



City of Palo Alto

City Council Rail Committee Staff Report

(ID # 7898)

Report Type: Action Items

Meeting Date: 3/22/2017

Summary Title: Rail Program Briefing Paper from March 2017

Title: Receive and Review Rail Program Briefing Paper from March 2017

From: City Manager

Lead Department: Planning and Community Environment

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Rail Committee receive the attached Rail Program briefing paper from March 2017.

Background and Discussion

The Rail Program Manager will provide a monthly briefing report to the Rail Committee, which provides a summary of all recent meetings related to the City of Palo Alto Rail Program and highlights any relevant issues for the Rail Committee. The briefing report for March 2017 is attached. The period covered in this report is March 2, 2017 to March 21, 2017.

Timeline, Resource Impact, Policy Implications, Environmental Review

N/A

Attachments:

- CPA RPM Briefing Pkt_031417



To: James Keene, City Manager, City of Palo Alto
Thru: Joshua Mello, Chief Transportation Official, City of Palo Alto
From: Richard Davies, Project Manager, Mott MacDonald
Date: March 14, 2017
Re: Rail Program Management Services Briefing Packet – March 2017

Below is a summary of Rail Program Management activity since the last Rail Committee meeting on March 1, 2017.

Meeting re Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) – March 9, 2017

A meeting with Rail Committee Chair, City Staff, Rail Program Manager, CARRD and Project for Public Spaces (PPS) was held on March 9 to discuss CSS and how to better advance the Rail Program Management services under its direction. As a follow-up to this meeting, Gary Toth (PPS), along with Mott MacDonald and Circlepoint, will be presenting on CSS and future steps at the Rail Committee March 22 meeting.

Below is a summary of the March 9 meeting.

Attendees

- Tom Dubois, Hillary Gittelman, Josh Mello, CPA
- Nadia Naik, Elizabeth Alexis, CARRD
- Chris Metzger, Richard Davies, Michele DiFrancia, Mott MacDonald
- Scott Steinwert, Maily Chu, Circlepoint
- Gary Toth, PPS

Circulation Study

- This is a technical analysis study, directed by the City Council.
 - What would happen with circulation under no build scenario (ie, don't build any grade separations)?
 - What would happen if we grade separate all of the crossings, or grade separate some and not others
 - The scope entails analysis of 6 scenarios that will need to be decided upon.
- This is a separate task from the CSS Alternatives Analysis (AA) and the City Council envisioned it happening first. Their thought was that the CSS AA could use the information generated and delve into the different design options of grade separations (eg, trench, hybrid, etc).
- The Rail Committee will need to advise whether to start the circulation study before the CSS AA, or do it in parallel.

Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS)

- Gary Toth (PPS) introduction - Look at CSS not as a magic potion, but really about walking into a project without preconceived notions – one of the principles that Gary helped draft in 2006.
- Experience with the Palo Alto community is that they are well educated, sophisticated, and expect information; it's a highly educated community that expects action.

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- Other neighboring cities are ahead of Palo Alto with their grade separation projects, and we want to make sure that funding is not undermined due to the “Palo Alto Process”.
- Steps in the CSS process as it applies to this project?
- Rings of involvement could include, for example: the public, a Community Advisory Committee (CAC), a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), and decision making body (Rail Committee would make recommendations to the City Council).
- We need to define the problem. There are multiple dimensions to the problem. What are we trying to accomplish?
- CSS process is also known as “Common Sense Solutions”.

Next steps

- Gary Toth will come out to make a CSS presentation to the Rail Committee.
- Mott MacDonald, Circlepoint and PPS will develop presentation for Rail Committee March 22 meeting about how CSS can be used for this project (i.e. an updated Community Engagement Plan).
- Mott MacDonald to follow up with CARRD re stakeholder groups and PRP CSS Toolkit info.

City/ County Staff Coordinating Committee (CSCG) – March 16, 2017

Monthly meeting comprised of Cities along the Caltrain corridor, which reports to the Local Policy Makers Group (LPMG). Caltrain and HSR Authority (Authority) staff alternate running the meeting each month.

Agenda for the March 16 meeting is provided below, which includes updated info and links to **Caltrain Electrification** and **UPRR Agreement** documents.

Agenda

1. Peninsula Corridor Electrification Project – Verbal Update
 - a. Press release on limited notice to proceed extension, [click here](#)
 - b. FAQs, click [here](#)
 - c. Jobs map, click [here](#)
 - d. Council updates
2. Union Pacific Agreements – Verbal Update
 - a. Link to the Agreements and FAQs, [click here](#)

Other Caltrain Grade Separation Projects

Per the Rail Committee’s request, additional information is being gathered on other Caltrain grade separation projects outside Santa Clara County (eg, San Mateo, Burlingame). In the meantime, below is a link to the 3/3/17 article in the San Mateo Daily Journal, “Caltrain eyes eminent domain: Transit agency unable to negotiate land deal for San Mateo grade separation” (also provided on the following pages).

