



CITY OF  
**PALO  
ALTO**

## **CITY COUNCIL RAIL COMMITTEE**

Tuesday, August 9, 2022

Regular Meeting

Community Meeting Room

1:00 PM

Pursuant to [AB 361](#) Palo Alto City Council and Committee meetings will be held as “hybrid” meetings with the option to attend by teleconference/video conference or in person. To maximize public safety while still maintaining transparency and public access, members of the public can choose to participate from home or attend in person. Information on how the public may observe and participate in the meeting is located at the end of the agenda.

### **HOW TO PARTICIPATE**

#### **VIRTUAL PARTICIPATION**

**[CLICK HERE TO JOIN](https://cityofpaloalto.zoom.us/j/99227307235)** (<https://cityofpaloalto.zoom.us/j/99227307235>)

**Meeting ID: 992 2730 7235 Phone:1(669)900-6833**

The meeting will be broadcast on Cable TV Channel 26, live on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/c/cityofpaloalto>, and streamed to Midpen Media Center at <https://midpenmedia.org>.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Public Comments will be accepted both in person and via Zoom meeting. All requests to speak will be taken until 5 minutes after the staff’s presentation. Written public comments can be submitted in advance to [city.council@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:city.council@cityofpaloalto.org) and will be provided to the Committee and available for inspection on the City’s website. Please clearly indicate which agenda item you are referencing in your email subject line.

### **CALL TO ORDER**

#### **ORAL COMMUNICATIONS**

*Members of the public may speak to any item NOT on the agenda.*

### **ACTION ITEMS**

1. **Presentation** Discuss Consideration and Prioritization of Bicycle and Pedestrian Crossings as it relates to Grade Separations Across the Caltrain Rail Corridor and Make Recommendations to the City Council Regarding any Proposed Changes.

## VERBAL UPDATE ON INTERAGENCY ACTIVITIES

- a. Caltrain
- b. VTA
- c. City Staff

## NEXT STEPS AND FUTURE AGENDAS

## CORRESPONDENCE (INFORMATION ONLY)

- June 23, 2022 Letter from Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority Re: Request for 2016 Measure B Caltrain Grade Separation Funding for Advance Planning of Grade Separation Projects
- June 14, 2022 Letter from Palo Alto to Cal Train RE: Four-tracking Refinement Requests (late add)
- June 14, 2022 Letter from Palo Alto to Cal Train Re: Request to Review and Respond to Key Technical Issues/Questions (late add)

## ADJOURNMENT

### PUBLIC COMMENT INSTRUCTIONS

Members of the Public may provide public comments to hybrid meetings via email, in person, teleconference, or by phone.

1. **Written public comments** may be submitted by email to [city.council@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:city.council@cityofpaloalto.org).
2. **In person public comments** please complete a speaker request card located on the table at the entrance to the Council Chambers, and deliver it to the City Clerk prior to discussion of the item.
3. **Spoken public comments using a computer or smart phone** will be accepted through the teleconference meeting. To address the Council, click on the link below to access a Zoom-based meeting. Please read the following instructions carefully.
  - You may download the Zoom client or connect to the meeting in- browser. If using your browser, make sure you are using a current, up-to-date browser: Chrome 30+, Firefox 27+, Microsoft Edge 12+, Safari 7+. Certain functionality may be disabled in older browsers including Internet Explorer. Or download the Zoom application onto your phone from the Apple App Store or Google Play Store and enter the Meeting ID below
  - You may be asked to enter an email address and name. We request that you identify yourself by name as this will be visible online and will be used to notify you that it is your turn to speak.

- When you wish to speak on an Agenda Item, click on “raise hand.” The Clerk will activate and unmute speakers in turn. Speakers will be notified shortly before they are called to speak.
  - When called, please limit your remarks to the time limit allotted.
  - A timer will be shown on the computer to help keep track of your comments.
4. **Spoken public comments using a phone** use the telephone number listed below. When you wish to speak on an agenda item hit \*9 on your phone so we know that you wish to speak. You will be asked to provide your first and last name before addressing the Council. You will be advised how long you have to speak. When called please limit your remarks to the agenda item and time limit allotted.

