



# CITY OF PALO ALTO CITY COUNCIL FINAL MINUTES

Special Meeting  
January 22, 2019

The City Council of the City of Palo Alto met on this date in the Council Chambers at 5:01 P.M.

Present: Cormack, DuBois, Filseth, Fine; Kniss arrived at 5:35 P.M., Kou, Tanaka

Absent:

## Action Items

7. Discussion and Project Update on Connecting Palo Alto and Consideration of the Following Actions: A) Separate From Study all Alternatives for the Palo Alto Avenue Crossing (Closure and Hybrid) and Include Palo Alto Avenue in a Separate Comprehensive Planning Effort; B) Separate From Study the Bicycle and Pedestrian Crossing of the Caltrain Corridor in the Vicinity of Loma Verde Avenue and Assess Feasibility in a Future Study; C) Address the Rail Committee's Recommendation Regarding a Tunnel by Modifying the Alternative to be South of Oregon Expressway Only and Further Explore the Scope and Budget for an Alternative With Freight Trains on the Surface and Passenger Trains Underground for the Meadow and Charleston Crossings; and D) Adopt a Modified List of Grade Separation Alternatives (CONTINUED FROM DECEMBER 17, 2018).

Council Member Kniss advised she would not participate in this Agenda Item because she had an interest in real property located within 500 feet of the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Authority (Caltrain) right-of-way. She left the meeting at 7:37 P.M.

Mayor Filseth advised he would not participate in this Agenda Item because his primary residence was located within 500 feet of the Caltrain right-of-way. He left the meeting at 7:37 P.M.

Vice Mayor Fine announced members of the public who addressed the Council on December 17 were unable to address the Council a second time under Council policies.

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Beth Minor, City Clerk, clarified that individuals of a group for whom a representative addressed the Council on December 17 were also unable to address the Council.

Council took a break from 7:38 P.M. to 7:50 P.M.

Rob de Geus, Deputy City Manager, reported Staff recommended all alternatives for the Palo Alto Avenue crossing be removed from study and included in a separate comprehensive planning effort; the bicycle and pedestrian crossing of the Caltrain corridor near Loma Verde Avenue be removed from study and assessed in a future feasibility study; the Council address the Rail Committee's recommendation to limit the tunnel alternative to south of Oregon Expressway and to explore the scope and budget for an alternative tunnel with freight trains on the surface and passenger trains underground for the Meadow Drive and Charleston Road crossings; and the Council adopt a modified list of grade separation alternatives for further study. At-grade crossings were located at Palo Alto Avenue, Churchill Avenue, East Meadow Drive, and Charleston Road. Currently, 92 trains traveled through Palo Alto daily. As Caltrain transitioned from diesel to electric trains, the number of trains traveling through Palo Alto was projected to increase to 114 trains per day in 2022 and 128 trains per day by 2029. The increased number of trains would impact traffic congestion significantly. The Council selected ten alternatives on May 29, 2018 and removed the Churchill Avenue hybrid and reverse hybrid alternatives on June 19, 2018. A comprehensive traffic study was underway to assess the impact of closing the Churchill Avenue crossing.

Eileen Goodwin, Apex Strategies, advised that the community outreach and engagement process included a Community Advisory Panel (CAP), technical advisers, meetings with stakeholders, community meetings, and a dedicated website. CAP meetings were scheduled for February and March, and a community meeting was scheduled for the end of March. The community had expressed interest in Caltrain committing to design exceptions, Caltrain funding grade separation projects, and taxing businesses for funding. Many members of the community did not understand the impacts of at-grade crossings on traffic congestion and viewed grade separation as a Caltrain project.

Mr. de Geus indicated Staff recommended a separate planning effort for the Palo Alto Avenue crossing because of significant transit and land use considerations that made the grade crossing distinct from other grade crossings. After review, Staff believed the Loma Verde pedestrian and bicycle crossing was outside the construction limits of the alternative.

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AECOM had identified significant constraints to constructing a Citywide tunnel.

Etty Mercurio, AECOM, explained that shoofly tracks would be needed to build the north entrance of a tunnel alternative. The location of the north entrance was constrained by the Palo Alto Avenue (University Avenue) station. Utilities would need to be relocated and Embarcadero Road would need to be reconfigured during construction of a tunnel alternative.

