



CITY COUNCIL RAIL COMMITTEE FINAL MINUTES

Special Meeting
August 15, 2018

Council Member Fine called the meeting to order at 8:22 A.M. in the Council Chambers, 250 Hamilton Avenue, Palo Alto, California.

Present: Fine, Kou, Scharff, Wolbach arrived at 8:30 A.M.

Absent:

Oral Communications

Neva Yarkin announced that she lives on Churchill Avenue and she wanted to say thank you to City Council for taking eminent domain off the table for the Churchill crossing.

Nadia Naik reported that Caltrain's standards were being changed and will be completed by December 2018. She suggested to Staff that they include pictures of grade crossings options in the Packet from now on.

Agenda Items

1. Connecting Palo Alto Rail Program: Continued Discussion and Screening of Railroad Grade Separation Ideas Related to Meadow Drive and Charleston Road, Including the Further Study of Idea MCL and the Potential Merger and Further Study of Ideas MCR and MCT.

Joshua Mello, Chief Transportation Official stated that Staff had suggested removing the hybrid options for Churchill, at a previous meeting, from the alternative's list. The Committee agreed and moved that recommendation up to City Council (Council) who acted to remove the hybrid options for Churchill. Council then directed Staff to look at hybrid and reverse hybrid alternatives for Charleston and Meadow.

Etty Mercurio, Senior Project Manager recapped that a hybrid was where the road was lowered and the rail was elevated over the road. A reserve hybrid was where the rail was depressed under the road and the road was elevated.

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She explained that at Charleston and Meadow there were no large constraints for the grade crossing but minimization of property impacts was a key focus for the analyzation. Charleston and Meadow could be lowered 6 to 7-feet which would put the railroad at 14-feet above grade for the hybrid alternative. The length of proposed railroad construction under the hybrid alternative would be 5,050-feet for 1 percent grade or 4,750-feet for 2 percent grade. The shoofly tracks would be roughly 6,400-feet for 1 percent in length and 6,000-feet for 2 percent. The shoofly would be located on the east side into Alma roughly 5-feet between intersections and 15-feet at intersections where there are additional turn lanes. There was a universal crossover, where trains switch from one track to another track, that was located south of Charleston that would need to be relocated but there was a tangent section further to the south suitable for that relocation. Besides two minor driveway reconstruction, there were no other property impacts with the hybrid option.

Mr. Mello noted that the difference between Churchill and Meadow/Charleston was that the neighborhood surrounding Churchill, the homes are older and all face Churchill. On Meadow and Charleston, the homes were newer and faced more inward thus there was little to no impact to driveways on Meadow.

Ms. Mercurio continued that at Charleston the idea was to have as little to no impact to neighboring properties. She stated that the maximum depression for Charleston for the hybrid was 5 percent coming off Park and Alma was at 1 ½ percent.

Mr. Mello interjected that the impacts to properties decreased as the ramps increased and decreased to and from grade level.

Ms. Mercurio explained that for the shoofly trees would need to be removed that were located around Alma, utilities would need to be relocated, and there would be visual impacts as well to neighboring homes. In terms of the reverse hybrid, the roadway would be raised to a max of 2-feet to ensure minimal impacts to surrounding properties for Meadow. The railroad tracks would be submerged 31-feet below Charleston and Meadow. This depth was due to the vertical clearance of 24-feet of trains going under the roadway per Caltrain requirements. She went on to stated that 1 percent was not feasible in the reverse hybrid because of the distance to San Antonio Avenue. At two percent it required 6,800-feet of railroad reconstruction. Adobe Creek and Burro Creek would also need further analyses on how

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those creeks would affect the reverse hybrid alternatives. The roadways would be raised to a maximum of 4 percent grade in the reverse hybrid alternatives for both Charleston and Meadow. The only impacts would be two driveways that would need to be reconstruction. The roadway would be raised to a max of 4-feet at Alma above the railroad tracks for the reverse hybrid at Charleston.

