

COMMUNITY DESIGN + ARCHITECTURE

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El Camino Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting #1

February 25, 2002

3:30 to 5:00 pm

at City Hall, Palo Alto

MEETING NOTES

1. Welcome, Project Background and Purpose

Virginia Warheit, Planning Division, Project Leader

2. Description of Project Scope and Goals of TAC Meetings

Phil Erickson, Principal, Community Design + Architecture (CD+A) and Jerry Walters, Principal, Fehr and Peers Associates (FPA)

Phil Erickson gave an overview of the scope (Copies of which were made available to all participants at the beginning of the meeting) and the tasks outlined in the document as well as the scheduled events associated with each of the tasks. In particular he highlighted the scheduling of TAC meetings, including the upcoming workshop on March 26. Jerry Walters highlighted the technical transportation evaluation portion of the project. During TAC meetings the Consultants will seek input from committee members on technical aspects of the project, such as infrastructure, curb alignments, design details, and specifications, as well as operational and functional issues of the street that need to be resolved for the schematic master design plan to be buildable.

3. Status of Data Gathering Process

- ❖ Thomas Kronemeyer, CD+A Project Manager, explained that the data gathering process was nearing completion. Still missing pieces were (1) digital and hardcopies of the alterations made to El Camino during the recently completed remodel between the Sandhill Road and Quarry Road intersections, and (2) Caltrans striping maps, which would accurately reflect lane widths for the entire corridor. Gayle Likens explained that she had approached Stanford University to assist with plans of the remodel in the Stanford Shopping Mall area and John Thomas of Caltrans offered to identify the Caltrans project number (EA #) for the recent restriping work on El Camino. He explained that this would expedite the request of drawings from the Caltrans division that administers the “as built” drawings. Once an EA # is identified, the CD+A Team can have their civil engineering consultant, LCC, go to the Caltrans District office to review the microfiche of the drawings.
- ❖ Jerry Walters reviewed the status of FPA’s data gathering. He stated that most of the requested data would be available by the March 7 meeting with exception of ECR accident data, traffic sign inventory and the aforementioned striping plans, which would be used to identify the widths of individual lanes.

John Thomas offered to assist FPA in the acquiring of accident data for the street. It was decided, however, to also proceed with the already started accident inquiry through the City's Police Department, as minor property-damage-only accidents were not historically reported to CHP by PAPD. John requested that accident data summary requests be specified to Caltrans (as privacy requirements prevent others from actually searching the database) through the City. John also pointed out that all lanes currently should be 12' feet wide, but also that there may be deviations in particular situations. John said that Min Yin Lee at Caltrans should be contacted for traffic signal timing information. He also said that, for efficiency, the City should make the requests to Caltrans for the signal data and traffic sign log for the corridor.

- ❖ Jon Hernandez (Q): Will FPA look at traffic speed data, particularly throughout the northern segment where the new signals at Sandhill and Quarry have changed the speed regimen?

Jerry Walters (A): FPA will analyze speed in the sense of travel time along the corridor and compare this data to travel time on alternate routes. The effects of the recently installed signals will be reflected in the data. This will allow the consultants to assess the degree to which travel times and speeds along El Camino are stable and uniform versus erratic and fluctuating and to predict the potential for traffic displacement from El Camino onto alternate routes in the case of implementation of measures that would slow traffic on El Camino. Gathering speed data as it would typically be done for the setting of speed limits is outside of the scope for this project. However, data from recent-past speed surveys by CHP and the City will be assembled and reported.

Jerry pointed out that FPA is intending to look at Middlefield, Alma and a route through neighborhoods as alternative routes for the travel time analysis. In this context, it was suggested that Foothill Expressway may need to be considered for this analysis. Jerry explained that if desired Foothill could be included in place of one of the above mentioned streets. However, he pointed out that this choice would have to occur soon, so that the data collection plans could be changed. After discussion, the committee did not recommend replacing any of the planned survey routes with surveys of Foothill or routes used to reach Foothill from El Camino. The group agreed that Foothill already offers sufficient speed advantages over El Camino that slowing El Camino further would not result in dramatic shifts to Foothill. The group also agreed that Foothill has fewer sensitive receptors (homes, schools, parks) than other potential diversion routes such as Middlefield.