[Click to Join](#)   **Zoom Meeting ID: 992-2730-7235   Phone: 1(669)900-6833**

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITY ACT (ADA)

Persons with disabilities who require auxiliary aids or services in using City facilities, services or programs or who would like information on the City’s compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, may contact (650) 329-2550 (Voice) 48 hours or more in advance.



# City of Palo Alto

## City Council Rail Committee Staff Report

(ID # 14576)

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Meeting Date: 8/9/2022

Report Type: Action Items

**Title: Discuss Consideration and Prioritization of Bicycle and Pedestrian Crossings as it relates to Grade Separations Across the Caltrain Rail Corridor and Make Recommendations to the City Council Regarding any Proposed Changes.**

**From: City Manager**

**Lead Department: Transportation Department**

### **Recommendation**

Review and discuss the current and future plans for determining the location and other aspects of several new potential bicycle and pedestrian crossings across Caltrain and make recommendations to the City Council regarding any proposed changes.

### **Executive Summary**

The Rail Grade separation project currently includes the grade separations at the existing at-grade crossings across the Caltrain corridor. However, the need for bicycle and pedestrian crossings at locations other than the four existing at-grade crossings across the Caltrain corridor has been recognized in multiple City planning efforts. The City's Comprehensive Plan, Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan, North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan, 2013 Rail Corridor Plan, etc. have identified various opportunities for these across-barrier connections. This agenda item brings forth a discussion of bicycle and pedestrian crossings across the rail corridor.

### **Background and Discussion**

The Caltrain Rail corridor runs north-south through the City of Palo Alto resulting in the need for east-west crossings for all modes of traffic. There are three existing grade separated vehicular crossings across this corridor at University Avenue, Embarcadero Road, and Oregon Expressway. The City is planning for the grade separations at four existing (Churchill Avenue, Meadow Drive, Charleston Road, and Palo Alto Avenue) at-grade crossings across this corridor. However, various other locations across this corridor have been identified with opportunities to provide for bicycle and pedestrian crossings.

The [City's 2012 Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan \(BTP\)](#) and the [City's Comprehensive Plan](#) recognize the need to provide for the following crossings across the Caltrain barrier in addition

to the existing at-grade crossings. The brief description and various actions that were taken on these crossings are described below:

1. Seale Avenue/Peers Park Connection:

The 2012 BPTP proposed a new Caltrain barrier connection concept at Peers Park between the Churchill Road surface crossing and California Avenue undercrossing. This connection would link the Serra Street/Park Boulevard and Stanford Avenue east-west bikeways (along with the north-south Castilleja-Park-Wilkie Bicycle Boulevard) across Caltrain to Seale Avenue, a low-volume residential street that has been identified in the BPTP as a future bicycle boulevard.

2. El Camino Park Caltrain/Alma Barrier Connection at Everett Avenue

This undercrossing was proposed as part of the 2003 Bicycle Transportation Plan and potential (partial) funding for its construction was identified as part of the Stanford Medical Center expansion project. Further analysis through the 2012 BPTP revealed significant utility conflicts and higher priority improvements to an adjacent facility (University Avenue undercrossing). Therefore, it was recommended to be considered as a potential long-term project.

3. Matadero Creek Caltrain undercrossing:

The 2012 BPTP also recognized the need for Across Barrier Connections at Matadero Creek. This crossing was proposed to connect Midtown to the future Matadero Creek Trail. In 2016 a feasibility study was conducted to evaluate the Midtown connection along the Matadero Creek ([Midtown Connection Feasibility Study](#)). The study provided three conceptual alignments for crossing at 1) Matadero Creek, 2) El Carmelo Avenue, and 3) Loma Verde Avenue.

In addition to the feasibility study mentioned above, the North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan (NVCAP) was identified as a significant opportunity to plan for a walkable, mixed-use neighborhood. The NVCAP intended to include a comprehensive community outreach program to provide opportunities for meaningful input throughout the planning process.

In 2019, the City Council directed staff that the bicycle and pedestrian crossing in the vicinity of Loma Verde Avenue across the Caltrain corridor be included in a future study separate from the Grade Separation Project for access and feasibility (Staff Report [9993](#))

In addition to the above-referenced crossings, the [2013 Palo Alto Rail Corridor Study](#) proposed a potential crossing at the following location crossing the rail corridor.

