



PLANNING & TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MINUTES

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November 19, 2002
SPECIAL MEETING – 7:00 PM
City Council Chambers
Civic Center, 1st Floor
250 Hamilton Avenue
Palo Alto, California 94301

ROLL CALL: 7:05 PM

Commissioners:
Annette Bialson, Chair
Michael Griffin, Vice-Chair
Karen Holman
Patrick Burt
Bonnie Packer - absent
Phyllis Cassel -
Joseph Bellomo

Staff:
Steve Emslie, Planning Director
Lisa Grote, Chief Planning Official
Gayle Likens, Senior Planner, Transportation
Julie Caporgno, Advance Planning Manager
Virginia Warheit, Senior Planner
Zariah Betten, Executive Secretary

Chair Bialson: I'd like to call to order this special meeting of November 19, 2002. Would the Secretary please call roll. Thank you. The first item on the agenda is Oral Communications.

ORAL COMMUNICATIONS. Members of the public may speak to any item not on the agenda with a limitation of three (3) minutes per speaker. Those who desire to speak must complete a speaker request card available from the secretary of the Commission. The Planning and Transportation Commission reserves the right to limit the oral communications period to 15 minutes.

Chair Bialson: I have no cards for Oral Communications so I will close that item.

CONSENT CALENDAR. Items will be voted on in one motion unless removed from the calendar by a Commission Member.

Chair Bialson: We have nothing on the Consent Calendar or Agenda Changes, Additions or Deletions.

1 **AGENDA CHANGES, ADDITIONS AND DELETIONS.** The agenda may have additional
2 items added to it up until 72 hours prior to meeting time.

3
4 **UNFINISHED BUSINESS.**

5 **Public Hearings:** None.

6
7 **Other Items:** None.

8
9 Chair Bialson: The first item of business is New Business, the Study Session on the Caltrans/El
10 Camino Master Design Plan Project. Would Staff care to speak to this item?

11
12 **NEW BUSINESS.**

13 **Public Hearings:** None.

14
15 **Other Items:**

- 16
17 **1. Study Session on the Caltrans/El Camino Master Schematic Design Plan Project:**
18 Study Session to review and discuss possible future improvements to El Camino Real
19 (State Route #82) in Palo Alto. This Master Plan project is a joint effort of Caltrans and
20 the City of Palo Alto. The purpose of the improvements being considered is to make the
21 road safer, more comfortable and more functional for all travel modes, including
22 pedestrians and bicycles as well as motor vehicles, and to provide for extensive planting
23 of large canopy trees in medians and sidewalks. The meeting will be conducted in a
24 Workshop format with formal presentations as well as opportunities for the public to
25 participate.

26
27 Mr. Steve Emslie, Planning Director: Yes, thank you Chair Bialson and members of the
28 Commission. It is my distinct pleasure to introduce this item. Our study session tonight is
29 concerning El Camino Real and the work that has transpired in the last ten months and to report
30 to you the results of those findings. We believe that you will find them very interesting,
31 provocative and provide you with a full range of options to consider for dealing with one of our
32 most important corridors, El Camino Real. It is an integral part of the City's transportation
33 network, provides a convenient travel lane as well as a place for homes and businesses to be
34 located.

35
36 Just in the way of a little bit of background and how we got to this point. We have been working
37 with a team of experts. Virginia Warheit, who will be addressing you momentarily, of our
38 Planning Staff in our Advance Planning Division, has been coordinating the project. It is a
39 unique project. This started some years ago essentially by a desire from both the City and
40 members of the community to investigate and look at ways to beautify El Camino Real, looking
41 at ways to increase vegetation, increasing the tree canopy and seemingly simple objectives. As
42 many of you know and many in the audience know that El Camino Real is an unusual street in
43 that it is controlled by the State of California. It is part of the State of California highway system
44 and as a result the state asserts jurisdiction over this right-of-way and has some very stringent
45 rules about how it is to be constructed, how it is to be maintained and what changes can be made
46 to that. These rules generally apply statewide and they can be a little bit rigid and not very
47 sensitive to the needs of a particular community because they are established at a state level and
48 intended to deal with a variety of conditions in a state of over 35 million people.

1
2 There has been a growing trend, nationally, and it has now reached California for a bounty of
3 civil engineering and highway management called context sensitive design. Essentially what this
4 theory asserts is that your standard should relate to your particular needs. If you have a heavy
5 traffic area and you want to get traffic through in a quick way then you have a certain standard.
6 If you have a business community that serves as your main street then that should have a
7 different look and feel and that the standard should be adapted to deal with those different types
8 of land use conditions. So Caltrans in attempting to adopt what other states have successfully
9 adopted in this context of sensitive design area decided to apply resources to El Camino. It is
10 through a grant that the City received from Caltrans that enabled us to take a look at this state
11 highway to see if the rigid standards that Caltrans has been applying to this for many, many years
12 in some way could be relaxed or made more appropriate for the City's desired goals and
13 outcomes. So with that about a year ago, January of last year, the City received its Caltrans grant
14 and assembled a team that you are going to hear from in a moment and began to study the
15 function of Caltrans, take a look at what history has happened, how the growth rates in traffic
16 have affected the function of this corridor as well as to project into the future as to how we can
17 continue to enjoy safe and efficient traffic movement for this corridor, and then also to address
18 what we are hearing from the community are other growing needs. That is for other forms of
19 circulation, not necessarily related to the passenger vehicle, namely bicycle and pedestrian use.
20 This Commission has reviewed a bike policy/bike plan that asserts to increase our trips that are
21 made by bicycle and being that El Camino is an important corridor providing for the convenient
22 and safe use of El Camino as a bike corridor is important in meeting that goal. So it does tie
23 back into a number of our long-range objectives in both our bike plan and our Comprehensive
24 Plan as well.

25
26 Before I turn it over I just wanted to point to a couple of findings that I think you want keep in
27 mind as you hear the presentation. Even if Palo Alto is not to issue another building permit
28 traffic will continue to grow on El Camino. It is a fact that car registration in Palo Alto increases
29 at a relatively modest rate, at a little over one percent per year, but you add this up over a period
30 of time and if we have not properly planned for the increase in traffic we are going to have a
31 problem with Caltrans whether we like it or not. So it is a fact, it is a reality of life that we need
32 to continue to look at ways that we can use our existing traffic corridor in a way that promotes
33 safe and efficient traffic movement and in a way that our citizens and residents have come to
34 expect, the convenience that El Camino does provide.

35
36 We have the opportunity to make traffic work better and fix other problems at the same time.
37 This is a finding that we did not set out to find. It came about through many, many months of
38 study. We are able to achieve many objectives without seriously impeding traffic flow on El
39 Camino. We are able to promote pedestrian safety by providing shorter crossing distances for
40 the pedestrian to cross El Camino. We are able to enhance traffic flow actually make it better
41 and that in time as traffic increases we will maintain the same travel distances and travel times
42 that we have come to enjoy today even over a period of 20 years. We are also able to improve
43 the aesthetics through improved landscaping, mainly specimen size trees.

44
45 I would also like to mention that that the four/six-lane concern that has been discussed is really a
46 small part of the project. For the bulk of the project and in many of the options that you will see
47 six lanes are maintained throughout the corridor. There are some opportunities in very, very
48 isolated instances, two in particular, where you can achieve additional pedestrian improvements

1 without serious impact to the travel times or the congestion. This is something that we would
2 like to explain and show you in a little bit more depth. This is really isn't about reducing El
3 Camino. It is about using our existing infrastructure to its maximum extent, being smart about it,
4 using the existing right-of-way and through modest and incremental changes and reductions to
5 lane width and signal timing, some of the smart ideas that many communities have implemented
6 to improve the way our travel on this very important corridor is conducted.

7
8 I would like to conclude before I turn it over to Virginia that if we are to indeed consider
9 reducing any lanes that this would not be done without a commitment to testing and trial of this
10 principle. We believe we have some of the greatest traffic engineering and planning minds in the
11 state if not the country working on this, but there is no substitute for actual experimentation. We
12 are committed to experimenting with this in a way that is easily removable and replaced back to
13 its original condition should it not prove to be acceptable to the community. This department,
14 our Traffic Division, has proven its commitment to trial and error experimentation through our
15 traffic-calming problem, that is no different. In this instance we are committed to any major
16 change to going through a period of experimentation and comment and review including a great
17 deal of community input. So just wanted to conclude with our commitment to all of this being
18 done through a trial and feedback basis.

19
20 Ms. Virginia Warheit, Senior Planner: What you see on the screen are the six points that the
21 consultant team will be presenting to you tonight. Our presenters are Jerry Walters with Fehr &
22 Peers, our traffic consultants; Phil Erickson a principal at CDNA, the lead design consultant on
23 the project.

24
25 First I will talk about why change El Camino and show some pictures of what is out there right
26 now and why it has some problems then one the goals of the project, what we are really trying to
27 achieve. Then Jerry will talk about the transportation analysis, a very sophisticated and
28 conservatively handled transportation analysis, a very thorough analysis has been done of
29 existing conditions on the street and an analysis of what any of the alternatives that are being
30 considered would amount to. He is going to talk about what kind of analysis and study went into
31 that. Then they will present for you some really interesting photo simulations that we have of
32 three locations on the street California Avenue, Los Robles and Stanford Avenue, explaining
33 what kinds of improvements we can achieve retaining six lanes throughout the entire corridor
34 and then in two locations why there are some really important additional benefits that you could
35 get if you have four lanes in those two locations. After that Jerry will address transportation
36 issues again with what exactly are the transportation aspects of these two alternatives. Then at
37 the end they are going to show a couple of the details that people have shown an interest in in the
38 past and how those actually work. We also have some materials on the walls and many slides.
39 Some of them we are going to go through quickly and we will go back to whatever you have a
40 lot of questions about later. So there are lots of information that we can go back to both in the
41 slides and on the wall to clarify anything that is of particular interest. I will turn it over to Phil.

42
43 Mr. Phil Erickson, Community Design & Architecture: As Virginia said we are going to move
44 through the PowerPoint show fairly quickly and then during the discussion period we can come
45 back and look at things in a little bit more detail where people have interest.

46
47 What we wanted to start with was this issue of why the City had even started thinking about
48 changing El Camino Real. What are some of the issues that are out there for people? What we

1 have done is looked at the variety of different people who use the street and what some of their
2 concerns might be. From the driver's experience of the street there are some issues in terms of
3 accidents and Jerry will speak to that in a bit. Also, the abrupt stopping and starting nature that it
4 isn't a very smooth street to drive down. Then also there are aspects to the design of the street
5 that encourage people to speed. Again, these are some of the things that Jerry will highlight in a
6 little bit more detail. El Camino is also important for transit service both within Palo Alto but
7 also within the larger region. Some of the concerns there about the conditions of the bus stops
8 and a lot of the pedestrian aspects that you will hear about relate directly to transit because as
9 soon as a transit rider is off of the bus you are a pedestrian. The VTA, the transit service along
10 El Camino Real, is doing some planning around the idea of making some major bus
11 improvements along the corridor and there is a chance to do some things with the street to help
12 encourage better transit use.

13
14 For pedestrians there are a lot of issues both in terms of moving along the street, the sidewalks
15 are quite narrow, but there are also a lot of issues about crossing the street. The distances to
16 cross the street are quite long and there is both I think real and perceived issues about the street
17 being a barrier. Similarly for bicycles, there are bicyclists who do ride up and down the street.
18 There are issues there related to the speed of the traffic that is next to the bikes. Then also issues
19 for bicyclists crossing the street. The particular concern there is with school children. There are
20 a number of schools and neighborhoods that find themselves on opposite sides of the street and
21 school children whom would like to be crossing the street safely.

22
23 For the merchants along the street, again that issue of the narrow sidewalks, is it the kind of
24 street where you are going to get patrons walking to your store and then some of the aesthetic
25 issues of the street also start to play for merchants, some of the negative aspects of the aesthetics.

26
27 For neighborhoods that are right adjacent to, back in and behind the street, again there is the
28 issue of children getting to school. The relationship to the street, is it a positive or a negative
29 thing and then the issues again of crossing the street. Then there are certainly concerns about
30 cut-through traffic. Again, you will hear Jerry highlight how some of the analysis that has been
31 done addresses that issue.