Mr. Mello articulated that Staff recommended continuing analyzation for the hybrid and reverse hybrid for Charleston and Meadow. He voiced that Staff's biggest concern was the shoofly encroaching into Alma Street and further traffic analyses were needed. Staff's other recommendation was to combine the Meadow/Charleston trench idea with the Meadow/Charleston reverse hybrid; thus, narrowing the alternatives down to seven alternatives.

Ed Shikada, Assistant City Manager asked Mr. Mello if graphics were to be involved when the in-depth process for each alternative was performed.

Mr. Mello responded that was correct.

Chair Wolbach added that there will be a second round for public comment after the Committee's deliberations if the public had any further questions or thoughts on the item.

Council Member Kou asked what the noise levels would have been for the hybrid option, especially with freight going along the railroad.

Mr. Mello disclosed that that information would be included when further analysis was to be done on the six preferred alternatives.

Council Member Kou advised that both Caltrain and freight would need to be included in the noise analysis.

Council Member Scharff disclosed that he saw no eminent domain occurring at Charleston in terms of the hybrids.

Mr. Mello responded that was correct aside from a retaining wall construction that would be adjacent to certain homes.

Council Member Scharff wanted clarification on the home impacts for Meadow.

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Mr. Mello explained that there were two driveway impacts for Meadow and that meant the driveway would need to be raised or lowered slightly to meet the new profile of the road.

Council Member Scharff articulated that there are three proposals that Staff was recommending further analysis on.

Mr. Mello voiced that the reverse hybrid was essentially a trench. So, he proposed to merge the trench idea and reverse hybrid together into one idea thus moving forward two ideas; the hybrid and the reverse hybrid/trench alternative.

Council Member Fine wanted diagrams and images for the shoofly track. He wanted to know what the 1 or 2 percent grade for the hybrid would look like from Alma, Park, and from somebody's backyard.

Ms. Mercurio reiterated that those images would be provided in the further analysis of the preferred six options.

Council Member Fine asked if all modes of transportation flow were maintained from Alma onto Charleston and Meadow in the hybrid and reverse hybrid options.

Ms. Mercurio answered yes, the existing roadway configuration was to stay the same.

Council Member Fine requested more information on how traffic movement would be if there were no longer any traffic signals.

Mr. Mello stated the intersections would have traffic signals and more detail would come to the Committee when further analysis was done.

Council Member Fine inquired about pedestrian movement along Alma.

Mr. Mello reiterated that the intersections would stay the same and there would be sidewalks for pedestrians to use to cross the street.

Ms. Mercurio reported that all the grade levels would meet ADA requirements in terms of their increase and decrease to and from grade level.

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Council Member Fine specified he was talking about the north/south pedestrian movement, not east/west.

Mr. Mello responded that Alma would be constructed to meet ADA requirements.

Council Member Fine asked if a 15 1/2-foot clearance was enough for trucks who would be going under if the railroad was elevated.

Ms. Mercurio confirmed that the height was standard and allowed trucks to pass under easily.

Council Member Fine requested a further review for truck clearances on the hybrid options.

Chair Wolbach commented that in the Apex Strategies (AECOM) report, 2 percent could not be achieved but the 1.7 percent could be achieved. He noted that the report never talked about the 1.7 percent and always referred to 1 or 2 percent grade increases and decreases.

Ms. Mercurio explained that in the analysis 2 percent was not achievable and the closest they could get to 2 percent was 1.7 percent.

Chair Wolbach declared that the report needed to be clear and that it needed to be fixed to say 1.7 percent if that was the maximum limit that could be reached for the Meadow Drive and Charleston Road railroad over roadway hybrid and build Loma Verde Avenue bike/pedestrian crossing to connect to Margarita Avenue bicycle boulevard (MCL) option.

Council Member Kou wanted more information about the two driveways that would be impacted, emphasis on the driveway that was located on East Meadow.