4. Kellogg Avenue/Alma Street:

The 2013 Rail Corridor study identified a potential crossing at Kellogg Avenue that provides for direct access to Palo Alto High School and Castilleja School from

surrounding residential neighborhoods. In addition, the Partial underpass alternative for grade separation at Churchill Avenue is proposed for the pedestrian and bike crossing at this location.

As part of the Churchill Avenue Grade separation Alternatives discussion on November 29, 2021 (Staff Report [13787](#) & [13543](#)), the City Council directed staff to ensure that the Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan includes the following elements:

- Consideration of the merits of Seale vs Kellogg;
- Consideration of bike improvements on the north side of Embarcadero;
- Evaluation of South Palo Alto bike/ped crossing in the vicinity of Adobe Creek consistent with the 2013 Rail Plan.

After discussing the Meadow Charleston Grade separation crossing alternatives on August 23, 2021 (Staff Report [13435](#)), the City Council directed staff to continue work on the bike plan in parallel with consideration of construction time and interaction with grade crossing plans. The grade separations for crossings at Churchill Avenue, Meadow Drive, and Charleston Road will include provisions for providing and accommodating pedestrians and bicycle traffic during the construction phase.

### **Timeline & Workplan**

The Office of Transportation Staff is currently working towards obtaining consultant services for updating the 2012 Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan, which will include the elements of the grade separation crossings directed by the City Council. The BPTP update is anticipated to be completed by July 2024.

The BPTP update will provide recommendations for additional bike/ped rail crossing locations that support bike network connectivity, indicating which locations serve the community's needs best and connect best to the existing bike network. Following this evaluation, feasibility analysis and community outreach will be needed for each location. Typically, it takes about 12-14 months to complete a feasibility study. Therefore, it is anticipated that with the availability of resources, the feasibility studies for these additional crossings can be completed by the Fall of 2025.

The feasibility study would include but not be limited to the following elements:

- Key stakeholder outreach (i.e., Caltrain, Stanford, Palo Alto Unified School District, etc.)
- Community priorities for each crossing (requires outreach)
- Design parameters (i.e., Caltrain Joint Powers Board/High Speed Rail design requirements or other limitations)
- Design alternatives
- Right-of-way needed
- The off-site infrastructure needed to support the new crossing

- Funding needed

Once a preferred alignment/project is approved by Council, the environmental review can occur, and staff can pursue grant funding. This is estimated to occur in 2025/2026

**Resource Impact**

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan Update is currently in the procurement process as such the costs associated with the update is not available. However, a major portion of the funding required to perform this update will be coming through the Transportation Development Act Grant (TDA3). Any additional funding required beyond TDA3 grant funds is available in the approved FY22-23 Capital Improvement Budget (CIP 04010). With regards to additional studies or projects that are identified through BPTP update process, a review of the need for additional resources will be required.

**Environmental Review**

The recommendation in this report does not constitute a project in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act and is therefore not subject to environmental review.



June 23, 2022

Honorable Mayor Pat Burt  
 City of Palo Alto  
 250 Hamilton Avenue  
 Palo Alto, CA 94301

Re: City of Palo Alto request for 2016 Measure B Caltrain Grade Separation Funding for advance planning of Grade Separation Projects

Dear Mayor Burt,

Thank you for your letter dated March 29, 2022 (received on April 13, 2022), regarding the City's request for 2016 Measure B Caltrain Grade Separation funding for additional technical studies for the Churchill Avenue and Meadow Drive/Charleston Road project site as well funding for standalone bicycle/pedestrian under crossings. We have reviewed your request and agree that additional technical studies should be conducted to better inform subsurface realities, such as water level and soil conditions, ultimately better informing cost-effectiveness, construction timelines, and potential construction methods for the projects.

The additional technical studies are eligible project costs and will be funded by Palo Alto's approved FY2022/FY2023 Biennial Budget allocation request for early engineering work. My staff has already reached out to Palo Alto staff for cost and scope of work for these additional technical studies so that we can begin drafting the necessary cooperative agreements.

