Mr. Black reported a traffic study was conducted prior to the City retaining Hexagon. That study identified impacts at eight intersections, but Hexagon disagreed with the analysis and felt six intersections were impacted. Hexagon did not believe the impacts extended to the two intersections on Middlefield.

Council Member Stone expressed concern about the redirection of traffic to other areas of Palo Alto.

Vice Mayor Burt noted the time horizon of grade separations did not align with the time horizon of the Comprehensive Plan. The Council, Staff, and the XCAP needed to address the conflicts within the Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan intentionally maintained the permeability of vehicles and increased the permeability of bicycles and pedestrians. A closure of Churchill decreased vehicle permeability and expanded bicycle and pedestrian permeability. The Rail Corridor Study provided an opportunity for new design standards that applied to all grade crossings on the Peninsula. The Council probably needed to engage Caltrain on design standards rather than exceptions. Property acquisition was not the same as eminent domain.

Council Member Tanaka inquired about Caltrain's financial status given the current economic situation.

Mr. Kamhi discussed the effects of the pandemic on transit. The latest federal stimulus package contained a significant amount of funding for transit agencies. Measure RR was a funding source for Caltrain.

Council Member Tanaka asked if decreased funding delayed the electrification project.

Mr. Kamhi believed the project was on track.

Council Member Tanaka requested the disadvantages of delaying a decision on Churchill.

Mr. Klein related that disadvantages were potentially missing opportunities for Measure B funding and federal funding for infrastructure and not having a project ready for construction when problems occurred.

Ms. Naik reiterated the possible impacts of the San Francisquito Creek Bridge replacement project. The mitigation measures proposed for the Churchill closure alternative benefited the City even if grade separations did not occur.

SUMMARY MINUTES

Mayor DuBois asked if the XCAP recommended Council proceed with some aspects that Caltrain would pay for.

Ms. Naik advised that the XCAP recommended Council proceed with geotechnical studies to help narrow the alternatives. Caltrain was not necessarily going to pay for the studies.

Mayor DuBois inquired about the extent that cost played in the XCAP's recommendation to close Churchill.

Ms. Naik believed cost was the primary factor for a majority of XCAP members.

Mr. Klein clarified that it varied by individual.

Mayor DuBois asked if it was possible for the bicycle and pedestrian tunnel to lead to Palo Alto High School.

Ms. Naik stated the path leads to the back of the football field.

Mayor DuBois was concerned about the amount of time spent discussing Churchill. The initial vote to close Churchill was held in August or September 2018. The Council criteria were functional and multifaceted. The Comprehensive Plan statement to reduce single-occupancy vehicle (SOV) traffic was misinterpreted. He wanted to understand the Churchill underpass alternative in detail. The roundabout for Charleston-Meadow was interesting.

Ms. Naik shared the XCAP's plans for detailed review of the alternatives and suggested the Council schedule a second Study Session for that review.

Mr. Klein concurred.

Council Member Filseth expressed interest in discussing Charleston-Meadow alternatives at the next Study Session.

Council Member Cormack requested Staff's comments regarding the Palo Alto Avenue crossing.

Mr. Shikada reported work on the Access Study was pending. The issue was Staff's capacity for the work.

Mr. Kamhi advised that the San Francisquito Creek Bridge was nearing the end of its useful life. Caltrain budgeted \$62,000 for assessment and outreach and selected a consultant. Caltrain requested a meeting with Staff in April to discuss the project.

SUMMARY MINUTES

Council Member Cormack wanted to incorporate the Palo Alto Avenue crossing into grade separations. She asked if the XCAP was designed to represent neighborhoods.

Mr. Shikada indicated the original Community Advisory Panel (CAP) was intended to be a coalition of those interested in the project. When the Council expanded the CAP's role, it added specific stakeholder groups but did not change the overall composition.

Ms. Naik added that nine members of the CAP transitioned to the XCAP. City Manager Shikada filled six positions on the XCAP with representatives of the business community, school community, Friends of Caltrain, the Council, and the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Council Member Cormack believed the XCAP was designed to aid the Council with decisions rather than to represent neighborhoods.

Vice Mayor Burt noted a potential multiyear closure of Charleston and East Meadow due to construction of grade separations. The Council needed to explore routes and a crossing for school children during construction and the possibility of property acquisitions for a crossing. The volunteer civil engineers reviewed the community's proposed alternatives and saved the City considerable expense. A bicycle and pedestrian bridge near Kellogg may be possible with the right design and Palo Alto Unified School District's (PAUSD) cooperation.

Council Member Kou expressed concern that only community members who followed the XCAP meetings were involved. The community needed to be fully involved with the XCAP.

Council Member Stone noted a grade separation was required for four tracks and asked if Caltrain stated that CHSR had to fund grade separations or the cost of additional tracks.

Ms. Naik did not know. The appendix to XCAP's report contained a history of grade separation funding. Along the Peninsula Corridor, grade separations were constructed as traffic mitigations. Caltrain's Rail Corridor Study had to consider the geographic and operational connections among grade separations. The San Francisquito Creek Bridge replacement project was ripe for federal funding, and the Council needed to address the crossing.

Mr. Kamhi commented that a quick return of Caltrain ridership was likely to result in more frequent trains. Greater frequency attracted more riders.

SUMMARY MINUTES

Ms. Naik added that a route into San Francisco's financial district would have the greatest impact on Caltrain ridership.

Council Member Tanaka inquired about the impacts of a tunnel along the entire Peninsula Corridor.

Ms. Naik explained that such a project was an extremely complex engineering problem, and many other potential projects provided higher returns.

Mr. Kamhi suggested funding all grade separations in the Corridor was less costly than a tunnel.

Ms. Naik added that businesses within one mile of the Caltrain right-of-way generated 12 percent of California's gross domestic product (GDP).

Council Member Tanaka inquired about plans for community surveys.

Mr. Kamhi indicated surveys depended on the approach the Council chose for grade separations.

Mayor DuBois asked if Caltrain planned to remove the San Francisquito Creek Bridge.

Ms. Naik explained that the hybrid alternative considered relocating the new bridge. She suggested Council Members visit the site to experience an earthen berm, which was similar to a hybrid alternative.

Mayor DuBois asked if the XCAP considered bike bridges rather than bike tunnels.

Ms. Naik answered no.

Mayor DuBois wanted to develop a rail plan for the Council and hold a series of meetings to narrow alternatives, identify next steps, and establish a timeline.

Tony Carrasco, XCAP Member, acknowledged the leadership of Ms. Naik and Mr. Klein and the positive experience of serving on the XCAP. He urged the Council to explore combining positive aspects of alternatives before selecting an alternative.

Gregory Brail, XCAP Member, expressed concern that delaying decisions was going to negatively affect the safety of residents.

SUMMARY MINUTES

Cari Templeton, XCAP Member, emphasized that the XCAP's recommendation for Churchill was closure with mitigations.

Keith Reckdahl, XCAP Member, felt more work on the underpasses was needed, and a comparison of the underpass alternatives with other alternatives was not fair.

Phil Burton, XCAP Member, supported the suggestion to hold periodic meetings and develop action plans.

Dave Shen, XCAP Member, remarked that the XCAP discovered many projects that needed implementing regardless of grade separations.

Mr. Shikada advised that the tentative date for the next discussion of grade separations was April 26, 2021.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 10:06 P.M.