32
33 The approach that we took to this project was to start with identifying goals, building from the
34 Comprehensive Plan and looking at what the City's goals are for the street into the future.
35 Analyzing the traffic and transportation nature of the street looking out to the year 2020. Then
36 we also spent quite a bit of time looking at the physical characteristics of both the street and then
37 the land uses that are along it. That is one of the things that gets us into this issue of contact
38 sensitive design. Then we started to develop a whole series of different alternatives and working
39 back and forth from a design standpoint and a transportation analysis standpoint with many back
40 and forth sessions with Fehr & Peers and other people on the consultant team and going back to
41 our steering committee with different concepts.

42
43 Some of the larger more important goals for the project are this issue of making it multi-modal.
44 Basically that means making it a comfortable street for all of those different people that I talked
45 about experiencing it, drivers, people riding transit, pedestrians and bicyclists. A focus on
46 improving safety on the slide here it says, improving safety and convenience for pedestrians and
47 bicyclists, but again there are issues that we are looking at in terms of safety for vehicles on the
48 street as well.

1
2 Here are some of those issues that really link the auto traffic and pedestrians and bicyclists and
3 this issue of people speeding on the street. What you see here in this bar graph is the relationship
4 between vehicle speed and fatality rate if a vehicle runs into a pedestrian. What you see is a
5 really sharp drop in this area moving from 40 miles per hour down to 30 miles per hour. That is
6 on of the things that we have been thinking about. This slide shows the way that a drivers
7 perceives the road in front of them, again depending on speed. At 40 miles per hour you are
8 moving faster, you are focused on a smaller area, 30 miles per hour your field of vision broadens
9 and that is all related to safety issues.

10
11 Again we were focusing on smoothing out and trying to get a more consistent speed of traffic
12 and a real strong focus on maintaining travel time. The images on this slide relate to some other
13 communities in California that have grappled with similar issues, in West Hollywood here and
14 then in Cathedral City where they have gone in and looked at major state route arterial streets
15 and done some of the kinds of changes that we are talking about to make these streets more
16 multi-modal. One of the things I would like to highlight here is that in both of these cases they
17 ended up having to take the street back from Caltrans. So these have now become local streets.
18 What we are doing in this project is having the opportunity to make these kinds of positive
19 changes for the community while the street still remains a Caltrans street. So Caltrans and the
20 state end up paying for a lot of the maintenance of the street and that is a really important goal
21 for this project.

22
23 Again, this issue of trying to make the street something that is more a part of the community is
24 something your Comprehensive Plan talks about quite a bit. Here is just a simple diagram of the
25 land uses along the street and the way that we need to design the street to relate to the varying
26 character where there are commercial uses concentrated along the street and a different character
27 where it is running along Stanford. We have done a lot of thinking about how the street needs to
28 tie into that. That being said, you go out and look at El Camino Real and it is quite a daunting
29 street. Here is Los Robles and El Camino Way where it intersects El Camino and it is quite a
30 challenge to think about how we could change the character of the street. This is a simulation of
31 what that street could become as a six-lane street. We will get into talking about this in a little
32 bit more detail in a bit but there is hope.

33
34 Let me turn it over to Jerry to talk about some of the transportation analysis work that we have
35 done.

36
37 Mr. Jerry Walters, Fehr & Peers Associates: Thanks, Phil. I am going to briefly review with you
38 a very comprehensive set of transportation information that we gathered and analysis that we
39 have performed and focus on some of the conclusions that we drew with regard to how the
40 vehicles operate, pedestrians, bicycles, buses, etc. My analysis goes to some fairly sophisticated
41 state of the science evaluation tools, looking carefully at signal timing and storage lents, etc.,
42 which we will be happy to discuss with you as questions come.

43
44 Some of the more revealing studies that we conducted are alluded to at the bottom of this slide.
45 We conducted numerous travel time and accident safety related data surveys. The next slide
46 gives you a little bit of an indication of how this was done. We used global positioning software
47 and hardware to travel El Camino and the parallel routes that were considered possible
48 candidates for traffic diversion and drove up and down the streets numerous times during peak

1 hours recording position, speeds, times, delays at every location along the street. We conducted
2 30-odd travel time runs in peaks on El Camino as well as parallel routes. What we found, on the
3 next slide, is that driving El Camino can be a somewhat jarring experience even for those
4 driving. Phil has touched on the experience for those walking and attempting to cycle along it.
5 This is a profile of travel speeds as one drives and this is a typical run traveled at the speed of
6 traffic southbound in the PM peak hour. What you will see there is stopping and starting going
7 on continuously along the road, seven or eight stops at traffic signals with some long delays
8 incurred and in between you see speeds picking up to in some cases fairly high levels, 45 miles
9 per hour at one location and 40 at several locations and that is in the peak hour. From a
10 transportation planners viewpoint that is not a truly healthy environment. That is one that calls
11 out for improvement. I will show you on the next slide a little bit more of the evidence. This is a
12 case where we see even in the peak hour in the peak direction speeds that are up and above the
13 speed limit interspersed with stops and delays. The next slide shows that this is actually a
14 pattern, it is not just two individual travel time runs. Here the color coding suggests that at the
15 red dots that is where our vehicle is stopping at a signal, yellow is slowing before or after the
16 stop, green is higher speeds and as you get to the very bright green you see numerous locations
17 where even in peak hour one is traveling 40 miles per hour and above on El Camino.

18
19 Next slide. This is an example of some of the more congested experiences in the peak hour in
20 the peak direction. What you see there with all of the red dots towards the southern portion of
21 the corridor is that the typical trip involves stopping at almost every traffic signal. A clear
22 indication to us that coordinating those signals a bit better can provide travel time savings and
23 perhaps be used as a offset against lower travel speeds at other locations to provide the same
24 overall travel time through the corridor.

25
26 Next please. The next critical item that we turned our attention to was accident experience. We
27 gathered quite a bit of data over numerous years and tabulated and looked at rates, etc. The key
28 conclusions are that there are locations spread throughout the corridor at which there are
29 accidents that are occurring at higher than the state average rate for facilities of this type and that
30 many of those, and these are indicated by the green stars, which by no means are meant to be
31 commendations they just happen to be green stars, at locations such as Churchill, Page Mill,
32 Curtner, I believe that is Maybell and up at Alma. Those are locations where there is a high
33 incidence of accidents that are speed related and rear end collision related. They also happen to
34 coincide with locations at which there are school crossings and pedestrian crossings. That a
35 correlation that is certainly telling as to the balance being provided between travel speeds and
36 safety and pedestrian crossing safety.

37
38 Next please. So our conclusions are that El Camino currently exhibits excessive stopping and
39 starting but then in between there are opportunities, even in peaks, to travel very quickly even up
40 to 50 miles per hour on El Camino. That there are locations with higher than anywhere
41 experience, higher than average and higher than statewide conditions suggest ought to be the
42 case, where accidents are occurring that are related to speed and where it so happens that
43 pedestrians are present in large and vulnerable numbers.

44
45 So we would like to achieve through the process of making El Camino more context sensitive
46 and multi-modal is to provide a better driving experience for the driver and a safer condition for
47 all modes of transportation.

48

1 This is an indication of how pedestrians are provided for at all of the intersections up and down
2 El Camino. The red bar indicates the amount of time, 30 seconds, that I would say ideally or at
3 least as an objective would be provided for pedestrians to cross El Camino given its width. That
4 is the Palo Alto accepted standard for that distance at a reasonable walking pace. You will see
5 that many intersections fall below and some far below that amount of crossing time. So that is
6 also an issue that calls out to be addressed.

7
8 Next. So in summary we have certainly locations on El Camino that are traffic dominated.
9 There are four key intersections listed there that are congestion management authority
10 intersections. They provide barely enough capacity and some would say not enough capacity to
11 handle the traffic. We are concerned very much about traffic capacity at those locations. There
12 are other locations at which traffic is moving too quickly, pedestrians are vulnerable and safety
13 experience suggests that there is room for improvement.

14
15 Next. Some of the ideas that that begins to suggest then are that there are locations where
16 through design, changing the designed speed and the travel speed along El Camino could be
17 beneficial. Possibly also leading to reducing the number of lanes at locations where there is
18 more capacity than is needed is potentially advisable. We will talk more about that later. And
19 that in doing so will provide both a more compatible traffic and pedestrian transit environment
20 and possibly even narrow the street a bit so that pedestrians have a greater opportunity to cross,
21 safer crossing experience and we will refer to again later, in fact takes less time away from the
22 traffic movements when pedestrians are crossing shorter distances.

23
24 Mr. Phil Erickson: So what would that street actually look like if we did try to achieve these
25 transportation goals and these other goals that the community has. One of the things that we
26 looked at was say we didn't want to take the standards on. Say we wanted to work within
27 Caltrans highway design manual and that sort of thing but make a multi-modal street. What we
28 find with El Camino is that we would actually end up having to widen the right-of-way of the
29 street by 26 feet. Not a very viable thing to do. So we have spent a lot of time figuring out how
30 to get efficient in the right-of-way. As was mentioned earlier we have focused on this issue of
31 what can we achieve by redesigning the street in its six-lane configuration. This is a diagram
32 that you will see a couple of different times with the different alternatives that we have
33 developed and you have it in the handout as well. What it indicates is the locations of primary
34 crossings of the street. There is a series of symbols that tell you what type of people are trying to
35 move across the street at those points, whether it is bicyclists, school children and that sort of
36 thing. When we start to look at the four-lane configuration it gets into how it relates to this. In
37 terms of the six-lane configuration there are a lot of things that we can achieve.

38
39 This is the existing cross section of El Camino Real in most of the urban locations. I am not
40 going to get into the detail of this but what we have been looking at is how we can transform the
41 street from that cross section to this cross section. So working bike lanes into the section, doing
42 some widening of the sidewalks, getting enough room for larger trees and then how can we get
43 larger trees into the medians as well. We have also looked at what happens where you have a
44 turn pocket. Where you have space for cars that are making left-hand turns and that gets into
45 some very important issues in terms of the median and whether or not we can have large trees
46 and how that play across the rest of the cross section as well.

1 Getting back to some of the visual images that we have, some of these simulations that we've
2 done, we have highlight here. Again, you have this as a handout. Some of the key issues in the
3 street cross section, there are a lot of locations where there really isn't enough width in the
4 sidewalk to do adequate tree planting, the median, the pedestrian refuge at the middle of the
5 intersection, again this issue of pedestrians crossing. The average crossing speed that Jerry
6 talked about at 30 seconds, the wider lanes within the street cross section itself encouraging
7 people to drive faster, bicycles having to mix with traffic and then again the narrow sidewalk for
8 pedestrians. So in reconfiguring the street we can get a wider sidewalk for pedestrians at
9 intersections we have what is called a bulbout, parking as you approach an intersection goes way
10 in most standard designs, there is always that red curb there. That gives you an opportunity to
11 widen the sidewalk, shortening the crossing distance but also providing more room for
12 pedestrians in these areas and landscaping and that sort of thing. Also looking at not only
13 widening the narrow part of a median at a turn pocket but extending it further out so that the
14 crosswalk cuts through the median and this provides a protected area for pedestrians. The
15 different sidewalk widenings and what we are doing in the medians again provides more
16 opportunities to plant trees. We have looked at narrowing the widths of the lanes while still
17 being sensitive to the fact that there are trucks that use this street and buses and so we are still
18 providing for their safe movement. Those are some of the benefits that you get out of the six-
19 lane configuration.

20

21 As we have talked about and alluded to we have identified some locations where there is the
22 potential to reduce the number of lanes in one direction from three to two. It isn't necessarily
23 four lanes in all locations. You will see how this plays out in the alternatives. As Jerry talked
24 about there are these four intersections that are important in terms of the cross traffic at Alma,
25 Embarcadero, Page Mill and Arastradero. Again, as you see here we have made certain that we
26 are not talking about doing anything to reduce capacity in those locations. Those are very
27 important locations for moving traffic.

28

29 So how do these different alternatives play out that we have looked at in terms of locations
30 where we could reduce the number of lanes? We are looking at an area from California up
31 towards Park as a possibility. One of the reasons to do that gets back to this context sensitive
32 issue. We looked at the land use in that area and there is a lot of activity that is coming right up
33 to the street, a lot of pedestrian activity, people moving from employment areas to restaurants
34 during the day, again a lot of school crossings, but we also looked at the aspects of this area from
35 a transportation standpoint and that has a lot to do with the details of how we have designed this
36 area. Another location is down by the triangle where there are very important school crossings at
37 these two locations but there is also a lot of activity here and some change that is planned to
38 occur there to really change the character of this area. Again, that is an opportunity where both
39 from a land use standpoint and from a traffic standpoint we could consider reducing the number
40 of lanes.