As for the request to use Grade Separations funding for planning of standalone bicycle/pedestrian under crossings, we need more information on the City of Palo Alto's Caltrain Grade Separation Program as a whole to understand how the bicycle/pedestrian-only facility/facilities will be incorporated into both the individual crossings and the citywide Grade Separation Program. As you are aware, there is a distinct 2016 Measure B Program category for bicycle/pedestrian facilities, and we need to better understand if the bicycle/pedestrian-only facility funds are better suited for this category. For your information, the next 2016 Measure B Bicycle/Pedestrian Planning competitive grant program call for projects is expected to be released in spring 2023.

My team will be reaching out to Palo Alto staff to get additional information on the City of Palo Alto's Caltrain Grade Separation Plan and the incorporation of the bicycle/pedestrian-only facilities in the Plan.

If you have any questions, please contact Jane Shinn, 2016 Measure B Program Manager, of my staff. She can be reached at [jane.shinn@vta.org](mailto:jane.shinn@vta.org) or 408.321.5513.

Sincerely,

Carolyn M. Gonot  
 General Manager/CEO

Cc: Ed Shikada, City Manager, City of Palo Alto  
 Philip Kamhi, Chief Transportation Official, Office of Transportation, City of Palo Alto  
 Ripon Bhatia, Senior Engineer



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June 14, 2022

Michelle Bouchard  
Acting Executive Director  
Caltrain  
1250 San Carlos Avenue — P.O. Box 3006  
San Carlos, CA 94070-1306

**RE: Four-tracking Refinement Request**

Dear Ms. Bouchard,

The Caltrain 2040 Business plan's inclusion of a possible passing track segment in either Palo Alto or Mountain View presents challenges for grade separation planning in Palo Alto. This letter respectfully requests Caltrain concurrence that four-tracking not be required as a design consideration at Charleston, Meadow, or Churchill Avenue crossings.

The City of Palo Alto has been diligently working on the development of grade separation alternatives at Churchill Avenue, Meadow Drive, and Charleston Road crossings along the Caltrain's Corridor. The City has selected the partial underpass alternative as the preferred alternative for the Churchill Avenue crossing and is currently pursuing further evaluation of alternatives in consideration for the selection of a preferred alternative at Meadow Drive and Charleston Road. The three remaining alternatives under consideration for Charleston and Meadow grade crossings include digging a trench for rail, constructing an underpass for vehicles and bicycles, and a hybrid option. We have identified key elements that are needed to proceed forward with the next steps of alternative selection that will lead to the preparation of environmental documentation and engineering design. Some of these elements relate to right-of-way constraints and therefore we require determination of the proposed Caltrain four-track segment location. At each of these crossings, Caltrain's requirement that grade separation designs not preclude four-tracking is a significant impediment to the timely and cost-effective project development.

Based on Caltrain's 2019 Business Plan and Caltrain's Long Range (2040) Plan, it is our understanding that Caltrain plans to have provisions to accommodate a four-tracks passing system as part of the blended system approach between Caltrain and California High-Speed Rail service along this corridor. Palo Alto has previously requested Caltrain to identify the limits of these four-track location needs. Caltrain staff had indicated that Caltrain is taking the most conservative approach in considering the potential for a four-track segment between the San Francisquito Creek Bridge in Palo Alto to just through the Mountain View Station (the area in



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which a 4-tracks segment is operationally viable for the intended purpose). However, the ultimate extent of the area preserved for four tracks does not need to encompass this full length. The High-Speed Rail Authority has recently released the *San Francisco to San Jose Project Section: Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement* (EIR/EIS) in which they are currently not proposing either three or four tracks for passing in Palo Alto. Given the adjacent single family residential uses at Charleston and Meadow crossings, four-tracking is prohibitively impacting the evaluation of grade separation alternatives.

The Caltrain right-of-way significantly reduces as it approaches Churchill Avenue from the south through Palo Alto Avenue to San Francisquito Creek Bridge. In addition, due to the proximity of the San Francisquito Creek bridge, an environmentally sensitive area, and proximity to Palo Alto Avenue Train Station, there are additional constraints within this segment of the Caltrain right of way. For Charleston and Meadow, two of the options under consideration would require moving the tracks. Therefore, we believe that four-tracking in this area will be impractical and cost-prohibitive. As a result, Palo Alto is requesting elimination of the four-tracking requirements.

