



# CITY COUNCIL RAIL COMMITTEE FINAL TRANSCRIPT MINUTES

Special Meeting  
Wednesday, November 8, 2017

Chairperson DuBois called the meeting to order at 8:01 A.M. in the Council Chambers, 250 Hamilton Avenue, Palo Alto, California.

Present: DuBois (Chair), Filseth, Fine, Scharff arrived at 8:06 A.M.

Absent:

## Oral Communications

Chair DuBois: We have one speaker for Oral Communications, Richard Brand. Yeah, I got it right. Man, long memory.

Richard Brand: Good morning everybody and thank you. Richard Brand, 281 Addison, Palo Alto resident. I guess my question is for the Mayor and he's not here. There was a letter drafted by San Mateo County Supervisor Slocum to the MTC in support of the Dumbarton bridge rail project. It was – it's been supported by our Supervisor Simitian and check and see if the City or maybe Josh, maybe you know. The Mayor had asked me for the address – the email address but I don't see any letter so I have a question and the question is – excuse me, the City had sent a letter in support of – there we go. So, my question is this, has the City sent a letter or drafted a letter and it has to go through Council, in support of the San Mateo County Supervisor's request that MTC provides funding for Dumbarton Rail renovation? Thank you.

Chair DuBois: I don't know if you want to answer?

Joshuah Mello, Chief Transportation Official: Sure, so we did send a comment letter to the Project Manager for the SamTrans/Dumbarton Corridor Study. Generally voicing support for the project but also expressing some concerns around the – some of the projects that are contained in that particular study. Since then MTC has actually initiated the Dumbarton Forward Initiative and the City of Palo Alto is a stakeholder on that. I think the intent of that is to take the SamTrans study one step further and potentially line up funding for some of the investments. We are working closely with MTC on that.

# FINAL TRANSCRIPT MINUTES

## Study Session

1. Presentation by the City of Menlo Park on Their Railroad Grade Separation Project at Ravenswood Avenue, Oak Grove Avenue, and Glenwood Avenue.

Chair DuBois: So now we'll go to item number one which is a presentation by Menlo Park.

Joshuah Mello, Chief Transportation Official: Yes, today we're joined by Angela Obeso. She's a Senior Transportation Engineer with the City of Menlo Park and she's also the Project Manager for their grade separation project. We invited her here today to give us an overview of where they are on their project.

Angela Obeso, Senior Transportation Engineer, City of Menlo Park: Thank you, thanks for having us today and hosting us. Like Josh said my name is Angela Obeso, I'm the Project Manager for the study in Menlo Park looking at the Ravenswood Avenue railroad crossing and potentially looking at grade separating other crossings that we have in the City. Just to give you a frame of reference, here's a map of the City of Menlo Park and all of our Caltrain crossings. Palo Alto is to the right of the screen there. The yellow lines are our City limits and we currently have four existing at-grade crossings with the Caltrain system. Ravenswood Avenue was the one closest to Palo Alto here and that is our highest volume of all types of modes; the most vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists. Oak Grove is next going north and it's our second highest volume location. Then Glenwood and Sunol are more in a residential type neighborhood. So, just to give you a frame of reference there, the Caltrain station in Menlo Park is between Ravenswood and Oak Grove. Just as an FYI there's a set of crossover tracks that allow Caltrain to operate single tracking or switch when they incidents. There's a set of tracks between the creek and our Ravenswood crossing. Just to give a little project background, we've done numerous studies over the years. The most recent that the City of Menlo Park has headed up were done in 2003-2004 and those were feasibility studies to really identify what types of crossings would be the most feasible for our constraints. Looking at within the City of Menlo Park itself, that study looked at the full range from basic under cross and over cross – overpass. It also looked at the trench, the wide variety and the findings for those studies helped to define the scope of the study that we're doing right now. That – basically the findings of that study found that the two most feasible options were what we're calling the hybrid which would raise the rail tracks a little bit and lower the road a little bit to kind of split the difference of the grade difference you need there. The other option was

# FINAL TRANSCRIPT MINUTES

an underpass where the train rail stays at its existing elevation and the roadways would go under. Then that brings us to kind of where we are today in getting together the project scope for what we're currently doing. In 2013 the San Mateo County Transportation Authority had a call for a grade separation projects as part of the Measure A grant funds and so we applied and we received \$750,000 to study. Basically, to build on those 2003-2004 studies and to come up with a preferred alternative so we could move forward. We did extensive coordination with our own rail subcommittee which is made up of two of our Council Members. We got Council direction and we did a lot of meeting and discussing with Caltrain and the San Mateo County Transportation Authority to make sure that our scope met not only Menlo Park needs but we took into account Caltrain's constraints. In late 2015 we issued an RFP and in March of 2016 we awarded a contract to AECOM and we got started right away with our community outreach. We did a lot of community outreach to date; three public meetings met with the Chamber and ongoing one on one property and business owner meetings. Just to make sure that all the folks who are potentially impacted by the project were aware and were able to give their feedback. We also went to a number of our Commission meetings and to date we have attended three Council meetings, most recently on October 10<sup>th</sup>, where we asked our Council – we presented some of the same information that I'm going to present shortly here but we asked them to pick a preferred alternative. There were four out of five Council Members present and they were unable to make a motion that evening so they asked us to come back with some more information. We're tentatively scheduled to go back to the Council in – most likely it will be in January based on the current Council's workload right now; to ask them again – to present the information they asked for and then also to ask them for a preferred alternative. As of right now, we do not yet have a preferred alternative. With all that community outreach that we did, we heard a lot of reoccurring themes and I'm sure that these are things that your residents here are familiar with and have similar comments about. There's a strong desire to see more grade separations and look at improving more than just Ravenswood. There's a desire to minimize the height of the railroad because of concerns about visual and noise impacts. There's a high level of pedestrian and bicycle interest to make sure that anything that we do improves the connectivity across east/west. Also, we have an intersection at Ravenswood with Alma Street that's -- currently we do not have the ability to drive straight through on Alma or make left turns to or from. There's some interest therein reestablishing that connectivity between Alma and Ravenswood. There are some other items there and I won't go through them all but I'm happy to answer questions if you are interested. Based on the feedback that we heard, we developed these three alternatives and this what we initially went to the community and the Council with. We had

# FINAL TRANSCRIPT MINUTES

Alternative A which is what we are calling the underpass. It would look at Ravenswood only. The 2003-2004 studies look at doing an underpass at all four but due to the fact that there were so many extreme impacts to private properties, we focused on Ravenswood for the purpose of this study because that's our – like I mentioned, that's our highest volume location. That would keep the railroad at existing elevation and it would trench Ravenswood approximately 22-feet from where it is today. That option and I'll show a visualization in a moment, Alma and Ravenswood would no longer be able to be connected. The train tracks would be at their existing elevation, Alma Street would be at its existing elevation and Ravenswood would go underneath both of them. Oak Grove, Glenwood and Sunol are the other three that would remain as existing. There would be no changes under that alternative. Then when we started looking at the hybrid option, which is the train goes up a little and the roads go down a little, we came up with two variations. Alternative B looked at just Ravenswood and Oak Grove as grade separations and it was a more extreme, so to speak, grade. It went up sharper and came down sharper and so the highest rail elevation under this option was higher than B or C. Then Alternative C had a more gradual rail slope so it came up a little and it just stayed constant for a bulk of the City and it grade separated Ravenswood, Oak Grove and Glenwood. Looking at the feedback that we received, really it pointed to a preference of Alternative C over Alternative B as the hybrid option to move forward with. We – after we got Council direction on this matter, we eliminated Alternative B and focused on C – A and C as we moved forward until the last round of community engagement and Council meetings. The next couple slides I show are going to be visualizations that our consultant team did. This one is Alternative A and we'll start as if we're over El Camino and Ravenswood and we'll kind of fly over in a 360 rotation. Here you can see Ravenswood that goes down, there's some retaining walls up to the train station there and the parking lot on the – its' the Big 5/Jeffery's Hamburgers area. Looking north here so here you can see Alma Street is also on a structure above Ravenswood. That's the library underneath us right there and then you see a lot of the side streets so Merrill and Alma Lane – I'm sorry, Alma – yes, Alma Lane. We've got Alma Lane and Alma Street right next to each other but both of those loose connectivity to Ravenswood as well. Then here we fly over – this is looking now south and you can see the station area and the station area layout itself is just a graphical representation. This is not necessarily what it would look like. Now we're over the building where Kepler's and Café Burone are and going back over to El Camino. Under this alternative, the sidewalks for Ravenswood would be at a separate elevation than the roadway. If you imagine Jefferson Street in Redwood City and how the sidewalks are higher. This is similar to what we'd be looking at here due to the ADA requirements. So, to get Ravenswood down 22-feet would take

