



CITY COUNCIL RAIL COMMITTEE FINAL SENSE MINUTES

Special Meeting
June 13, 2018

Chairperson Wolbach called the meeting to order at 8:09 A.M. in the Council Chambers, 250 Hamilton Avenue, Palo Alto, California.

Present: Fine, Kou, Scharff, Wolbach (Chair)

Absent:

Oral Communications

Kathleen Judge lived on the corner of Emerson Avenue and Churchill Avenue. She stated that she supported the guiding principles but wanted no eminent domain to happen. She recommended removing the full and hybrid lowered grade separation options.

Nadia Naik disclosed that the money from Measure B was being proposed to be divided evenly across all the grade separations. She stated that there could be funding from the state that could potentially help fund grade separations along with Measure B funds.

Jason Matlof voiced that the Old Palo Alto community was proposing to have a trench City-wide but if that cannot happen then their proposal was to close Churchill Avenue and fix the east/west connections on Embarcadero Road. He stated that there was a miscommunication to the Council in that there would be less traffic going through Professorville if Churchill Avenue was closed.

David Shen stated that he lived on Churchill Avenue. He reiterated what a previous speaker stated in that he wished to see the regular and reverse hybrid option be eliminated from the Churchill Avenue crossing.

Tom Shannon, 256 Kellogg Avenue, urged the City Council Rail Committee (Committee) to look at Tyson's Corner in Virginia to see what not to do in terms of a viaduct.

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Barbara Hazlett announced that she lived on Emerson Street. She opposed any proposal of widening Embarcadero Road underpass because of safety concerns and the impacts it could have on increasing more traffic.

Agenda Items

1. Introduction of Eileen Goodwin of Apex Strategies (AECOM Team), to Discuss Community Engagement for Grade Separation Alternatives.

James Keene, City Manager announced that City Council (Council) was meeting on June 19, 2018, to discuss any rail grade separation options.

Rob de Geus, Deputy City Manager announced that Staff was working with Apex Strategies on the community engagement process, along with the AECOM team. He gave a brief description of Eileen Goodwin's background around community engagement.

Eileen Goodwin, Apex Strategies explained that Palo Alto (City) was the lead for any public engagement. The Joint Powers Board (JPB) owned and operated the rail lines. Some goals that the Apex Team wished to accomplish were an understanding from the community of what the problem was and how to solve it, building trust between Apex Strategies and the community, that the process be transparent, and several others. She announced that the team has come up with a draft plan that included a variety of different types of community meetings. The Community Advisory Panel (CAP) was suggested to be around 12 people and would meet up to six times before the City Council makes its final decision in December. Each member's job was to act as a conduit for information to the community that they represented. Stakeholder meetings would gather comments about the project ideas, including right-of-way issues and constraints. There were three proposed community meetings; August 23, 2018, from 6:00-8:00 P.M.; one in October of 2018 from 6:00-8:00 P.M.; one in November 2018 from 6:00-8:00 P.M. The August meeting would include items about how the Council has narrowed down the options and how each of those options works for specific grade crossings. Additional outreach tools included a project fact sheet, meeting notices, City event e-blast, press releases, community meeting sign-in sheets and comment cards, a web page, surveys, project mailings, a database of contact information, and a hotline to the project team.

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Cedric de La Beaujardiere encouraged the Committee to keep the 10 existing grade separation alternatives alive until the August community meeting so that the community can have input on those 10 alternatives. He suggested doing a broader outreach to the community in terms of mailers and surveys.

Stephen Rosenblum recommended that the ultimate solution that the City decided on must provide equity for all parts of Palo Alto. He suggested that the CAP include members from the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC).

Rob Levitsky suggested to leave Churchill Avenue open and move the bikes and pedestrian crossing underground, install an overpass or underpass at Palo Alto High School, remove one of the traffic signals, and work on signal timing on the rest of the traffic lights.

Nadia Naik noted that the community did not have a chance to review and respond to the new Apex Strategies team's process for community engagement.

