



# CITY COUNCIL RAIL COMMITTEE TRANSCRIPT

Special Meeting  
Tuesday, May 31, 2016

Chairperson Berman called the meeting to order at 5:04 P.M. in the Community Meeting Room, 250 Hamilton Avenue, Palo Alto, California.

Present: Berman (Chair), Burt, DuBois, Scharff

Absent:

## Oral Communications

None.

## Agenda Items

1. City's Response to High Speed Rail Notice of EIS/EIR Preparation  
(Continued From May 25, 2016)

Chair Berman: The first item on the Agenda is the City's response to High Speed Rail Notice of EIS/EIR Preparation, which was continued from our meeting last Wednesday morning on May 25th. I have two members of the public—excuse me. The first item is Oral Communications. There aren't any members of the public who want to speak to Oral Communications, so we'll close that item and then move on to the City's response to High Speed Rail Notice of EIS/EIR. We have two members of the public who'd like to speak to that. The first is William Brenegar. William, you'll have 3 minutes. If you'd just come up to this microphone right here, that'd be great.

William Brenegar: Mr. Mayor, Vice Mayor, Honorable Council Members. I'm here because we have to stop this insanity. This has been nothing but a political payoff for the Schwarzenegger campaign and unfortunately Jerry Brown. We're going to have to put up with 10 years or however long it takes them to build something. It is not useful. The letter, I agree with the gentleman. You'll have to load that train 24 hours a day both ways to even make a budget. I don't know of 10,000 people that want to ride a train every day down to LA. Maybe I'm wrong. I don't think there's 10,000 people in LA who want to ride every day. The scar that this thing is going to put on our Peninsula, these electrical wires hanging, it kind of makes me think of Nazi Germany with the rail there. All I'm asking—I know you all are

# TRANSCRIPT

fighting this and doing the best you can. I just want to encourage you to do whatever we can to stop this nonsense. I'm going to be honest with you. I'm not riding down to Bakersfield in a train, and I'm not riding down to LA in a train, and I don't think most of the people here are going to ride the train. It's too long. It's silly. We would have to have parking lots at all these places. What are we going to do? Fill them up with parking decks? That'll look nice. I know everybody's fired up about that. They don't want to even put it in a trench or put it in a tunnel. They want us to see this every three minutes. It's just not right. Like I said, it's just a political boondoggle that it made some people a job and some money. They had no intent to ever complete this and do not. Thank you very much.

Chair Berman: Thank you very much. The next speaker will be Herb Borock. You'll have three minutes.

Herb Borock: Chair Berman and Committee Members. The Staff Report for this Agenda Item at the end says that the content, length and tone of the City's letter will contribute to its effectiveness. For guidance on the content, length and tone of the letter, I went to the guidelines for the California Environmental Quality Act for the Notice of Preparation and determinations of scope of EIR. Although this is directed at responsible agencies and trustee agencies, I believe the comments also apply properly to any local agency or individual organization that's responding to the Notice of Preparation. The guideline says that the response at a minimum shall identify the significant environmental issues and reasonable alternatives and mitigation measures that need to be explored in the Draft EIR. It goes on to say that a generalized list of concerns not related to the specific project shall not meet the requirements for a response. I see that there's a five-page memo at places. This is the first that I've seen it. I don't know; maybe you got to see it this second. (inaudible) opportunity before the meeting to go through all these. It's broken up into three sections that include the planning process, the alternative description and the environmental impacts. I would ask you, when you go through that letter, to see the extent to which it does comply with the guideline's definition of what a response should be and does not include the things that it says are not a proper response. To repeat, it is the significant environmental issues and reasonable alternatives and mitigation measures that need to be explored in the Draft EIR. Thank you.

Chair Berman: Thank you very much. Would Staff like to ...

Hillary Gitelman, Planning and Community Environment Director: Good evening, Council Members. Hillary Gitelman, the Planning Director. As

# TRANSCRIPT

Mr. Borock mentioned, there is an at-places memo. Actually it was distributed on Friday and put on the website on Friday. A draft letter—I wanted to thank the Committee for their comments at the last meeting. We tried to take those comments that you made at the last meeting with the ideas that were already included in that Staff Report and amplify upon them to get to this draft letter. I also wanted to thank Adina Levin for her help as we put this together just to make sure that we were on the right track with some of these things. I just don't have personally the background that some of you do and that she does in this project. I hope we gave you a draft that's a good starting place. We're here this evening to take any comments or suggestions you have to finalize this so we can get it out in the Council's packet this Thursday.