# FINAL TRANSCRIPT MINUTES

more than the five percent that the ADA requires so they would be separated there. The next simulation is looking Alternative C so this is the hybrid and again, we'll start as if we're stand – flying over at El Camino. You can see it's a more gradual grade down Alma – I'm sorry Merrill Lane there behind Kepler's and Burone's and it's able to maintain connection to Ravenswood. The retaining walls there are not as high because the roadway now long goes down about 10 or 11-feet. Alma and Ravenswood here has a full connection and likely we would add a traffic signal there and we'd be able to make left turns in and out of all four directions. Alma Lane and Newell Lane are able to connect to Ravenswood so basically maintaining most of the connectivity. There's a few driveways that we would have to alter in this scenario and this is somewhat similar to the San Carlos where Old County Road is right behind so it would look similar to that. Again, here we're looking south in the station area and then over Kepler's. Then next it will start to fly north as if we're over the rail itself and so it will give you a view of what Oak Grove and Glenwood intersection would look like as well. Here's Oak Grove right here and we would again maintain connections to the side streets. It's about a 10-foot and reducing rail elevation from existing here. This is Glenwood where we would go back to existing rail elevation before we hit Encinal, which is our northernmost at-grade crossing. Under Alternative C, one out of the four would remain as existing and one of the questions that our Council asked us was if we could something with Encinal? So, one of the things that we're doing right now is looking at if there are options to grade separate perhaps just for pedestrians and bikes or if we were able to grade separate full vehicles, what impacts that would have overall and potentially into the town of Atherton. With all of that we did a comparison matrix here to try to illustrate what the difference between A and C are. Kind of the main takeaway here is that with Alternative A, you have improvements with the light blue color and they are more moderate impacts – I'm sorry, improvements. Then your impacts are also relatively moderate as well and it's a little lower of a cost. With Alternative C, you have a much greater level of improvements but your impacts are also much greater as well because you've got more than one set of crossings; one street – more than one street going on at the same time and a slightly higher cost. At our final community meeting we presented this and we also present some constructability constraints such as a need for a shoofly track, potential staging impacts and asked the community to basically vote which one do you prefer, A or C? Of the 55 attendees we had that evening, more than 85 percent said that they preferred alternative C, mostly because it got more grade separations and better east/west connectivity overall through the town. Those that did support Alternative A said they preferred it because it takes care of our highest volume location which is the biggest concern for both congestion and safety. It was a lower construction cost and they felt

# FINAL TRANSCRIPT MINUTES

that it would be easier to get it built sooner. We also heard continued interest in a trench alternative and a viaduct alternative. Then like I mentioned, we talked about some of the constructions considerations and impacts there. The property and business owners that we talked to generally kind of fell in the same range. Those that had no effects to their property or minor or moderate effects, they generally preferred Alternative C for some of the same reasons that the Community meeting folks did. Those who had major effects, specifically Oak Grove and Glenwood the other two northern crossings, generally preferred Alternative A so that their properties weren't impacted as majorly. Again, they had concerns about maintaining access to their residence and customers during construction. That brings us to where we are today, we're currently in coordination's both with Atherton and Palo Alto because we are next door neighbors so to speak. We want to make sure what we do meshes with what the adjacent communities are looking at as well. I know that you guys are going through a similar study for all of your crossings right now so we have been in constant coordination to make sure we know what's going on here and vice versa. Then like I mentioned, our City Council asked us to look at potentially what could be done at Encinal. One of the options is if we fully grade separated for vehicles, as well as for bikes and peds at Encinal our northernmost crossing, it would potentially require the rail to have elevation within Atherton's limits. We want to make sure that that's something that they are or are not ok with before we proceed with responding. We're in the process of coordinating with their Council right now on that. Once we get those and the other questions that Council asked us addressed, we're going to come back and then ask them for a preferred alternative. One we have a preferred alternative decided on and directed, we can then move forward and secure funding so we can start the environmental studies and the final design to move the project forward. With that I am happy to answer any questions.

Chair DuBois: Thank you very much. Do we have any questions or comments?

Council Member Filseth: (Inaudible)

Ms. Obeso: Yeah, they are so the website right there, [MenloPark.org/Ravenswood](http://MenloPark.org/Ravenswood), all of the information that we presented at the various community meetings, including those videos, are posted up there.

Mr. Mello: If I could just add, we're going to continue to work with the City of Menlo Park to see if there are any opportunities for collaboration on our projects as well.

# FINAL TRANSCRIPT MINUTES

Chair DuBois: We have two speakers, Richard Brand followed by Roland LeBrun.

Richard Brand: Good morning again. Richard Brand, Palo Alto just for the record here now that we're turned on. I have actually bicycled along Alma and the rail right of way is about 15-feet above the grade at the end of Willow. Did you consider bringing Willow all the way down and then tunneling underneath the right of way there because it would be almost -- there are no buildings along there. You already have the right of way 15-feet above the grade level and since there's the old Chevy dealer property that you could condemn and it wouldn't interfere with an existing business. Did you look at that option?

Ms. Obeso: I just want to clarify, you mean tunneling Willow under the rail?

Mr. Brand: That's correct so you extend Willow through Alma, under the rails, and into El Camino Real.

Ms. Obeso: Ok so we did not look at that specifically with the study. There are a few different reasons, one -- excuse me, we currently have another study going on right now where we are going to build a bike and pedestrian crossing. It hasn't yet been determined under or over and we're looking at the details of that but there will be a bike and ped crossing at -- roughly where Middle Avenue comes into El Camino. There will be a direct connection for bikes and peds there. The other reason is there is strong opposition from our residents to connect Willow to El Camino or there has been in the past. So, that would be a separate study, a separate effort that would require its own set of outreach. The main goal of this project here was a focus on grade separating Ravenswood and potentially looking at our other existing t grade crossings.

Chair DuBois: Our second speaker is Roland LeBrun.

Roland LeBrun: Thank you. Is this working? I don't know if you caught this on the video but they are going to start with the island platform and we've been fighting this like crazy at Caltrain Board Meetings; this is not bought, this is not the VTA Light Rail. Once the grade separation is in or potentially before we're going to be increasing the lite speed to 110 MPH. You're going to have passengers right there, stuck in the middle of an island platform with trains blowing by on each at 110. If you go back to the video and you see where the ramp is, there's less than 10-feet between the ramp and the

# FINAL TRANSCRIPT MINUTES

edge of the platform. This is has got to stop because what's going to happen is the High Speed Rail Authority is going to come back and say you know what, we need passing tracks. So, you're going to have this massive fly overring us 30 or 40-feet up in the air and flying over all that stuff. We – there was a meeting in San Carlos a couple of weeks ago where they were fighting these flyover passing tracks like crazy. I went back to a presentation I gave to PTC 5-years ago, which is called Passing Stations. When you have got a passing station you basically get four tracks within the station without both platforms. What that does is substantially increase the capacity of the line so we can get up to twelve potentially beyond that trains an hour. What it also does and I give multiple examples from Europe is that the high speed trails are in the two middle platforms. The passengers are at least one track away from these trains. Actually, in Europe what they do is the two middle tracks are protected with concrete barriers on each side so passengers aren't getting sprayed with water, (inaudible) and god knows what else. Please, Palo Alto, put your foot down and say enough of this island platforms in the Caltrain right of way. Thank you.

Chair DuBois: Great, thank you. I have a few quick questions, what assumptions did you use in terms of how frequently trains would go by in your future conditions?

Ms. Obeso: We're partnered with Caltrain on this study and so we've been working directly with them and they review all the iterations of what our consultants put together. Their latest data about the future with electrification and potentially with High Speed Rail, we use those latest assumptions.

Chair DuBois: Do you know those? Is it trains every 3-minutes at peak?

Ms. Obeso: I don't have that off the top of my head. I can get that information and provide it to Josh though.

Chair DuBois: Yeah, I'd be interested. I saw in your video you had the center electrification poles. Are those locked in for Menlo Park?

Ms. Obeso: No, they are not so between the two alternatives, the simulations that I showed, Alternative A, I believe shows the platforms on the outsides and the electrification poles on the outside as well. The Alternative C video shows a platform in the middle, the island platform, and the electrification poles are in the middle in that scenario. We have had a



# FINAL TRANSCRIPT MINUTES

discussion with the Council about that before High Speed Rail had made any statement about the passing track location; the alternative there. We do have some guidance on that but as of right now, until we go into an environmental and design, the ultimate decision about where the platforms and therefore the electrification poles has not yet been made.

Chair DuBois: Then a similar question to Willow, I mean have – if we look at the border of Palo Alto and Menlo Park, has there been any consideration connecting Alma to Alma (inaudible) Ravenswood separation?