Vice Mayor Fine reiterated that property acquisition and construction disruptions would be significant for a tunnel alternative in North Palo Alto. Staff recommended the list of alternatives contain a South Palo Alto tunnel, closure of Churchill Avenue, a Meadow/Charleston trench, a Meadow/Charleston hybrid, and a Meadow/Charleston viaduct.

Ed Shikada, City Manager, suggested the Council defer questions regarding the Charleston and Meadow crossings until Staff presented information for those crossings.

Council Member Cormack requested the advantages and disadvantages of including Churchill in the proposed Downtown coordinated area plan.

Mr. de Geus related that Staff had not proposed boundaries for the coordinated area plan. Churchill Avenue was quite a distance from the Downtown area and not considered a part of Downtown.

Mr. Shikada announced the traffic study pertaining to closure of Churchill would be presented in February. The recommendation regarding Palo Alto Avenue was driven by the relationship between University Avenue and Palo Alto Avenue for Downtown access. From a circulation perspective, Churchill Avenue did not provide access to Downtown.

Council Member Cormack asked if the video for construction of a North tunnel was intended to help the community understand the significant difficulties of constructing a Citywide tunnel.

Mr. de Geus understood the community's support for a Citywide tunnel. The video was intended to show the impacts of constructing a Citywide tunnel. Given the significant impacts of a Citywide tunnel, Staff recommended removing it from study.

Council Member Cormack wanted to understand why the no-build alternative was not under study.

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Mr. de Geus explained that traffic congestion would increase significantly with Caltrain electrification if crossings remained at grade. Community engagement could provide more information regarding traffic congestion and at-grade crossings.

Ms. Mercurio added that the environmental impact report was required to contain an analysis of a no-build alternative; therefore, a no-build alternative did not need to be included in the list of alternatives.

Council Member DuBois asked if Measure B funding could be utilized to upgrade existing grade separations.

Mr. Shikada reported the topic had not been raised in discussions with Valley Transportation Authority (VTA). VTA, City of Mountain View, and City Sunnyvale had expressed interest in funding known grade separation projects. Staff would need to develop a strategy for how grade separations would be the best use of funds.

Council Member DuBois inquired about options if the Council decided not to remove Palo Alto Avenue to a separate planning effort.

Mr. Shikada responded closure.

Council Member DuBois asked if Alma Street could be relocated to the current location of the railway and a viaduct built on the current location of the southbound lanes of Alma. Essentially the viaduct would be built between the northbound and southbound lanes.

Ms. Mercurio indicated it could be studied.

Council Member DuBois asked if Staff had studied the noise impacts of freight trains traveling on viaducts.

Ms. Mercurio replied that a noise study had not been conducted. Mitigation measures for noise and vibration could be implemented for all the alternatives.

Council Member DuBois felt a trench would be less noisy than a viaduct.

Ms. Mercurio reported a noise study would investigate the radiation and reflection of noise.

Council Member DuBois noted charts indicated or estimated the impacts of noise.

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Ms. Mercurio explained that the matrix was intended to facilitate community discussion and input.

Council Member DuBois believed the video represented a worst-case scenario by beginning the boring for a trench in North Palo Alto, where the right-of-way was narrow.

Ms. Mercurio advised that boring could begin in South Palo Alto. The video attempted to capture the constraints associated with constructing a bore pit, whether it was an extraction or entrance pit.

Council Member DuBois asked if extraction pits could be smaller than entrance pits.

Ms. Goodwin explained that using a crane to extract the boring machine would cause the project footprint to widen. The consultants attempted to limit construction to the Caltrain right-of-way.

Mr. Shikada added that a ramp would be needed to bring the train from the tunnel to grade.

Council Member DuBois asked if the increase in the right-of-way would cause the loss of lanes on Alma Street.

Mr. Shikada stated the use of dual boring machines would cause the loss of lanes.

Ms. Mercurio clarified that the bore pits had to be separated by a specific distance, which caused the bore pit to be 100 feet wide and 40 feet deep.

Council Member DuBois inquired regarding an alternative to close Meadow Drive.

Mr. de Geus did not believe closure of Meadow had been studied.

Council Member DuBois suggested the Council would benefit from understanding channelization of creeks.

Ms. Mercurio would share information for Adobe and Barron Creeks in the next presentation.

