

# COMMUNITY DESIGN + ARCHITECTURE

Region • City • Neighborhood • Building

## **El Camino Real Advisory Group (AG) Meeting #3**

*April 23, 2002*

4:00 to 6:30 pm

*at Council Conference Room, 1st floor, City Hall, Palo Alto*

### MEETING NOTES

#### 1. Project Update

Virginia Warheit (Planning Division, Project Leader) gave a brief project update with regard to a meeting between Caltrans officials and representatives of Redwood City, Menlo Park, and Palo Alto, which was headed by Assemblyman Joe Simitian.

She also reported that Caltrans had commissioned a study to investigate safety aspects of trees planted in medians and sidewalks. A meeting between Professor Ed Sullivan, of Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, who conducts the study and members of the above mentioned communities will take place on May 2, 2002, in Palo Alto.

#### 2. Status of Transportation Analysis and Key Findings with regard to the Development of Corridor Design Alternatives (including present and projected Traffic Volumes)

Chris Gray, of Fehr and Peers Associates, gave a summary of findings related to accident data and traffic volumes. He explained that presently some of the key intersections on El Camino have a level of service (LOS) of F (failing), these intersections include El Camino at Alma, Embarcadero, Page Mill and Charleston.

He also discussed the results of the accident investigation. The review of the accident data from Caltrans indicated that El Camino Real in Palo Alto, when analyzed as a single corridor, had an overall accident rate that was slightly lower than the statewide average for a similar roadway. Additionally, the accident data indicated that the main cause (speeding) and type of accidents (rear ends) occurred at a rate similar to the entire state.

#### 3. Presentation of three Principal Corridor Scenarios for the Length of the El Camino Real and Cross Section Alternatives for Key Corridor Segments

Phil Erickson, of Community Design + Architecture presented the three principal corridor alternatives that the Consultant team has been considering for El Camino Real.

##### 1. 6 Lanes throughout Alternative

This alternative assumes that future traffic volumes require a road cross section of 3 thru lanes per direction for the entire length of the street and that ease of traffic flow remains the prime goal for El Camino Real.

2. 4 Lanes throughout Alternative (except at four regional intersections)

This alternative assumes that the community and city officials establish a policy for the transformation of El Camino that principally scales the street back to a road with 2 thru lanes per direction with exception of 500 foot segments before and after all intersections with particularly high traffic volumes (El Camino at Alma, Embarcadero, Page Mill and Charleston) which would have 3 thru lanes per direction.

3. Hybrid of 6 and 4 lane Alternatives

This third alternative assumes that it is desirable to scale back El Camino to 2 thru lanes per direction wherever this can be achieved within carefully selected segments, and remain a 6 lane road where this is necessary to maintain a certain level of service for motor vehicles that will need to be determined.

Principally the three alternatives vary in the application of street cross section alternatives, with differing sidewalk and median widths, to different segments of the corridor. The Consultants pointed out that a more developed version of the Hybrid Alternative is most likely to become the focus of work during the second half of this project. Phil then went on to present and discuss various four and six-lane cross section (and plan) alternatives for different segments of the corridor. Beyond the basic difference in the number of thru lanes, the alternatives differed in how much width could be allocated to sidewalks (sidewalk trees), parking, and medians (median trees).

Comments from members of the Advisory Group:

- ❖ Sukie Stanley (Q): What will happen to the existing street trees when the cross section of the street is changes?  
  
(A): This will depend on the health conditions of the individual trees, whether they can practically be moved to another location, if they can fit with proposed street cross section designs in their existing locations, and how they fit in with the communities desired visual image of the future El Camino. Some tree species, such as Ginkgo have been found to perform poorly in the sidewalks, but they are doing well in the medians and are now beginning to achieve a significant size and provide fall color.
- ❖ Brigid Barton (Q): Will shifting lanes back and forth increase the likelihood of accidents?  
  
(A): Since we are proposing to also lower the speed limit and actual speeds on El Camino this is unlikely.
- ❖ Ned Farquhar: Cross sections do not need to be symmetrical and could be customized relative to the adjacent land uses (and other existing conditions) and the needs of users in the respective location (i.e. on-street parking may not be needed).
- ❖ Judith Wasserman: Should there be a sidewalk alongside the Stanford Campus if a bicycle lane is provided within the El Camino roadway?

- ❖ Kathy Durham: Yes, there should be a sidewalk or multi-purpose path so that young children are not forced to bicycle in the roadway. There is also more foot traffic along Stanford frontage than commonly assumed. Demand for a sidewalk will even more increase once Stanford builds new housing units close to El Camino.
- ❖ Gayle Likens: Consultants should talk to VTA to determine what tree locations and curb bulb-out configurations are acceptable to them.
- ❖ Jim McFall: On-street parking along Stanford frontage is heavily used on weekends.
- ❖ Judith Wasserman: If we could get UE-6 for six lane segments of El Camino and UA-4 or UB-4 for any 4 lane segments, we would be close to achieving many goals. Look at the corridor and determine where this is possible, the address the remaining segments.
- ❖ Gayle Likens: Consider having at least some parking as part of the Stanford frontage (SA-6, SA-4). Also, there is a short right-turn pocket (northbound) at Churchill Avenue that needs addressing.
- ❖ John Ciccarelli: Consider making the frontage road along the Southgate neighborhood one way so that there is room at Churchill for the bike lane to shift to the left around a dedicated right turn lane.

#### 4. Proposed Set of Performance Criteria for Evaluation of Design Alternatives

Phil Erickson (CD+A) introduced Advisory Group Members to a document that outlines a draft set of goals and objectives for the project as well as a matrix that lists how the Consultants intend to evaluate different design alternatives relative to the set of goals and objectives. The matrix furthermore outlines a series of strategies that may be used to implement the proposed goals and objectives.

#### Comments from members of the Advisory Group:

- ❖ Ned Farquhar: (1) The ‘Reduction of Auto Traffic’ should be made an explicit goal of this project – otherwise many of the objectives listed in the matrix cannot be achieved. (2) A percentage share of bike/pedestrian/transit trips should be defined as goal for intermodal operation of the street. (3) Life in neighborhoods should be positively impacted by improvements to El Camino – or, at least, not be negatively affected.
- ❖ Jerry Walters (FPA): It is not a project goal to create congestion on El Camino to affect change in people’s choice of transportation mode.
- ❖ Chris Gray (FPA): We can affect supply of transit, bike lanes and wider sidewalks, but we cannot actively influence demand for these modes through this project.
- ❖ Kathy Durham: The implied goals of ‘Walkability’, ‘Bikeability’, and ‘Reduction of Barrier Effect’ should be more explicitly stated as project goals for this project.
- ❖ Sukie Stanley: With respect to neighborhoods, the reduction of cut-through traffic and non-resident parking should be an objective in the matrix.
- ❖ Judith Wasserman: It should be stated that design guidelines for El Camino are being prepared to support the listed goals and objectives.

5. Next Steps and Meetings

Community Workshop #1 will take place on June 1, 2002.

Shortly after this workshop, the Consultants intend to meet with City Council for a study session and also have another meeting with the Advisory Group.

NOTE

*Please find attached to this document to e-mail messages with additional comments by Judith Wasserman and Jim McFall that were received after the Advisory Group Meeting.*