Overview of Information Meetings to Date:

- ❖ Phil Erickson and Thomas Kronemeyer gave a brief overview of their meetings with VTA, Stanford, and City Parks and Forestry representatives.

VTA Meeting: Jim Jarzab of VTA pointed out that the two El Camino bus lines (#22 and #300) carry upward of 30,000 passengers daily. VTA is planning to upgrade its #300 line to Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) level of service. As part of this effort the agency intends to propose the installation of curb bulb-outs at the BRT stops (California, Page Mill, and Arastradero). Busses would stop in the outermost travel lane and stop at the bulb-out where boarding and alighting would take place.

Stanford Meeting: Key issues highlighted from the meeting with Stanford planning and property staff included the recognition of the particular conditions of the campus' frontage onto El Camino, which is largely more "rural" in nature with the exception of the Stanford Mall frontage. Stanford is planning some improvements along the Arboretum and the sports field areas, which would likely increase landscaping along El Camino and provide an asphalt walkway. Discussion also focused on the importance of improving linkages across El Camino between the campus and downtown Palo Alto and neighborhoods on the east side of the street.

City Parks and Forestry Meeting: City arborists Dave Sandage, Dave Dockter and representatives from the Parks Department (Paul Diaz and Chris Rafferty) joined CD+A and Joe McBride, the Consultant Team's urban forestry expert, for a field meeting on ECR. The meeting was intended to get a better understanding of tree conditions and past planting efforts along ECR from the perspective of City staff. Since 1986 ca. 300 trees were planted in ECR sidewalks, most of which London Plane trees. It was apparent that trees with constant irrigation (from nearby lawns on private properties) have outgrown their intermittently watered counterparts. It was suggested to explore the future installation of irrigation with all street trees.

The medians are planted with a variety of trees, some of which have reached the end of their (city tree) life expectancy. Furthermore, consultants and City staff discussed the future possibility of using structural soils under sidewalks and roadway pavement to improve the growing conditions for street trees. Joe McBride will complete a tree survey for all trees in sidewalks and medians, addressing aspects such as general health, diseases, trunk diameter, crown diameter and others.

4. Feedback from Members of TAC

- ❖ Leon Kaplan (Q): How does this project relate to the planned improvements and design for a City gateway at Adobe Creek.

Virginia Warheit (A): The Adobe Creek project can go ahead as planned. The majority of the planned improvements are flexible enough to be adjusted later to standards established as part of the larger El Camino project.

- ❖ Virginia Warheit (Q): Currently El Camino is a designated truck route. Would it be possible to remove this designation in light that only relatively few trucks use it?

John Thomas (A): El Camino is not a designated route for the heaviest category of trucks. Trucks on El Camino typically deliver goods to stores on the street or its side streets. Caltrans therefore would not want to remove the truck route designation. However, the local authority could enact legislation to that end. It was generally agreed, however, that removing the truck route designation from El Camino would not reduce the truck use dramatically, as there are no reasonable alternate truck routes for deliveries in Palo Alto.

- ❖ How can consultants and TAC Members best achieve efficient communication?

This agenda item will need to be addressed again. A roster of consultants and all designated TAC members with e-mail addresses and phone numbers should be made available to enable the possibility of communication between TAC members and Consultants outside of TAC meetings.

5. Future TAC Meetings and Workshop on March 26th

The TAC will next meet with the full Consultant Team for an all day workshop on March 26, 8 am to 4:30 pm, at the assembly room in All Saints Church, Hamilton Avenue at Waverley Street. This workshop is intended to allow City Department and Caltrans decision makers and the Consultant Team to discuss alternative design concepts for El Camino Real and evaluation criteria to use in assessing the viability of proposed design concepts.