Ms. Obeso: Yeah, that is not a part of this project but that is certainly something that we could look at as we move forward. It seems that the timing between our two studies is ideal to look at other things that we may want to incorporate together. Whether it's looking at connecting Alma, whether it's looking at the Palo Alto crossing location so that's certainly something that we could incorporate with the study. Then potentially do as one project into construction and design. Josh and I have talked a little bit about some of the things that we could be looking at.

Chair DuBois: That was my last question is has there been consideration about syncing up construction schedules?

Ms. Obeso: Yeah, definitely. I think if at all possible if we're going under construction in a similar timeframe, we would want to – whether or not we package it as one is one question and then definitely we would schedule so that our east/west connectivity – our communities are so closely knit and a lot of people are traveling between the two or through the two. It would be critical for us to time it so that we don't have all of our crossings under construction at the same time so definitely.

Chair DuBois: Thanks.

Mayor Scharff: Maybe I missed it but how – where's the – what are the funding sources for A and C?

Ms. Obeso: The funding source for the study is a San Mateo County Transportation Authority grade separation...

Mayor Scharff: No, not the study, to actually build the grade seps.

Ms. Obeso: As of right now we do not have any funding secured for our future phases.

# FINAL TRANSCRIPT MINUTES

Mayor Scharff: So, there's no real construction?

Ms. Obeso: No, we need to get direction on our preferred alternative from our Council before we can move forward because then we show better for obtaining funding. Exactly.

Mayor Scharff: Alright. When you went to the Council, you went on A and C, is that correct?

Ms. Obeso: The – on the October 10<sup>th</sup> we went with A and C. When we went to them the two times before we had all three; A, B, and C.

Mayor Scharff: When you went the last time, was it two to two on A and C? Is that the issue?

Ms. Obeso: No, it was two – so they did not have a formal vote but the gist of the conversation sounded like two of them were in support of C, one was in support of A, and other was in support of additional studies.

Mayor Scharff: Got it. We can get that additional studies Council Member to run here next time. I think that's it, thanks for the great presentation.

Ms. Obeso: Great.

Council Member Fine: Thanks so much for coming. I do want to echo what Tom mentioned about Alma. I've heard that from a number of community members though of course, we'd be worried about giving up our park there. A few things so one, just to my colleagues and Staff, I think this alternative matrix is really helpful and so are the videos. I would encourage us to look at something like this. One question, depending what you do at Ravenswood, what kind of percent grade increases are you looking at there? Maybe this is a question to our Staff, does that impact our ability if we decide to elevate or lower at Alma?

Ms. Obeso: At Ravenswood, under Alternative A the train elevation stays as existing so there's...

Council Member Fine: (Inaudible)

# FINAL TRANSCRIPT MINUTES

Ms. Obeso: Yeah, so where ever it is now – under both alternatives we confirm at the City limits so we don't alter the creek or the park area at all. The train grades do not change under Alternative A so it's as if it's still at existing condition as far as the train is concerned. Under Alternative C the train – we have a maximum of one percent requirement from Caltrain right now so the grade would not go up or down more than one percent. With Alternative C, because we start at the south end of town at our Palo Alto border, it's at a higher elevation than our northern border at Atherton. So, we would have – I can pull up the numbers if you want to know the train grade that we're looking at but it's fairly small, it's like half a percent or something that we would go up. Then we would have to come back down sharper on the other end.

Council Member Fine: Sure, I'm just guessing that if we're in some scenario, decide that we want to go deep from our station down to their's if that would impact? I mean it would, right?

Mr. Mello: We're going to get the numbers from their designer and we're going to take a look at some different scenarios. One of which will probably be extending the hybrid into Palo Alto across Palo Alto Avenue and see how that would – what that would look like. We'll also look at where they are in relation to the creek and the City limits and how that would relate to a tunnel in size or a trench.

Council Member Fine: I guess I just raise that to my colleagues in that it could be a forcing function for us here if they are starting to increase right at the City border. Then our options may be limited on this side of the creek.

Council Member Filseth: (Inaudible)

Council Member Fine: But if they are going to do it at the half percent so I guess we should just be aware of that.

Chair DuBois: Thanks so should we move on to Item Number 2? Thank you.

Ms. Obeso: Thank you.

Mayor Scharff: Thanks very much, that was great.

**NO ACTION TAKEN.**

# FINAL TRANSCRIPT MINUTES

## Action Items

2. Recommend City Council Approval of an Addendum to the Rail Committee Charter and Discuss the Organization and Format of Future Rail Committee Meetings for Community Input (Continued From October 11, 2017).

Chair DuBois: Alright so Item Number 2 is an addendum to the Rail Committee Charter.

Hillary Gitelman, Director of Planning and Community Environment: Thank you. Hillary Gitelman the Planning Director. This is really a kind of housekeeping item. If you recall back in September the Council had a discussion about community engagement during this process and requested an amendment to the Committee's charter to include a broader engagement effort on the part of this Committee. We've included in your packet the Rail Committee's charter with the guiding principles that were adopted last April. In addition, in the Staff report, we have a paragraph that we're suggesting the Committee recommend to the Council for additions to the charter. We've proposed a way that the Committee could convene additional meetings to get community input at each stage in the process. So, those little diagrams that we've included in the report outline basically the four phases. We've already completed Phase One, the definition of evaluation criteria. We're currently in Phase Two, identifying the alternatives for in-depth analysis and then there will be two more phases before we get to a preferred alternative. We're suggesting that in each one of these phases, the Committee holds a public meeting in a Town Hall format in additions to its regular morning meeting. That Town Hall format meeting would be an evening meeting, it could be here at City Hall or it could be elsewhere and we outlined two options in the Staff report. One is that this morning meeting happen first and then a couple days later the community meeting happens at another venue and the Committee makes its recommendation to Council on these items. The other alternative is that the Town Hall style meeting happens first and then a couple days later you meet here in the morning and you make your recommendation to the Council so a slight variation. The main thing that we're looking for from you is a recommendation to the Council on this addition to the charter.

Chair DuBois: Thank you. Any questions or comments? We're being asked a question about community meetings; do we want them before the rail or after the rail?

# FINAL TRANSCRIPT MINUTES

Mayor Scharff: Maybe Staff has a recommendation on that. I mean what are the pros and cons?

Ms. Gitelman: You know we had a robust conversation ourselves about which is better and I think there are advantages and disadvantages to both. In the format where we had this meeting first, it would give you an opportunity to hear from some of our regular attendees and what their questions are and maybe prepare us better for the evening meeting. Then we could prepare responses and be able to dialog better but in the – on the other side, if we have the Town Hall meeting first, then it allows you to come back to this forum and have a more focused debate and dialog before making your decision.

Mayor Scharff: Alright, that was helpful for me so I think that I would support doing the Town Hall first because then we get the widest community and then we can focus our discussions around that. Everyone who would normally attend this meeting can also attend that meeting.

Council Member Fine: I think that's fair. All the folks in the audience with the respect that we hear from them each and every time and I expect that they will be at the forums as well so I think the Mayor's suggestion is a good one.

Chair DuBois: I think the challenge is for Staff to summarize those meetings in time to bring them to us. They wouldn't really be part of our packet, right?

Ms. Gitelman: You would be present.

Mayor Scharff: You would be there.

Ms. Gitelman: So, I mean...

Chair DuBois: If somebody misses one though...

Ms. Gitelman: We would have to scramble to respond to any comments or questions that we were unable to respond to the night of the Town Hall meeting.

Mr. Mello: We would just stay in our offices all night.

Chair DuBois: Are we talking about these for the upcoming (inaudible)?

# FINAL TRANSCRIPT MINUTES

Ms. Gitelman: Well, this is a really good point because later in the meeting – tonight (inaudible) meeting, you're going to talk about when we are going to schedule your next couple meetings. We really were hoping to identify alternatives for evaluation before the end of the year, which means we would try and do this in December. I don't know if that's feasible and it may turn out to be a January kind of thing but we'll talk about that later today.

Mayor Scharff: I do have concerns if we get much into December because people take the holidays and getting any sort of public participation starts to really get difficult.

Ms. Gitelman: I think we're – we feel some urgency because we want to get to the same place that Menlo is. We want to be able to do – get some videos that show you exactly what the alternatives would look like but to do that we need to know what the (inaudible) of alternatives are.

Chair DuBois: I'd say it looked like they have about 18-months of public outreach first. Alright, so I will make a Motion – well, we have one – alright, I'm going to allow the public comment though I think we're almost done with the item. First speaker is Roland, followed by Herb.

