



**City Council
RAIL COMMITTEE**

FINAL MINUTES

Special Meeting
May 18, 2022

The Rail Committee of the City of Palo Alto met on this date at the Community Meeting Room and via virtual teleconference at 1:00 p.m.

Present: Vice Mayor/Chair Lydia Kou, Mayor Pat Burt, and Council Member Alison Cormack

Absent: None

Oral Communications

Public comments were received from:

Martin Summer shared a painting bid of \$2000 per pole to repaint the University Avenue pole coverings, indicated private funding is secured and asked for this item to be included on the agenda, supported by the RAIL Committee, and completed.

Adrian Brandt noted considerations by the Finance Department to defer the San Francisquito Creek Bridge rehabilitation capital item in response to a budget shortfall.

Action Items

Item No. 1 Updates

- A. Caltrain: A representative was not present.
- B. VTA: A representative was not present.
- C. City Staff

Chief Transportation Official Philip Kamhi provided an update on the quiet zone project on Palo Alto Avenue and noted that, together with the City of Menlo Park, requests for proposals (RFP) are being reviewed by Senior Engineer Ripon Bhatia for collaboration on the Palo Alto Avenue study. Furthermore, he relayed the approved use of the Measure B grade separation funding by VTA for the additional studies and a forthcoming formal response to the Mayor regarding the use of Measure B Local Streets and Roads funds upon determination, noted the City's efforts to evaluate and prepare for grant opportunities for grade separation projects, and announced upcoming meetings with VTA and Caltrain to discuss technical issues and follow-up letter.

Public comments were received from:

Nadia Naik asked if opportunities exist for the City or XCAP to help VTA understand the importance of bike pedestrian crossings.

In response to Mayor Burt's questions, Chief Transportation Official Kamhi reported that a meeting is scheduled with Caltrain to discuss the San Francisquito Creek Bridge analysis and study results, confirmed the pursuit of active transportation grant funds, and noted plans for community outreach, exploring alternatives/options, and prioritization to prepare for the bike and pedestrian crossing application process.

Mayor Burt indicated that Senator Becker and staff extended support to City's with MTC grade separation grants and meetings.

Senior Engineer Bhatia emphasized how preparedness increases the chances of being awarded grant funds.

In response to Chair Kou's question, City Manager Ed Shikada suggested including the prioritization of the bike and pedestrian plan in the Committee's annual work plan.

ACTION: NO ACTION WAS TAKEN

Item No. 2 Discussion of Rail Committee 2022 Work Plan to be Recommended for City Council Approval

The RAIL Committee engaged in an open discussion and, with consideration for RAIL Committee guiding principles, reviewed the 2022 work plans recommended by staff and Mayor Burt by identifying issues and desired outcomes, the role of the RAIL Committee to support the City Council, and a timeline to be forwarded to the City Council for approval.

Bicycle and pedestrian transportation paths: Chief Transportation Official Kamhi and Sylvia Star Lack indicated that work is being done to secure a consultant to lead a study that will last 12 – 18 months and go before City Council for approval, collect community input, and involve the Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee, City School Traffic Safety Committee, and Planning and Transportation Commission. Furthermore, he noted that Transportation Planner Ozzy Acre will oversee the consultant for the Bicycle and Pedestrian plan project. Chief Transportation Official Kamhi relayed the unlikelihood of substantial work done before 12 months resulting in the grant application dates for crossing funds to be pushed back and the sequencing for additional crossings in this order: community outreach, project prioritization by Council, feasibility/concept alternative analysis, and funding applications with a conceptual project.

Senior Engineer Bhatia discussed grade separation projects, bike and pedestrian crossings, funding opportunities, prioritization, project readiness, planning requirements, and timing.

Staff shared that it is essential to maintain bike crossings in the vicinity of Charleston Road and Meadow Drive during construction.

Mayor Burt questioned if the pitch to VTA is assertive and clear to emphasize the difference between the bicycle and pedestrian crossing and vehicular crossing sequencing and expressed concern for funding opportunities by following the order of the current plan.

City Manager Shikada suggested including prioritizing new crossings in the RFP for the City-wide plan and making it part of the scope for consultant assistance.

Chief Transportation Official Kamhi indicated that the Caltrain crossing at Park Boulevard and Peers Park was not included on the project list and needs to be prioritized and the RAIL Committee deliberated on next steps before reaching Council for approval, sequencing, and prioritizing.

Public comments were received from:

Nadia Naik concurred with public outreach and funding efforts and suggested the RAIL Committee recommend looking at the connections across the Caltrain barrier.