<http://www.smdailyjournal.com/articles/news/2017-03-03/caltrain-eyes-eminent-domain-transit-agency-unable-to-negotiate-land-deal-for-san-mateo-grade-separation/1776425176738.html>

Caltrain eyes eminent domain: Transit agency unable to negotiate land deal for San Mateo grade

separation

March 03, 2017, 05:00 AM By [Samantha Weigel](#) Daily Journal

Owners of the Hillsdale Shopping Center may face eminent domain proceedings as transportation officials look to secure a strip of land needed for Caltrain's plans to create three new grade-separated crossings and relocate a nearby San Mateo train station.

A jury could eventually determine how much the transit agency pays to the private property owner since negotiations are stalling over the undisclosed price of a 16,330-square-foot strip of land spanning a parking lot slated to become a public road immediately east of El Camino Real between Ana Furniture and the vacant TGI Fridays building.

Caltrain's long-planned \$180 million project includes moving the Hillsdale Caltrain station further north and raising the tracks at 25th Avenue, and adding new crossings at 28th and 31st avenues.

Creating the new connection at 31st avenue, which currently dead-ends at the railroad tracks to the east and at El Camino Real to the west, will require purchasing land from property owner Bohannon Development Company. The local company owns the shopping center and property across El Camino Real near the existing Hillsdale Caltrain station.

Transit officials are now slated to file a court action in the coming weeks after negotiations over the price of a portion of parking lot next to Bohannon's Ana Furniture building haven't led to a deal.

"If we're unable to reach an amicable settlement, we'll move toward the courts. But the objective right now is to achieve control of the property so we can move ahead [with the project,]" said Brian Fitzpatrick, SamTrans' manager of real estate and property development. "We've made them an offer, the offer we've given them is reflective of the fair-market value for the property and Bohannon doesn't agree with that and would like us to move forward with a third party to adjudicate that value."

SamTrans, which is part of the overarching San Mateo County Transit District, has eminent domain authority and is moving on behalf of Caltrain, which does not. On Wednesday, the SamTrans Board of Directors voted to declare it necessary to secure the land and directed attorneys to commence eminent domain proceedings.

"We started the process. There's numerous opportunities to negotiate settlements and we're always ready, willing and able to talk legitimate settlement," Fitzpatrick said.

Bohannon, which is in the midst of a massive redevelopment project across the street at the shopping center, did not wish to comment on the matter.

Bohannon's property isn't the only one SamTrans is going after, although it's the only permanent acquisition that hasn't been settled. In total, there were about 10 properties that required officials to negotiate for purchase or a temporary easement, Fitzpatrick said.

This week, the board authorized attorneys to proceed with three eminent domain claims along El Camino Real. Aside from the permanent Bohannon acquisition, SamTrans is seeking temporary easements for staging construction equipment including 7,788 square feet at Bohannon's property; 2,118 square

feet at a trustee-owned property where Michaels Arts and Crafts is located; as well as 1,004 square feet where Big 5 Sporting Goods is located by 28th Avenue, which is owned by two limited liability companies, according to SamTrans staff reports.

The prices offered to each of the property owners was not disclosed, although Fitzpatrick noted once papers are filed with the court or a settlement is made, more information would be publicly available.

An independent appraiser provided a fair-market property valuation for each parcel and SamTrans was required to submit those as offers, Fitzpatrick said.

The owners disagreed with the valuation and the next steps were to begin eminent domain. If agreements aren't made, juries could be asked to determine how much the properties are worth.

That leaves the final price of the project somewhat up in the air, but SamTrans officials noted eminent domain allows them to take possession of the property to avoid delays.

"The reason we're going through this process is because we have to protect the project schedule," said Gary Cardona, SamTrans' senior real estate officer. "We're hopeful we get a resolution, but we need to protect the project schedule."

The last time eminent domain had to be used was during the grade separation project in San Bruno, he said.

Construction and design

The \$180 million San Mateo project, generally known as the 25th Avenue Grade Separation Project, is funded by a combination of local, city, state and high-speed rail funds. Various communities continue to seek their own grade separation projects, although funding is an issue for many.

The project has been touted as critical to improving safety by eliminating at-grade crossings, reducing gate downtimes, and enhancing east-west connectivity between the new massive mixed-use Bay Meadows development and west of El Camino Real.

"There should be better traffic circulation in the area; it opens it up for bike and pedestrian traffic as well," said Brad Underwood, San Mateo's Public Works director. "It's very important to the city, very important to the Bay Meadows development and we're looking forward to getting that project going."

Construction is anticipated to begin this summer and last through early 2020.

There is enough right-of-way in the area to allow it to construct elevated tracks adjacent to the existing tracks, which will enable it to continue service throughout most of construction, said Caltrain's Project Manager Rafael Bolon.

Although nothing has been determined, this area may be considered for passing tracks should the state's high-speed rail ever come to fruition.

Once Caltrain's new tracks are in place, along with a new Hillsdale Caltrain station relocated further north toward 28th Avenue on the elevated platform, crews will pick up the existing tracks and be able to move them over within a



weekend, Bolon explained.

After the tracks are finalized, the streets will be lowered where necessary and new crossings for vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists can be completed, he said.

Construction will include holes for the future infrastructure required to hold up electrification equipment — a massive project for which Caltrain supporters were disappointed to hear federal officials have delayed a decision on whether to issue a \$647 million grant until the president outlines his budget.

Some have suggested Caltrain's grant was delayed due to California Republicans who felt electrification was too closely tied to the state's controversial high-speed rail.

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