41

42 We also looked at another way of doing this where what happens here is you get some extension
43 of four lane areas but in a lot of these places again looking very carefully at how the traffic is
44 working around these intersections. For example here we would want to have three lanes in the
45 northbound direction but two lanes in the south. That has all to do about the capacity that is
46 needed for the traffic but still achieving some benefits for pedestrians and bicyclists and others
47 by reducing the width of the roadway.

48

1 So why do we go into this? Going back to the roadway cross section itself here is the six lane
2 proposed improvements. If you go to four-lane what you see happening here, the character of
3 the sidewalks changes and the character of the median changes quite a bit. Going back to that
4 section that we were looking at Los Robles, again here is the six lane improvements and what
5 could happen with the four lane improvements. So again the crossing time for pedestrians is
6 reduced. This is an important intersection for children who are going to school. It gives us a
7 little bit more room for the protected median and it gives us more room on the sidewalks. So that
8 in areas where there is more activity from land use along the side of the street it gives us an
9 opportunity to widen those sidewalks and creates more opportunities for planting trees as well.

10
11 Some examples of some similar conditions on roads around the Bay Area and in California,
12 wider sidewalks what a 16-foot wide sidewalk would look like. San Pablo Avenue in Berkeley a
13 four lane state highway with larger trees and you do really get that canopy effect and then this
14 idea of a protected pedestrian crossing.

15
16 Jerry is going to get into talking about some of the transportation conditions of some of these
17 different alternatives that we have looked at.

18
19 Mr. Walters: One key issue that came first to mind when we first considered the possible lane
20 reductions was the effect that it was going to have on travel time through the corridor. What this
21 graphic displays is a set of evaluation findings that compare the travel time through the El
22 Camino corridor, this is southbound in the PM, this incorporates that travel growth that Steve
23 spoke of earlier over the next 20-year period. What we see is the future condition without any
24 changes to El Camino would mean that a travel time of currently a little over 12 minutes would
25 go to 14 minutes through the corridor. That is the do nothing scenario for the future.

26
27 We could improve upon that, the yellow bar, by improving that signal timing that I referred to
28 earlier. We in fact could offset the growth in travel if that were the only thing we did and bring
29 the travel time back down to about today's level. Going to the green bar to the right of it, the
30 changes that relate to design speed adjustments and travel lane width adjustments of individual
31 lanes but no reduction in the number of lanes would retain that travel time, still about 12
32 minutes. Then the two bars on the right show the effect of implementing either configuration A
33 the more limited four lane segment reduction or B the more extensive reduction. What you will
34 see there is that the A condition is only slightly greater than and is about four percent greater
35 than or about 30 seconds longer travel time than the do nothing case. So the change is certainly
36 not dramatic. I would suggest barely perceptible. Case B, configuration B, increases the travel
37 time relative to the do nothing by about nine percent or about one and one-half minutes. So
38 those are the travel time consequences.

39
40 The next bar shows the effects northbound PM peak hour, which is another critical condition.
41 There you see that the effects of the reduction in travel lanes are even less dramatic. The first set
42 of bars is the most pronounced case of all the peak hour directional conditions we considered.
43 Here the effects are about a three percent or 30-second increase in travel time through the
44 corridor compared to the do nothing case in the future.

45
46 We have also been concerned with the recent and even present examples of four lane sections
47 along El Camino and what types of traffic conditions they manifest and whether in fact our
48 analysis is not recognizing the realities that you have seen and live with now. One of those

1 examples was recent construction that has occurred south of Charleston/Arastradero across the
2 bridge during which the number of lanes was reduced through the orange cones that Caltrans will
3 use to four lanes. Most observers have noted that that caused some extreme congestion. The
4 reasons why we still feel the locational changes that we are recommending are not going to
5 produce congestion levels are listed there in the white bullets. This is one of those key
6 intersection locations that we talked about earlier. Charleston/Arastradero is a high volume
7 location at which we are not recommending reducing the number of lanes to four lanes. The
8 other points have to do with the way in which that lane reduction is achieved and the temporary
9 nature of that reduction. Rubber necking, as it may be called in some parts of the country,
10 gawking does contribute to traffic slow downs, unexpected conditions contribute to congestion
11 delay, unexpected stops and starts. A number of factors meant that that configuration was not
12 designed or handled in a way that would really be a good example of a traffic lane reduction
13 even if we were to consider doing it at such a high volume location.
14

15 The next example is Menlo Park. Segments of El Camino through Menlo Park are reduced to
16 four lanes. They happen to be segments that are not comparable to the locations where we might
17 suggest doing it in Palo Alto. Number one, those are locations that carry very high cross street
18 volumes on Ravenswood and on Santa Cruz and on some of the other streets in that area. They
19 are up in the 20,000 vehicles per day range, which is similar to what Embarcadero carries and we
20 are not recommending making such changes at such locations. Our recommendations have to do
21 with locations where the volume is half or less than that on the cross streets. Also the way in
22 which they accomplish the lane changes contributes to unanticipated conditions for some drivers.
23 Those of you who have driven it know that the way in which they reduce their lanes is usually
24 through what we call trap lanes. If you are driving along the curb lane in the six-lane segment
25 that curb lane will become a right turn lane, which will force you to turn at an intersection at
26 which you may or may not have intended to turn. If you didn't intend to turn the reaction is to
27 try to weave abruptly into one of the lanes that will go through. That is not the type of condition
28 we want to create. So the lane transitions that we would be considering would not be lane trap
29 but gradual reductions between intersections. So those two situations do not represent
30 comparables to what we are suggesting for El Camino in Palo Alto.
31

32 To summarize, we are looking ahead to 20 years of traffic growth. We are complimenting
33 improvements to traffic and pedestrian operations through signal timing improvements with
34 design speed changes and possible lane reductions, which have benefits to the calming or speed
35 management of traffic and a better experience for pedestrians, bicycles and transit.
36

37 Next. So this is a summary on why our conclusions are that these proposals will work. We are
38 not reducing at the major intersections, as I said, the changes affect as little as 22% of the
39 corridor and only at locations where the capacity is sufficient. By allowing the street to be
40 narrower at locations where there are pedestrian demands that need to be served crossing the
41 street you create situations where limiting and reducing the pedestrian crossing time takes less
42 time and reduces the amount of red time that then confronts traffic on El Camino. So that phase
43 change time-sharing approach results in more efficiency for El Camino than you might expect.
44 The retiming of signals for coordination allows us to meter traffic flows and to retain that overall
45 travel time at the levels that I mentioned. I think I have covered these points.
46

47 Mr. Erickson: I wanted to quickly illustrate some of the locations where you can see some of
48 these differences play out. So looking at the Stanford Avenue intersection, another important

1 school intersection, here is the existing condition today. Here is what it could look like as a six-
2 lane improvement and here is what it could look like as four lanes. So again, you see this benefit
3 of the shortening of the pedestrian crossing distance.
4

5 We have looked at in different segments, this is in the area around California Avenue
6 intersection, we have looked at how to handle the transitions from three lanes to two lanes. Here
7 you see, as Jerry was talking about, rather than making this a required right turn the traffic comes
8 through the intersection and then makes its merge as it continues to move north. As you go in
9 the other direction you see two lanes southbound going towards Page Mill, what happens there is
10 you can add lanes more quickly. So we have been looking at these kinds of details. Again,
11 another simulation, what California Avenue looks like today and what it could look like in the
12 future. That is our presentation.
13

14 Chair Bialson: Thank you very much. Virginia or Steve, do you have any comments to make?
15

16 Mr. Emslie: Just that this concludes our presentation and we would be happy to entertain any
17 questions before we take public comment.
18

19 Chair Bialson: Thank you. I would ask Commissioners to ask any questions now. We will have
20 an opportunity after the public speaks but I would like to have the Commissioners kick off any
21 questions. Any questions? Pat.
22

23 Commissioner Burt: I would like to make sure I understood one critical aspect. I believe you
24 were saying that in the areas that you are proposing as possible reductions to four or five lanes
25 the way in which the traffic flow is not diminished or the reason that it is not diminished is that
26 currently the flow running north-south on El Camino is impeded by red lights that you run into at
27 those kind of fairly low volume intersections. And that the length of time that that light is red is
28 not in order to allow cars to pass through the intersection but it is how long it takes for a
29 pedestrian to walk across. Is that correct?
30

31 Mr. Walters: There are two things going on. One is that the lights that you will encounter are
32 red more often than they should be regardless of whether it is pedestrians or vehicles on the side
33 street that are causing them to be red. They could be coordinated better so that the typical trip
34 didn't involve encountering as many of them. Then there is the matter of whether the red light is
35 because of pedestrians only or high volumes of side street traffic. We have looked at the
36 volumes of side street traffic and the pedestrian requirements on all of those side streets. We
37 find that when you take into consideration the volume of traffic, in many locations it is low
38 enough so that when a pedestrian is present it takes longer for the pedestrian to cross than the
39 typical number of vehicles that stores up on the side street when it is waiting for its green signal.
40 So that 30-seconds for a pedestrian to have a comfortable crossing time plus a few seconds for
41 what we call "solid walk time," so the 30 is the time from the time you begin getting a flashing
42 don't walk to the time you get across, that that amount of time is greater than the time it takes the
43 vehicles to complete their maneuvers. So if we narrow the pedestrian crossings we shorten that
44 returning from red to green on El Camino.
45

46 Commissioner Burt: Are signals currently such that where we have the option for pedestrians to
47 push a button to get a pedestrian walk sign does the amount of green time crossing El Camino
48 change if there is a pedestrian request to go across from when there is only vehicular crossing?

1
2 Mr. Walters: Yes it does, which is why the crossing time may only be that 30 seconds plus when
3 a pedestrian button is pushed. It turns to red quicker for the side street if it is only a traffic call.
4

5 Commissioner Burt: A final follow up because I think this is where the rubber meets the road on
6 this issue. If we narrow the roadway then the amount of time that it takes the pedestrian to cross
7 is less time consequently we get more green time on El Camino on those signals and that's why
8 the traffic flow is not reduced considerably even though we have reduced the number of lanes.
9

10 Mr. Walters: Correct. That is one of the key reasons.
11

12 Chair Bialson: Virginia.
13

14 Ms. Warheit: I just want to make sure that and Jerry said this, there are two things. One is the
15 pedestrian and the other is that the synchronization of the lights now is very poor so there is a lot
16 of efficiency to be achieved out of better signalization coordination.
17

18 Commissioner Burt: Right but we could get that efficiency whether we are six lanes or four.
19

20 Ms. Warheit: Right.
21

22 Chair Bialson: Joseph, do you have a question?
23

24 Commissioner Bellomo: Yes. Does part of your strategy include curb cut reductions in future
25 developments along? How do you foresee the impacts of development as we look at curb cuts
26 either diminished or increased?
27

28 Mr. Erickson: That is an issue that maybe if we had the time to get to a higher level of detail we
29 could have looked at and focused on. I would say at this point the kinds of improvements that
30 we are talking about making within the street could occur regardless of the curb cut issue. At
31 some locations if say there is a curb cut that is close to a corner that may affect how a bulbout
32 might be designed but we have not been proposing curb cut reductions. While that probably
33 would provide a benefit to all the kinds of things that we are talking about it was both a level of
34 detail and then also just an issue that we felt didn't need to be looked at at this level.
35

36 Commissioner Bellomo: I would like to clarify as well, Caltrans standards and your
37 recommended standards. How in fact do they dovetail? Caltrans has specific, I have worked
38 with them, it is arduous, and how is it that you see this being a win/win with the City and
39 implementing standards that are above and beyond what Caltrans might or might not suggest or
40 standardize? How does that set a standard for when you have an edge? Where does that edge
41 start and stop and why not take it beyond the edge? What sets the standard for Caltrans to say
42 well this is a better vision or this is a better standard and you are maybe creating something that
43 they should do throughout?
44

45 Mr. Erickson: There is a real change happening in Caltrans today. It is happening for a number
46 of reasons. One of the reasons is there are a number of communities that are now raising this
47 issue with Caltrans for a variety of different reasons but at the same time I think Caltrans sees an
48 opportunity to benefit communities around those other transportation modes so that they have

1 more of a focus now on being safer for pedestrians, they are being safer for bicyclists. The
2 Director of Caltrans has issued a memorandum that says that Caltrans shall do context sensitive
3 design. Frankly, this project has become a project where Caltrans is starting to figure out a lot of
4 how do they take that memorandum and act on it because a lot of what is in their highway design
5 manual if looked at conservatively would be an impediment to a lot of the changes that we are
6 talking about, narrowing lanes, a lot of very detailed dimensional issues that we didn't want to
7 get into but we have spent a lot of time both within the team, with your transportation folks here
8 in the City and in numerous meetings with Caltrans working through these issues. There are
9 some unique aspects to this project. This project is happening at a planning level. Typically
10 Caltrans doesn't provide what they call exceptions where you can break those dimensional rules
11 until you get down to a much more detailed level of design where you have working drawings
12 and you are pretty much ready to start construction. They have decided that there are number of
13 issues where they are now willing to look at granting those exceptions at a planning level. Here
14 we are developing these concepts for El Camino Real and if in the future they said, "no, you
15 really have to have 12-foot wide lanes," that has a ripple effect through a lot of the things that we
16 have been talking about. They are willing now to look at granting exceptions for things like that
17 that we hope to achieve before this project is complete and exception from them that says yes,
18 you can do 11-foot lanes and the future improvements. So they are starting to look more
19 creatively and we have been working hand-in-hand with them throughout this project.