Adrian Brandt suggested grouping projects and funding for bicycle, pedestrian, and vehicular crossings as a single project.

Chair Kou suggested that bicycle and pedestrian crossings effected by construction be included in discussions for elevation consideration and a review of the Embarcadero Road pathway for safety concerns.

The RAIL Committee deliberated at length on project readiness steps for grant application, public review, and three focus areas: Churchill underpass, midtown, Charleston/East Meadow, connectivity, and sequencing.

Chair Kou suggested including Item B, the Embarcadero Road and El Camino Real Improvement Project, in the Bicycle and Transportation plan. The RAIL Committee discussed safety concerns along the route, project segmentation, and changing the item name to Embarcadero and Kingsley. Council Member Cormack supported a recommendation for Council to direct staff to look at adding this item back to the Capital Improvement Project (CIP) list. Furthermore, the RAIL Committee debated on the street boundaries and RAIL Committee purview of this item.

For Items C- G, the RAIL Committee concluded that the quiet zone analysis agreement to work with the City of Menlo Park will be taken to the City Council if the cost exceeds the budget allowances and noted an opportunity for additional quiet zone analysis on Palo Alto Avenue and City-wide.

For Items D-G, the RAIL Committee concluded that a review of Caltrain standards and answers to questions by Caltrain are necessary before moving forward with Federal infrastructure funding pursuits and noted the availability of technical questions from XCAP to support staff.

Public comments were received from:

Nadia Naik clarified Caltrain's claim from the April 2022 RAIL Committee meeting that clarified issues related to onboarding a support consultant unrelated to funding, as well as their interest in receiving technical questions from the City, noted optimism in standard changes, offered to share a technical list with the RAIL Committee, and encouraged moving forward by directing staff to meet with Caltrain.

Adrian Brandt concurred with Nadia Naik.

Chair Kou supported forwarding the technical questions from XCAP to Caltrain and recommended questioning Caltrain if the four track needs to be in Palo Alto.

For Items D-G, it was determined that these items will be captured as part of the RAIL Committee work plan and staff will report back with progress updates.

For Item H, it was determined to be within the scope of the RAIL Committee.

For Item I, it was determined to go to the City Council for scoping.

For Item J, it was suggested by Council Member Cormack that staff add the language “incorporate into the municipal services agreement if appropriate” and to recommend to the City Council identify which parties should work on the municipal services agreement (MSA).

For Item K, staff agreed this item will remain going through its existing channels.

For Item L, the RAIL Committee agreed the item is already part of the work plan.

For Item M, it was determined the item is a level 3 priority.

For Item N, the RAIL Committee agreed that the item is referred and engaging, and staff will prepare separate letters to address technical issues and the four track.

For Item O, staff indicated that logistics and expectations are needed for appropriate follow-up and noted potential procurement issues with vendors, and it was determined that vendor presentations be directly associated with decisions under consideration.

For Item P, the RAIL Committee agreed to request that Council delegate the RAIL Committee to pursue regional, State, and Federal grant funding opportunities.

For Item Q, the RAIL Committee agreed to keep this item on the work plan as: April 26, 2021 Part 2/Grade Separation Criteria.

Additional items suggested for the RAIL Committee work plan included inviting the Chair and Vice Chair of XCAP to attend RAIL Committee meetings and a trench study, sequencing, and community partner engagement with Palo Alto Unified School District (PAUSD), Stanford, and Safe Routes to School.

Public comment was received by:

Martin Summer requested a conversation with Chief Transportation Official Kamhi and Caltrain to explore possibilities to change the pole color at the University Avenue station.

Nadia Naik noted the benefits to the trench cost estimate from the geotechnical study, suggested adding the word *advocacy* to the guiding principles, and conflicting standards in the XCAP appendix and offered to attend RAIL Committee meetings.

MOTION by Council Member Cormack, seconded by Chair Kou to direct staff to prepare, and return to the RAIL Committee at the next meeting, a summary draft of the 2017 RAIL Committee agreement terms

and guiding principles, RAIL Committee work plan and items requiring Council authority, an explanation of the how the RAIL Committee will accomplish the work plan, a clarification of advocacy letters and coordination versus recommendations, and a calendar for the remainder of 2022.

MOTION PASSED: 3-0

Next Steps and Future Agendas

The RAIL Committee will meet on June 15, 2022 at 1:30 p.m. to review the summary draft prepared by staff and the guiding principles.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 4:10 p.m.