Ms. Goodwin declared that she thought that having the TAC involved was a good idea and that it was possible to include them in the community engagement process.

Chair Wolbach asked Staff to clarify where the CAP and the stakeholder groups overlap and supplement each other.

Ms. Goodwin explained that without knowing who was on those groups she could not determine where the overlaps were. The stakeholder group was envisioned to include property owners, real estate agents or business groups that would not normally attend late night meetings. The stakeholder meetings were aimed to attract business groups on a one-time basis.

Chair Wolbach recommended having morning or late evening meetings for the CAP instead of the proposed 3:00 to 5:30 P.M.

Mr. Keene declared that the Committee needed to advance all thoughts and proposals towards the solutions instead of criticizing what was not happening. Also, that the decision-making processes needed to go at a pace that if people were disappointed, then they could absorb that and move forward.

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Chair Wolbach agreed with Mr. Keene.

Council Member Scharff reiterated that the CAP and stakeholder groups were advisory Committees to Staff and had no way of slowing down the timeline. He did not agree on including the TAC with the community groups and if the community groups needed technical questions answered then he suggested to bring in an outside person who could answer those questions. He wanted the CAP to start meeting in July and he did not agree with slowing down the process.

Council Member Fine stated that he agreed with Council Member Scharff that the TAC and community groups are independent of each other and to move forward on having the CAP meet in July. He suggested focusing the community meetings around specific issues such as financing or bike crossings. He reiterated that he did not want to keep restarting the process and that they needed to stick with the time schedule that had already been laid out.

Mr. Keene commented that the Committee and Council was making a tough decision and that those decisions were made with the best intentions to support what was the best solution to the problem at that time.

Chair Wolbach stated that the true question was how much of the process does the Council want to start before the Council went on summer break. He wanted Staff to make sure that the consultants were ready to start recruiting for the stakeholder and CAP groups.

MOTION: Council Member Scharff moved, seconded by Council Member Fine to recommend the City Council move forward with the community engagement plan as developed by Staff and AECOM including the creation of a Community Advisory Panel.

Council Member Fine wanted Staff to characterize a cost list and timeline if Staff or the consultants felt that they needed more time to pull everything together.

Mr. de La Beaujardiere urged the consultant to work the community engagement meetings so that everyone was heard, not just the loudest voices.

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Adina Levin advised that at one community meeting should focus on financing for the grade separations and letting the community members know what the different options were for paying for the grade separations.

Monica Tan Brown announced that she was a member of the North Old Palo Alto Community Group. She wanted the Committee to know that the reverse and traditional hybrid was not a good option for Churchill Avenue and those options were not irreversible if constructed. She agreed with Council Member Scharff that decisions needed to be made and that the process should not slow down.

Ms. Naik recommended to the consultant that the community engagement meetings needed to have a focal point and that there needed to be consensus among the community members at the end of the community meeting.

Mr. Peon voiced that the community needed more data on where the traffic bottlenecks were, how many cars used which intersections and so forth. That way the community could make an educated guess on which option they would prefer for specific grade crossing.

MOTION PASSED: 3-0 Kou not participating

The Committee took a break from 9:36 A.M. to 9:44 P.M.

2. Discussion and Potential Recommendations to Further Narrow Possible Grade Separation Alternatives.

Josh Mello, Chief Transportation Official articulated that since the May 29, 2018 City Council meeting there were ten alternative options on the table. Three out of the ten alternatives were chosen for a preliminary analysis by AECOM.

Etty Mercurio, AECOM explained the three alternatives chosen were the hybrid for Churchill Avenue where the road was lowered and the rail was elevated, the Churchill Avenue reverse hybrid which was were the road was elevated and the rail was lowered, and the third was at the Palo Alto crossing where the road was lowered below an elevated track.

Chair Wolbach wanted to know why those three options where chosen.

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Mr. Mello answered that Staff wanted to have a better idea of how many properties would have been taking for those three options.

