



City of Palo Alto

City Council Staff Report

(ID # 10808)

Report Type: Rail Communications Update

Meeting Date: 11/4/2019

Summary Title: Update From the Expanded Community Advisory Panel

Title: Update From the Expanded Community Advisory Panel (XCAP) and Potential Community Engagement Efforts

From: City Manager

Lead Department: City Manager

Rail (Connecting Palo Alto) Update:

- a. Update from the Expanded Community Advisory Panel
- b. Update on Rail Communication and Potential Community Engagement Efforts

a. Update from the Expanded Community Advisory Panel

At the September 9, 2019 City Council meeting, the City Council adopted some changes to the Expanded Community Advisory Panel (XCAP). The changes allowed the XCAP to elect a Chair and Vice Chair as well as to take votes on recommendations, among other things. In the Council motion, the City Council also asked the XCAP to provide no less than every other month updates to the City Council. The XCAP update today is a follow up to the City Council action in September. The XCAP will provide the City Council with an update on their progress to date. The next XCAP update is planned for early to mid-December.

b. Update on Rail Communication and Potential Community Engagement Efforts

The City of Palo Alto has undertaken a community-based process to address the increased traffic congestion expected when [Caltrain](#) electrifies the tracks and runs more trains through the region, including the Palo Alto corridor. Caltrain's expanded service and other changes are outlined in their CalMod Plan and [Business Plan](#). The City's community-based process, called [Connecting Palo Alto](#), seeks to evaluate the best options to maintain community access and address local traffic congestion as Caltrain electrified service begins in 2023.

Significant work has been achieved to date and more work is planned to gain community feedback as part of the decision-making process that will affect Palo Alto's future rail

crossings. Staff is actively working to share information about the process to inform and engage the community as the City Council considers options in spring 2020. Staff will update the City Council on efforts underway and seek feedback on ideas around communications and community engagement for Connecting Palo Alto rail grade separation at this Council update on October 28, 2019.

This discussion with the City Council is to gain their feedback on the ideas planned for communications and community engagement. The update will also provide a general timeline of efforts planned, including returning to the City Council in December to gain input on establishing a Rail Blue Ribbon Committee.

An example of communications to share information about the process is the new Blog Series on Medium.com the City of Palo Alto's new blog platform. The first two blogs can be viewed [here](#). The blog series is one of many ways the City is sharing information to increase awareness about the City's community-driven process as it evaluates current options and plans for City Council decisions in spring of 2020. An example of planned community engagement around the existing options and neighborhood impacts is the upcoming community meeting scheduled on November 7, 2019. This will represent a significant milestone in the development of community-wide awareness of the options being considered for grade separations at Charleston Road, Meadow Drive, and Churchill Avenue. The XCAP has been instrumental in understanding the options being considered and ensuring that the technical analysis reflects sensitivity to localized and community-wide perspectives. The November community meeting will provide the first overview of work to date specifically designed for the general public since March 2019.

As the consideration of grade separation options moves into the "community conversations" phase in which community members will be invited to provide feedback on the options as well as express preferences, staff is developing a framework for this engagement. This can include open houses and town hall meetings at which the XCAP and Council can hear directly from community members in early 2020, as well as an online surveys and other engagement methods. Staff is also mindful of the City Council direction from September 9 to bring to Council recommendations related to a potential Rail Blue Ribbon Commission.

These two items are an opportunity to update the City Council and gain feedback on efforts underway as the City and community evaluates the best options to address community access and local traffic congestion as Caltrain's modernization and growth plans proceed.