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Community Outreach Plan

Palo Alto Rail Program Management Services

City of Palo Alto

June 15, 2018

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Revision History

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1. Introduction and Purpose

A. Background

The City of Palo Alto is bisected by the Caltrain corridor which runs in a north-south direction through the length of the City. While the City enjoys the benefits of rail service, it also has to deal with the impacts of traffic congestion and the community's concerns about safety and noise. In addition, the City is preparing for increases in passenger rail service due to Caltrain's Electrification Project and the probable California High-Speed Rail (CAHSR) Project.

Since 2009, the Palo Alto rail corridor has been the subject of considerable discussion and community focus. The City has undertaken multiple studies over the years to assess mobility and the impact of the Caltrain corridor and Caltrain operations have on that mobility. The more recent studies have focused on improving mobility access across the corridor through grade separating one or more of the at-grade crossings and adding additional pedestrian/bicycle crossings. These studies have shaped Palo Alto's rail corridor planning efforts and has been a collaborative process with involvement and outreach among City staff, City Rail Commission, City Council, local community, adjacent local jurisdictions, stakeholders, and individuals. The AECOM team will build from the previous studies and will work collaboratively with City staff and the various stakeholders to continue this coordination, collaboration and outreach for the successful completion of this project's next phase. This effort will also include working with the City's other consultants on urban design, complete streets and streetscape designs.

Currently there are four multi-modal (vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle) at-grade crossings, three grade separated multi-modal crossings, and two pedestrian/bicycle crossings of the Caltrain Corridor within the City. The focus of this project effort will be to identify preferred grade separation solution for the at-grade crossings by the end of 2018 with Charleston Road and East Meadow Drive being the first priority. This will be an important milestone in moving the Connecting Palo Alto Program forward.

In order to move this project forward, it is critical that consensus and support be obtained from a large number of stakeholders. A key factor in obtaining consensus and support of a preferred solution is to develop high quality graphics and visual simulations that illustrate the issues of the ideas and designs. In addition, understanding Caltrain operations and criteria is critical in knowing how to work around an operating commuter rail without disrupting its revenue service. Evaluation needs to carefully consider Caltrain's operational requirements and how construction will not impact revenue service. This knowledge and experience will be critical in evaluating viable alternatives as their operational requirements will be changing in the near future with the addition of electrification and positive train control (PTC). Grade separation ideas and solutions will need to account for PTC, electrification and HSR design criteria and constraints especially regarding construction phasing and staging.

Funding is another critical component of the project for identifying financial approaches and models for the design and construction of grade separations. The City has already started this process with its published Rail Financing White Paper issued in November 2017 that identified several funding sources that included Santa Clara County Measure B and California Section 190 funding sources. These funding sources are highly competitive and given the competitive environment to obtain these funds it is paramount to progress projects quickly to get to the front of the queue and take advantage of the funding opportunities. While these funding sources will not be enough to construct the total project, investigation into other funding sources and revenue streams must occur to develop a feasible total financing plan.

B. Connecting Palo Alto

Connecting Palo Alto is a community based process to address long-standing challenges associated with at-grade crossings on the Caltrain corridor that runs through the community. This process informs decisions affecting both community aesthetics and mobility choices for many future generations. Community feedback and collaboration are a vital part of the decision making process. Engagement activities that inform, educate, gather input and connect citizens about potential rail design alternatives will help prepare the City for the transit landscape of the future. This Outreach Plan will be part of the community process.

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C. Project Purpose and Purpose of the Community Outreach Plan

The purpose of the outreach effort is to:

- To provide updated, accessible and educational information on the rail corridor grade separation alternatives process, and to create opportunities and platforms to enhance and encourage community engagement and participation.
- Identify, engage and work with key stakeholders to inform community about historical importance of project, urgency of timely decisions and need to participate to assist Council to adopt a preferred solution.

D. Roles

The City of Palo Alto is the lead for public involvement and will provide input to help screen the alternatives. The Caltrain Joint Powers Board owns and operates the rail line and is a partner in the screening effort. The Palo Alto community and businesses are encouraged to participate as users and neighbors of the proposed grade separations.