Ms. Mercurio stated that when reviewing the three-options AECOM looked at the Caltrain criteria that were based on the design speed for the trains, Caltrans Roadway Design and American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) roadway criteria. One constraint of the Churchill Avenue traditional hybrid was the California Avenue station in that there should be no reconstruction of that platform. The other constraint was that when construction was occurring that it did not impact the Caltrain commuter trains. The traditional hybrid was proposed to be at a 1 percent grade per Caltrain's criteria and once the train track hit Churchill Avenue it was about 10-feet high in the air. Caltrain's criteria allowed for a 22-foot clearance from the top of rail to the top of the roadway structure which means that any excavation at Churchill Avenue was 15-feet down. After Churchill Avenue, the railroad would decrease at a 6 percent grade before Embarcadero Road. The traditional hybrid would impact 14 to 22 residential properties including visual impacts. For a reverse hybrid for Churchill Avenue, the rail was depressed 6-feet and the vertical clearance for rail under a roadway structure was significantly more with the roadway being elevated at 22-feet in the air. The rail would then ascend at a half percent grade to reach the California Avenue platform. For the reverse hybrid, there was a potential for 40 plus residential properties to be impacted. In terms of the Palo Alto hybrid, there were more constraints than the Churchill Avenue hybrids. Those constraints included that there was no interruption to Caltrain's commuter trains, there was a heritage tree in the El Palo Alto Park that would have been impacted, and there was a reservoir located to the west of the tracks. No residential properties were impacted with a hybrid at Palo Alto Street but there were commercial impacts. At Palo Alto Avenue the rail was elevated 7-feet in the air and that would mean there needed to be 15-feet of excavation below the rail for the roadway.

Mr. Mello advised the City Council Rail Committee (Committee) not to move forward with the two-hybrid options on Churchill Avenue but felt comfortable moving forward the Palo Alto hybrid.

James Keene, City Manager reminded the Committee that a full analysis would cost around \$200,000 to \$300,000 per option. He advised the Committee to move a recommendation forward to Council to remove two or three options from the existing 10 that were on the table.

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Council Member Scharff wanted to know about the impact for the Palo Alto hybrid option.

Mr. Mello stated that one commercial property could be impacted and that could potentially just be a driveway modification.

Council Member Scharff asked for clarification on the Palo Alto hybrid and the El Palo Alto Park.

Ms. Mercurio explained that the Palo Alto hybrid would come close to the heritage tree located at El Palo Alto Park, and the hybrid would extend into Menlo Park.

Council Member Scharff wanted clarification on where Menlo Park stood on working with Palo Alto (City) for the hybrid option at Palo Alto Avenue.

Mr. Mello reported that he did not see there being any issues unless the City propose major impacts to the City of Menlo Park.

Council Member Scharff asked if the viaduct was superior to the Palo Alto hybrid.

Ms. Mercurio questioned if Council Member Scharff meant a completely elevated viaduct.

Council Member Scharff stated that Palo Alto Avenue should not be closed. He wanted to understand which option was better for Palo Alto Avenue, the hybrid, or the viaduct.

Mr. Mello voiced that both options carried the same footprint.

Council Member Scharff agreed with the idea of removing both hybrid options for Churchill Avenue. Full closure and partial closure of Churchill Avenue were two other options that could be looked at.

Mr. Keene asked Council Member Scharff if full or partial closure included pedestrian connections.

Council Member Scharff answered yes.

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Council Member Fine inquired about the Stanford train station and if it was included in any of the Churchill Avenue options.

Mr. Mello articulated that the Stanford station would either be removed, relocated or reconstruction below or above grade with any hybrid option.

Council Member Fine declared that was significant news.

Mr. Mello noted that the station could be moved north.

Cedric de La Beaujardiere agreed with Council Member Scharff that the Palo Alto viaduct should be an independent option from the hybrid. He suggested the Committee explore if a viaduct could be constructed without having to build a temporary track. He wanted to see viaducts as an option for Churchill Avenue and would like to see financing papers done on the cost for viaducts.

Martin Bernstein agreed that viaducts should be explored more. He showed an air rights agreement between the City and a private developer to show how value capture of land could work.