Council Member DuBois: (inaudible) quick question?

Chair Berman: You can lead us off on whatever questions or comments ...

Council Member DuBois: I just want to confirm this letter we got at places is exactly what we got last week.

Ms. Gitelman: That's right. It went out on Friday.

Council Member DuBois: Thanks.

Chair Berman: With that, I'll open it up to colleagues for any questions or comments.

Council Member DuBois: In no particular order, I just made some notes on the letter. If it doesn't come out enough, I thought we should request an analysis of the impact of the Caltrain schedule and the potential for bunching of cars depending on how the passing tracks are situated. Is that clear?

Ms. Gitelman: Yeah. I think it's in there already, but we can make sure it's more clearly stated.

Council Member DuBois: Before Point 4, where we talk about the working group, I thought that was the point where, before we say that, we should reiterate our desire for CSS as the proper approach. Not that we're necessarily condoning the working group approach. We prefer CSS, but if we're going to have a working group, then we'd like to be able to submit some recommendations for people to be on that group.

# TRANSCRIPT

Ms. Gitelman: If it would be okay, do you think I could make that point in item Number 3? That point about the working group is kind of specific to that process. I'd be happy to add that to Item Number 3.

Council Member DuBois: Yep. I actually want to ask my colleagues, but I thought before we actually got into these points, it might be worth reiterating our official position in general about High Speed Rail from the Staff Report, the two bullet points that we think that it fundamentally contradicts the measure that the voters approved, and that the Business Plan doesn't meet the requirements. On Point 7, where it starts to talk about the 42 grade separations, I had two points. One was Herb Borock's point about seeing an estimate of the cost and time to do the grade separations. Also, if we word it properly, I'd like to see comparison again of the investment in Southern California where they're doing some trenching and grade separations versus the Peninsula route. The level of detail in the EIR did not seem at all comparable to the level of detail in the Southern California leg. They're working on that now before they're working on High Speed Rail. Continuing on Point 9, we mention the Hatch Mott MacDonald study for Charleston and Meadow, but we don't mention Churchill and Alma. I think we should mention those as well. On Point 14, I wonder if there was a typo here. It says we should reconsider the decision to access San Francisco by using the Caltrain alignment rather than using the East Bay. Shouldn't that be flipped around?

Ms. Gitelman: Yeah, thank you. That's a mistake.

Council Member DuBois: On Point 24, at the last sentence there, we say including but not limited to El Palo Alto. I thought we might want to explain what that is, the City's namesake, 300-year-old redwood tree or whatever the description is. Those are my comments. Thank you.

Chair Berman: Thank you, Tom. Anybody else want—Pat.

Mayor Burt: First, just following up on Tom's comment on El Palo Alto. It's actually, I believe, listed under State Landmarks as the Number 2 Landmark in California, if I'm recalling correctly, under some list. It has greater prominence than just that we care about it. Second, at the Local Policy Maker Group, when there was a request made last week for an extension on the comment period for the scoping of the EIR/EIS, the High Speed Rail Authority representatives insisted that any extension on the EIS was solely the discretion of the FRA, and that we should go to the FRA to request that extension. While I appreciate that that's probably technically accurate, I was pretty surprised, and others were as well, that the Authority, who has

# TRANSCRIPT

been the lead agency on this going back to the prior EIR/EIS on the Peninsula Rail Program and now and all their documents list them as the lead agency on that, washed their hands of any role, even what's more responsibility in getting an extension. Nevertheless, we'll want to forward any request for an extension directly to the FRA and have a separate letter to them.

Ms. Gitelman: Thank you, Mayor Burt. I actually debated whether the letter should be addressed to both Mr. McLoughlin at High Speed Rail but also Ms. Perez at the Rail Administration. I put her as a cc, but we could change that and address the letter to both parties, if that would be your preference.

Mayor Burt: It now seems like that's probably the best case.

Ms. Gitelman: Happy to do that.

Mayor Burt: In addition to impacts of passing tracks on Caltrain operation, there's also the issue of whether an absence of level boarding will hinder the ability of a blended system to operate fully and whether that would be a negative environmental impact. Of course, are we also framing each of these in terms of our alternatives?