Roland LeBrun: Very briefly in the interest of time, I think I should bring to your attention that the second Wednesday of the month conflicts with the MTC Programming and Allocation Committee in San Francisco. This is really the meeting where the big discussions take place over the allocation of hundreds of millions of dollars so I thought that you might want to consider this.

Chair DuBois: Thank you. Herb.

Herb Borock: I had just one editing suggestion at the end of the recommendation. I would break the last sentence into two sentences, removing the word 'and,' then start a new sentence. The stakeholders – the stakeholder input.

Chair Dubois: Ok, thank you. Nadia.

Nadia Naik: Hi, Nadia Naik. I just wanted to point out that we are – so we're having all these community meetings but we – none of the important papers on which a lot of the decisions are going to be based are actually going to be out in time for those community meetings. For example, the trenching and

# FINAL TRANSCRIPT MINUTES

tunneling papers is going to be out on the 29<sup>th</sup> and then the meeting is going to be on the 30<sup>th</sup> but the hydrology and soils paper is not going to be ready. Hydrology and soils, when you're doing a tunnel, could be the difference between a 2x tunnel and 400x tunnel depending on what kind of soil you have. So, you might be able to discuss construction impacts but you won't really be able to discuss what's under there. I would just say that the feedback, we've been getting a lot of requests for private meetings so I've been doing several. I have one tonight that I am doing in South Gate so that number has had a significant uptick. I would say that the – what I am hearing most is that they want to come to meetings but they feel like there's not enough information for them to make decisions. So, even in the coming community meetings, these papers aren't going to be out so I would just think about that when you're thinking about trying to narrow down alternatives because none of this information is really going to be available for them to actually have much of a conversation about.

Chair DuBois: The last speaker is Adina Levin.

Adina Levin: Good morning Committee Members, Adina Levin, Friends of Caltrain. I want to really bolster what Nadia just said. Particularly with regard to the finance study because there is a lot of really hopeful thinking regarding the possibilities of a trench and a tunnel. In the absence of information about what the choices are to pay for such a thing, the conversation can go around in circles for a really long time. I think that having that – if people get to talk about what their ideal solution is and then it turns out that in their judgment when they see that information that's not something that they want to do. People are going to be very sad and so having that information, I think is a really good prerequisite to having an informed conversation, as opposed to a less informed conversation. Secondly, the water – they hydrology is actually important and that was one of the key factors that led Burlingame to change their minds at the Council level and the community level between having a trench, which was the initially strongly preferred option and having a split which was their ultimate decision. It turned out that given their hydrology it was going to be extremely difficult and costly to keep it dry. That was one of a small number of key factors that led them to that decision. Similarly, I think that holding those meetings after these key pieces of information will help people feel like they're having a conversation based on new information rather than talking and then realizing oh, what I thought I wanted is not what I wanted; a similar recommendation. Thank you.

Chair DuBois: Alright so I think we can get into that in our next item. I'll go ahead and make a Motion that we adopt the addendum with the split of the

# FINAL TRANSCRIPT MINUTES

last sentence. That was a good change for (inaudible) and that we will hold the Town Hall meetings before the Rail Committee meetings.

Council Member Fine: I'll second that.

**MOTION:** Chair DuBois moved, seconded by Council Member Fine to recommend the City Council:

- A. Adopt the addendum to the Rail Committee's Charter, including splitting the last sentence; and
- B. Direct Staff to hold Town Hall meetings before Rail Committee meeting.

Chair DuBois: Just one quick question, we're talking about – we have these roundtables scheduled now but there will be more roundtables in the future?

Ms. Gitelman: Yeah, we're going to – we're committing to either round tables or more community workshops. We will determine the format of those in the future but what we're talking about in this context our Town Hall meetings conducted by this Committee.

Mr. Mello: Those Town Hall meetings would occur at key decision points. If you remember there were several key decision points along this road that we're on and that's when those Town Hall meetings would occur.

Chair DuBois: Ok, so should we vote on the Motion?

Council Member Fine: Yeah, just one comment. I do think the speakers – we'll get to this in our next item but it would be helpful if Staff could provide us or the community with kind of like an index of what are these reports? When are they coming and what they are about? Just so that we are aware of all of that.

Ms. Gitelman: We'll do that in the next item. Just a clarification, this is a recommendation to the Council so we'll have to put this on the Council's Consent Agenda.

Chair DuBois: Assuming it's unanimous. All those in favor? Alright, moving on to item number three.



# FINAL TRANSCRIPT MINUTES

**MOTION PASSED:** 4-0

At this time, Agenda Items 3 and 4 were heard together.

3. Summary of Upcoming Community Round Tables.
4. Review and Provide Direction on Draft Community Questionnaire Number Two.

Ed Shikada, Assistant City Manager: To the pleasure of the Chair, I think the Staff is suggesting hearing both 3 and 4 together since effectively they are integrated in terms of next steps. So, I (inaudible).

Joshuah Mello, Chief Transportation Official: Sure and I'll give you a quick overview of our plans for the roundtables and then Claudia is going to talk a little bit about the community Questionnaire Number 2. We have scheduled four community roundtables to occur in November. Just to remind the Committee Members, we are currently in the alternatives development phase so some of our speakers mentioned the need to have information available in order to make decisions. Right now, we're in kind of the open solicitation for all alternative that should be considered. The information will be available at the point in time when we start to whittle down the alternatives but we're not at that point right now. Right now, we're trying to hear from as many people as possible what types of options and alternatives they've thought about for the different grade crossings. The roundtables are – the first one will be November 14<sup>th</sup> at the Mitchell Park Community Center and that one will focus on both Charleston Road and Meadow Drive. The second-round table will be on November 16<sup>th</sup> at the PAUSED Administration building. That one will focus on the Churchill Avenue grade crossing. Then after Thanksgiving, we're going to reconvene on November 28<sup>th</sup> and have a meeting at – in this room actually to talk about the Palo Alto Avenue, aka Alma Street, grade crossing. Then finally on November 30<sup>th</sup> we're going to have a trench and tunnel discussion and this is where folks can talk about a larger, more comprehensive City-wide solution that may involve multiple grade crossings or all four grade crossings. There was a potential conflict on November 30<sup>th</sup>, the Santa Clara County Planning Department – Planning Commission is holding a meeting to take public comment on the Stanford (inaudible) Application. I did coordinate yesterday with Supervisor Simitian's office and the Santa Clara County Planning Director and that meeting is going to run till 9 o'clock, our meeting will end at 8 o'clock and they are going to expect to accommodate people coming from our meeting. They are actually going to hold that meeting open until 9 pm, which was the

# FINAL TRANSCRIPT MINUTES

scheduled time and I told them they will probably have a handful of folks coming from our meeting to the county meeting. We have coordinated on that and there is a little bit of an overlap of the meetings but there's actually another hour available for folks who go from our meeting to that meeting. The format of the roundtable is we're expecting about 20-40 folks. We do have – already have forty-six RSVPs for the first one, Charleston Road and Meadow, so we're working on Staffing arrangements for that. How we're going to break the groups out and how we're going to facilitate a larger group but we're pretty much on track for that 20-40 number for the other one. We are seeing pretty low RSVPs for November 28<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Palo Alto Avenue meeting. We think that's a combination of two factors, the first being that there's not a lot of interest in that grade crossing. We've seen that to date at the workshops and it's also immediately after the holiday – the long holiday weekend so people probably aren't back in town. The last thing that I'd want to do after eating Thanksgiving dinner is come to public meeting on a Tuesday. We're working to ramp up attendance on that. We may need to overflow some people from the other roundtables voluntarily into that one and expand the discussion there if the first one continues to grow in attendance. The format is going to be a true roundtable discussion. It's not going to be – Staff is not going to take a heavy-handed approach, we're going to facilitate the community discussion. The goal of these discussion is to put every possible alternative or option on the table for consideration so there's no bad ideas. We'll be assembling a suite of alternatives as Hilary mentioned throughout the entire month of November. We'll be taking input from you as well at a later meeting and at the roundtables we'll be there to provide information and facilitate. If the conversation comes to a stall, we'll jump in and we'll some questions that will help facilitate the conversation. We'll be taking notes and minutes and we'll summarize all those for you. They are – we are going to ask the folks at the end of the meeting to fill out what we're calling a bingo card. This will be a matrix with the different grade crossing locations on the top and then three columns where we'll ask them to submit three different alternatives for consideration for each of the grade crossings. They are intended to be relatively informal, we're not going to dominate the discussion with technical Staff presentations. However, we will be there to answer any technical question that the community members may have. It's being promoted on social media and the City website. We have -- through Brown Paper Tickets we have an RSVP options for folks so that we can understand what the attendance will be moving forward. With that I'll turn it over to Claudia to talk about community questionnaire number two and then I think we'll be (inaudible) to take questions and comments.