20
21 Commissioner Bellomo: So I guess a timeline. Is it possible to move Caltrans in an expeditious
22 way incrementally? You talk about timing. Can there be important factors of this plan put in
23 place prior to others? Is it global when you talk of working drawings is it phased? When you
24 say there are safety problems, are those implemented immediately? How do you envision this
25 working with a group like Caltrans and to get anything done?

26
27 Mr. Erickson: The first thing and Virginia you might want to chime in on this, it is surprising
28 how fast Caltrans can move when they want to. I think there is a lot of lore around Caltrans.
29 Again, it is a combination of factors. They are hearing about this a lot more. They are funding
30 this project really as a model project to address a lot of these issues. Then the other aspect of
31 your question in terms of how this would actually begin to be implemented, we have been
32 thinking about that. About how the project could move forward in phases and again that is one
33 of the reasons that we have tried to identify some of these exceptions that we want to get at a
34 planning level. That then tells us that we can move forward with implementing this concept here
35 and we have some confidence that we will be able to move forward through the rest of the
36 corridor.

37
38 Commissioner Bellomo: Do your concepts include audible accessible crosswalks for
39 accessibility throughout this corridor?

40
41 Mr. Erickson: We haven't gotten to that level of detail but that is something that certainly could
42 be a part of these improvements.

43
44 Commissioner Bellomo: I am going to pass on now.

45
46 Chair Bialson: Michael.

47

1 Commissioner Griffin: I have to tell you that I have real trepidation about the lanes moving back
2 and forth between six to four and back to six again. I am a salesman by profession. I spend way
3 too much time stuck in traffic and one of the things that really is an impediment to getting around
4 the Bay Area are lanes pinching off either through design or accidents or what have you. It is
5 really a difficult leap for me to buy into the concept of the El Camino moving back and forth
6 with these pinch points, I am going to call them. I am wondering if in the course of your analysis
7 that you were able to come across an example of where this approach was executed successfully
8 hopefully in California but anyplace so that we had a chance to look at them as a template or a
9 model.

10
11 Mr. Emslie: While they search their database for an example let me just say that keeping this at
12 six lanes, three lanes in each direction, is a very viable option. We can achieve many of the
13 goals that we set out to achieve and still keep six lanes. It is just that we felt duty bound to
14 inform you that there are in the opinion of technical experts in this field that it is possible to go
15 beyond and achieve even more objectives by going to four lanes in limited locations. I don't
16 want to leave anyone with the impression that if we don't reduce a lane that we can't improve El
17 Camino. Nothing could be further from the truth. We get the bulbouts, we get improved
18 pedestrian crossings, you get the enhanced sidewalks, you get many of the objectives that we set
19 out to do. So it is in the spirit of providing you with the baseline information so that you can
20 start to weigh and make those choices. It would be a very, very successful project if we were to
21 continue to have six lanes.

22
23 Commissioner Griffin: Would anyone like to address my question directly?
24

25 Mr. Erickson: That is what I am going to try to do right now. There are locations on state
26 highways where this does occur. I believe, and again this is something where we have been
27 working with Caltrans and we will continue to work with them to identify some locations, on
28 East 14th Street in San Leandro there are locations where there are lane drops. I believe in the
29 Cathedral City example that I showed earlier, although I am not 100% certain, that they have
30 reductions in lanes as well. Another thing that I wanted to get to though directly about this issue
31 is that I want to be clear that there really aren't that many locations where this would happen.
32 The way that you had phrased the question of the lanes weaving in and out and all of the
33 transitions that we have from three to two lanes, in both of the configurations that we look at in
34 each direction, here if you are coming northbound on El Camino, there is a reduction here, then
35 there is an addition of a lane here, there is a reduction here and an addition there. So there is
36 really only two locations as you move through the entire stretch of El Camino where there would
37 be that reduction in the number of lanes. So it is not this kind of thing that is going to happen
38 very frequently. You see cases in streets where for traffic calming techniques and other things
39 like that where this kind of movement happens more frequently. That is not what we are talking
40 about here. The speed management things that we are talking about are occurring more within
41 the overall design of the street and there is really only two locations in each direction where that
42 reduction in lanes would occur.

43
44 Chair Bialson: You have the six lanes throughout that you have designed. How many spots or
45 spaces do you lose in on-street parking if you do try to maintain six lanes throughout?
46

47 Mr. Erickson: We have not done a count of that. What we have done and earlier when I showed
48 where the turn pocket was that is the location where there could be the potential to see a

1 reduction in parking. That is because what we are trying to do there is widen that narrow median
2 enough both for planting trees but also for the protection of pedestrians crossing the street. We
3 have come up with design alternatives where in that most constrained location where you have
4 six lanes and a turn pocket there is a design of the street that would work were you don't have
5 parking on either side of the street. There is a design alternative where you have parking on one
6 side but not on the other and then there is a third where you can still have parking on both sides
7 of the street. Is it Park Boulevard near California in Palo Alto there are these sort of parking
8 pockets where there are areas where the curb moves back, you have few parking spaces, the curb
9 comes out farther and you have a location for a tree and some other landscaping. It is a concept
10 something like that. Again, this is a project at a planning level but what we have done is come
11 up with solutions that can meet all of the potentials that are out there where you could have
12 parking on both sides, parking just on one side or maybe there is a location where there isn't a
13 need for parking on either side of the street and then you wouldn't have it. So it is again through
14 the detail design that you can still provide for the parking solutions that the users and property
15 owners along the street would want to see.

16
17 Chair Bialson: Okay. Karen.

18
19 Commissioner Holman: I had a question about lane widths. Apparently, if I am understanding
20 correctly, Caltrans's standard is 12-foot and this plan proposes 11-foot wide lanes. So can you
21 tell me where 11-foot lanes have been used successfully? Also could you compare that to what
22 typical Palo Alto residential lane widths are?

23
24 Mr. Erickson: That has probably been the most gratifying event in any of the meetings that we
25 have had with Caltrans is when we bring up 11-foot lanes. At one point we were talking about
26 some locations needing ten foot, six inch lanes and you see them start to grumble a bit. They
27 have the flexibility to go to 11- feet and they do it quite often. Many diamond lanes on high-
28 speed freeways are 11-feet. The travel lanes on the Golden Gate Bridge are ten feet, I believe.
29 Van Ness in San Francisco where it stayed Highway 101 has ten-foot lanes. So they do, where
30 they need to for physical constraints often go smaller than 11-feet. Eleven feet was really a
31 condition where they didn't see an issue. That is one of the exceptions that we are going to work
32 towards getting at the planning level. There are numerous streets throughout the Caltrans state
33 highway system that have 11-foot lanes.

34
35 Commissioner Holman: So basically I threw you a lob.

36
37 Mr. Erickson: Thank you.

38
39 Commissioner Holman: I have one other question too. Excuse me?

40
41 Ms. Warheit: They threw us a lob with that one. That was our one easy thing with Caltrans.

42
43 Commissioner Holman: Thank you. Do you have an answer about what types of development
44 parking is going to be the most advantageous both for entry onto El Camino from both a safety
45 perspective and from a flow perspective? In other words, out of what type of garage parking, out
46 of alley, at surface level parking is there a type of access that you would say would not be
47 advantageous or that would be advantageous?

48

1 Mr. Erickson: While we ponder let me ask for clarification on your non-lob question. Is the
2 issue that you are trying to get at side street as opposed to onto El Camino or location along El
3 Camino? I am not exactly sure what you are asking.

4
5 Commissioner Holman: Development on El Camino because we are trying to keep traffic
6 flowing and also addressing safety and there are some situations on El Camino now where the
7 site isn't very good. Maybe this is too specific at this point in time but I was wondering if there
8 were types of development that you would say should be avoided or should be encouraged to
9 help implement the safe entry onto El Camino. Is that clearer?

10
11 Mr. Walters: This would be a location specific type of condition and assessment. We wouldn't
12 encourage high volume traffic generators such as parking garages at mid block locations where
13 there might be an attempt to achieve either an new opening in the median or a signal or some
14 other means of allowing that access to occur. On the other extreme for the character of the
15 sidewalk and the parking and the pedestrian conditions frequent curb cuts, too frequent curb cuts,
16 in addition to those that are there now is not desirable. So there is generally a reasonable
17 compromise between those two that we would be attempting to achieve at most locations.
18 Counter to my first point, there may be some locations at which a relatively high volume
19 connection could be provided and a new signal could be installed. We do find that the signal
20 spacing along some segments of El Camino is widely spaced enough that it actually encourages
21 speeds to pick up between intersections. As long as those new signals could be coordinated with
22 the rest of the system, provide yet another pedestrian crossing point that is protected by a signal,
23 that may be an acceptable situation.

24
25 Commissioner Holman: I asked the question because as I am sure you know we are looking at
26 the Zoning Ordinance Update and I thought that might be some helpful information for us to
27 have in the back of our minds as we are looking at that.

28
29 Chair Bialson: Thank you very much for answering that question. I would like to go to the
30 public now. We have quite a few cards and since this was presented to the public as a meeting
31 that would go 7:00 to 9:00 I would like to have the public have an opportunity to speak during
32 that period. First is Dan Askari to be followed by John Ciccarelli. Each speaker will have three
33 minutes to speak. If you could come up to the microphone and please give your name.

34
35 Mr. Dan Askari, 3897 El Camino Real, Palo Alto: Good evening. I am delighted that you are
36 looking into the traffic flow on El Camino for the next 20 years. I was wondering if I could
37 bring your attention to some immediate need on El Camino Real. I have a Chevron gas station at
38 the corner of El Camino and Ventura. It is very close to the pictures floating around on Los
39 Robles. I think it is the next street. It is one of the wider streets without a streetlight. I wonder
40 if you remember that there was a really bad accident where one of the kids was crossing the
41 street and got run over by a car. I was there and it was real horrific. That was a couple of years
42 ago. I guess for some reason Caltrans agreed to put a stoplight there. I am there every day and I
43 see a lot of close calls, believe me everyday that don't get reported but there are a lot of close
44 calls with kids crossing the street coming from the traffic school coming over to this side. They
45 are going to Hollywood Video or going to Jack in the Box. There is just a lot of traffic,
46 pedestrians crossing the street. So I am just here to see what it takes to push a button with
47 Caltrans. It has already been approved. Like they said, I really don't think crossing El Camino
48 at that time. To be honest with you I try to use the shorter side to get to the other side of El

1 Camino. What would it take to press the button with Caltrans to get things going? Like they
2 said if they want to get things done they can. So what would it take to do it? Are we just waiting
3 for another accident to happen? It is really sad. I appreciate your time.
4

5 Chair Bialson: Thank you very much for bringing that to our attention. We will see what we can
6 do. Next John Ciccarelli to be followed by Dana Knowles.
7