Vice Mayor Fine asked if the Council or Rail Committee would review priorities and processes for evaluating alternatives in the near future.

Mr. Shikada reported the Council should make the decision whether to review them. The process had become a process of elimination. The criteria

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adopted by the Council had guided the work. The implications of each alternative were becoming clear. From a Staff perspective, a review of the criteria was not necessary.

Vice Mayor Fine inquired about the potential effects of Stanford University's General Use Permit (GUP) application and Development Agreement on a coordinated area plan for Downtown.

Mr. Shikada reported Stanford University representatives were interested in the planning effort for Downtown and were willing to work with Staff.

Vice Mayor Fine requested Staff's opinion of the suggestion to merge the Loma Verde bicycle and pedestrian crossing with the North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan (NVCAP)

Mr. de Geus indicated Staff could discuss the matter.

Vice Mayor Fine asked if a single-bore tunnel was an option.

Ms. Mercurio advised that a single-bore tunnel would require more space and more depth. A single-bore tunnel required a deeper depth because more cover was needed.

Vice Mayor Fine asked if it was possible to push the tunnel length closer to the University Avenue and San Antonio stations.

Ms. Mercurio indicated the consultants were tasked with reviewing a tunnel within the city limits. At the southern end of the tunnel, the constraining point was the station platform for San Antonio. Moving the northern end further north would impact the Palo Alto Avenue and University Avenue station.

Vice Mayor Fine asked if the descent at the southern end of a tunnel could begin at the city limits.

Ms. Mercurio explained that that was the plan.

Council Member Kou asked if Staff was negotiating Stanford University's participation and funding under the tri-area development plan.

Mr. Shikada was not familiar with a tri-area development plan.

Council Member Kou was referring to the uses shared among the County of Santa Clara (County), Stanford University, and the City.

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Mr. Shikada was not aware of a tri-development plan. The City, VTA, and Stanford University were parties to agreements concerning the Transit Center.

Council Member Kou asked if the City had a tri-party plan for municipal services.

Mr. Shikada would look into any tri-party agreements.

Council Member Kou asked if the City had responded to the letter from the Mayor of Menlo Park. Perhaps Menlo Park would be willing to consider a tunnel through Palo Alto and Menlo Park.

Ms. Goodwin related that the Menlo Park City Council had reviewed the topic and were considering changes for three grade crossings.

Vice Mayor Fine suggested Council Member Kou was referring to the Tri-Party Municipal Services Agreement.

Council Member Kou hoped Staff would present the tunnel video to the CAP for review and explain assumptions used in designing the alternatives.

Ms. Mercurio explained that the design utilized Caltrain design criteria. The tunnel required a 2-percent grade, which Caltrain would have to approve. Otherwise, the consultants utilized industry protocols and design standards.

Mr. Shikada noted additional assumptions were continued operation of the rail line during construction; a property that would lose access due to a shoofly was considered a full acquisition; and street closures would be a component of construction.

Council Member Kou felt, based on her observation of construction of the Transbay Terminal, the video exaggerated the number of property acquisitions and road closures. She had hoped the Council would have more scenarios to review.

Ms. Mercurio clarified that the Transbay Terminal did not serve trains, and its construction required a temporary terminal and considerable street closures. The construction methodology for the Transbay Terminal was not the same as the construction methodology for a Palo Alto tunnel.

Council Member Kou inquired about the need to cover the tunnel during construction.

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Ms. Mercurio explained that the distance between grade and the final depth of the tunnel was a trench configuration. Boring would not begin until the trench reached the depth needed for the tunnel.

Council Member Kou asked how the Central subway was constructed.

Ms. Mercurio advised that a tunnel boring machine and a cut-and-cover method were used. At the new Chinatown station, a shaft was mined to the depth of boring, and a boring machine was dropped into the shaft to begin boring. The project did not involve an active railroad.

Council Member Kou suggested shoofly tracks be located on each side of the tunnel so that the tunnel could be centered in the right-of-way. A traffic study should be comprehensive rather than segmented.

Mr. de Geus reported a comprehensive study had to be broken into smaller components so that Staff could perform the work.

Council Member Kou suggested that the area around Palo Alto Avenue should be included in a traffic study to provide context.

Mr. de Geus reiterated that boundaries had not been defined for the coordinated area plan.

Council Member Tanaka requested the point at which the rail line would begin its descent in North Palo Alto.