Mr. Mello voiced that the driveway would need to be regraded to match the roadway's new elevations. In terms of a safety perspective, there would be no change to the existing conditions.

Council Member Kou rephrased that the road, sidewalk, and bicycle paths would not be narrowed.

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Mr. Mello confirmed that was correct.

Parag Patkar declared that he was happy to hear that there would be no eminent domain for these two crossings. He preferred the reverse hybrid option instead of the hybrid option. He voiced that the Committee should still include a partial tunnel option for Charleston and Meadow.

Penny Ellson stated that she found it difficult to follow the Staff report because there were no illustrations included. Colored options were preferred instead of black and white. She wanted more information about how Park Boulevard would connect to East Meadow and Charleston in terms of bike travel. She asked for more information on how privacy intrusion would be mitigated if the railroad was elevated behind residential homes. She wanted more information about the proposed ADA grades in terms of school children walking or biking to school.

Becky Epstein voiced that her preferred option was to have a trench. She also wanted more information on what will happen to Park Boulevard in terms of all modes of transportation.

Lisa Marcacci reported that she lived on Park between Meadow and Charleston. She articulated that she and other neighbors located on Park preferred the reverse hybrid option. She voiced her support for more pictures and would like more information on how pedestrian and bike movements would be along Meadow.

Khurshio Gandhi commented that she appreciated that no properties were to be impacted by the proposed options. Her preferred option was the reverse hybrid and the deeper the train was underground, the better it will be for all modes of transportation using that crossing.

Nadia Naik emphasized that the tunnels in San Francisco have a clearance of 18-feet instead of the 24-foot standard for Caltrain. She requested that Palo Alto (City) be involved in Caltrain's process as they review and possibly change the standards.

Adina Levin announced that she was with Friends of Caltrain and that she was happy to see that the two options on the table have minimal impacts to properties. She asked that the fencing that needs to be in place to protect the wires for electrification be shown in the future illustrations and additional information be included; specifically, height and aesthetics of those fences.

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William Robinson voiced his support for the reverse hybrid option.

Amie Neff articulated that she did not understand what was meant by visual impacts in terms of the hybrid and she wanted more clarification on that. She asked for more information on the berm that would need to be constructed for the hybrid and how that impacts residential homes. She also wanted more information about pedestrian and bike flow on Margarita Street and how the homes at the end of Margarita Street will be impacted by those changes.

Council Member Fine wanted to know from Staff what Park Boulevard would look like in terms of pedestrians and bikes crossing.

Mr. Mello explained that there was a project separate from the rail project that would be installing a median on Charleston to prohibit left turns in and out of Park Boulevard.

Council Member Fine stated he would like further information on how pedestrian and bike traffic would be at Park Boulevard. He announced that the City tries to work with property owners on an easement to change their property before the City resorts to eminent domain. He asked Staff if a trench was quieter in terms of noise versus the other alternatives.

Mr. Mello reported that he could not say at the time but further analysis would be performed on that topic.

Council Member Fine voiced his support for the reverse hybrid options and keeping pedestrians and bikes above the train. He supported Staff's recommendation to merge the trench and the reverse hybrid together. He requested of Staff some information on how much the reverse hybrid would cost.

Mr. Mello answered that he did not have any estimations.

MOTION: Council Member Fine moved, seconded by Council Member Scharff to recommend the City Council have the Rail Committee receive information and a presentation regarding three grade separation ideas, specifically at Meadow Avenue and Charleston Road (MCL, MCR and MCT), as part of the Connecting Palo Alto Rail Program. The Committee may recommend further refinements to the 8 remaining railroad grade separation

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ideas, including the potential merger of Meadow/Charleston reverse hybrid and trench or tunnel ideas (MCR and MTC).

Council Member Fine commented he'd like to see more graphics, information on truck routes and cost estimations.

Council Member Scharff agreed with Council Member Fine that graphics were essential and he would like more information on costs as well.