# FINAL TRANSCRIPT MINUTES

Chair DuBois: Do you mind if we maybe just split the questions and talk about this first and then go to the questionnaire? So, who wants to go first? Go ahead.

Council Member Fine: Just one quick comment, thanks for putting this all together. I found it pretty helpful and I think so did the public, I think it was CirclePoint who was doing these things where they are showing if we do this kind of grade separations, it means these impacts. So, getting the balance on both sides and that if we're going to trench here, there's taking of this many homes. If we're not – if we're going to close it, we can preserve all these homes and improve traffic here. I thought just showing folks the tradeoffs there was really helpful and informative.

Chair DuBois: Thank you for the (inaudible) because I found this very thin. I mean the meetings are a week away, I would have expected a little bit more. It sounds like it's going to be brainstorming and not to contradict Council Member Fine but like he said, if it's no ideas are bad ideas and getting them all out. I think you ought to be careful about the pros and cons right up front. The overall goal wasn't clear to me, I guess you're saying that it's really just to generate this list of potential alternatives?

Mr. Mello: Yeah, if you remember I think it was the last meeting that I presented the updated schedule with the different stages and currently we're in the alternatives development stage. This is the – where we develop the master suite of alternatives. The next stage will be the selecting specific alternatives for evaluation so going back to the Menlo Park example, they had three alternatives they evaluated. We're going to get to somewhere around 2 to 4 per crossing location but that's going to happen early in 2018.

Chair DuBois: These meetings are not detailed alternatives, it's really just generation at this point?

Mr. Mello: Yeah, we're developing the master suite of alternatives currently so we expect folks to – I mean we will discuss constraints and pros and cons of different options.

Chair DuBois: Thank you for the update on November 30<sup>th</sup>. That really – I've been hearing a lot from the public about wanting to move that meeting just because it's too big items, Stanford GUP and this. I do wonder in our meeting it might be difficult in this roundtable format but if you can identify people who are going to go to that other meeting and let them talk early so

# FINAL TRANSCRIPT MINUTES

they might be able to leave early. Then the November 28<sup>th</sup> meeting, have we targeted the high-rise apartments that are right there at that crossing?

Mr. Mello: Yeah, we're going to do some special outreach to them. We're also going to talk to Menlo Park about doing some outreach there. We're also going to use some of the stakeholder groups that we have from the Downtown RPP and other initiatives and the Downtown North area to try to get better attendance at that meeting.

Chair DuBois: Then my last question/comment is I'm not sure how much we should count on this RSVP process. I mean is there a contingency if a lot more people show than you expect?

Mr. Mello: Yeah, we're assuming a certain number of RSVP won't show up and we're also assuming that a certain percentage of additional folks that did not RSVP will show up. We're keeping that in mind as we analyze the Staff needs.

Chair DuBois: Thanks. We do have one member of the public who wants to speak, Adina Levin.

Adina Levin: Good morning. I have a comment and a question so first of all thanks for mentioning reaching out to Menlo Park regarding the Palo Alto/Alma crossing. That is obviously on the border and will also be of interest to people in Menlo Park. As well, I was just looking at some of the information from the Stanford GUP and noticed that was a significant Stanford commute route. The Stanford Commute Program may be another additional way to get people who are users of that crossing to be commenting so that's a comment. Then the question is regarding the difference between these upcoming meetings looking at the different locations and how are these different from the breakout tables that were at the previous meeting? Friends of Caltrain does promote these meetings to people in the community and recommends attendance and it would be helpful to be able to really distinguish them if there's a clear distinction between what will happen there and what happened at the previous breakout tables; where people were similarly organized by crossing and where making – brainstorming type suggestions about their concerns and needs for those crossings. Thank you.

Chair DuBois: Sure.

# FINAL TRANSCRIPT MINUTES

Mr. Mello: I think there are two answers to that question, Ms. Levin. The first is some of the roundtable discussions at Community Workshop 2 felt artificially abbreviated. People where – not everybody was able to offer their thoughts. There were a couple tables where one or two people spoke primarily and the others really didn't get to talk. This is an opportunity to continue the discussions that occurred at community workshop two. It's also an opportunity to bring new people in because unlike the workshop, this is going to be on a weeknight – these are going to be on a weeknight evening. If you remember the workshops where on a Saturday afternoon so there are some people that are maybe available during the week and are not available on Saturdays. We're also going out to the neighborhoods for these so we're not expecting people to travel to one central location. We're trying to make this a little more accessible than the one central workshop with the goal of getting additional people involved in the process.

Chair DuBois: Nadia?

Nadia Naik: Hi, Nadia Naik again. Josh, maybe you could talk a little bit more of are they going to have the same kinds of maps and measuring tools and stuff that was at the community workshops? Again, I just – pulling the lens back a little bit, I just wanted to point out that I know this – I totally appreciate the community meetings and as you know, I am a fan. I think just generally the way they are being staged, from the community's perspective you're going to have them have specific location meetings. Again, no real data and then on the 28<sup>th</sup> you'll have the financing paper come out and a trenching and tunneling paper come out. Then you're going to have an evening meeting around trenching and tunneling but less than 24-hours for people to have read that paper. Then you're going to have potentially the week of December 6<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup>, that will be a decision point where you guys will be deciding to whittle down alternatives but yet the community would not have had a chance to both participate in an open free think session and digest this data and give you feedback on how to narrow those alternatives. I understand that we're having community meetings before decision points but you're not really allowing the community to have kind of deep dives on those big topics that are coming. If you play that out, your hydrology and soils paper doesn't come out probably till January, which is kind of really, really the delaminating factor on trenches and tunnels. Which as we all know from the CirclePoint questionnaires that we have had previously, it is the leading and most favorable alternative. My point is, despite the fact that you're trying to engage the community, you're really leading them towards a kind of bloodbath where you get them all super

# FINAL TRANSCRIPT MINUTES

excited about something and then you might potentially tell them, you can't have your cake.

Chair DuBois: Any comments?

Mayor Scharff: I guess I was looking at the comments on the trench and the tunnel and I sort of agree with Nadia on that a little bit. I mean I think these are a little too optimistic in some ways that these are written. I mean do we really think...

Chair DuBois: We're not on the questionnaire yet.

Mayor Scharff: Oh, I thought we were on the questionnaire.

Chair DuBois: We were going to have Claudia speak to that.

Mayor Scharff: Oh, alright. (Inaudible)

Chair DuBois: Should we move onto the questionnaire?

Council Member Fine: Just one point – one thing. Just to dig into that issue of if we're going to release the paper and have the meeting the next day and then the hydro paper is not for another month. Is – if we wanted to change that scheduling of these meetings, could we kick these out to January something? I just want to put that out there as a hypothetical.

Mr. Mello: Change the dates of the roundtable?

Council Member Fine: Yeah, (inaudible)(crosstalk).

Mr. Mello: You know we've already advertised them, it's been in the newspaper and it's on the City's website. We have RSVPs and I mean we usually get a lot of flake when we reschedule public meetings.

Council Member Fine: I mean is there a way to like do them again or something? I don't know.

Mr. Mello: Just to reiterate, we're not making any decisions at the roundtable so the folks will have plenty of time to digest the papers as they

# FINAL TRANSCRIPT MINUTES

are released. The data will be available at the roundtable on the 30<sup>th</sup> to talk about but we're not...

Council Member Fine: Sure, but I mean these are really pretty complex papers that...

Chair DuBois: I guess maybe another alternative would be before we narrow those alternatives if we had another roundtable once the papers come out.

Mayor Scharff: Well, you were going to summarize them at the roundtable?

Mr. Mello: Yeah, we're definitely – we're going to have a presentation that summarizes (inaudible)(crosstalk)

Council Member Fine: I know but that's kind of like us getting a packet to make a big decision the day of.

Mayor Scharff: We're not making – they're not making any decisions.

Council Member Fine: No but we're giving them the indication that they're helping to make that decision and...

Mayor Scharff: This is more like a study session. I don't disagree that it's not perfect but it's more like a study session.

Council Member Fine: We may – I guess I'm saying we may want to look at some kind of meeting towards the end of January as Tom mentioned.

Chair DuBois: Like I said, if there's another roundtable that takes the results and then has the hydrology paper and these other papers before narrow alternatives, that might be the best route.

Council Member Fine: Yeah, I think that's a good idea.

Chair DuBois: We're being pretty loose with public comments, that's part of our new charter so Tony if you could go ahead.