E. Community Outreach Plan Goals

The goals for the outreach effort include:

- The Community would understand and agree to the problem that the ultimate preferred solution would solve
- The Team proposing the ideas, alternatives to study and ultimate solution is the correct group to do so
- The process was fair and transparent
- The trade-offs were understood and that all parties were acknowledged and considered
- The Community would understand the funding constraints and opportunities related to the preferred solution and other ideas
- Community members, businesses and all stakeholders would partner with the Team to gather information and ideas to develop grade separation ideas that satisfy multiple interests; and
- Process would develop partnerships for future funding opportunities.

2. Public Participation and Community Engagement

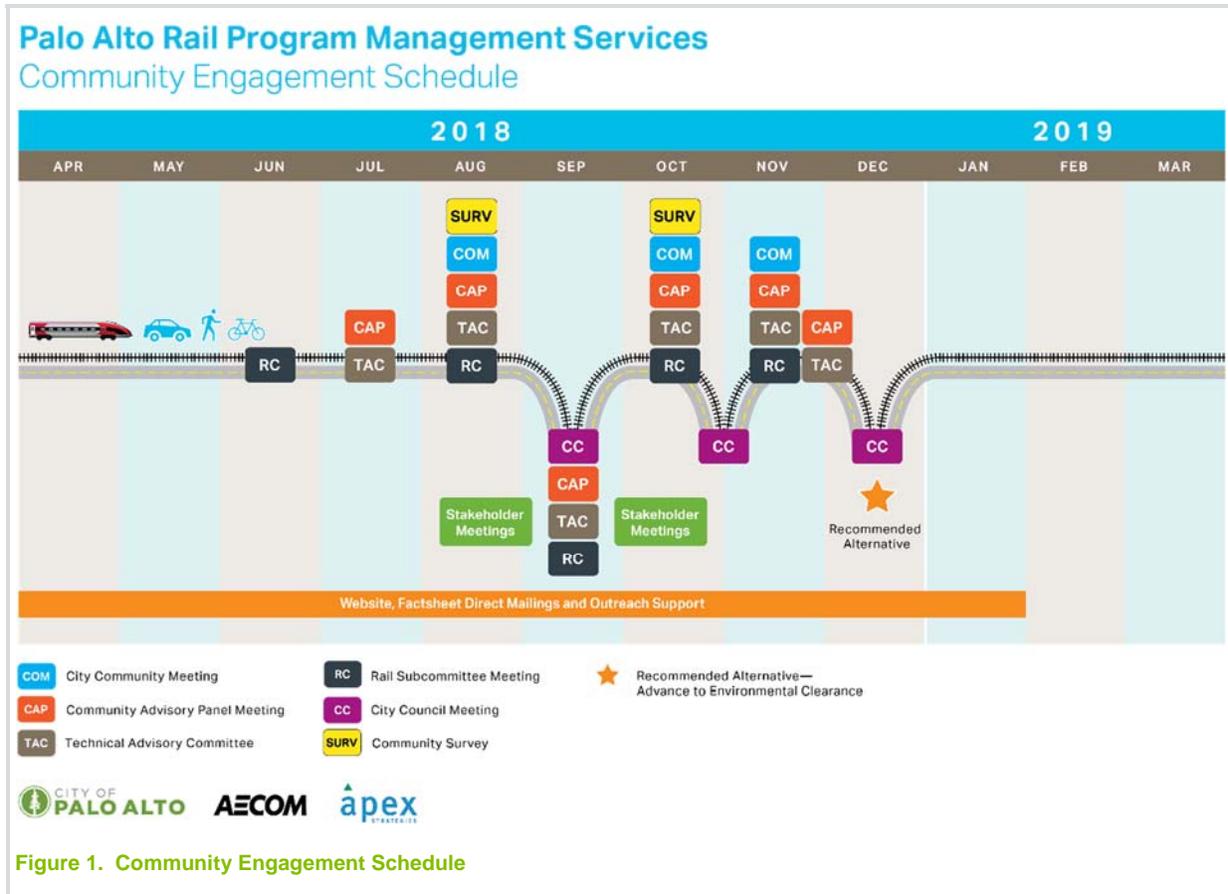
The following section summarizes the public participation and community engagement portion of the Grade Separation Study effort

A discussion of outreach tools, responsibilities, target audiences, and schedule of activities follows. The graphic below highlights the various public participation opportunities and community engagement strategies:

