



City of Palo Alto

City Council Rail Committee Staff Report

(ID # 9734)

Report Type: Action Items

Meeting Date: 10/17/2018

Summary Title: Update on the Schedule for Grade Separation Alternatives

Title: Connecting Palo Alto Rail Program: Schedule Update and Upcoming Major Milestones for Community Outreach and Technical Analysis of Seven Remaining Railroad Grade Separation Ideas

From: City Manager

Lead Department: City Manager

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Rail Committee receive an update on the schedule for the grade separation alternatives selection process for *Connecting Palo Alto*.

Background

There are presently seven grade separation alternatives under consideration, each of which will undergo substantial technical analysis and be presented before the community at multiple meetings before the City Council is asked to approve a preferred grade separation solution. Presently, the Rail Committee grade separation alternatives under consideration include:

Palo Alto Ave

1. Closure or Partial Closure
2. Hybrid (road under rail)

Churchill Ave

3. Closure or partial closure

Meadow Ave and Charleston Ave

4. Hybrid (road under rail)
5. Trench – (road over rail)
6. Viaduct – (elevated rail)

All Crossings (City Wide)

7. Tunnel (road over rail)

Discussion

At its February 3, 2018 Special Meeting, the City Council set among its top priorities the selection of a preferred grade separation alternative by the end of 2018. Since that point, the Council has made significant progress on this effort through a number of significant milestones including the analysis of trenching/tunneling, costs and financing mechanisms, and traffic analysis issues, selection and engagement of a new consultant team, and initiation of the next phase of focused community and stakeholder engagement. At this point, it has become clear that additional time will be required to narrow options to a single preferred alternative.

The updated schedule below illustrates a modified schedule; however, the urgency and momentum remains critical. Caltrain is well underway with their electrification project, the sooner we can define a preferred grade separation solution the more coordinated the City can be with Caltrain's electrification project and resulting infrastructure modifications. Moreover, due to competing funding interests among cities for Measure B funds and our commitment to the public on the process we must maintain a timely project schedule to identify the most viable grade separation solution as soon as possible.

Due to the complex nature of each grade separation alternative, and the work required to generate materials for productive community discussions, public meetings in November will be focused on East Meadow Drive and Charleston Road and the January meetings on the citywide deep-bore tunnel, Churchill Avenue, and Palo Alto Avenue. The following are the anticipated key milestones and dates on the schedule.

October

- Community Advisory Panel: October 10
- Rail Committee: October 17

November: Charleston Avenue & East Meadow Drive Focus

- Community Questionnaire
- City Community Meeting: November 28, 2018
- Community Advisory Panel: November 7, 2018
- Technical Advisory Committee
- Rail Committee: Date TBD

December

- City Council: Date TBD

January: Citywide Tunnel, Palo Alto Avenue, & Churchill Road Focus

- City Community Meeting: January 23, 2019
- Community Advisory Panel Meeting: January 9, 2019
- Rail committee: Date TBD

February

- City Council Meeting and public hearing to identify preferred solution: Date TBD

November represents an important month for technical and community feedback on alternatives for East Meadow Drive and Charleston Road crossings. The Rail Committee, the CAP, and the Community Meeting will focus on factors related to these locations and will include information and 3D exhibits which are presently under development. Major topics for discussion at these meetings will include cost, visual appearances, and the baseline traffic findings which will inform future work on the traffic study.

During this time, technical civil and traffic engineering work on remaining alternatives will continue concurrently with the ongoing community outreach effort. The project team will complete the following: conclude traffic data collection and initiate analysis for the multimodal traffic study to evaluate closure options at and Churchill Avenue; meet with key stakeholders; continue development of construction issues and costs; and complete 3D visuals and exhibits.

Events in December are focused on receiving City Council feedback on the results, findings, and recommendations from the community meetings, Rail Committee, CAP and Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). Technical work will continue concurrently in preparation for meetings in January on the second focus area: the citywide deep-bore tunnel, Palo Alto Avenue, and Churchill Avenue.

The January meetings on the deep-bore tunnel, Palo Alto Avenue and Churchill Avenue will include a similar degree of effort and public outreach as the November events focused on Meadow Drive and Charleston Road. However, since closures at either or both Churchill Avenue and Palo Alto Avenue are potential options, much of the technical information will relate to findings from the traffic study in addition to technical engineering, construction, and finance variables critical to the Palo Alto Avenue hybrid and citywide deep-bore tunnel.