Roberto Peon announced that he would like the hybrid options for Churchill Avenue to be removed but he wanted more exploration on options for Churchill Avenue that did not require eminent domain.

Barbara Hazlett announced she lived on Emerson Street. She wanted clarification on what the impacts and possible eminent domain was to Professorville if Churchill Avenue were to be closed and Embarcadero Road were widened.

Nadia Naik reported that the City could use a 2 percent grade which would allow for the road to be raised at a minimum height for the Churchill Avenue's reverse hybrid.

Roland Lebrun asked for confirmation from Ms. Mercurio that Caltrain required 22 ½-foot clearance and High Speed Rail (HSR) required 27 ½-foot clearance.

Chair Wolbach declared that Staff would respond to questions after public comments.

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Mr. Lebrun articulated that the consultants were not giving out the right information and that knowing the wrong information would result in eliminating grade separation options that did not need to be eliminated.

Yoriko Kishimoto agreed with the idea of removing the hybrid options for Churchill Avenue but she also wanted the widening of Embarcadero Road removed as well.

Jason Matlof stated agreement with Council Member Scharff to remove the hybrid options for Churchill Avenue.

Richard Purkey encouraged the elimination of the hybrid options for Churchill Avenue. He also wanted Staff to investigate bicycle and pedestrian paths at Embarcadero Road and Churchill Avenue.

Chair Wolbach noted that bicycle and pedestrian crossings were already being considered at all the crossings.

Adina Levin announced that closing Palo Alto Avenue was problematic and that she would not be supporting that option. She also noted that Menlo Park's City Council had voiced that they would like to work with Palo Alto on a hybrid option for Palo Alto Avenue. She wanted the City to remember that fencing would also be part of visual impacts and she asked the City to look at secondary streets options that would not require widening the roadways.

Rob Levitsky commented about the removal of the hybrid options for Churchill Avenue. He wanted to keep the option of keeping Churchill Avenue open.

Ms. Mercurio clarified that the analysis criteria used a 24 ½-foot vertical clearance and that was Caltrain's current criteria. Vertical roadway clearance per Caltrans was 15 ½-feet and HSR required vertical clearance of 27 ½ feet.

Council Member Scharff explained that the Town and Country back up was the real problem for Embarcadero Road and traffic through that area. He suggested taking out the language of widening the bridge at Embarcadero Road.

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MOTION: Council Member Scharff moved, seconded by Chair Wolbach to recommend the City Council:

- A. Eliminate Churchill Avenue Hybrid (CAH) idea from consideration;
- B. Eliminate Churchill Avenue Reverse Hybrid (CAR) idea from consideration;
- C. Break out Churchill Avenue closure option into full closure and partial closure;
- D. Remove the language regarding widening Embarcadero Road underpass from description of Churchill Avenue crossing closed (CAX) idea; and
- E. Add to Churchill Avenue crossing closed (CAX) idea, "study additional options for addressing traffic in the Embarcadero Road underpass area."

Mr. Keene disclosed that once there was a preferred alternative chosen then the next step was to do an Environmental Impact Review (EIR) which would expose all potential impacts to the City.

Mr. Mello interjected that the bridges on Embarcadero Road were roughly 100-years old and that they needed to be replaced in the future.

Council Member Scharff announced that the bridges on Embarcadero Road were a separate discussion from grade separations. He wanted to separate out the options of closing and partially closing Churchill Avenue.

Mr. Mello announced that the list of impacts that was in the Staff report did not limit the impacts that were looked at. He reiterated that the motion was to remove the language regarding widening the Embarcadero Road under crossing from the description of idea CAX.

Ed Shikada, Assistant City Manager asked for clarification on what a partial closure for a grade separation meant.

Council Member Scharff answered that it meant closing it at certain parts of the day.

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Chair Wolbach interjected that it meant not grade separating it.

Council Member Kou commented that she did not support taking out the language of widening Embarcadero Road. She reiterated that she did not want the Embarcadero Road traffic study to exclude the bridges or neighboring streets because the language was removed from that alternative.