Ms. Gitelman: I'm sorry. We make a number of comments in the alternatives description starting at Number 8 about these issues. I think we did get that one that you brought up at the last meeting about the level boarding. It's number 10. Please tell me if that captures your thought or if we should expand that. The passing tracks are dealt with in Number 11 and 12.

Mayor Burt: When I look at "10," it says impact on High Speed Rail. Actually our concern is principally impact on Caltrain.

Vice Mayor Scharff: That's "10"?

Mayor Burt: Yeah. I didn't go through the letter to make sure that our other concerns—I had my notes, but I didn't track them against the letter. Is there a number that identifies construction impacts, both in general and then on the grade separations?

Ms. Gitelman: It will take me a moment to find where we talk about that. We can certainly do more. I like the way that Mr. Borock's comment letter framed that issue. We could even add that thought about the impacts of construction of grade separations. On the timing, if they precede High

# TRANSCRIPT

Speed Rail and on the operations of Caltrain and High Speed Rail if they follow.

Mayor Burt: If they are done after either Caltrain is launched as an electrified system or after High Speed Rail is launched as a blended (crosstalk).

Ms. Gitelman: I'd be happy to add that.

Mayor Burt: In the Local Policy Maker Group meeting, this came up as well. The High Speed Rail Authority was talking about essentially doing grade separations approximately in blocks of five. We raised the question of if you're able to do that many at a time, how many year period would it take to do a set of grade separations. I think it's probably a 2-3 year period. Those are major construction projects. Depending on whether all—is it 42 in the system?

Ms. Gitelman: Yes.

Mayor Burt: Let's not assume that all grade crossings will remain open in the long term. There may be some closures where, particularly further up the Peninsula, low-volume grade crossings exist. Nevertheless, if we're thinking in the neighborhood of 40 grade crossings times three = years, that's a lot of years to get them all in. Just on CSS, I think we may want to actually put it as its own number. We want to really go into an explanation of why having CSS, let's say, or an equivalent multi-stakeholder group. It's been demonstrated as a process that is likely to more effectively identify alternatives and reconcile competing interests and result in—if a project does come forward, it will be a better project, less likely to be exposed to legal challenge as well. This was one of the arguments that was also made by the LPMG, that this approach is penny wise, dollar foolish, because it's going to more likely result in a project that will be challenged. Maybe there still is a basis to include that last thing in this letter which is about the rushed timing. When they came forward with this schedule September, I questioned a great deal why they were proposing the schedule that they had, which was even more aggressive than this one. The answer finally emerged that they expected within a month or so to receive their expressions of interest from private investors and they thought they would have strong investment responses from the private sector, that would potentially accelerate construction of this segment. The opposite happened. Since then they've had their primary ongoing funding source, the cap and trade dollars, really two things have happened. The Legislative Analyst, the Legislature's attorney, clarified that the current cap and trade legislation

# TRANSCRIPT

does not qualify them for ongoing funding beyond 2020. That's a pretty definitive position. Last week the cap and trade auctions came in at 2 percent of anticipation, and the entire cap and trade system is now in disarray, for not only this project but for other transportation projects that were hoping on that as a funding source. Their belief that they had enough dollars to go forward on the schedule that they are still claiming in their Business Plan is now seriously undermined. Their hope and belief that they would have additional private sector dollars has been refuted by the responses from the private sector. I think we should in some concise way include in our argument that the timeline does not need to be this aggressive. These two changes that have occurred since they put this schedule out there are changes in just the last couple of months. It really undermines the premises of their schedule.

Chair Berman: Greg.

Vice Mayor Scharff: They got two percent, is what you said, of the funds that they expected?

Ms. Gitelman: I'm sorry. Mayor Burt, if you could help me just identify. Make the point after Item Number 3, which goes into this why rush and we sent you a letter on this, and we have ...

Mayor Burt: I would say "3" is—let's see. We'd have a new "4" that would be all about CSS or an equivalent multi-stakeholder process. I thought it was "4" that—I'm sorry. Yes, "3." Add onto "3," that their timeline was based upon anticipated funding on two levels that now have failed to materialize.

Ms. Gitelman: Thank you.

Mayor Burt: At least for the time being.

Vice Mayor Scharff: If you could just help me out. When we send a letter like this, it's a comment on the EIR/EIS and response to an OI.

Mayor Burt: Scoping.