- Three Stakeholder Meetings (3)
- Three Community-wide Meetings (3)
- City Council Meetings (3)
- Rail Sub-Committee meetings (5)
- Community Advisory Panel Meetings (6)

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- Technical Advisory Committee (as needed and in support of the CAP)
- Outreach Materials (mailers, surveys, website)



A. Community Advisory Panel (CAP) Meetings

The Project Team will convene a Community Advisory Panel (CAP) of up to a dozen (12) community members to advise the Project Team on Project ideas and outreach opportunities. City Manager will select the CAP members to participate. The CAP will have access to the Project Team for all necessary data and background material including information from other working groups such as but not limited to the Technical Advisory Committee members and technical members of the project team as appropriate. This group is anticipated to begin meeting in July and would meet up to six (6) times during the process. Meetings will be held at a time to be determined but expected to be at a time where support from technical experts can be maximized..

The CAP ideally would:

- Be project liaisons
- Collaborate with the Project Team in evaluating alternatives
- Contribute to the successful delivery of the Preferred Solution
- Build an understanding of the project
- Regularly attend CAP meetings
- Come prepared to the CAP meetings by reading project materials ahead of the meetings when requested
- Provide honest feedback

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Specific Tasks would include

- Receive briefings on technical areas
- Receive project updates
- Review and suggest edits to Project Outreach materials
- Disseminate accurate information
- Act as conduits for information to community at large

B. Stakeholder Meetings

Stakeholder meetings will gather comments about the project ideas, including right-of-way issues and constraints. These meetings will educate community members that may not attend community meetings such as businesses. These stakeholder meetings will review and gather comments on improvement ideas under consideration that could impact their operations.

It is important to remember that three community-wide meetings will be held to inform the public and gather comments, and these forums will provide opportunities for the community to gain additional information and provide additional comments on the project ideas. These will be complemented by City Council meetings (three) to brief Council Members and the public and gather comments. The Consultant Team/AECOM staff will attend and present at the City Council meetings after the three community outreach meetings are completed. It is anticipated that other interested parties, such as residents and nearby businesses, among others, will get involved as a result of various community outreach efforts.

The Consultant Team will work with City Staff develop the format, materials and questions for up to three stakeholder meetings. These meetings could be held with the following established groups: Palo Alto Chamber of Commerce, Leadership Palo Alto, Palo Alto Real Estate agent group, Stanford University, Palo Alto neighborhood leaders and/or similar organized groups. The Consultant Team will work with City Staff to best determine the most efficient means to reach these stakeholders.

C. Community Meetings

Three Community Meetings will be held throughout the process as summarized below. The Community Meetings will assess desired improvements to address existing constraints; review project ideas; and review solution scenarios once they are determined. These community meetings are expected to be held in the evenings on weeknights. All meetings will cover all grade separation ideas under consideration and will not be focused on specific neighborhoods. Specific themes such as funding and circulation will also be addressed.

- *Community Meeting #1 August XX, 2018 6:30 - 8:30 pm:* Introduction to Project and initial screening of the grade separation ideas to alternatives for further study: During this community meeting, participants will have the opportunity to learn about the Project's purpose and need and screen various remaining ideas. The Project Team will show video of existing grade crossing issues such as long gate downtown, traffic back-ups and unsafe behaviors. The ideas still under consideration will be explained and screened at the meeting. It is hoped that the screening could be a survey with people logging in responses via cell phone technology that would be immediately available for view. It is also hoped that the first responders would participate in the meeting to help inform the public to their view of the various ideas as first responders. The format would include time for the attendees to interact directly with the Project Team on specific topics such as traffic, bicycle and pedestrian circulation, funding options, and the environmental process.
- *Community Meeting #2 October XX, 2018 6:30 -8:30 pm:* Continued feedback will be taken on the refined project ideas. Participants will have an opportunity to comment on each of the remaining project ideas and help develop pros and cons for each design. Traffic impacts, construction staging and site specific 3-D simulations will be available for public review. This meeting would also have some portion where a survey is taken to gather feedback through cell phone technology.

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- *Community Meeting #3 November XX, 2018 6:30 - 8:30 pm*: Participants will have the opportunity to learn about the Study findings/refinements in the preferred solution as well as the next steps in the process including funding and financing options and ideas for consideration. Refined 3-D visuals will be presented at the meeting.