8 Mr. John Ciccarelli, 2065 Yale Street, Palo Alto: Good evening Chair and Commissioners. I am
9 representing the College Terrace Residents Association. I am the Board's City Observer. We
10 are excited about this project and we have been working as members of the advisory group. I
11 represent the Terrace. Kathy Durham has been representing school commute issues. We are
12 excited about the progress and the process. El Camino is our front yard we are one of the
13 neighborhoods that has the privilege or some other words might be used of fronting on El
14 Camino. It does a lot for us. It is one of the reasons I live in College Terrace. It puts me close
15 to personal resources, transportation, haircut, dentist, bank, stores, you name it but it could be a
16 nicer place to walk across and along and a nicer place to bike across and along. For those of our
17 residents with kids it is a place to commute to school not only for Terrace residents but for
18 residents of our neighborhoods across the street who want to cross at Stanford Avenue
19 especially. Possible improvements as a result of this study and its resulting design templates
20 give us great hope that the Stanford Avenue crossing could be made a lot safer and more pleasant
21 than it currently is. You walk along El Camino right now and it is not a pleasant place to walk as
22 an individual. It is probably not a pleasant place to think about locating a business if your
23 business has any sort of a pedestrian dimension to it. So one of the exciting outcomes about this
24 could be a more viable place for commerce, which is what keeps the machinery of Palo Alto
25 running. So I would like to encourage you to keep an open mind about the technical alternatives.
26 It is hard to get your brain around so many interrelated concepts especially if you are not a
27 transportation engineer. I wanted to offer an analogy that might help explain why I think and
28 why many people are convinced that selective lane reduction could work and thus enable us to
29 bring all the rest of the benefits in terms of pedestrian crossing and such. El Camino is not a
30 closed pipe. It doesn't carry the same amount of water at every point along the pipe. Traffic
31 adds to it, traffic leaves it. There is oncoming, for example a trip that I take to Downtown adds a
32 car at Stanford Avenue, subtracts a car at Churchill. This is happening all up and down El
33 Camino and so it is not a pipe that has to be six lanes the whole way. That is not the right
34 analogy to use. So we encourage you to keep an open mind about both the alternatives being
35 presented and we will get El Camino not only as a place to move cars but especially with this
36 new opening by Caltrans a way to make a new place for Palo Alto. It is really setting a set of
37 design standards that can allow a place to evolve from what is now just a highway. Thanks. I
38 want to hand copies of our newsletter to everyone on the Board.
39

40 Chair Bialson: Thank you. Dana Knowles to be followed by Roger Carpenter.
41

42 Ms. Dana Knowles, 390 Oxford Avenue, Palo Alto: Thank you. I live in the neighborhood
43 across from College Terrace in Evergreen Park. I have three small children who cross El
44 Camino to go to Escondido Elementary School and I am also the traffic safety rep for Escondido.
45 My main concern is safety crossing westbound on Stanford Avenue across El Camino. I literally
46 have to hurry our children along so that we make it across that light and that is the case for
47 approximately 50 to 80 adults and children who cross that direction going to Escondido on a

1 daily basis. So I would just echo those same points about safety. I thank you for this
2 opportunity to comment.

3
4 Chair Bialson: Could you stay up there? We have a question for you. Pat.

5
6 Commissioner Burt: Yes. I am interested in your opinions or your knowledge from being a
7 school commute coordinator. What potential increase in pedestrian and school children ridership
8 might we achieve if we have safer crossings? Do you have any sense of that?

9
10 Ms. Knowles: Yes. I can only speak anecdotally. I do know that there are many parents who
11 drive their kids across El Camino because they don't want either themselves want to walk or bike
12 across or take their kids across. So I say there might be 50 additional families who might walk
13 that intersection or bike. We hope to have some firmer numbers on that.

14
15 Chair Bialson: Thank you. Roger Carpenter to be followed by Kirsten Flynn.

16
17 Mr. Roger Carpenter, 2091 Park Boulevard, Palo Alto: I also live in Evergreen Park, cross street
18 Oxford between Stanford and California. I just wanted to relay a couple of experiences that I
19 have had recently. One of them was just at lunch on a Saturday on California Avenue and I
20 made the decision to walk up El Camino on the way home back to my house, walk from
21 California up to Oxford, only three blocks. I walked with my two children. I have a five-year
22 old son and three year old daughter. My son was on a scooter and my daughter was on a very
23 small bicycle on the sidewalk. About halfway my son fell over, hurt his knee and anywhere else
24 it wouldn't have been a big deal but with all of the traffic noise it was a very stressful experience.
25 At least this is one customer that won't go to the businesses on El Camino anymore if my
26 children are around. The other experience, I bike to Escondido every day with both my children.
27 I have a double trailer bike so that they are attached to my bicycle. I certainly wouldn't do it if
28 they weren't attached to my bicycle. Even with them attached I was crossing on a green light
29 and cars coming east on Stanford, there is no left turn lane, will turn left to travel north on El
30 Camino. There is typically very little traffic coming out of Evergreen Park so a lot of cars
31 assume that they can make that left turn without even looking. I was crossing and had to come to
32 a stop because cars were cutting across in front of me even though I had a green light. The scary
33 part about it was not that they cut across me but the light turned red as I was trying to cross and
34 since there is no delay between the light turning red and El Camino getting a green four lanes of
35 traffic started coming towards me as I was crossing the rest of the intersection. I literally had to
36 jump and down and scream to the drivers so that they wouldn't hit me. I just wanted to give you
37 those experiences. My main concern is obviously our safety.

38
39 Chair Bialson: Thank you very much. I see we were taking a lot of notes during your
40 presentation. I appreciate that. Next is Kirsten Flynn to be followed by Bob Moss.

41
42 Mr. Kirsten Flynn, 471 Matadero Avenue, Palo Alto: I live in the Ventura neighborhood. I like
43 many of the people who have spoken need to cross El Camino with my children. I bike to
44 Barron Park School. As an aside, I do have some information on walking to school and what
45 kind of traffic reduction could be possible. I was a coordinator for International Walk to School
46 Day, which is October 2 of every year. We took surveys on how children had gotten to school
47 that day and there was a 25% reduction in the number of children who raised their hands saying
48 they were taking the single family car that day and there was a 25% rise in the number of

1 children who said they were walking that day. So that was a one-day effort with a fair amount of
2 publicity and effort on my part. It had quite a large gain so it is possible to get kids to walk
3 again. My point relates to schoolchildren, school children must cross El Camino. The way that
4 the schools are zoned my entire neighborhood must cross El Camino, all of Ventura. This is a
5 neighborhood where a lot of people that walk or ride bicycles don't do it because they want to or
6 because they want to stay fit. They are not what you would call ["funny clothed cyclists]."
7 These are cyclists who walk perhaps because they do not have a car or because they share a car
8 with their family and their spouse needs it to go to work. We have a lot of families that walk to
9 Barron Park every day. I think we owe it to these children and we owe it to these families to
10 make them safe on the road going to their neighborhood school. An interesting statistic that I
11 came across when I was working on Walk to School Day is that the number of children who live
12 less than a quarter mile from school and yet are driven to school is around 50%, less than a
13 quarter mile and they are driven to school. I think safety is the main reason. Also not
14 coincidentally I think obesity amongst children is often called an epidemic nowadays. Pedestrian
15 and bicycle traffic has been inconvenienced by El Camino and divided by El Camino and in fact
16 entirely avoids El Camino for decades. I think an interesting point from one of the slide is that
17 all modalities must be accommodated. The existing traffic must be accommodated in order for
18 us to get this funded. So there is a financial benefit to accommodating all the modalities. El
19 Camino could be a neighborhood center for me. Venture is a vibrant neighborhood and there is a
20 lot of shopping that could take place on El Camino, which would help our tax base. So lets take
21 this project as an opportunity to make this street a vibrant part of our community instead of a
22 divider down the middle of our community. Thank you very much for your time.

23
24 Chair Bialson: Thank you. Bob Moss to be followed by Anjan Ghose.

25
26 Mr. Bob Moss, 4010 Orme, Palo Alto: Thank you. I would like to try to separate the proposals
27 that were made tonight into three categories. The first one is why are we waiting so long? The
28 second is these are quite reasonable and the third is be careful. In the first category landscaping
29 El Camino is something that we have been talking about for literally decades. In 1985 Ken
30 Artunian did a pro bono landscape design, which was only very slightly adopted thanks to a
31 combination of the drought and Caltrans rigidity. The second of course is synchronizing signals,
32 which we have been asking for again for many, many years. Those things are slam-dunks. Why
33 don't we do them tomorrow? The second category of things that I believe are quite reasonable
34 and I don't think are very controversial. For example narrowing street a ways to 11-feet, putting
35 in bike lanes, widening the sidewalks to say ten feet, widening the medians to eight to 12 feet
36 providing safety places for pedestrians to stay in the middle. These are all fairly simple and non-
37 controversial. The ones that start getting exciting are things like removing parking along the
38 commercial strip. If you remove the parking in the 3500 and 3600 blocks of El Camino you will
39 essentially put all of those businesses out of business. They have to have the on-street parking.
40 Without on-street parking they die. You have heard a lot of comments about the four and six
41 lane sections. In the ones that they showed you in the graphics there was only one change in
42 section. For example in North Hollywood what they did was they changed it at either end and it
43 is four lanes throughout it doesn't go narrow, wide, narrow. That is as far as I know has never
44 been done before. As for the computer simulations I have seen them a number of times and they
45 have a major defect. That is they don't include the chaos factor and I have discussed this with
46 both Staff and the consultants and they agree. Unfortunately they don't know how to computer
47 model chaos. So that makes it very, very difficult to really do the job right. The other problem I
48 have is the graphics we saw today. For example El Camino at Los Robles shows that the four-

1 lane section would be north of Los Robles but the map we have shows it would be south between
2 Los Robles and Maybell. They talk about also not having the four-lane section too close to
3 major intersections. Maybell is only 700 feet from Charleston. That is close. There is also talk
4 in this about how, for example Maybell is a major crossing for commerce. The west side of El
5 Camino between Maybell and Los Robles is 100% housing and on the other side there are
6 probably five stores. There is no commerce. There is no reason for people to cross the street for
7 commercial purposes. However, where there is for example near the gas station, as you heard,
8 that is not shown as major commerce. So the map is wrong. The map does not reflect reality. I
9 have lived here for 30-years, I know what El Camino is like. This map doesn't reflect what El
10 Camino is like.

11
12 Chair Bialson: Thank you. I will let you introduce yourself and then to be followed by Paul
13 Goldstein. I again apologize.

14
15 Mr. Anjan Ghose, 4119 Park Boulevard, Palo Alto: I live in the Charleston Meadows
16 neighborhood on Park Boulevard. First of all I am delighted that you are looking seriously at
17 improving El Camino. We have heard a lot of good discussion today on making El Camino safer
18 for schoolchildren, for pedestrians, six lanes versus four lanes. One area I would also like to
19 bring up is to make El Camino part of an integral network of bike routes. I like using my bike,
20 so does my son. We try to use Park and Bryant and try to avoid El Camino if at all possible.
21 That is something I dread, crossing El Camino with out bikes. So now that we are redesigning it
22 I would urge the Commission to make sure that El Camino is an integral part of our bike route in
23 Palo Alto, which I think improves the quality of life. Thank you.

24
25 Chair Bialson: Paul Goldstein to be followed by Joy Ogawa.

26
27 Mr. Paul Goldstein, 1024 Emerson Street, Palo Alto: I wanted to talk about two things, one is
28 bike lanes. The current plans as presented to incorporate a bike lane for the entire length of El
29 Camino in Palo Alto. The bike lane can be accommodated without reducing the number of
30 traffic lanes. It can be accommodated in the six-lane option. The bike lane requires very little
31 additional width from what otherwise would be a wide right turn shoulder lane. The addition of
32 the striping on the bike lane psychologically narrows the right lane thereby promoting and
33 encouraging slower travel speeds. So in addition to providing a more comfortable experience for
34 a bicyclist it also has a side benefit of narrowing the psychological width of the roadway for a
35 driver thereby encouraging slower speeds. As the previous gentleman said El Camino is used by
36 bicyclists. It is used both as a route to get to and from and of course many of us have to cross El
37 Camino. The kinds of improvements that the consultants have presented would make it easier to
38 cross.

39
40 I was on the citizens advisory committee to this and I think everybody has done a really good
41 job. We have gone through a lot of iterations on it. I do support the project as it has been
42 presented. One thing I did want to emphasis is our Planning Director has talked about how the
43 six-lanes will work. The six-lane option will work but I really do want us to explore and keep
44 those four lane options available. I have lived both in College Terrace and also the area around
45 Los Robles. I know what El Camino is like there. It is a barrier. It is difficult to cross. It makes
46 businesses on the other side seem much further away. Having that be a narrower street with
47 wider sidewalks, wider medians, I think would do a great deal to encourage the kind of
48 community development that we want here in Palo Alto. The necessity for the additional lanes is

1 often for stacking around major intersections. Traffic engineers understand this well but that is
2 why the six lanes are always preserved around these major intersections. It is in places between
3 the intersections where you can get the same amount of carrying capacity in a four-lane
4 configuration. Thank you very much.

5
6 Chair Bialson: Joy Ogawa to be followed by John Traynor.