Vice Mayor Scharff: And scoping. It's the scoping letter. What are their legal obligations to us to respond? Can they ignore the letter; do they have to address each comment; how does this work?

# TRANSCRIPT

Ms. Gitelman: Their obligation is to consider our comments as they prepare the draft environmental documents. They won't respond explicitly to our letter.

Vice Mayor Scharff: They don't have to respond to each individual comment, unlike on an EIR when you have to respond to the comments.

Ms. Gitelman: That's right.

Vice Mayor Scharff: They just read this and take it into consideration and that's it.

Ms. Gitelman: That's right. It gives them some idea of how we will be looking at the Draft EIR/EIS and what our comments might look like if they don't address these.

Mayor Burt: And their legal liability if they don't.

Vice Mayor Scharff: Right, if they don't. Correct. You heard a bunch of comments from different people. Could you just go through this letter of what we're changing and what we're not changing from the letter and what we're putting in, just so I understand, before we vote, what we're talking about (inaudible)?

Ms. Gitelman: Sure. Please help me, those of you who have commented, if I miss something. First and foremost, we're going to address the letter both to the High Speed Rail Authority but also to the Federal Rail Administration, the environmental specialist who's identified as the contact in the Federal Register. I think Council Member DuBois suggested that we articulate at least a couple of points from the City's official position. That's something I'd really like the whole Committee's guidance on.

Vice Mayor Scharff: I don't think I support that. That's probably the reason (inaudible). The reason is I think we're sort of beyond that at the moment. I don't think it's helpful to the process. I would not vote for that.

Ms. Gitelman: That's a question or maybe we won't do that.

Vice Mayor Scharff: The rest of you may. Let's move on. I want (inaudible).

Council Member DuBois: I was curious of the opinion. Do you mind if we just have you two weigh in and then we can make a decision on that?



# TRANSCRIPT

Mayor Burt: I had the same concern, because this letter is supposed to be focused on the scope of the EIR and the EIS. Broader policy concerns, not only arguably aren't pertinent here, but they could further just consciously or not undermine how we'll be viewed as a valid commenter, if we just fold them into opposition to the project.

Chair Berman: What you want to do is fold into this our general opposition, what was in the Staff memo essentially?

Council Member DuBois: I was asking what you guys thought about that. I wasn't set one way or the other. The second point was that the Business Plan doesn't meet the stated goals, which I guess we could word that as part of the EIR. If you guys think it's not ... It's ridership, revenue, all that stuff.

Chair Berman: I agree with the concerns. I was going to ask, when it came to me, a couple of concerns about the length of this letter as is. I don't know that we want to deviate too much.

Ms. Gitelman: Thank you. Moving on. We've talked about adding a little bit to Point Number 3 about the fact that the schedule was justified by prospective funding that has since then not materialized, either from investors or from the cap and trade program. We talked about adding a new Number 4 that would go into some more detail about the CSS or equivalent stakeholder process being shown to be a better way to identify alternatives, recognize competing interests and result in a project that's a better project and less likely to be subject to legal challenge. We talked about adding—I'll have to figure out where to do this—something about the cost and time associated with—that the EIR/EIS needs to disclose the cost and time associated with evaluating the grade separations whether they happen before and as part of High Speed Rail or whether they happen subsequent to High Speed Rail. In that case, what the effects would be on High Speed Rail and Caltrain service.

Council Member DuBois: On Number 4, which I think we skipped, I was suggesting that we wanted to—maybe it doesn't belong in here which is fine—recommend members for that working group.

Ms. Gitelman: Recommend members of the working group?

Council Member DuBois: Yep.

Mayor Burt: (inaudible)

# TRANSCRIPT

Council Member DuBois: Number 4 is talking about the working group. Is it appropriate for us to say we'd like to propose potential members?

Mayor Burt: Not here. The High Speed Rail Authority has welcomed us proposing members. I just don't understand how it's a comment on the scope of the EIR.

Council Member DuBois: Okay. It says the City wants to provide input. Maybe it's enough the way it is. It's what it already says.

Mayor Burt: An EIR scope is something different from everything that we may have concerns about or want to comment on.

Council Member DuBois: Hillary's last comment on grade seps(separations), I think that would be Point 7.

Ms. Gitelman: Yeah.