Ms. Mercurio indicated the descent would begin right after the Palo Alto Station platform.

Council Member Tanaka requested the rationale for not locating the Palo Alto Avenue station underground.

Ms. Mercurio explained the rail line would be submerged only a few feet at the Palo Alto Station if the descent began at the city limits. The grade of the rail line had to be constant at a station platform. Extending the platform length to 1,000 feet would hinder the geometry of the tunnel.

Council Member Tanaka asked how the elimination of freight trains would affect the tunnel.

Ms. Mercurio advised that the elimination of freight trains had not been fully explored.

Council Member Tanaka asked if Staff had spoken with Mountain View or Menlo Park about the tunnel beginning in Mountain View or Menlo Park.



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Mr. Shikada indicated specific locations for a tunnel had not been discussed.

Council Member Tanaka asked if the tunnel could begin at the San Antonio Station.

Mr. Shikada related that concept was being evaluated.

Ms. Mercurio added that the constraint was the San Antonio Station. The Caltrain right-of-way just before the platform was located within the Palo Alto city limits.

Council Member Tanaka noted a tunnel project in Los Angeles was constructed at a cost of \$10 million per mile. He inquired about potential reductions in cost based on technological advances.

Ms. Mercurio reported tunneling was dependent on geotechnical properties, the groundwater table, the final use, and many other factors. All of those factors contributed to the cost of a tunnel. Therefore, the cost of each tunnel was different.

Council Member Tanaka suggested the cost could decrease over the next ten years, and the project probably would not be constructed in the next ten years. He asked if the cost of tunneling was falling.

Ms. Mercurio reported construction costs were increasing. Historically, postponing projects only increased the cost.

Council Member Tanaka remarked that unconventional thinking could change the possibilities.

Mr. Shikada related his instructions to the team had been to present practical and buildable options while remaining open to different ideas. The discussion should focus on viable options.

Council Member Cormack requested clarification of a partial closure for Churchill Avenue.

Mr. de Geus explained that partial closure meant vehicles could cross Churchill at grade during specific times of the day or week when the number of trains would be lower. Staff continued to explore the possibility of a partial closure.

Council Member Cormack seemed to recall Caltrain representatives stating a partial closure was not possible.

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Mr. de Geus clarified closure as meaning vehicles could not cross Churchill at any time.

Council Member Cormack asked why partial closure was not an option for other crossings.

Mr. de Geus reported Staff was consulting with jurisdictions and agencies that had authority in the area to provide an answer.

Vice Mayor Fine recalled that the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) opposed a partial closure. At some point, the CPUC could require closure.

Council Member Cormack asked if a partial closure would be temporary.

Vice Mayor Fine seemed to recall that closing Churchill during the day only was not possible.

Ms. Mercurio reported the November community meeting focused on the trench, hybrid, and viaduct alternatives for Meadow/Charleston. The alternatives utilized published design criteria and regulations. Caltrain design criteria included a maximum 1-percent grade for the railroad, a minimum vertical clearance of 24.5 feet when trains ran below a structure, and a minimum vertical clearance of 15.5 feet when the roadway ran below a railroad. For a trench option, plans need to include drainage, relocation of utilities, shoofly tracks, and pumping of surface runoff and groundwater. A trench would be 37 feet deep at the deepest point and more than a mile long. The first step was constructing a temporary shoofly between the existing tracks and Alma Street. The trench would need tie-backs for structural support. Standards limited the types of vegetation that could be planted above structural elements. Once the trench was constructed, the shoofly would be removed. For a hybrid option, plans would include a temporary shoofly and an embankment varying between 0 feet and 14 feet tall and 5,000 feet long. Raising the rail line would not impact creeks. Construction of a viaduct option would not require a temporary shoofly or relocation of utilities and would not disrupt traffic on Alma Street, Meadow Drive, or Charleston Road. The viaduct would be constructed between the existing tracks and Alma Street. The matrix evaluated the alternatives based on the Council-adopted criteria and included notes for each alternative. A separate matrix provided the engineering impacts for each alternative.

Ms. Goodwin advised that community identified likes for the trench alternative were bike and pedestrian patterns were similar to the existing patterns; a potential reduction in rail noise; and fewer visual impacts.