7
8 Ms. Joy Ogawa, 2305 Yale Street, Palo Alto: I live in College Terrace, two short blocks from El
9 Camino. I walk across El Camino just about every day. So I would love to have a better
10 pedestrian experience and to me, wider sidewalks is the main element that I think would
11 contribute most to an improved pedestrian experience. But I am not willing to sacrifice my street
12 to the added impact of increased cut-through traffic for an improved pedestrian experience along
13 El Camino. I have attended both workshops. I have listened to the consultant's presentations
14 and I am convinced that reducing lane numbers from six to four between Park Boulevard and
15 California Avenue will result in increased cut-through traffic on Cambridge and Yale from cars
16 wanting to get from El Camino to Page Mill heading west. On the other hand I am also
17 convinced that the notion of reduction in lane number will never fly in this City. In fact I think
18 that reducing lane numbers is a lightning rod for criticism and if the proponents of this plan
19 really want to see some positive changes along El Camino they will eliminate the notion of
20 reduction in lane numbers as soon as possible. Again, I am a frequent El Camino pedestrian and
21 if you can't get my support for this concept it is going to be a really hard sell.

22
23 On the other hand there are elements of the plan I can support. Coordinated traffic signals, yes.
24 Wider sidewalks, yes. Bike lanes, yes. I don't even mind narrowing lane widths by one foot.
25 Trees where feasible, yes, with the caveat that I do not think that sidewalk widths should be
26 sacrificed for medians wide enough for large trees. In some places smaller trees might have to
27 be substituted and in some places such as intersections with the left turn lanes the medians might
28 not be able to support trees at all. These are things that should be faced. Don't get me wrong I
29 love trees. I volunteered to plant and survey trees for canopies. I just don't think that planting
30 large trees all along the median on El Camino should be a top priority.

31
32 I wanted to also make some comments about bulbouts and how some of the locations of bulbouts
33 will not work. I made a graphic I was going to show but it is just not set up for it and I don't
34 have the time. There are some places I think bulbouts will interfere with right turn lanes to the
35 point of backing up traffic. So bulbouts in certain sections fine, in some places you just have to
36 be really careful. I wanted to say that the predictions of the traffic flow, these models, are based
37 on data that was collected in the middle of this year and I don't think that is illustrative.
38 Certainly it doesn't reflect the traffic that we had two years ago. I remember standing at the
39 corner of Page Mill and El Camino with a political sign in November of 2000 at the peak PM
40 hour and there were cars backed up all the way beyond California Avenue. The computer
41 simulation that I saw just does not illustrate that. That is traffic we have seen in the past. I don't
42 know, I can't predict the future but I think it is likely we will see that or even worse in the future.
43 I don't think that this simulation took that amount of traffic into account. So I think I have run
44 out things to say and I haven't run out of time. That's amazing. So those are my concerns.

45
46 Chair Bialson: Thank you, Joy. John Traynor to be followed by Kathy Durham.

1 Mr. John Traynor, 30 Churchill Avenue, Palo Alto: I think we have lost track of what El
2 Camino Real is. It is designated as an arterial, which is for the purpose of carrying through
3 traffic. It is not doing its function right now. Last time I looked at a traffic flow map the traffic
4 per lane on Alma was greater than El Camino Real over quite a stretch, which means that El
5 Camino Real is being avoided by many of the drivers rather than being welcomed on the El
6 Camino Real and unload the other areas. We are looking at all kinds of things here which I think
7 are a lot of nonsense, frankly. I live on Churchill between Alma and El Camino Real. We have
8 over 10,000 cut-through drivers a day because El Camino Real is not carrying the load. It is not
9 attracting through drivers. I think synchronization will help greatly if it is done right. I also
10 think synchronization can solve the crosswalk problem as well. If you synchronize traffic in
11 packets going through and then allow more time at the crosswalks for people to get through the
12 crosswalks I think that is all you have to do to make it easier for pedestrians to cross. The other
13 thing is at two o'clock today I came down El Camino Real from the southern city limits all the
14 way to Churchill. I saw nine pedestrians on the sidewalk, that's all. They looked like they could
15 probably do okay on our eight-foot sidewalks on the south end. Why we want to go to 17-foot
16 sidewalks is just ridiculous in my judgment. I don't know where buses are having any problem
17 either, frankly. The bus stops look very functional to me. They are just red lines on the curb and
18 a bus stand. Has anybody checked to find out if there has been a problem? I don't know of any
19 problem maybe there has been. Maybe buses have been rear-ended or something but they
20 shouldn't be because they are in the parking lane when they pull over. I think that the designers
21 are very insensitive to the way El Camino Real is being used. They are proposing so many trees
22 that you can't see the businesses through the trees. The reason people go to El Camino Real to
23 put their businesses there is for visibility. If you have all trees in your view you don't have any
24 visibility the same with the bus stops. If the bus stops are expanded for any reason that cuts out
25 street parking and street parking is vital to many of the businesses along El Camino Real. As far
26 as bicycle lanes are concerned I can't think of a worse place for a bicyclist to be pedaling than
27 along El Camino Real. With the pollution that they are inhaling and 50,000 cars whizzing by at
28 40 or 50 miles per hour is just a horrible thought if anything happens.

29
30 Chair Bialson: Could you wrap up, please?

31
32 Mr. Traynor: Sure. What I really want to see is to make El Camino Real more attractive for cars
33 and have them go through throughways to unload Alma and get off Churchill. Thank you.

34
35 Chair Bialson: Thank you. Kathy Durham to be followed by Irvin Dawid. That would be our
36 last speaker.

37
38 Ms. Kathy Durham, 2039 Dartmouth, Palo Alto: Good evening. Thank you for holding an extra
39 meeting so that we could have more time to do this and I think there is a lot of information that
40 you have been given. Certainly all of us on the advisory committee were amazed at the amount
41 of stuff that we had to look at, think about and so on. Actually, this was one of the more
42 productive project advisory groups that I have been involved with. I would like to commend all
43 of the Staff work and consultant's work that went into that. My main message for you is, El
44 Camino is broken and we have a chance to fix it and we can do it right. When we hear the folks
45 who come up and are telling us from their perspective what does and does not work in traffic we
46 need to remember that the current design doesn't work well for drivers, for businesses, for
47 pedestrians, for cyclists, for kids, for seniors, for the disabled. I can't think of anyone it does

1 work well for. The 1960s design has brought us to this. It can't solve the problems that we are
2 facing. We need a new solution.

3
4 The Comprehensive Plan calls for comprehensive and forward-looking solutions to problems
5 like this. Well here is a proposal that is trying to do just that. It maintains vehicle capacity
6 because this is a highway, it will remain highway, it will remain a truck route, it will remain a
7 transit route. That is the bottom line. The cars and the other motor vehicles have to go through
8 with no diversion. It improves safety for everyone and it has the potential to transform a blighted
9 area into a pleasant shaded environment that people might actually think of as the main street for
10 those us who live on the wrong side of the tracks.

11
12 The six-lane proposal I think is a slam-dunk. As I was reflecting I realized nobody went into this
13 project thinking it was going to be a slam-dunk. I at least was pretty convinced that it was going
14 to be zero sum gain, that trees versus bikes versus cars versus pedestrians, that somebody was
15 going to be the loser in all of this. What we found was that with careful analysis and with some
16 fairly amazing pushing on Caltrans and reminding them of what the [Ashto] standards for 35
17 mile per hour roads are and so on. The role of Joe Simidian, somebody should tell you about this
18 if you haven't already heard this. It does seem like we might be able to have it all, that cars,
19 people and trees can thrive. I just want to say one thing about the four-lane option, which is this
20 design project. To eliminate an option without testing something that there is very strong data to
21 show that it will work is very foolish. Leave that in there and let's work on it, let's try it and see
22 where we get.

23
24 Chair Bialson: Thank you, Kathy. Our last speaker is Irvin Dawid.

25
26 Mr. Irvin Dawid, 753 Alma Street, Palo Alto: Thank you Chair Bialson and Planning and
27 Transportation Commissioners. Just a quick note. A previous speaker said that his goal was to
28 make El Camino Real more attractive for cars to unload Alma. I live on Alma Street. If you
29 look on the west end of Alma for the entire length there is not one business just railroad tracks.
30 On the east side of Alma Street with the exception of one or two businesses north of Lytton there
31 are no businesses. To compare Alma Street with El Camino Real from a multi-modal point of
32 view makes very little sense. You heard from previous speakers, probably the best speaker I
33 thought was the very first one, he mentioned so many businesses that residents there use. I think
34 it clearly indicates the fact as John Ciccarelli said that that is their main street or their front.

35
36 The main thing I want to stress to you today is something that I don't think has really been
37 discussed at all and that is the environmental justice angle. If you look at the census blocks that
38 are the poorest in Palo Alto you will see that they are fronting El Camino Real, specifically
39 Escondido Village and Curtner Ventura. Then you compare that with were our transportation
40 investments are and you will see that they are predominantly in the north part of the City. Look
41 right around here, look at the parking structures, look at residential parking permit projects, look
42 at Downtown North the traffic and the whole cut-through issue there. Here you have a chance I
43 think to actually do some correction. I strongly support the hybrid project. I would modify it. I
44 don't like the way that it stops or it starts very close to Los Robles or just past Los Robles. It
45 should go much further north towards Matadero. I don't know from looking at this map how
46 much of the Curtner Ventura area is covered. That whole area is critical in terms of letting
47 residents there access both sides of El Camino Real.

1 One of the things that I thought was missing from the presentation, and I just want to say that I
2 really need to commend the consultant and Staff I think this was truly excellent. This was one of
3 the best presentations and coordination between Staff and consultants I've seen. There was a
4 mention of lots of rear-end accidents. I would like to see in terms of pedestrian collision
5 specifically casualties and fatalities. I would like to see where those are occurring.
6

7 Finally I just want to say also from the environmental justice angle, if you look at the people who
8 are using the buses on El Camino Real you will see another reason why we should really stress
9 this project and go for what I am calling the modified hybrid. Thank you.
10

11 Chair Bialson: I seem to have one more speaker card for Dorothy Bender and that will be our
12 last speaker.
13

14 Ms. Dorothy Bender, 591 Military Way, Palo Alto: Hi. I live right off of El Camino. I am on
15 my bike every single day. I am on my bike here. I am challenged by El Camino, I am
16 challenged by getting around this town but I do believe that if we support this project and
17 support it as creatively as we can we will get more people out of their cars. There are many,
18 many people who say to me I would be on a bike like you if I felt it was safe. That is why I
19 encourage you to support the project especially the four-lanes. I think that would really make a
20 difference and encourage more people to get out of their cars. Thank you.
21

22 Chair Bialson: Could you stay up there? We have a question. Pat.
23

24 Commissioner Burt: Dorothy, I guess I am surprised that I didn't hear more from some of the
25 Barron Park folks, yourself and Bob Moss about the aspects of the Comp Plan that talked about
26 building a pedestrian oriented retail center in South El Camino there and how this plan may
27 support that goal.
28

29 Ms. Bender: The fact that you didn't hear it I think it is in our wishes, our dreams. So
30 representing Barron Park and knowing my community that would be really something we would
31 want. I have to cross Matadero, that Matadero light, and unless I press the pedestrian activated
32 light there I can hardly make it because it is 30-seconds and I may be behind a few cars. So
33 anything you can do to improve safety. We are in a community that people can bike 365 days a
34 year and I think if we do something about El Camino especially because so many people will be
35 living close to El Camino, the New Housing Element has many, many housing units along that
36 corridor. Unless we do something people will go into their cars.
37

38 Chair Bialson: I seem to have one more speaker and that will absolutely positively be the last
39 person.
40

41 Ms. Ellie Giclmasis, 992 _____: I just wanted to add I ride a bicycle a fair
42 amount and one of the things that is most dangerous on a bicycle is be in a bicycle lane with
43 parking and not have enough room so that people generally open their car doors, they don't look
44 in back to see if there is a bicycle coming, the car door opens in front of you, and if you are not
45 paying strict attention either you have to go out in traffic or squeeze on the brakes. It is a very
46 dangerous situation to have not enough space to be riding well away from the cars. I think any
47 bicyclist will tell you this is true and probably had close calls. My son was actually speeding
48 along in Pasadena and a lady opened the car door and slammed into him. He was hurt

1 considerably. So for that reason, and I don't know about accommodating the traffic, I would
2 encourage four lanes and enough room for the bicycles to be well away from the cars. Thank
3 you.