Vice Mayor Scharff: As we go on, I'm concerned that when we do the scoping of this, it's fine if it's not inappropriate. I'm a little concerned about the fact that we don't talk at all about wanting them to scope out the tunnel when they do the grade separations. Is part of that whether or not they should look at if freight trains were to run at a two percent grade rather than—is it 1 percent at the moment? I think we should get that in here somewhere.

Ms. Gitelman: I think we tried to include that in Item Number 9 at the end there, where we mention the Hatch Mott MacDonald work. You should tell me if you don't think that's sufficient. It's the top of Page 3.

Mayor Burt: That's a really good point, and one that I had somehow omitted. I think it goes more broadly even than Council Member Scharff had stated. They need to analyze the impact of freight on the corridor, variations of the current freight system and exclusion of freight and what that might mean to alternatives including trenching. For example, we looked at 1 percent grade and then two percent. Two percent conceivably could be handled with freight in the future with a waiver. With no freight, it could potentially go to three percent.

Vice Mayor Scharff: I would be in support of everything Mayor Burt said.

Ms. Gitelman: We were back on Number 7. I got the point there about the grade separation cost and level of detail. The next change to the letter would be this one we just talked about in Number 9. Amplifying that to say

# TRANSCRIPT

that they should analyze the impact of freight on the corridor and potential modifications of freight, the impacts on alternatives including the ability to do this two percent separation. Council Member DuBois asked that we also mention our desires to grade separate Churchill and Alma, even though those weren't explicitly studied by Hatch Mott and MacDonald. We can do that.

Vice Mayor Scharff: Pat also said the no freight option.

Ms. Gitelman: The no freight option.

Vice Mayor Scharff: Which means you wouldn't be running any freight on the corridor. That means you could go to 2 percent.

Ms. Gitelman: I'm just not sure that that's a feasible alternative for them to consider. We can put it in, but I don't know that they have the ability to control ...

Mayor Burt: Why would it not be a feasible alternative?

Ms. Gitelman: Because the Federal Rail Authority is one of the—the party we're going to address this to. We can add it and see what they say.

Mayor Burt: It's very possible that there would be a freight alignment that would not need freight south of Redwood City. For instance, if Dumbarton Rail was reopened and the freight service that exists today—a very strong argument can be made that it doesn't actually need to go down this far into San Jose. Whether freight would be eliminated from the whole corridor or from our segment, it is something that is being considered. The fact that the FRA is supportive of retaining freight in principal doesn't mean that that's not an alternative.

Ms. Gitelman: Happy to add that to the letter.

Mayor Burt: It's something that's been considered actually in this discussion going back to 2009.

Council Member DuBois: Just to add. You mentioned freight in "9" and then I almost think this general impact on freight is a new point, maybe between "9" and "10."

Ms. Gitelman: Yeah. Maybe we'll add a new item there. Number 10, we're going to add Caltrain. This is where we would address Council Member DuBois comment about looking at the potential impact of the passing track

# TRANSCRIPT

on—I'm sorry. This is the one about level boarding. We'll cover Caltrain as well as High Speed Rail. In the next two points is where we'll capture ...

Chair Berman: Sorry, can I interrupt? I was going to speak to this when it came to me, but I might as well interject it at this point. Pat, at the last meeting, brought up this example of if there's somebody who holds up the train because they're having trouble getting onboard, if they're using a wheelchair or whatnot, and the impact that that has on the entire timing of the system. The timing needs to match up perfectly with the passing tracks. Should we be a little more explicit or explain that situation a little more in this bullet point? I also have concerns about how long the letter is overall, so I'm not helping that. I wonder if just describing the concern—if they didn't connect the dots on this already, they might need us to be pretty explicit about it.

Ms. Gitelman: I'd be happy to expand on that point, just to make sure they understand what our concern is. Items 11 and 12 are about the passing track. That's where we capture Council Member DuBois' concern about the bunching of cars. I think what we're trying to say is we need to understand what the impacts of the various passing track options would be on service, Caltrain service and reliability. It's kind of what we're trying to get to in Number 12. Item 14, I'll correct that typo where the Caltrain and East Bay alignments were reversed. The next comment I got was about Point Number 24 where we'll expand on El Palo Alto as a resource.

Council Member DuBois: I know Marc hasn't gone yet. I had one other point that I think actually fits in somewhere around "10," "11," "12." Should we mention need to look at the cumulative impacts of both electrification and High Speed Rail and the timing and construction? I don't think we explicitly call that anywhere. You were touching on it in terms of the order of construction of grade seps, electrification and High Speed Rail. All three of those things is important.