Mr. Shikada clarified that an EIR traffic study would still look at all options and impacts even if the language was excluded from the CAX option. Removing the language would make it so that it was no longer part of the project description and that would impact how the scope of the project and cost estimation were defined.

Council Member Kou declared that she still had concerns about removing that language.

Council Member Fine clarified that the building that was impacted by the Palo Alto hybrid was actually an apartment building. He asked Staff if any changes to the Palo Alto hybrid effected the station at University or any future stations.

Mr. Mello announced that station platforms would not be impacted and would not intervene with any station upgrades in the future.

Council Member Fine wanted clarification if Alma was assumed to have a speed of 25 miles per hour.

Ms. Mercurio clarified that it was assumed for a speed of 35 miles per hour. She stated that Churchill Avenue and Mariposa Avenue were analyzed with the assumption of 25 miles per hour speed limit.

Council Member Fine asked if having a one-lane underpass was feasible at Churchill Avenue.

Mr. Mello restated a public speaker's suggestion that an underpass would begin before Alma, pass underneath Alma, and then come up on the Southgate side. Parking would need to be removed on Churchill Avenue to accommodate this concept but that idea had not been explored yet.

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Council Member Fine asked if a bike underpass at Churchill Avenue could result in eminent domain.

Mr. Mello answered that there has been no analysis on bicycle underpasses at that time.

Council Member Fine suggested that further analysis needed to be done on bike underpasses at Churchill Avenue. He wanted to know what other types of partial closures were there in terms of Churchill Avenue.

Mr. Mello articulated that it could be one-way, closed to cars, a part-time closure, and several other versions.

Council Member Fine advised to flush out all options for a partial closure. He inquired about how many homes could potentially be taken if there were a grade of 1.5, 1.75 or 2 percent.

Ms. Mercurio articulated that it was not a linear reduction but possibly a 20 percent reduction of eminent domain at a 2 percent grade.

Mr. Keene asked Ms. Mercurio if those numbers could be obtained before the next Council meeting.

Ms. Mercurio stated that she could do that.

Council Member Fine asked his colleagues for more input on if the language should be removed or not for widening Embarcadero Road.

Chair Wolbach reiterated that the motion was intended to exclude, as part of the grade separation planning, the widening of Embarcadero Road.

Council Member Kou suggested separating the widening of Embarcadero Road from the motion so that there could be more discussion at Council about it.

Council Member Fine asked Staff how the grade separations were chosen for the grade separation project.

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Mr. Mello answered that those grade separations were chosen because of the expected train traffic increase and safety concern increases.

Council Member Fine stated that Embarcadero Road was already grade separated and should not be discussed in terms of the grade separation project.

Mr. Mello suggested to change the language under the CAX option to mitigations will be identified through a discussion of a traffic impact analysis.

Council Member Fine voiced agreement with Mr. Mello's suggestion. He asked for clarification on if the Committee was thinking of keeping the Embarcadero Road grade separation in the planning process or removing it.

Chair Wolbach reported that the Motion captures everyone's concerns about Embarcadero Road. The Motion was stating that the intention was not to shift the traffic from Churchill Avenue to Embarcadero Road.

Mr. Lebrun emphasized that if Churchill Avenue was closed first then the Committee must consider how construction work was going to happen on Embarcadero Road in the future. He recommended that AECOM put their top experts on the problems of vertical clearance to help mitigate the cost.

Mr. Peon wanted more information about raising or lowering the platforms at California Avenue and what the design constraints were if there were no home takings at Churchill Avenue.

Ms. Naik stated that she would forward to the Committee a letter on design exemptions from HSR on the height of the catenaries. She announced that the traffic study from Mott McDonald was the driver behind the discussion on how to handle Embarcadero Road if Churchill Avenue were to be closed. She suggested moving the school district bus hub to East Palo Alto to help circulation. She agreed with Mr. Lebrun that there were other future construction impacts to other crossings if an existing crossing were shut down.