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Community identified dislikes for the trench alternative were easements for support structures; limitations on landscaping over support structures; potential flooding and noise impacts related to pumping stations; and closure of Charleston Road while Meadow Drive was under construction and vice versa. Community identified likes for the hybrid alternative were minimal right-of-way impacts and an opportunity to restore landscaping. Community identified dislikes for the hybrid alternative were visual and noise impacts and traffic disruptions during construction. Community identified likes for the viaduct option were the lack of impacts on private property; minimal traffic disruptions during construction; and opportunities for landscaping. Community identified dislikes for the viaduct alternative were visual and noise impacts.

David Shen advocated for quickly choosing a final alternative and beginning construction in order to limit the impact of an increased number of trains on traffic.

David Herzl noted 500 citizens signed a petition opposing raised rail alternatives. The City should remove raised options and begin work on a tunnel alternative. Personally, he supported a trench alternative. The matrix comparing alternatives was flawed, and more weight should be assigned to certain criteria.

Neva Yarkin wanted a solution that allowed pedestrians and bicyclists to travel along Churchill Avenue safely. More solutions were needed for the Churchill crossing.

Steven Rosenblum remarked that Staff proposed eliminating the Citywide tunnel before the Rail Committee and the community had discussed it. Crossings had been discussed independently rather than comprehensively. The process should be slowed until Staff could be hired and become familiar with the alternatives.

Keith Bennett noted trench alternatives would have significant impacts to groundwater and groundwater flows. If allowed, the land above a rail tunnel could support a large number of high-density housing units.

Jason Matloff supported a coordinated area plan for Downtown. Churchill Avenue should not be included in the coordinated area plan.

Rachel Kellerman supported a coordinated area plan for Palo Alto Avenue with the caveat that traffic should be studied comprehensively.

Young–Jeh Oh opposed the inclusion of Churchill Avenue in the coordinated area plan because residents and the Council supported a full or partial

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closure of the Churchill crossing and Churchill Avenue was not a part of Downtown.

Monica Tan Brown supported closure and construction of a pedestrian crossing of the Churchill Avenue crossing.

Barbara Hazlett remarked that North Palo Alto streets and rail crossings should not be closed until robust traffic studies were completed and vetted with the public. Closing the Churchill Avenue crossing would unfairly burden other neighborhoods and eliminate an east-west conduit.

Kerry Yarkin opposed inclusion of Churchill Avenue in the coordinated area plan. She shared safety concerns regarding the Churchill crossing.

Winter Dellenbach supported inclusion of the Loma Verde bicycle and pedestrian crossing in the NVCAP. Measure B funding could be used for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

Arthur Keller suggested extending the ascent for reverse hybrid, trench, and tunnel alternatives to south of Adobe Creek and north of Barron Creek in order to avoid the creeks. He questioned whether a trench would be narrower than a tunnel; whether tracks could be shifted west and a trench or tunnel constructed on the east side of the tracks; and whether a 12-foot vertical clearance was sufficient for Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) buses.

Rita Vrhel remarked that Embarcadero Road should be included in the coordinated area plan if Churchill was included in the plan; however, she opposed including Churchill Avenue in the coordinated area plan. Elevated alternatives could be acceptable if electric trains were quieter than diesel trains.

Rob Levitsky opposed the closure of the Churchill Avenue crossing because the impact of additional trains on traffic would not be as great as stated.

Roland LeBrun expressed concerns about some technical information that was not supported by facts. A tunnel entrance did not need to be 100 feet wide. Shoofly tracks could be constructed within the right-of-way if the right-of-way was at least 80 feet wide.

Council took a break from 10:28 P.M. to 10:35 P.M.

Council Member Kou requested clarification of the ability for tracks to clear the creeks.

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Ms. Mercurio explained that the Hatch Mott MacDonald study proposed beginning a tunnel within Mountain View city limits. Therefore, the Hatch Mott MacDonald study stated a tunnel could clear the creeks. The current Charleston/Meadow trench alternative did not extend beyond Palo Alto city limits and did not clear creeks.

Council Member Kou asked why the trench alternative could not be located in the center. Caltrain was installing poles and shoofly tracks in the location of the existing track. Constructing a trench in the middle would reduce costs.

Mr. Shikada clarified that Caltrain was not utilizing shoofly tracks for its electrification project. Caltrain was building poles around the existing rail. The Caltrain project did not have the complexities of grade separations.