Comments from each Community Meeting will be summarized and posted on the project web page for review.

D.City Council Meetings

After each of the project's community outreach meetings the Team will prepare a report for City Council. These City Council Reports will cover information presented at each respective Community Meeting and provide City Council Members opportunities to provide comments and receive reports on the community feedback gathered at the community-wide meetings, through the website surveys and at stakeholder meetings, including the Community Advisory Panel.

E.Outreach Materials, Website and Surveys

The following outreach materials will be created to inform the community about public participation opportunities:

- *Project Fact Sheet*: A project Fact Sheet will be developed that describes the purpose of the effort, the project schedule, and opportunities for input from the community. The first version of the project Fact Sheet will be available in Summer 2018 and updated as project information makes it necessary. It is assumed that two rounds of updates will be made during the duration of the project as alternatives are developed and screened. The Fact Sheet will be available for download on the Project web page. In addition, the Fact Sheet will be distributed at the Community Meetings, City Hall, stakeholder meetings and at any speaking engagement opportunities the City staffs may attend. A mailed version of the first fact sheet is recommended as on one of the four project mailings.
- *Meeting Notices/City event e-blast/Press Releases*: Prior to each Community Meeting, meeting notices will be created to advertise the Community Meetings and also availability of on-line surveys where appropriate. Notices will be distributed by the project web page, the City's City Events email, gov-delivery, through each City's Twitter and Facebook accounts, NextDoor, the City's list of elected and appointed officials, and posting on the Friends of Caltrain blog, CAARD blog, Stanford newspapers, Palo Alto Weekly and other web outlets. Any mailings for public outreach will be prepared and distributed by the City through their public information office.
- *Community Meeting Sign-in Sheets and Comment Cards*: Comment forms will be available at all Community Meetings for the community members to provide written comments. Sign-in sheets will be available at all Community Meetings to help build on the existing email list of interested parties.
- *Web Page*: A project web page hosted on the AECOM website and linked from the City and Caltrain websites. The existing Connecting Palo Alto Project website branding will be utilized. The site will be available to interested parties to learn about the project and process, research archived material and to find out about upcoming meetings. The web pages will be updated regularly as project materials are developed for the Community Meetings and other audiences.
- *Two Surveys*: At the first and second community meetings the team will ask for in person feedback through cell phone feedback voting and similar on-line versions could be developed to capture feedback as well. Mailers would also be sent to send people to the website to take the on-line survey and announce the community meetings. It should be noted that the on-line surveys will be relatively simple in nature and probably focused on choosing between some options only, as tallying open-ended questions are beyond the scope of the effort.
- *Four Direct Project Mailings*: The proposed mailers would be 1) mail out of the project fact sheet and reminder of web page address 2) mail out of push to use on-line survey round one and first community meeting date, 3)

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mail out for second on-line survey and second community meeting and 4) Last community meeting date and/or proposed preferred solution.

- *Database:* Contact information from Community Meeting attendees and web page signups will be compiled into the existing project database. This database will be utilized to inform the community about upcoming public participation opportunities and meetings.
- *Hotline to Project Team:* The City phone number going straight to an answering machine will be the first contact for questions about the project and the City Project Manager will maintain and share a log of these encounters. The AECOM team can be available to assist with technical information or to review wording of responses.

F. Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

Support the Technical Advisory Committee

- Assemble a Connecting Palo Alto Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), a standing group of agency representatives. TAC meetings will be held on an as-needed basis at key decision points. The TAC will provide a forum for engagement with staff from the agencies with special knowledge about the rail corridor. The TAC will help the Project Team and community identify the technical opportunities and constraints for various alternatives. The TAC will not, in and of itself, be making any decisions regarding the Connecting Palo Alto program. The Project Team anticipates that there would be support from some of the TAC members to the proposed Community Advisory Panel described above along with members of the Consultant Team with specific technical expertise. It is also anticipated that the TAC would also continue to have separate meetings to discuss technical issues separate from the CAP.

G. Public Participation and Community Engagement Summary Report

A brief summary report documenting the public participation and community engagement will be prepared at the end of this element of the project (first quarter 2019).