4
5 Chair Bialson: Thank you. One of our Commissioners has a question for a previous speaker.

6
7 Commissioner Griffin: Bob, I was listening to your comments and you ran out of time. I
8 actually wanted to get your take on the traffic flow coming out of Barron Park crossing El
9 Camino going around the island and heading east on Meadow toward Alma Plaza Shopping
10 Center for example. We are going to be dealing with that issue here in the next couple of weeks
11 and I am just wondering whether or not you or your neighbors have any consideration about how
12 either the lane change or where the lanes throttle back and forth how that would affect Maybell
13 and Los Robles.

14
15 Mr. Moss: There are two aspects to it. I didn't have enough time to be clear but I haven't heard
16 Barron Park Association and people in Barron Park say that narrowing to four lanes between Los
17 Robles and Matadero is unthinkable. It is certainly something we would be willing to try. As
18 Steve has said we are going to try it, we are not going to do anything permanent. It makes more
19 rational sense to do it in that area rather than do it down between Los Robles and Maybell. One
20 of the reasons is that the school traffic, which they are concerned about, going onto Maybell and
21 El Camino Way and Los Robles and El Camino Way especially in the mornings and surprisingly
22 enough in the evening, five o'clock to 5:30 is very heavy. If you do things with the intersections,
23 which significantly impact people crossing and going down toward Meadow, down toward the
24 schools, you are going to have a real mess. The morning traffic when you have a day when it
25 rains you literally can't get down El Camino Way once you cross El Camino. Traffic is backed
26 up all the way. Alma Plaza probably gets less patronage from Barron Park than it normally
27 would because of the congestion getting across El Camino and going down Alma. Much to my
28 amazement I would be going at home at night at 5:30 or six o'clock and traffic coming in the
29 opposite direction, from El Camino to Alma, was backed up beyond Wilkie Way and there is no
30 school. So that is a very, very intensively uses section, a very, very intensively used corridor.
31 The same sort of thing is true on the Maybell side. You get a lot o use in that area. Anything
32 that is done with those intersections has to be done very carefully so you don't prevent traffic
33 from crossing and particularly people who are coming out of El Camino Way and want to go
34 north. They have to be able to get around that corner and go. That is very important otherwise
35 you are going to have traffic backing up around that bend in El Camino Way and all the way
36 back up to Meadow. The same would be true on the other side, on the Maybell side. It is a
37 weird intersection. You can't just treat it the way you would a normal one.

38
39 Commissioner Griffin: Great, thank you, Bob. I appreciate that clarification. Staff might note
40 some of those comments as well.

41
42 Chair Bialson: Thank you. For any members of the public who filled out one of those yellow
43 sheets if you could drop it off to Virginia before you leave that would be appreciated. All those
44 comments will become part of the record for the Staff and Commission to look at.

45
46 We have closed the public hearing portion and I want to bring this back to the Commissioners
47 for their comments and any further questions you may have. Karen, it is your turn.

1 Commissioner Holman: Do the consultants or Staff have any information about the degree of
2 seriousness or fatal accidents that have occurred at any of these intersections that refers to both
3 Irvin Dawid's comment and the first speaker?
4

5 Mr. Walters: We have pedestrian accident information gathered over the most recent three-year
6 period along El Camino. There were seven I believe total at various locations crossing El
7 Camino and none of them were fatal. We have some bicycle accident information here as well
8 but I will have to interpret that before I can give you a clear answer to that question.
9

10 Mr. Emslie: We also have a member of our team who has some additional information about
11 traffic accidents.
12

13 Mr. Chris Gray, Fehr & Peers Traffic Consultant: In the three years for which Caltrans kept
14 accident data there was one fatality which had occurred over the past three years and that
15 occurred at Page Mill. It was a vehicular fatality and there were no bicycle and pedestrian
16 fatalities recorded.
17

18 Chair Bialson: Thank you. Joseph, do you have any questions or comments?
19

20 Commissioner Bellomo: I certainly have many comments having been born and raised on El
21 Camino in the 1950s on an apricot and cherry orchard in Sunnyvale. I have seen the progression
22 of El Camino. I have worked on numerous projects as an architect on El Camino. I think this
23 can be and will be a model project especially in respect to Caltrans engaging with the consultant
24 team and Staff and a community advisory board like this. This is a win/win. I am first of all in
25 obvious support of a lighting synchronization, enhanced cross walks, drought resistant
26 landscaping enhancement all along the corridor. I am in agreement with the lane narrowing. I
27 think one important aspect is having worked on the vitality, livability and walkability along this
28 corridor is the merchants and the retail nature of El Camino Real as well as its mixed-use
29 component. I really do feel the parking is an important element to preserve. The manipulation
30 of four to six lanes is certainly something that I think can work and I am in agreement that a
31 possible trial basis is something to be looked at. At this time I would not look at the hybrid
32 solution of four to six lanes as the option of choice for because I see in the future the growth of
33 El Camino will be an obvious one in the car count. At this point I guess I would say that the six
34 lane solution still is something that I see that could work in concert with the pedestrians and the
35 bicycle lanes. I do think there is something to look at as far as bike safety. To really encourage
36 bicycles to participate in El Camino is tricky. I know as a bike rider I also avoid El Camino and
37 I think that still will come up as traffic is especially the merchant traffic and the off-street
38 parking and how you transition with the bicycles safely. Crossing the street from artery to artery
39 is one thing but transitioning along the corridor is something else that will need to be explored in
40 a safe manner. I think one thing that has not been talked about and I guess I have a question
41 about it is lighting. Dose Caltrans lighting continue to be implemented in your review and your
42 proposal?
43

44 Mr. Erickson: We have been looking at lighting as one of the improvements that would occur
45 with the project. Again, we haven't gotten down to the specifics of it but we expect and some of
46 the phasing of the improvements and such that we have looked at does include lighting, other
47 amenities, benches, that sort of thing as part of the project. I don't see any potential conflicts
48 with Caltrans in terms of lighting and that sort of thing.

1
2 Commissioner Bellomo: One other question. When this is implemented and when you talked
3 about construction documentation and schematic design and design development is this
4 implemented on a segment by segment basis where you actually have schematic design that
5 shows street to street and how that is designed and how it is put forward incrementally? How
6 does that work where you actually fulfill pieces and phases of this coming about?
7

8 Mr. Erickson: Again, there is some potential. One of the examples that I showed, the
9 Hollywood example, they were actually able to pull together funding and built the entire project
10 in one go. So there is some outside chance that something like that could occur but what would
11 happen as you move forward out of the planning level is you would go through as you said sort
12 of the standard schematic design development into construction documents. That is where the
13 detailed involvement with the public, going out meeting with individual property owners,
14 looking at curb cuts, looking at the details of parking, looking at what the City is talking about in
15 terms of future change, the details of where you locate lights, trees and all of those sorts of things
16 would be worked out through that process. Staff might want to chime in on this but I would
17 expect Palo Alto would have a big element of public involvement in working with the folks
18 along the street.
19

20 Chair Bialson: Thank you. Phyllis.
21

22 Commissioner Cassel: I am sorry I wasn't here for the presentation. I will have to look at that
23 later. There were some comments from the public about large trees. I am presuming that the
24 reason you put large trees in is because they have to get up above the height of the large trucks
25 and up high enough with enough clearance underneath to put your signage. I presume that is the
26 case.
27

28 Ms. Warheit: You are aware of the Trees for El Camino Project that the City is sponsoring and
29 that was actually one of the things that initiated the Staff beginning to take a look at this whole
30 thing. The large trees have several advantages. One is they shade the pavement and the
31 pavement actually lasts longer and has to be replaced less frequently if it is shaded. They help to
32 disburse water so it helps with storm water runoff. Then exactly what you said, they are pruned
33 up to 14 feet so sight distance issues, signage, clearance, all of that is really easier with big trees
34 than it is with little trees, which all tend to be right in the way and get truck sheared and block
35 the signs and block pedestrian passage and so on. So it is for all those reasons.
36

37 Chair Bialson: Do you have any comments to make?
38

39 Commissioner Cassel: Just that basically I am glad we are going to try looking at some
40 interesting alternatives as well as just the six-lane option.
41

42 Chair Bialson: Okay. Michael.
43

44 Commissioner Griffin: I will go fast. We have been talking about trees here for the last minute
45 and I am wondering, I know that there is a large group of people in the community that are really
46 trying to get this tree project underway, is it possible that while we are waiting for the funding to
47 do all of this pretty aggressive brick and mortar type work on the El Camino, is it possible to
48 proceed with the trees or does that complicate everybody's life?

1
2 Ms. Warheit: It is definitely a priority to start with the trees right away. In fact the Parks and
3 Recreation Department intend to start the bid documents for planting about 1,000 feet of trees in
4 the section starting at Embarcadero and going south to either Churchill or even possibly on to
5 Park because the median already meets Caltrans standards there. So that is the first hurdle. Until
6 Caltrans actually either grants an exception or changes their standard we are stuck with the 12
7 feet. So come January we will start first where we have already got 12 feet. Then as quickly as
8 we can get leeway to go down to eight feet we will start planting where we have eight feet. Then
9 the next step in continuing with the tree planting is this whole phasing business. Get some sense
10 of what you are going to do first and then unless there is a really strong reason to think that the
11 center of the road might shift we can go ahead with the trees and then work the other things
12 around them. That is a part of a very complicated phasing piece of work that would need to be
13 done as soon as the planning phase is finished.
14

15 Commissioner Griffin: Well, Virginia, are you saying then that we do have to make up our mind
16 what the final configuration of the street is going to look like before the planting starts?
17

18 Ms. Warheit: No, I don't think so. In most cases the center stays in the center and in most cases
19 the median is in the center. Now, like they were saying when you actually get down to putting
20 something in the ground you have to go to the next level of really looking to see if it is here or if
21 it is two feet in another direction. So I can't answer for the whole 4.3 miles right now exactly
22 how it will work out. There is a lot of the median that already 12 feet wide and is either planted
23 with the wrong tree or not planted where we can get a really good start coming this next winter.
24

25 Commissioner Griffin: That is marvelous. Thank you.
26

27 Chair Bialson: You just want to ask questions? Michael, thank you. Okay, Pat.
28

29 Commissioner Burt: First I would like to commend the Staff and the consultants and the
30 working group for really taking an open minded and innovative approach toward this. I
31 frequently have been surprised and disappointed at the community reaction toward new ideas in
32 recent years. Silicon Valley is based on innovation and innovation and progress means that we
33 have to be willing to try new things and evaluate new things. Fortunately the proposals that we
34 have presented before us don't put us down an irreversible path. They give us an option to have
35 a small segment where we would try and find out whether in certain locations the four lane
36 option or a five lane option works effectively or doesn't. Then we base long-term decisions
37 based upon empirical data.
38

39 I also have a few questions. One of the things is that I have heard no discussion about any long
40 term prospects for light rail on El Camino. At one time that was part of the discussion during the
41 Comp Plan. How does that fit in here? Has that been ruled out or is it still an option or what?
42

43 Ms. Warheit: That was something that they looked at when we first started the project. Is it
44 possible to have light rail and still do any of these things? One of the very first things that the
45 traffic experts concluded was that those four big intersections drive El Camino, Alma,
46 Embarcadero, Page Mill and Charleston. If they are successful everything else in between needs
47 less capacity. At those intersections you don't have any room for light rail. We can't drop lanes
48 at those intersections so there is no place to put the light rail. So that was kind of right out of the

1 box we knew it wasn't going to work. Now there is fortunately the BRT Concept, the Bus Rapid
2 Transit Concept, tries to meet a lot of the benefits of light rail with bus. It might be that the bus
3 technology is going to catch up and get to the point where it gives us what we would get with
4 light rail also. They have looked at some scenarios in which in the future if you wanted to have
5 railed vehicles it could be side running instead of in the center. So it would run in the outside
6 lane kind of like how on Market Street it shares space with the cars. There is always that option
7 but to have a dedicated light rail, two-direction track down El Camino there is no room for it and
8 accommodate the traffic at those four major intersections.
9

10 Commissioner Burt: Thank you. Another question I have is that one of the speakers mentioned
11 kind of precarious crossings of El Camino with bicycles as oncoming traffic is turning left into a
12 lane. One of the fathers of young children going to Escondido, I think. I have run into that same
13 sort of circumstance and in particular with children. When you have children you are more
14 hesitant to charge across an intersection. As part of this plan does it include striping of bike
15 lanes as we cross intersections so that oncoming traffic would become more visually queued to
16 bike traffic going across El Camino?
17