Parag Patkar asked when a discussion would happen about the south Palo Alto intersections and he wanted to know how south Palo Alto could appoint a community member on the Community Advisory Panel (CAP). South Palo

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Alto did not want any raised alternatives in their area and no eminent domain.

Ms. Levin appreciated the change in the language about Embarcadero Road in the project scope.

Chair Wolbach announced that south Palo Alto will be discussed later and to connect with City Staff if anyone was interested in nominating someone from their area to be on the CAP.

Council Member Kou asked if detailed information was included in the Packet for the City Council on eminent domain for all three options that were preliminary analyzed.

Mr. Mello concurred that a narrative was included in the Packet.

MOTION PASSED: 3-1 Kou no

Information Items

3. VTA Measure B Grade Separation Funding Plan - Recommend Council Approval.

James Keene, City Manager announced that Mr. Shikada would update the City Council Rail Committee (Committee) on information that had been discussed at the City Manager level.

Ed Shikada, Assistant City Manager reported that Council Member Scharff and Council Member Fine were on the Local Policy Maker Group. He noted that there was no alignment in how the funding allocation would proceed so there were more ongoing detailed discussions about the funding allocation. He suggested that the City Council Rail Committee (Committee) ask Council to identify a representative from the Council to participate among other elected official from surrounding Cities.

Council Member Scharff asked for clarification on how funding was allocated because a previous speaker had mentioned that funding was allocated evenly among the grade separations.

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Mr. Shikada disclosed that Sunnyvale was not in alignment with Mountain View and Palo Alto and that Measure B funds could be taken away from the City because of that.

Mr. Keene suggested that at the elected level someone had to be appointed and speak up for Palo Alto to work that issue out.

Council Member Kou added that Staff convey the message to Council Member McAlister her appreciation on securing Palo Alto 50 percent of VTA funds for grade separations.

Chair Wolbach asked Staff what they wanted the Committee to do for this item.

Mr. Shikada clarified that it would be helpful if the Committee recommended to the Mayor to appoint a Council Member to participate in the discussions.

Chair Wolbach inquired if the Mayor could do that.

Mr. Keene answered that the Mayor was able to make that appointment. He explained that Council Member McAlister was the rep from Mountain View and he was the VTA rep for the North County Consortium Subcommittee.

Chair Wolbach noted that north county included Palo Alto, Mountain View, Los Altos, and Los Altos Hills.

Nadia Naik advised the Committee that there needs to be lobbying for funding. She recommended bringing this topic to the next City Council meeting. She voiced that it was important to understand why Sunnyvale was objecting and holding up VTA's decision making process.

Mr. Keene stated that the Mayor could handle appointing someone and that it would not be added to the next City Council's meeting Packet.

Chair Wolbach recommended that the intergovernmental update topic that was supposed to be reoccurring at each Rail Committee meeting be returned onto future agendas.

4. Caltrain Business Plan - Discussion/Potentially Recommend Council Position.

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Ed Shikada, Assistant City Manager announced that there was no further report.

Council Member Kou asked how the Local Policy Maker Group was established and what they do.

Mr. Shikada explained that Caltrain had asked for a single representative from each City along the Caltrain corridor. They alternated their monthly meetings between High Speed Rail (HSR) and Caltrain Modernization (CalMod) but soon will be moving to a regular monthly meeting that would focus on the business plan.

Adina Levin reported that the Caltrain Business Plan was fully funded and there was expected to be a community process to be starting up that was focused on post electrification service. She recommended that Palo Alto pay close attention to Caltrain's Transit Oriented Development (TOD) policy and TOD tool kit.

Roland Lebrun stated that at some point Caltrans would have to start doing counter capacity planning. He suggested that the City focus on baby bullets, baby bullet stations, and have double length platforms in the stations. He noted that if the City decided to move the Stanford station north then there could be an opportunity to combined two stations into one.

Next Steps and Future Agendas

Ed Shikada, Assistant City Manager commented that Staff would bring something back to the City Council Rail Committee when they knew the schedule in the upcoming week.

ADJOURNMENT: Meeting adjourned at 11:35 A.M.