Ms. Gitelman: Caltrain modernization, High Speed Rail and grade separations.

Council Member DuBois: The order and timing of those.

Ms. Gitelman: Happy to include that or expand that point. We did include here somewhere about cumulative impacts.

Chair Berman: A couple of my concerns have been addressed. I just had one other question, maybe two or three. The last sentence of Item Number

# TRANSCRIPT

7, I actually don't understand. I don't know if I'm just reading it wrong. At the end, we say something is long overdue, but I can't figure out what it is that is long overdue that we mention in that sentence. If we can maybe just ...

Ms. Gitelman: If the Committee doesn't think this is a useful thought, we can strike it. The idea was to say a long time ago we said we were going to study at least selected grade separations. We should have been deciding which of those selected grade separations were starting 2 years ago.

Chair Berman: I see. I'm perfectly okay with making the point.

Ms. Gitelman: Streamline it?

Chair Berman: Exactly.

Mayor Burt: I'd just break the sentence into (inaudible).

Chair Berman: I think Pat's point about—if I recall correctly, the results of the cap and trade auction came out later that day, after we had our High Speed Rail meeting with Mr. Tripousis. It totally undercuts his argument of we need to finish this in a fast timeframe so that we'll get third-party investment. There is no way third parties are going to invest in this at this stage. Until High Speed Rail gets cleaned up—I mean until cap and trade gets a little more certainty around it. Also Pat was mentioning that the Legislative Analyst's Office said the current cap and trade program only goes 'til 2020, and then it'll have to be renewed. It's also still being determined whether or not that's a 50 percent plus one majority or a two-thirds, which dramatically impacts its likelihood of success based on is it a fee or is it a tax. There's a lawsuit right now happening with that. I just don't know what world they're operating in where they think serious third-party investors would be interested in investing in this project given all the uncertainty. It really undermines their credibility, I think, with the local agencies when they continue to insist on an accelerated timeframe based on arguments that just hold no legitimacy. I'd say feel free to be very pointed when you make that point. Other than everything that was discussed, those are the main comments that I had. On a macro level, is there a concern about the letter being too long or too detailed? Are they going to—maybe we don't expect that they'll really take us seriously, because they haven't taken much local community comment seriously up 'til now. For instance, we say in Point 3, we have not received a response to this letter that we sent them on January 25th. I don't know if we should underline that or bold that or emphasize our displeasure with that fact. Is there any

# TRANSCRIPT

concern that this is too long and we're just going to lose them from the start? It's tough, because it's very complicated.

Ms. Gitelman: I don't know. I've been on the receiving ends of letters like this. On one hand, you go, "Oh, my God. They're driving me crazy." On the other hand, you're like, "At least we know what their concerns are. We can do an analysis that is responsive to these issues."

Chair Berman: It makes sense to err on the side of being comprehensive.

Ms. Gitelman: I don't think there's a downside.

Chair Berman: Anybody else have any wrap-up comments, questions? No. Do you guys feel pretty clear on ...

Ms. Gitelman: I think I have what I need. What I'll do is prepare a revised letter on the Mayor's letterhead. It'll be in the packet for the Council's consideration on the Consent Agenda next Monday.

Chair Berman: Thank you very much. That wraps up Item Number 1. I know we want a little conversation ...

Vice Mayor Scharff: Don't we have to actually vote on it?

Chair Berman: We don't have the final letter. I guess we're going to be voting on it at Council.

Vice Mayor Scharff: How does it go Consent if we don't vote on it? Not to be (inaudible).

Chair Berman: That's a good point. I'll move that we approve the revised letter to be placed on Consent on June 6th.

Vice Mayor Scharff: I'll second that.

**MOTION:** Chair Berman moved, seconded by Vice Mayor Scharff to recommend the City Council approve the revised comment letter and that it be placed on the June 6 City Council Consent Calendar.

Chair Berman: Any questions, comments? I don't need to speak to it. All in favor. That passes unanimously.

**MOTION PASSED:** 4-0

# TRANSCRIPT

## Future Meetings and Agendas

Chair Berman: Moving on to Future Meetings and Agendas. We just received an updated tentative future items sheet.