Tony Carrasco: Tony Carrasco, 583 Glenbrook Drive in Palo Alto. Just wondering if the traffic report that was sent out to everyone, some of it describes the vertical alignment of these trains. It seems like Churchill in all

# FINAL TRANSCRIPT MINUTES

cases is on grade which determines where the alignment should be. The question that I have for you guys is that has the vertical alignment of the tracks been determined or are we still open to trenches and tunnels in the north?

Chair DuBois: I don't think it's been determined and we're going to talk about that circulation study later today. Thank you. Ok, so why don't we move onto the questionnaire?

Claudia Keith, Chief Communications Officer: Thank you, Claudia Keith, Chief Communications Officer. In your packet is a second draft community questionnaire that follows along – if you recall we sent out an initial one over the summer as a touch point with the community. This is meant to be another data point in trying to get input from the community. It talks about a variety of different considerations for alternatives at the grade crossing. It assumes some knowledge but we really are trying to, in part of this, broaden the scope of people who may not have attended the community meetings or not been really engaged at all. We plan to – after the Committee's input, send the questionnaire out similarly as we did the first round where it was to a fairly large universe. We got about ten percent of folks sending it back which really is a lot. I don't know whether we would get that same response but again, it's meant to be just another data point as we're really trying to gather the community's perspectives on alternatives. That's the purpose of the second community questionnaire. We would summarize the results, as we did the first one, as part of your deliberations. One of the thoughts that we had was perhaps to use some of these questions as a facilitation in the roundtables potentially because they would be the kinds of things that the community might be talking about at a specific grade crossing. We'd like to get the community's input both on the specific questions and potentially any kind of outreach that you would like to see us do.

Chair DuBois: Greg, you had some comments?

Mayor Scharff: Yeah, I do and I guess they are sort of all on different questions. We talk about – I think we say things like if there are constraints – where was it? The one where North Palo Alto and (inaudible)?

Ms. Keith: Yeah, q. seven – question seven.

Council Member Fine: (Inaudible)



# FINAL TRANSCRIPT MINUTES

Mayor Scharff: Right. I like – let me read – I had it where I want – why don't you let someone else go and I'll come back to what I want to say.

Chair DuBois: Eric, do you have any comments? I wondered if we should add a question about closing a crossing if – something like if an existing crossing where closed, are there any existing crossings that should be widened? (Inaudible) University, Embarcadero, Oregon or other...

Mayor Scharff: I would support that.

Chair DuBois: So, you know...

Ms. Keith: We did have one, question 4 but it was basically if we closed it for bike/ped only alternative.

Chair DuBois: Yeah but we don't really talk about the possibility of widening like let's say Embarcadero which is near Churchill. The other thing on the outreach, I thought the – I think it was Adina who had suggested Stanford for the Palo Alto crossing. I think that was a good suggestion as well.

Council Member Fine: Just one thing, I think part of this is trying to figure out the community sensitivity to different outcomes here. One piece that's not touched on here is the funding. It may be helpful to have a question around that of saying depending on the type of grade separations we do, there are different cost estimates and we could give some ballparks. It might also be helpful to ask people to indicate would you be willing to get grant funding from the regional guy? Would you be willing to do some kind of transit tax? Would you be willing to do a bond measure? I mean these are the things that we kind of know will maybe be coming down the pipeline. I think it would be helpful to see Palo Alto's opinions about that.

Mayor Scharff: So, ok, let me try and get back to – what are we trying to – what are we trying to actually accomplish with this?

Ms. Keith: That seems to be a (inaudible)...

Mr. Mello: As we developed our suites of alternatives, we're going to need to think about which ones make sense from a community opinion and we don't want to put something out there that's just a complete no go. This will help us as we move forward with the assembly of the suite of alternatives and

# FINAL TRANSCRIPT MINUTES

then eventually when the Rail Committee and Council need to select the alternatives to move forward into evaluation.

Mayor Scharff: This is my concern with – I guess I'll put it this way and it's something that Claudia said. If we want to engage more people who may know nothing about this, in a complete vacuum and voting for the tunnel, number one. Then I'm voting for the trench and then after that, I'm not happy with most of the other alternatives. I think we know that to start with. I don't think there's any mystery about that. I think that we've had community meetings so the more difficult questions are – I think you get to them a little bit when you say if it turns out a trench or tunnel in the north and it's too challenging, which of these alternatives would you like to consider? I think that's a helpful question. I think like in q. 6, without knowing where about (inaudible) which of the crossings would you be open to considering in Palo Alto? I think it would almost helpful to say – we need a question that says if a trench or tunnel is not feasible and I think it's good to break it up between South Palo Alto and North Palo Alto (inaudible). Then I think we need to break up the difference between a trench and tunnel. I don't think we do that, we say trench/tunnel. I think they are completely different animals so that's really sort of my concerns with this is I'm not sure...

Chair DuBois: Does question number 8 capture your concern? It says if a tunnel is too costly, what would you consider?

Mayor Scharff: Well it says if – the question is (inaudible) trenching or tunneling challenging, which would be the alternative? So, I think we need to break up trench and tunnel.

Council Member Filseth: (Inaudible)

Mayor Scharff: I'm wondering if we should explain a little bit different is a trench is an open area where you may not be able – where you may be able to cover portions of it but a lot of it's not covered. A tunnel – I think everyone is familiar with what a tunnel looks like. I think we're a little too optimistic about tunneling under the creek, frankly. I think we say that there may be constraints. I mean I think may is like a little too soft. Are there – I would think that there would be constraints with a trench going through Oregon Express Way, where that grade separation is. That seems to me to be a major challenge that we're not identifying. I also think there's a major challenge with trenching and there may be major challenges of trenching or tunneling under those too of Embarcadero. I meant those seem to be like

# FINAL TRANSCRIPT MINUTES

major rebuilds and the cost of major rebuilding that – to Tom's point earlier, it may be cheaper to widen Embarcadero there and rebuild that bridge so it's four lanes. I'm thinking there's more useful information about rebuilding Embarcadero and I think we're way too optimistic the way we write this about a tunnel or a trench underneath in the north part of Palo Alto. That's my concerns.

Chair DuBois: I mean at the same time you're doing survey questions and you don't want to bias the answer.

Ms. Keith: Yeah, we were trying to balance on sort of between...

Mayor Scharff: I don't agree with that actually. I think if you want useful information you have to give people some of the constraints so they can at least have something in their head about that. Where if you say – as I said, in a complete vacuum, why would everyone not vote for the tunnel? I mean you get out of change, you don't see it, it's – (inaudible) we know that.

Chair DuBois: It's just that there's a science to writing survey questions and you got to strike the balance.

Mayor Scharff: Well but I haven't heard a scientific explanation.

Council Member Filseth: Well, there is kind of science to this and so I mean what phase are we in here? Are we polling the community for more – are we in focus group land where we're polling the community for more ideas to make sure we've got everything covered or are we in the phase where ok, we got to – we got these alternatives, we understand the tradeoffs and we're polling to see what percentage of people want this trade off verses that trade-off? Then we're going say ok, three-quarters of the people want it this way in full knowledge and (inaudible) and stuff like that. Which ones of those are we in here? What phase are we in here? Sort of like...

Chair DuBois: We're in the brainstorming phase pretty clearly.

Council Member Filseth: Ok, so then are we going to say well, fifty-one percent of people said that they wanted a trench and then forty-nine people said they wanted a tunnel so we're going to go with a trench.

Council Member Fine: If we are on the brainstorming phase I don't think we should be asking a question like get us answers we'd rather know or helpful.

# FINAL TRANSCRIPT MINUTES

So, I've been looking at question 5, what about considering the addition a new grade separates for bikes and peds. I doubt anybody is going to say no, I'm not open to this idea. Is that actually getting us helpful information?

Council Member Filseth: Well that depends, are we brainstorming (inaudible) alternatives or are we trying to do cognitive analysis here?

Mayor Scharff: Well, are we actually brainstorming? I actually don't view survey questions as that useful in brainstorming. I think what survey questions are is we need to identify preferences between realistic alternatives a little bit to give us useful information. We need to identify strong points of opposition like if one hundred percent of the people – well, say eighty percent of the people in Palo Alto say we do not want to see any takings of land. That's something to know and if forty percent say we don't want to see takings, that means 60 percent might be ok with it. That's the kind of stuff I want to know from the survey. I want to know where the strong points of opposition are and when people have to start looking harder choices, what their preferences are. If you give these people a really easy way out, which is let's do a tunnel, I'm all for the tunnel.

Council Member Filseth: Well, I think – you know that would have been my sense as to where we actually -- is -- we're past sort of the brainstorming of this and we're actually sort of getting into the – starting to dip a toe into the water of what choices are we (inaudible) at a very, very high level. We (inaudible) a quantitative phase here and we've got to be really, really in the preliminary but then (inaudible) are going to have to understand what some of the tradeoffs are, which (inaudible) over here. Which is you can't just ask do you want (inaudible)? Now you got to start asking questions...