Council Member Kou did not understand the need to construct shoofly tracks in order to build a trench.

Mr. Shikada reiterated that shoofly tracks would be needed to continue train service while grade separations were constructed.

Council Member Kou suggested story poles be installed for elevated alternatives.

Council Member Cormack realized the complexity of grade separations required a serial process for considering alternatives. The visualizations of alternatives helped the Council and community understand the tradeoffs of alternatives. She asked Staff to address any disadvantages to a tunnel alternative in South Palo Alto only with freight trains above ground and passenger trains below ground.

Ms. Goodwin indicated the alternative should create an actual grade separation in order to obtain funding. If freight trains continued to operate on the surface, the alternative would likely not be a true grade separation.

Mr. de Geus added that the savings from separating the two could offset any outside funding.

Council Member Cormack remarked that a decision regarding Churchill Avenue should incorporate Embarcadero Road. The scope of study for Churchill Avenue was unclear. The difference between the hybrid alternative and viaduct alternative for Charleston/Meadow was only 5 feet; therefore, the impacts of the hybrid alternative would be similar to the impacts of the viaduct alternative. The Council and community needed a better understanding of noise impacts. Fencing around a trench would not be

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attractive. She was not willing to remove the viaduct alternative until she understood construction problems. More meetings and comprehensive technical information were needed.

Council Member DuBois inquired about the possibility of building the trench in the location of the viaduct while trains continued to operate on existing tracks and swapping City road right-of-way for Caltrain right-of-way.

Ms. Mercurio explained that the footprint of a trench and the length of shoofly tracks would need to be studied in order to determine the practicality of such a configuration.

Council Member DuBois requested the consultants consider the possibility. The tie-backs would be located underneath rights-of-way rather than underneath private property. Eliminating shoofly tracks would reduce construction costs. He requested an updated schedule for the next 12 months. Waiting for development of a coordinated area plan for Palo Alto Avenue would delay the process quite a bit. The Council should revisit the evaluation criteria, and the criteria for maintaining local access and reducing regional traffic on neighborhood streets should be reinstated. Alternatives should not be removed at the current time. The process should review alternatives comprehensively rather than individually. Stanford University needed to be involved in the process. At some point, voter approval may be needed. The Council needed to consider traffic impacts in groupings such as Palo Alto Avenue with University Avenue, Churchill Avenue with Embarcadero Road, Meadow Drive with Oregon Expressway, and Charleston Road with San Antonio Road. This approach could influence the City's ability to obtain funding. Perhaps the closure of Meadow Drive should be an option. It would be premature to eliminate a tunnel alternative or a viaduct alternative. He could support developing a coordinated area plan for Palo Alto Avenue if the timing for a concept of the coordinated area plan aligned with other scenarios. The community's suggestions for Palo Alto Avenue should be vetted.

Council Member Tanaka requested the depth of a trench at the Palo Alto Station if the trench had a 2-percent grade and began at the border with Menlo Park.

Ms. Mercurio answered a couple of feet. A vertical curve was needed to account for train speed and other factors.

Council Member Tanaka related that the consultant stated the tunnels had to be 100 feet apart.

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Ms. Mercurio clarified that the portal would be 100 feet wide. The rule of thumb for distance between twin bores was one diameter of the tunnel. The geotechnical and geological conditions specific to the location were also factors in determining the distance between bores.

Council Member Tanaka requested a response to the public speaker's comment regarding shoofly tracks.

Ms. Mercurio explained that locating a construction area between two active rail tracks was not ideal because the construction equipment would need an at-grade crossing to access the area. In addition, splitting the track would result in a wider footprint because of the need to maintain a minimum 10-foot clearance from center line of track to a construction barrier.

Council Member Tanaka agreed it would be premature to eliminate alternatives, especially a tunnel alternative. An alternative without freight trains should be studied. The process should focus on funding strategies. More extensive polling of the community should be conducted. The Council should strive to ensure traffic did not shift among neighborhoods. Eminent domain should be a last resort. Crossings should be studied comprehensively.

Council Member Kou suggested the Council consider adding criteria regarding specific noise levels.

Vice Mayor Fine inquired regarding the number of future CAP meetings.

Mr. de Geus advised that CAP meetings had been scheduled for February 13 and March 13.