We sincerely appreciate Caltrain's review of the proposed four-tracking segment along this corridor within the city of Palo Alto. We request that Caltrain considers narrowing the extent of the four-track segment. Caltrain's decision in narrowing this segment for consideration of four-tracking will be supportive to moving forward with the selection of preferred alternatives and in pursuing the next steps of project design and environmental documentation.

City Staff are available and would like to meet with you to discuss these issues. We can also request additional input and expertise from members of our Expanded Community Advisory Panel who are very familiar with these issues. Thank you again for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

*Ed Shikada*

Ed Shikada

City Manager  
City of Palo Alto

cc: Rail Committee Members  
Patrick Burt, Mayor  
Lydia Kou, Vice Mayor  
Alison Cormack, Council Member  
City Staff  
Philip Kamhi, Chief Transportation Official  
Ripon Bhatia, Senior



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June 14, 2022

Michelle Bouchard  
Acting Executive Director  
Caltrain  
1250 San Carlos Avenue — P.O. Box 3006  
San Carlos, CA 94070-1306

**RE: Request to Review and Respond to Key Technical Issues/Questions**

Dear Ms. Bouchard,

In the development of grade separation alternatives in Palo Alto, some technical issues and questions have surfaced that require Caltrain's review and response, which are outlined below. This letter requests review of these design criteria with the goal of reducing their impact on grade separation project cost and complexity.

Under the current development of the Palo Alto grade separations, Palo Alto City Council has selected the partial underpass alternative as the preferred alternative for the Churchill Avenue crossing and is currently pursuing further evaluation of alternatives in consideration for the selection of a preferred alternative at Meadow Drive and Charleston Road. The three remaining alternatives under consideration for Charleston and Meadow grade crossings include digging a trench for rail, constructing an underpass for drivers and bicycles, and a hybrid option. The key technical issues identified are necessary for the City to proceed forward with the next steps of alternative selection in order to make informed decisions and prevent inflated costs. Receiving responses to these issues will help to confirm alternative selection which will lead to the preparation of environmental documentation and engineering design. Some of these elements relate to technical standards that we understand that Caltrain will be reviewing and updating.

As such, we would like to request that Caltrain reviews the following technical issues/questions:

- Consideration of **increasing the maximum allowable grade design**, which is required or helpful for certain alternatives currently under consideration by Palo Alto.
- Consideration of a **reduction in freight speed standards** will shorten the distance that is necessary for either raising or lowering the train tracks, which has an impact on both designs and cost.



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- Consideration of **reducing the thickness of the bridge deck**, which reduces the depth of the underpass. This reduced elevation change reduces the underpass length, lowering costs and mitigating neighborhood impacts.
- Consideration of **reducing vertical clearance standards** for any structures that may need to go over the tracks should also be reviewed, as having higher clearances can increase costs.
- Consideration of **allowing cities to use newly created space underneath elevated tracks as public spaces**. Will Caltrain allow cities to use newly created space underneath elevated rail tracks?
- Consideration of the **curve of track alignment at Palo Alto Avenue**. Will Caltrain expect that the curve(s) in track alignment between the Palo Alto Transit Center and Menlo Park will need to be straightened in the future?

City Staff are available and would like to meet with you to discuss these issues. We can also request additional input and expertise from members of our Expanded Community Advisory Panel who are very familiar with these issues. We trust that Caltrain will review and consider these issues, and when necessary, revise your technical design standards, as these impact our decision-making. Thank you for your consideration of these requests.

Sincerely,  
DocuSigned by:

*Ed Shikada*  
Ed Shikada  
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City Manager  
City of Palo Alto

cc: Rail Committee Members  
Patrick Burt, Mayor  
Lydia Kou, Vice Mayor  
Alison Cormack, Council Member  
City Staff  
Philip Kamhi, Chief Transportation Official  
Ripon Bhatia, Senior Engineer