Mayor Scharff: I like that.

Council Member Filseth: Do you still want a pony if you've got to muck out the stables and brush it every day? We sort of got into that but like at a very high level.

Chair DuBois: We do have a couple public speakers. This is a good conversation; do we want to ...

Mayor Scharff: Let's hear from the public.

Chair DuBois: Alright, so Adina followed by Nadia.

# FINAL TRANSCRIPT MINUTES

Adina Levin: Alright, I have two questions, one that's a little narrower and ones a little broader. So, the narrow one is there's a question about age and it was really, really difficult to figure out what that question is getting at. I mean it seems like there is some underlying intent like are you 80-years old but you're really thinking about the next generation in your great-grandchildren. It seems like somebody has something in mind and it's not being said what it is and I think that it's not clear what the goal is. The outcome might be to make people annoyed because it's super unclear about where that's going. The other question is getting to the really subsistent decision about has – asking people to make tradeoffs. The things about these surveys is that you can only do a certain limited number of these and asking people about their preference about trench and tunnel and cost right before the information comes out is really burning the option of asking people the information after it comes out. People will make much more informed decisions after it comes out. I mean if somebody said hey, do you want a pony? I would love a pony. Ok, the pony costs \$500. Ok, I can make that babysitting, I'm happy. Do you want a pony? Ok, that costs \$100,000. No, that is far beyond my babysitting income, right? The – I think it is not respectful of the community to be asking the question that requires real information. The information is about to come out but it's giving a physics quiz before the class as opposed to after. It's asking the opinion before you have the information, I think that's really not right. I don't think that this should be done in terms of – I think asking for those tradeoffs is super important for this process and will be really valuable after the information comes out and people can digest it. It is really deeply problematic beforehand, thank you.

Chair DuBois: Thank you. We do have several speakers so I'm going to start using the timer.

Nadia Naik: Just my luck.

Chair DuBois: Nadia, followed by Elizabeth. You have (inaudible), Nadia.

Ms. Naik: Yeah, it's ok, I talk fast. I'm just going to say that following the horse metaphor, you've got the cart before the horse. What is the point of this survey? Is this a poll? Is it a survey where whoever answers it gets a prize or not? You're not really asking the right questions and to what Adina saying, you're not giving any data. Usually when you think about using a survey, you think about an opportunity to educate the public. Is this survey going to have a map? Are you going to explain to people that the value of Caltrain is that it takes two lanes of traffic at peak hour in both directions?

# FINAL TRANSCRIPT MINUTES

Are you going to explain to them how many more trains are going to be coming? There's actually factual errors in the very introduction, it says that we only currently have two existing grade crossings and we don't talk about Oregon Expressway. I mean you've got to be really careful about the information that you're putting in there. You want to use this as an opportunity to educate people. To Adina's point, if you're then going to put out new information, wouldn't that be a better time to put this stuff out? The other thing is that this is an opportunity for you to have people rank options; one through five. Use some of that more tailored questioning like if you answered this then maybe you think this. There are some cases where you're asking about funding and you muddle a few ideas together but you don't really go into them. You know ask people, if you really want to know stuff – what you want to know would you be willing to tax yourself? Would you – do you want a business license tax? Do you want us to go out for regional funding? Do you want us to – what – there's not any sort of depth to a lot of the questions where you really want to ask questions. To Mayor Scharff's point, the biggest question is are you willing to take people's homes and do you even know which alternative you may or may not be picking and what that does? I don't think anybody has the level of sophistication that you're thinking about to be able to answer this survey. Which the age question, ok so I'm with Adina, I don't know what we are trying to get too but I will point out two flaws. Number one is, the first question is are you going to be twenty in the 2030? So, you have a lot of 2-year old's answering this survey right now. It's got to be all over Walter Hayes is what I'm thinking. Number two, is the question could be given to the entire population of the Stanford Campus but you didn't ask them that if in 2030 they are going to be living in the City of Palo Alto. These questions, you have to be really careful and I would also say that people would take a lot of offense to that age question. You don't want everyone answering with a smiley face because it's probably not a smiley face in their mind. I think you need to be really careful. I think you need to understand the relevance of what you're really asking. You know you don't want to over serve it. You're having them have all these brainstorming sessions and think about it, from their perspective, they are going to go to all of these community meetings with no real information and get super excited. Then you are going to send them this thing and they are going to keep checking off their favorite answers because everyone wants the pony guys and so then what? I think – I would suggest that you hold off on this survey until after you've done all these community meetings. Until you've really thought about what you want to be asking these people. Thank you.

Chair DuBois: Elizabeth Alexis, followed by Roland.

# FINAL TRANSCRIPT MINUTES

Elizabeth Alexis: Yeah, so I'm pretty much with Nadia. I would hold off on a survey now until you know exactly what you want to ask. I'm going to be talking in item five extensively and may come up with some other questions you might want to ask people. I mean, first of all, we need to have people just reading these surveys and editing them incredibly carefully. As Nadia said, not only do we miss in the opening how many grade crossings we have. We actually say that we have six roadways that cross and these intersections are called grade crossings. No, they are not grade crossings, they are train crossings. Some of which are grade crossings and some of which are grade separated crossings. Unless you're going to give good information like in a poll that helps you – gives you a little information ahead of time. I mean the second thing is I think around the world we've discovered the downside to asking people their opinion on a matter like if you can't give it to them or even if you give it to them, it's a fifty-fifty, forty-five and what do you get out of that information? If – instead you want to get a temperature and then you have a zero to five kind of reading like especially on a question. I think there are questions that sooner rather than later do need to be asked about emanate domain and emanate domain both on – because people will have different feelings about emanate domain on houses that are already back the tracks. People sort of feel like they knew what they were getting into verses people on the cross streets where people may not feel like that's "fair." I don't know but until you ask that question and that's kinds of a zero to five thing. The same thing on taxing and other things so I think it's early. I also think that – I'm going to talk about this in number five, I don't think we know why people use the different roads that they use yet and the point that will we'll be making is that right now the Alma/Palo Alto and Churchill is not about getting across town. They are about getting on and off Alma safely and so if you want to talk to people to really understand what's going on, you may want to ask them some very specific questions like the Embarcadero one. Which of those turn movements are you comfortable doing because a lot of them puts you into unprotected turns against four lanes of traffic. I think there are some things that you could ask that would help you understand more of the current situation in Palo Alto. There are some things in which I think we do need to get a temperature on. The thing that could eliminate or include alternatives with the emanate domain issues but you also need again education. So, I hear a lot of things that are just not true like they're going to take your house and you'll get two dollars or you're going to lose your property tax basis. You also – these become very emotional issues so without enough information we're not going to get good answers on this. Anyway, that would be – my suggestion would be to hold off. I think we need to – we're really far ahead of where we need to be at this point and you're going to ask people if they want the pony, just as everyone said. Just look around the world, is it

# FINAL TRANSCRIPT MINUTES

always a great idea to ask -- sometimes you have to be very careful with these things. Thanks.

Chair DuBois: So, Roland, followed by Stephen Rosenblum.

Ed Shikada, Assistant City Manager: Mr. Chair, if I could interject? We did receive word that we will be interrupted in more than 10-minutes so you might want to think about how the remainder of this – we have an indication there will be a fire drill that will occur.

Chair DuBois: I think we'll finish this item and then we'll probably have to come back.

Roland LeBrun: I think before you go out to have questionnaires – the issues is that you might raise people's expectations beyond reality. To start, when you are talking about tunnels, there are two kinds of tunneling. There's tunnel boring which is one way and the other way is known as cut and cover. Cut and cover is really no different than trenching except that after you are done trenching, you stick a lid on top of it so you've got to understand that. Cut and cover is not going to work with Oregon, it's not going to work with the creek; tunnel boring will. Actually, one (inaudible) I have with the tunnel and it's not even on tracks, it's under Alma. The issue that you now have are ok, great you've got a tunnel but what are you going to do about stations? My advice to you is you really want to go and look at what's going on in San Francisco right now. They are going to make a decision by the end of the year. (Inaudible) is going to be cut and cover or another alignment which is going to be tunnel and boring. For one point, (inaudible) tunnels, the cut and cover you're looking at \$4.5 billion so think about that. Tunnel boring you're probably more into the \$2-\$2.5 billion and it's going to be much longer. It's probably in the 3-mile region but the station itself is half a billion so you've really got to start thinking about that before you go in with a questionnaire because might say well, this is great. We're going to go and have a tunnel and then you guys will say whoops, we (inaudible) do anything like that. Then people start losing credibility so my advice to you is to keep a close eye on San Francisco between now and the end of the year and take it from there.