Mr. Shikada noted the schedule of CAP meetings had been extended. The Council's feedback and direction would help define a schedule for the CAP. Extending the schedule further could result in the loss of CAP members.

Vice Mayor Fine remarked that the Council and community had questions regarding the assumptions contained in the tunnel alternative; therefore, more study was needed before a tunnel alternative could be eliminated. A strategy for engaging Stanford University and VTA was needed. He could support a coordinated area plan for the Palo Alto Avenue area but had concerns about the schedule for a planning project. He suggested a future Rail Committee or Council meeting include discussion of the CAP, evaluation criteria, schedule, and polling of residents.

**MOTION:** Vice Mayor Fine moved, seconded by Council Member DuBois to:

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- A. Direct Staff to separate from study all alternatives for the Palo Alto Avenue crossing (closure and hybrid) and include Palo Alto Avenue in a separate comprehensive planning effort;
- B. Direct Staff to separate from study the bicycle and pedestrian crossing of the Caltrain corridor in the vicinity of Loma Verde Avenue and incorporate this into the North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan process;
- C. Direct Staff to present the tunnel alternative at the Community Advisory Panel (CAP) and March Community meeting, and outline assumptions and alternatives for a citywide tunnel and further explore (the Scope and Budget) for an alternative with freight trains on the surface and passenger trains underground (for the Meadow and Charleston crossings);
- D. Adopt a modified list of grade separation alternatives:
  - 1. South Palo Alto | Rail Tunnel;
  - 2. Churchill Avenue | Full or Partial Closure and add Improvements (CAX);
  - 3. Meadow Drive and Charleston Road | Hybrid (MCL);
  - 4. Meadow Drive and Charleston Road | Rail Trench (MCT);
  - 5. Meadow Drive and Charleston Road | Viaduct (MCV);
  - 6. Citywide Tunnel (WBP);
- E. Direct Staff to return to Council with a strategy for Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) and Stanford University, especially around funding; and
- F. Direct Staff to study multi-modal mitigations for existing grade separations, taking into consideration both current conditions and future impacts.

Vice Mayor Fine indicated the Loma Verde bicycle and pedestrian crossing was not part of the grade separation process. By adding the Citywide tunnel alternative to a CAP meeting, the Council and community could review the parameters of a Citywide tunnel. The Council needed to address the impacts that alternatives caused for existing crossings. Part F of the Motion addressed the suggestion to pair streets for study. Hopefully, a coordinated area plan for Palo Alto Avenue would result in options for the crossing.



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Additional information could reveal reasons for eliminating the Citywide tunnel as an alternative.

Mr. Shikada advised that the Agenda Item was intended to continue the process of elimination and to narrow the number of alternatives. He suggested the Council visualize what it would take to reach a decision when none of the alternatives was an obvious favorite. Staff had identified significant issues with a Citywide tunnel alternative. Components of all alternatives would garner community opposition. The Motion allowed Staff to make some progress and provided areas for focus.

Vice Mayor Fine commented that reviewing the process could aid decision-making. While he could support eliminating some of the alternatives, the time was not right to eliminate alternatives.

Council Member DuBois hoped the alternatives could be modified to address concerns or generate support. Providing more details specific to Palo Alto could aid decision-making.

**INCORPORATED INTO THE MOTION WITH THE CONSENT OF THE MAKER AND SECONDER** to add to the Motion, "direct Staff to restore 'maintain or improve local access' evaluation criteria." (New Part G).

**INCORPORATED INTO THE MOTION WITH THE CONSENT OF THE MAKER AND SECONDER** to add to the Motion, "direct Staff to return to Council soon to review evaluation criteria and timeline." (New Part H).

Council Member DuBois requested a timeline for developing a coordinated area plan for Palo Alto Avenue.

Mr. Shikada reported funding and Staff capacity would affect a timeline for the project. Staff had discussed a strategy but would follow any Council direction.

Council Member DuBois asked if grade separation and transportation could be separated from a coordinated area plan.

Mr. Shikada advised that Staff could define the scope for a project so that the project focused on access to the station, the Downtown, and Stanford University.

Council Member DuBois related that planning for the area between the station and Stanford University should occur but with a higher priority for the grade separation issue. He asked if the Council could direct Staff to vet

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grade separation issues sooner, assuming a coordinated area plan project would require a couple of years.