Council Member Kou requested that story poles be installed so that residents could understand the full magnitude of how high and wide the road or train would be in the air. She stated she wanted cars and train noise to be analyzed in the noise analysis.

Mr. Mello clarified that minimal property impacts referred to physical changes to a property; not noise or visual impacts.

Council Member Kou wanted to know more about the trees and how they would be affected.

Mr. Mello explained that all the trees between Alma and the railroad corridor would have to be removed because of the shoofly track. More analysis was to be given around the shoofly and what impacts it would have on the surrounding area.

Chair Wolbach agreed that pictures need to be done as soon as possible. He stated it was important to find viable alternatives that are achievable but do not take people's homes. He suggested to combine the reverse hybrid and the trench together but make the South Palo Alto Tunnel a stand-alone alternative.

Mr. Mello voiced that the South Palo Alto tunnel could be merged into the reverse hybrid/ trench option if it was looked at as a trench with a cap on it. He noted that there were a lot of constraints that come with a full, below grade tunnel. Staff planned to have a discussion in the future with the Committee and Council on the City-wide tunnel and what that would entail.

Chair Wolbach reported that a covered trench, not a tunnel, was different than what was presented in the Staff presentation. He voiced that what he was hearing from Staff was that the tunnel option for Meadow Drive and

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Charleston Road roadway over railroad trench or tunnel (MCT) would not be a feasible alternative.

Mr. Mello answered that there were two ways to think about the construction of a tunnel. One option was to do a cut and cover which would essentially be a trench and then have a built cover over it. The other way to construct a tunnel would be a deep bore tunnel. He explained that because of the constraints, the deep bore tunnel required more analysis and evaluation. The cut and cover tunnel would have the same layout as a trench and he voiced that he did not see that alternative having a large variation from the shallow trench alternative.

Chair Wolbach stated that Staff and the Committee needed to be clear on the terminology they were using so as not to confuse people. He wanted to know from Staff if there was a difference between the cut and cover tunnel and the covered trench.

Mr. Mello articulated that traditionally the cut and cover tunnel would restore the grade above the tunnel.

Chair Wolbach commented that the deep bore tunnel was not feasible for South Palo Alto because of the constraints with Oregon Express Way and San Antonio.

Mr. Mello disclosed that Staff had not looked at that alternative yet.

Mr. Shikada advised that the conversation was a little too in depth for Staff at that time and Staff would come back with more information.

Mr. Mello reiterated that Staff was recommending to look at trenching and tunneling together under Charleston and Meadow.

Chair Wolbach wanted to know if Staff would be able to show cost impacts, home impacts, and visual impacts for each of the sub-options in the new combined alternative.

Mr. Mello answered that once Staff can analyze the options better, they can determine which options are not and are not feasible and report back to the Committee on the results.

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Chair Wolbach inquired about what next steps would be.

Mr. Mello articulated that next steps would be to continue with preliminary analysis for the hybrid at Palo Alto Avenue and come back to the Committee with those results. If a hybrid were feasible then Staff may recommend removing the option of closing Palo Alto Avenue thus bringing the options down to six preferred alternatives.

Chair Wolbach stated he was comfortable supporting the motion that was on the table.

Council Member Fine interjected that Staff should look at the possibility of covering portions of the trench in South Palo Alto to improve bike and pedestrian flow.

Council Member Scharff announced that Staff needed to provide a list of the remaining seven options to the Committee at the next meeting. He also agreed with Staff that taking the alternative of closing Palo Alto Avenue off the table was a good idea. He wanted to know if Staff had analyzed a Meadow and Charleston viaduct option.

Mr. Mello answered that a viaduct was still on the list.

Council Member Scharff stated that the community has voiced the removal of the Charleston and Meadow viaduct from the preferred alternatives.

MOTION PASSED: 4-0

The Committee took a break from 9:43 A.M. to 9:54 A.M.