Chair DuBois: Stephen Rosenblum.

Stephen Rosenblum: Yeah, I also just wanted to agree with the previous speakers. I think – I've been coming to these meetings now for about 4-



# FINAL TRANSCRIPT MINUTES

years on the rail. I consider myself pretty well informed as a private citizen but I haven't done near the work of some of the other people that have spoken and I can't see the value of sending a survey out like this to people who may be totally uninvolved in the issues. Then asking them what they want without knowing any of the tradeoffs. So, I think saving Staff's time -- I think the community meetings -- the Town Halls, I think those -- people will be getting information. They'll have a chance to discuss with Staff and they will be up to make more informed decisions about what they want rather than just getting a survey and filling it out with no information. I think you should not send this survey out at this time and postpone it until when we are really looking at choose between a few alternatives and can discuss exactly what the tradeoffs are. Thank you.

Chair DuBois: Alright so about 7-minutes till the surprise fire drill. Does Staff want to respond to some of the public comments?

Hillary Gitelman, Director of Planning and Community Environment: If I could just make a couple comments and first of all I wanted to clarify, it's a questionnaire, not a survey. We're not trying to get statistically valid responses here and I think we should clarify the objectives. It's not only for us to learn what the people are thinking and get their input but it's also so that people start to think about this difficult challenge the City is facing and a challenge that's going to be something that is meaningful for generations to come. We've tried to make questions that maybe there are no right answers too but they get people thinking like oh gosh, maybe it won't be feasible to do a trench. Maybe we will have to think about other alternatives and gosh, maybe this is a project that's going to be something that happens for the next generation of people and not for me. So, we've got some great thoughts about how the questions can be reframed or reworded but I think there is a value to a questionnaire at this point for the lay people who don't come to these meetings and don't understand it in the same depth as some of the people in the room. Now, of course, if the Committee wants to put it off, we can do that and do it in the new year but let's think about how we're reaching the people who are not going to come to these roundtables. This might be a way to get them informed about just how complicated the problem is that we're facing.

Mayor Scharff: You know I agree with that sentiment completely that it's useful but unfortunately, I don't think this questionnaire does that. I think questionnaire does what the speakers -- the public speakers -- I think it sets up do I want a pony? Of course, I want a pony. I don't think it engenders deep thought and I agree also that it's -- how many times can we send these

# FINAL TRANSCRIPT MINUTES

questionnaires with the same questions? So, we should probably – I think we should rethink the whole questionnaire. I think we should send it out but I think – I don't think these are the right questions and I don't think we can recreate them today. I think we should give broad direction to go back. I think we should wait till after the studies come out, they are coming out fairly soon. I think you could use some of the information – I could take each one of the questions like the speakers did and say the same thing. That if we say do you want to business license tax to pay for this? I mean I don't want to pay the tax so sure, let's tax business or would I consider a parcel tax? Well, I might consider a parcel tax if it's thirty bucks but if it's \$4.5 billion over my parcel and you want \$10,000 a year or \$20,000, no. So, I mean I think all of these things without context and making the hard choices isn't helpful. I think we need the information, we need to put the information in the questionnaire to make people think and so I would wait until we have the studies.

Chair DuBois: Yeah, I'm probably a little less on the extreme detail on the questions but I think maybe going back. I think again when you explain kind of the intent behind things like the age question, it's more understandable but I think we probably need to go back and reword them or think about how to ask them. I do think it's a really good point that you just want to start to indicate how complex this is. I think if – when you come back, maybe be really clear about the goal and the purpose and opportunities for future questionnaires and surveys.

Council Member Fine: I'll just say I'm persuaded by all of the speakers in the public that this probably should come back after or we should send this out after the studies are out. I think also or at least I hope that some of the roundtables might surface a few more areas where we don't quite have the pulse of the community and we may want to get it. So, at the roundtables, specifically the locational ones, we might find a few other issues where we want to get some data points and the survey may be helpful after that. I think December 1<sup>st</sup> is a bit ambitious here.

Chair DuBois: I'm actually wondering if – well, so do we want to make it a formal Motion on this or do we need too?

Mayor Scharff: (Inaudible)

Ms. Gitelman: You know I think we can take your comments back, put this on ice for month and maybe at your next meeting come back with some recommendations about a survey we can do now focused on a clear set of

# FINAL TRANSCRIPT MINUTES

objectives or one that we would do in the future – and/or one that we would do in the future with all of the technical information. I guess I would just add, I don't see a world in which we won't be doing an in-depth analysis of the trench or tunnel ideas. So, even if we put all the information that we get out of these upcoming studies, I still think that's going to be in the suite of alternatives that we carry forward for more in-depth analysis. So, we will always be learning more about that, I could be wrong but that's just the pulse of the community right now.

Chair DuBois: I'm to suggest that we – if is – could we move the circulation study to a future meeting. I think it's going to take a fair amount of time and if we could quickly maybe go through the briefing paper and future agendas, we might be able to wrap up before the alarm goes off. Is that something...

Council Member Fine: I agree, yeah.

Mr. Shikada: Three minutes.

Mayor Scharff: Well, before we agree to do that because normally we schedule this meeting to 11:00, how long is the fire drill? Is it a 10-minute fire drill? Who schedules a fire drill during Rail Committee meeting?

Mr. Shikada: They don't check for approval on this type of things.

Chair DuBois: Generally, we go till 10 o'clock.

Mr. Shikada: I would imagine the drill will take at least 20-minutes or so.

Mayor Scharff: Ok, fair enough.

## **NO ACTION TAKEN.**

~~5. Review and Comment on Draft Rail Corridor Circulation Study White Paper.~~

## Agenda Review and Staff Update

~~6. Receive and Review Rail Program Briefing Paper From October 2017.~~

# FINAL TRANSCRIPT MINUTES

## Interagency Communications

None.

## Next Steps and Future Agendas

Chair DuBois: So, Staff report?

Ed Shikada, Assistant City Manager: Let's see, do you want to talk about the briefing paper or no? Should we talk – future agendas, should we jump to that?

Chair DuBois: Ok, yeah, we can do that. I thought we could get through this as well.

Joshuah Mello, Chief Transportation Official: Oh, I thought we switched to – sorry, I thought we switched that (inaudible) because we have so many other...

Chair DuBois: Oh, did we?

Mr. Mello: I can do that if you want me to?

Chair DuBois: No, let's just do future agendas.

Mr. Shikada: Just to give you a quick snapshot on a look ahead, we currently do have on calendar November 29<sup>th</sup> as your next Rail Committee meeting. I have heard some suggestion that might be a problem for Members so that be perhaps worth confirming that. We also have the City Clerk checking to see if there's a potential for a meeting in the week of December 11<sup>th</sup>. I think you're last Council meeting for the year is that evening so if we can get a quorum on that week then we could proceed with the meeting.

Mayor Scharff: So, the 29<sup>th</sup> works for me.

Council Member Fine: I can do the 29<sup>th</sup>, not the week of the 11<sup>th</sup>.

Chair DuBois: Pretty sure I'm confirmed for the 29<sup>th</sup>. I have to look at December.

# FINAL TRANSCRIPT MINUTES

Mr. Shikada: There's a – I believe a doodle poll that's in process.

Chair DuBois: So, if you think the circulation study is pretty important, the 29<sup>th</sup> is very full. I'm wondering if maybe we should move Burlingame to January or something?

Mr. Mello: I've already pushed them off a couple times. I'd be worried we might lose them entirely.

Chair DuBois: Ok, well I just think we need to rebalance that agenda on the 29<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Shikada: For the purpose of a quick run through, on the 29<sup>th</sup> we currently have tentatively scheduled the Burlingame presentation on their Broadway grade separation project, discussion of the alternatives that are in process, discussion of the trenching and tunneling white paper, finance white paper, and your month rail program briefing.

Chair DuBois: (Inaudible) throw the circulation study in there. (crosstalk)

Mr. Mello: If we're able to have a December meeting, based on our discussion today, I don't think we'll be talking much about the development of alternative and selecting alternatives for analysis December – in the December meeting. We could push some of the November 29<sup>th</sup> items to December 11<sup>th</sup> and then push the December 29<sup>th</sup> items into the new year.

Mr. Shikada: Or – and potentially extend the November 29<sup>th</sup> if that is still workable for your schedules because it sounds like it will be a deeply technical discussion.

Council Member Fine: It will make it some good holiday reading.

Chair DuBois: Yeah so, we're going to get very busy with these roundtables and if everybody could make the roundtables. I guess please respond to the clerk on the doodles for December. Alright, so I guess we'll call the meeting adjourned here. Thank you, guys.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 9:29 A.M.