Mr. Shikada reported Staff could make it a priority and work on it as quickly as possible.

Vice Mayor Fine suggested the coordinated area plan project could be phased.

**INCORPORATED INTO THE MOTION WITH THE CONSENT OF THE MAKER AND SECONDER** to add to the Motion Part A, "with a priority on transportation."

Vice Mayor Fine suggested Staff identify transportation improvements or alternatives and present them to the Council as a first step.

Council Member Kou felt Embarcadero Road and perhaps Churchill Avenue should be included in the coordinated area plan.

Council Member DuBois indicated Part F of the Motion captured that.

Council Member Kou asked if Part F pertained to traffic studies only.

Vice Mayor Fine clarified that Part F pertained to multimodal traffic. He did not include Embarcadero Road and Churchill Avenue in the coordinated area plan because that area would encompass a large part of the City and introduce land use issues.

Council Member Kou reiterated that boundaries for a coordinated area plan had not been identified.

Mr. Shikada remarked that the traffic study could guide a decision regarding the boundaries.

Council Member Cormack inquired about merging Parts A and E.

Vice Mayor Fine explained that VTA and Stanford University should be engaged in the coordinated area plan, but they should also be engaged in all grade separations.

Council Member Cormack requested clarification of Part F.

Vice Mayor Fine clarified that the four existing crossings would be examined to determine existing traffic issues and improvements. The four existing crossings should also be considered in all grade separation topics.

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Council Member Cormack inquired whether Part H meant prioritize evaluation criteria and the timeline for making a decision or conducting a poll. The criteria had evolved over time.

Council Member DuBois stated Part H meant the Council would discuss evaluation criteria.

Vice Mayor Fine indicated the timeline in Part H referred to the timeline for the process, potentially for the coordinated area plan, and the frequency that items returned to the Council.

Council Member Cormack suggested the timeline could refer to an approach for the Council to make a decision or an approach that involved the community broadly.

Council Member Tanaka agreed that the language of Part H should be more precise. Perhaps the language could include a funding strategy and a poll of residents.

**INCORPORATED INTO THE MOTION WITH THE CONSENT OF THE MAKER AND SECONDER** to add to the Motion Part H, "with a funding and polling strategy."

Vice Mayor Fine commented that the discussion would include updating evaluation criteria, updating the timeline, conducting more community outreach and polling, and funding.

Mr. Shikada advised that Staff likely would not return to the Council with that discussion prior to CAP and community meetings in March. Budget considerations would also be presented to the Council.

**MOTION AS AMENDED RESTATED:** Vice Mayor Fine moved, seconded by Council Member DuBois to:

- A. Direct Staff to separate from study all alternatives for the Palo Alto Avenue crossing (closure and hybrid) and include Palo Alto Avenue in a separate comprehensive planning effort with a priority on transportation;
- B. Direct Staff to separate from study the bicycle and pedestrian crossing of the Caltrain corridor in the vicinity of Loma Verde Avenue and incorporate this into the North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan process;
- C. Direct Staff to present the tunnel alternative at the Community Advisory Panel (CAP) and March Community meeting, and outline assumptions and alternatives for a citywide tunnel and further explore

# FINAL MINUTES

(the Scope and Budget) for an alternative with freight trains on the surface and passenger trains underground (for the Meadow and Charleston crossings);

- D. Adopt a modified list of grade separation alternatives:
  - 1. South Palo Alto | Rail Tunnel;
  - 2. Churchill Avenue | Full or Partial Closure and add Improvements (CAX);
  - 3. Meadow Drive and Charleston Road | Hybrid (MCL);
  - 4. Meadow Drive and Charleston Road | Rail Trench (MCT);
  - 5. Meadow Drive and Charleston Road | Viaduct (MCV);
  - 6. Citywide Tunnel (WBP);
- E. Direct Staff to return to Council with a strategy for Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) and Stanford University, especially around funding;
- F. Direct Staff to study multi-modal mitigations for existing grade separations, taking into consideration both current conditions and future impacts;
- G. Direct Staff to restore “maintain or improve local access” evaluation criteria; and
- H. Direct Staff to return to Council soon to review evaluation criteria and timeline with a funding and polling strategy.

**MOTION AS AMENDED PASSED:** 5-0 Filseth, Kniss absent

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 11:52 P.M.