18 Mr. Walters: We have been aware of that issue from the beginning of the study. That is a very
19 critical one. The way in which we have attempted to discover solutions has been to separate the
20 traffic movements more discretely from the bicycle movements rather than to rely on paint to
21 provide the protection. Within the handling of how the signals are times and the traffic lanes are
22 timed there are really two options. One is to create separate movements for example at Stanford
23 Avenue as it crosses El Camino to have one side of Stanford Avenue move first for all
24 movement, bicycles and vehicles, and the other side move second so that there isn't an oncoming
25 conflict issue. The other potential solution is to strip the traffic lanes so that there is a separate
26 left turn lane and through movement lane so that the conflicting movements are more easily
27 separated from one another. The uncertainty on the part of the bicyclist as to whether the vehicle
28 is turning or going through is partially addressed in that way. In our simulations and analysis of
29 the corridor we have been attempting to rely on that first segregation measure where possible and
30 the second, the striping change, where that doesn't work or can't be accommodated.
31

32 Commissioner Burt: Thank you. Finally, could the consultants explain a little bit more for me
33 why in some segments the design is to have three lanes on one side and two on another and why
34 that works.
35

36 Mr. Walters: As one of the commenters pointed out traffic operations is about quite a lot of
37 dynamic movement issues and it also comes down in the end and in some cases o just storing
38 vehicles while signals are going through their cycles. The three lane segments on one side of the
39 street as opposed to two on the other are usually placed at locations where we need three lanes to
40 stack vehicles waiting for the signal to turn. That is usually vehicles approaching one of these
41 four major intersections where we need all the capacity, all the throughput that can be
42 accommodated at that intersection for through moving traffic. In the reverse direction the main
43 requirements aren't as high because there is no storage occurring and the traffic lanes are then
44 reduced and the flow occurs more efficiently in that direction.
45

46 Ms. Warheit: I think an example of that is at Maybell and it speaks to some of what Bob Moss
47 brought up. At Maybell the traffic coming from Charleston requires Maybell to continue to be
48 three lanes heading north and three lanes through that intersection. So it doesn't go to two lanes

1 until you have already cleared Maybell going north. Going south it can stay two lanes on the
2 southbound side until just across the crosswalk at Maybell. The attempt was to try to do that at
3 least on one side to make that Maybell crossing smaller because there are so many school
4 children crossing there. So as soon as the southbound traffic gets through Maybell, crosses the
5 crosswalk, there is immediately three lanes again. So Maybell really is three lanes on three of its
6 four sides and only two on the southbound side.

7
8 Chair Bialson: Pat, do you have any comments to make as wrap up?

9
10 Commissioner Burt: Are we moving into giving our preferences?

11
12 Chair Bialson: Any comments you make with preferences or anything else would be appropriate
13 now, yes.

14
15 Commissioner Burt: My preference would be to do the experiment that I think was talked about
16 for the one segment in the El Camino Way area. Is that correct as an option that is being
17 considered?

18
19 Ms. Warheit: You might say option one is six lanes throughout, option two has A and B. A
20 actually has a bit of four lane both at Stanford and at Los Robles and the difference with part B
21 of two is that it simply extends further north in both cases.

22
23 Commissioner Burt: But would the intention be to make a trial program in both the El Camino
24 Way section and north of that in the Stanford Avenue are or just to initially do one or the other?

25
26 Mr. Emslie: I think what we are looking for is essentially a broader level concurrence of at least
27 pursuing the idea, not ruling it out at this point. Then as this plan takes shape and we finish it
28 and it goes on to the Council and comes back to you for your final action and then on to the
29 Council, that we would then follow up with a plan that would include, and we would recommend
30 that it include, a very strong statement be done until it is experimented. Then we would come
31 back and pick a location and have the Commission review a temporary experiment that again we
32 would take public input. So I think we are not quite at that level just yet.

33
34 Commissioner Burt: Then I will simply say that I am supportive of continuing to evaluate the
35 possibility of four lanes in limited sections and that an experiment seems to be an appropriate
36 way to determine its true feasibility for the long-term.

37
38 Chair Bialson: Karen, do you have any comments otherwise I will speak.

39
40 Commissioner Holman: I am afraid you will have to wait your turn. Similar to the question that
41 Michael had about planting trees I had about light synchronization. Is that something that could
42 happen ahead of everything else or does this have to be one complete package that is presented
43 to Caltrans at once in order for funding?

44
45 Mr. Walters: There is reasonable hope that the signal synchronization could occur earlier. That
46 hope in part hinges on the fact that VTA, the transit operator arm of Valley Transportation
47 Authority, as part of their Bus Rapid Transit Concept for the corridor is investigating improving
48 the signal coordination and preemption and prioritization for their buses. That would allow

1 improvements to be made to the hardware and the software that would then facilitate doing the
2 other coordination at the same time.

3
4 Commissioner Holman: That would be great and nothing that I am going to take to the bank but
5 do you have any idea of what that timing might be, just theoretically?
6

7 Mr. Erickson: If I remember correctly VTA is talking about doing just the physical upgrades
8 that would need to happen to the traffic control boxes going into next year. So the studies that
9 would need to be done to figure out the retiming of the signals could possibly occur next year as
10 well. So it would probably be something at the earliest I would guess you would see towards the
11 end of next year. Again, it depends really on when VTA would want to move forward and then
12 extent to which the City would coordinate with them and Caltrans. So it isn't just a signal
13 improvement for the BRT but also looks at the traffic flow through the entire corridor and maybe
14 make some of the pedestrian crossing improvements that could come from looking at the signals
15 as well.
16

17 Mr. Emslie: To the Chair I would just would like to add on a little bit of a dark cloud. VTA
18 funding is in incredible chaos right now because the VTA's funding is very much tied to the
19 sales tax that is collected in the county that supports the transportation. As we all know that is
20 seriously down due to the area's recession. So a lot of projects that were considered green
21 lighted are being reconsidered. I just wanted to let you know that there are larger economic
22 issues at play that could delay beyond the expectations of our team.
23

24 Commissioner Holman: Thanks for the reality check, Steve. The light synchronization for one
25 thing would help as I understood from your presentation eliminate some of those peaks that
26 come with traffic exceeding the speed limit. I presume on the other end of that spectrum it
27 would also help with those backups where we saw all those black areas where cars are just
28 sitting. So I would really look forward to the light synchronization to stop that because so much
29 stopping and starting also has a seldom mentioned environmental air quality aspect that we
30 would all benefit from not having that impact as well.
31

32 Cut-through traffic, I am interested in looking at both the retention of the six-lane and also
33 looking at the four-lane options. The cut-through traffic for a lot of neighborhoods is an issue for
34 various proposals and this one is one of them. I think there was a conversation that I had earlier
35 with Virginia about right turn lanes and that being a prohibitor of cut-through traffic. So I was
36 wondering if you could address that. A lot of times if somebody is sitting in traffic and they
37 don't want to sit in traffic their tendency is to turn right at an intersection and then do the cut-
38 through. So if those right turns were prohibited would that not eliminate that cut-through
39 potential?
40

41 Ms. Warheit: That is one of the traffic control techniques that would be addressed in the
42 subsequent levels of actually, as Steve was saying, when you are looking closely at a particular
43 section and then you start looking lot by lot and looking at exactly how things are working, that
44 is certainly one of the things that we have talked about. If you have a situation where someone
45 turns right to cut-through if you have a no right on red that is one of the ways of dealing with
46 that. I will turn this back to Jerry because there are lots of other techniques that can be dealt with
47 too but it is not at this planning stage that you look at each one of those and find a solution.

1 There is a whole repertoire of solutions to use in helping to discourage people from going where
2 you don't want them to go. Jerry?

3
4 Chair Bialson: I don't think that is necessary right now because we want to keep this at a more
5 general level. The public was promised this would go to nine o'clock.

6
7 Commissioner Holman: I do think it is important though that people do know that those tools
8 are out there and available. A couple more here, well, it seems like they have all been covered
9 by other people's questions. One other question. Was the traffic count actually taken in May of
10 this year?

11
12 Mr. Walters: The counts were taken in spring of this year. We did however look at past trends
13 dating back to 1992 and then extrapolating the uniform traffic trend rather than the low point that
14 this year represents in the economic cycles. We extrapolated the normal trend for our future
15 forecast of traffic and that is what our designs are intended to handle, the extension of the trend,
16 the uniform growth trend for the area to 2020.

17
18 Commissioner Holman: Okay, great, thank you. I would like to also compliment Staff and the
19 consultants on a really good clear presentation. Thank you.

20
21 Chair Bialson: I get to be last. I too commend you for a great presentation. I have been to as
22 many of the meetings as I can on the advisory group and it has been wonderful to see the
23 progression of this plan and this relatively polished still general concept brought to us this
24 evening. The only comment that I would make sort of focuses on the bicycle friendliness of El
25 Camino. It is critical to me that we improve the usability of intersections for bicycles but as I
26 look at some of the objectives that you have here you talk about providing equity and balance for
27 all modes. It seems to make an equivalence for bicycles and pedestrians. I think the six-lane
28 model is one that is certainly easiest to get acceptance on although I do want the four lane
29 options pursued. In light of that I think what we have got to recognize is that in making El
30 Camino friendly for bicycle use we impede to a certain extent the on-street parking and the
31 pedestrian use of the sidewalk. So I would like to have in future iterations of these models some
32 recognition and alternatives given as to what we can do and what tradeoffs we are making in
33 pedestrian, bicycle and on-street parking. I think it is very problematic to have this become a
34 bike, not boulevard, but a bike route given the compromises that have to be made. Again, I
35 would like to have that be addressed and it not be written as a hard and fast equivalence in the
36 future because we are looking at having phased implementation that may go out ten or 15 years
37 and none of us may be here at that point. So I would like it to be clearer in the documentation as
38 to what we are talking about. That is my personal comment. I think that we have probably given
39 you as much as you want or hoped for at this point. I thank the public for coming and giving us
40 your perspective and very cogent germane comments. So we will close this item at this time and
41 look forward to it being brought back to us. Virginia.

42
43 Ms. Warheit: Probably in January. We will continue to work with Caltrans on resolving issues.

44
45 Chair Bialson: When will this go to Council?

46
47 Ms. Warheit: After that.

1 Chair Bialson: Okay, that's great. Thank you.
2
3 The next item I think we have a meeting tomorrow we get a lot of housekeeping done.
4
5 **REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES.** None.
6
7 **REPORTS FROM OFFICIALS.** None.
8
9 **COMMISSION MEMBER QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, AND/OR ANNOUNCEMENTS.**
10
11 Chair Bialson: We do have Approval of the Minutes of October 30th. Do I have a motion?
12
13 **APPROVAL OF MINUTES.** Approval of minutes of the October 30 Regular Meeting.
14
15 MOTION
16
17 Commissioner Burt: So moved.
18
19 SECOND
20
21 Commissioner Griffin: Second.
22
23 MOTION PASSED
24
25 Chair Bialson: All those in favor. (ayes) All those opposed. No opposition so that motion
26 passes.
27
28 **NEXT MEETING:** Special Meeting of Wednesday, November 20, 2002.
29
30 Chair Bialson: We will adjourn this meeting. The next meeting will be a Special Meeting
31 tomorrow.
32
33 I have one comment. Pat?
34
35 Commissioner Burt: Yes, I wanted to take this opportunity to raise the issue of when the
36 Commission is scheduling its retreat and its joint meeting with the Council. I understand that we
37 can't necessarily get an answer to this question tonight but perhaps we could get some Staff
38 response at tomorrow night's meeting. We in the past have had the retreat in I believe the
39 October/November timeframe. Last year we postponed the meeting with Council from its
40 normal November period up to January or February. We are already running past those timelines
41 for scheduling and I think it would be good to get it on our agenda.
42
43 Chair Bialson: Steve, could you get that to us tomorrow?
44
45 Mr. Emslie: Yes, we will get a date set up and have Zariah poll and get a date where you all can
46 attend for the retreat.
47
48 Chair Bialson: Great. I think Phyllis has an announcement.

1
2 Commissioner Cassel: I will be unable to participate in tomorrow night's meeting and I would
3 like to make that announcement now rather than wait until tomorrow night. I have a conflict
4 related to my employment, that I work for Stanford and my husband does also, so I cannot
5 participate in Stanford items.

6
7 Chair Bialson: Thank you, Phyllis. Given that I will adjourn this meeting. Thank you very
8 much, Commissioners.

9
10 ***ADJOURNMENT:*** 10:00 PM