Ed Shikada, Assistant City Manager: The one change that was made, Chair and members of the Committee, is Item B, items to be scheduled. On your meeting last week, you made reference to wanting to discuss rail quiet zones, so we added that to the list, and we'll work with Staff to identify an appropriate time to bring that forward. In addition, just wanted to note for the Committee's attention that at your last meeting you discussed the Dumbarton Transportation Corridor study. We've provided an at-places related to that, that just simply provided some public documents that have been put together for correspondence to SamTrans from the City of Palo Alto expressing our interest in participating in the study. This was before it began. Also a recent PowerPoint presentation done by SamTrans staff on this study that provides a basic overview of the scope, the schedule and the approaches that they're taking to that study.

Chair Berman: Thank you very much. That was in reply to a member of the public who had asked us to look into the idea of being a study partner to this study. The study partners are listed on Slide 9 of the slide deck that's in the at-places memo. As was pointed out to me from Staff, this pretty much includes the service providers and the funder, really the only study partners. It was Richard Brand from the public who had reached out about this idea. I got back to him to get a little more clarity on what he was looking for. He sent a question to SamTrans. As of two hours before the meeting, Sam Trans hadn't replied in regards to how different local agencies might participate in a more substantive way in the study. We don't have a lot to go on right now. This is just flagging for possibly in the future, depending on if we get more information back from SamTrans on how Palo Alto might be a larger participant in the study and in the process. Once we learn that, then we can have a conversation about whether or not that makes sense. Without the first bit of information, it's hard to have the conversation.

Vice Mayor Scharff: I'm still confused on this (inaudible). The notion is that we'd have—there's a citizen working group that they're putting together? Is it a liaison?

Chair Berman: We're still finding out. I don't know if Tom ...

Vice Mayor Scharff: If so, shouldn't it be a Council Member who is the liaison to something like that?

# TRANSCRIPT

Chair Berman: We have no idea.

Council Member DuBois: My impression was it was a citizen working group, but we don't know.

Chair Berman: Tom had brought this up at the last meeting. Richard Brand emailed us about it. We're still in the information accumulation stage before we can actually make a decision policy-wise. It was a good question. Any other comments?

Mayor Burt: Not on that.

Chair Berman: But under this item, Future Meetings and Agendas?

Mayor Burt: Yes. At the last Local Policy Maker Group, there was an update on Caltrain grade crossing safety improvements. These are things not exclusively quad gates, but along lose lines. The problem was that they ranked the priority crossing based upon traffic volume and not traffic volume per lane or other design issues that make one grade crossing more problematic than another. I guess under their criteria, if a grade crossing had two lanes each direction, four lanes, and another grade crossing had one each direction. If the one with four lanes had one more car per hour, it would rank as being a higher problem grade crossing warranting safety improvements more than one that is more congested. I had raised this with them 2 or 3 years ago when they made a first pass at this. They came back with the same methodology. It's just superficially flawed in its methodology. I think that we need to formalize our objection to that methodology. I'd like to agendize that for the next meeting.

Chair Berman: Absolutely. That conversation happened at our last Rail Committee meeting. You go to too many meetings. It was a very good point. They looked like deer caught in headlights when you made the point. Clearly they hadn't give it enough thought. I totally agree that we should ...

Hillary Gitelman, Planning and Community Environment Director: If I can just interject. I talked to the representatives of SamTrans at the meeting. I think they heard the message. What they were presenting are the improvements that they are proposing at our four grade crossings. However they prioritized, our grade crossings did end up on the list. They presented it in their PowerPoint. These are kind of low-level improvements at the crossings that they're currently ...

Mayor Burt: I didn't think our four did make the list, all of them. I thought only two did.



# TRANSCRIPT

Ms. Gitelman: We can send the Committee that PowerPoint again. They're pretty minor improvements, but I think they did include something at all of our crossings.

Mayor Burt: I agree that they're pretty minor; although, the methodology, if they don't change it, would be the one they'd use going forward for major improvements. If you look at this—I don't know. They're not numbered slides. They listed our four crossings, Charleston is Number 6 and Alma is Number 9, Churchill is Number 13 and East Meadow is Number 18. They were proceeding on the top ten.

Vice Mayor Scharff: That's my recollection. I can't remember if it was top ten, but I remember it was only two of them.

Chair Berman: I think they were covering the top item on every one in terms of improvements. For the second two, they weren't going to fund the additional improvements. I think. Any other questions on Future Meetings and Agendas?

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 5:50 P.M.