2. Community Outreach Update

Robert de Geus, Deputy City Manager announced that there was a Council meeting that took place on June 19, 2018, to approve the new community outreach plan. The plan included a new Community Advisory Panel (CAP), additional community meetings, a stakeholder meeting plan, a new website, surveys, and continuing the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The CAP was advisory to Staff and to Apex Strategies (AECOM). Twelve members were selected from the 44 applications that were submitted and the first meeting was set for August 15, 2018, at City Hall in the Community Room.

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The next community meeting was scheduled for August 23, 2018, from 6:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M. at the Mitchell Park Community Center in the El Palo Alto Room. Staff would be discussing the August 23rd community meeting with the CAP at their first meeting to hear their feedback on the agenda. Caltrain would have representatives at the community meeting, Menlo Park and Mountain View so the public could ask them questions. AECOM was working on a new website that the public would be able to access to review all the materials and timeline for all the grade crossings.

James Keene, City Manager added that the community meetings were not designed to capture every perspective that was in the City. There were other ways that the community could be heard; either through email or speaking at Committee or Council meetings.

Mr. de Geus interjected that Staff was making every attempt to be available to the public.

Mr. Keene added that the community meetings were formatted to follow a process that was dictated by previous community meetings. One role for the CAP was to relay all information that was learned from their meetings back to their neighborhoods and surrounding community members.

Nadia Naik asked if the other stakeholder groups would be a public process and how those meetings were to work. She suggested the City help provide meeting space for members of the CAP and their neighborhoods.

Chair Wolbach wanted to know if the CAP meetings were open to the public.

Mr. de Geus confirmed they were open to the public.

Chair Wolbach requested from Staff more information on the stakeholder group.

Mr. de Geus announced that Staff would report back to the Committee about the stakeholder group.

Chair Wolbach suggested that the PTA and Safe Routes to School would be popular groups to have at a stakeholder meeting. He recommended that at the next community meeting that the smaller break out groups report out to the larger group when they are done discussing a topic. Those report outs

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would then be summarized and provided to the Committee, the Council, and the other various groups for review. He stated his appreciation that the timeline had been pushed out to the beginning of 2019.

Council Member Kou wanted confirmation that the CAP meetings were scheduled for August 15, 2018, September 17, 2018, and October 10, 2018.

Mr. de Geus confirmed that those were the correct dates.

Council Member Kou suggested having a question and answer time during the community meeting that was to take place on August 23, 2018.

Council Member Fine asked for an update on Memorandum of Understanding MOU with Caltrain and their electrification poles. Also, information on the agreements with the Santa Clara County Valley Transportation Authority (VTA), Mountain View, and Sunnyvale on how Measure B funds were planned to be distributed.

Chair Wolbach announced that the Committee was moving Council Member Fine's question to Interagency Communications.

NO ACTION TAKEN

Interagency Communications

Ed Shikada, Assistant City Manager announced in terms of the electrification agreement there was still dialog happening between the attorneys of the organizations and Staff would come back with a full answer at a later meeting. Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) funding was still under discussion as well.

Council Member Fine announced that Sunnyvale and Mountain View were pushing for an equal allocation of the Measure B funds. At a past Local Policy Maker Group (LPMG) meeting, High Speed Rail (HSR) announced that they were willing to back local agencies for bike and pedestrian projects as they relate to grade separations.

Chair Wolbach added that the state lobbyists needed to be updated and included in the rail conversations.

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James Keene, City Manager articulated that he had reached out to Townsend to see if he was available to attend the City Council meeting that was scheduled for September 10, 2018.

Adina Levin disclosed that Proposition 6 was on the ballot that would take away \$5.4 billion per year for transportation funding. She noted that the community needed to rally against Proposition 6 and protect the money for longer trains now and potential grade separations. She stated that the state's Rail Plan called out the Caltrain corridor, including grade separating the corridor, as something that was of state interest.

Council Member Kou wanted clarity on where Union Pacific, the state, and other railroads come into play in terms of grade separations. She advised Staff to reach out to the district representatives for that information.

Next Steps and Future Agendas

None.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 10:19 A.M.