13

From:	Jackie Schneider
To:	Council, City; Clerk, City; Lauing, Ed; Lythcott-Haims, Julie; greg@gregtanaka.org; Stone, Greer; Burt, Patrick; Veenker, Vicki; Kou, Lydia
Cc:	Jackie Schneider
Subject:	Palo Alto Rail Grade Proposal Concern!!!
Date:	Monday, June 10, 2024 11:45:20 AM

Dear City Council Members:

Recently you have been hearing from Seale Avenue and other Palo Alto residents who would be greatly impacted by the proposed Partial Underpass at Churchill, me included.

I ask that you remove this item from the current agenda, and close future conversation of a Partial Underpass at Churchill. I imagine it seemed a creative alternative at the time it was presented. I also know how hard it is to publicly change our mind. Please don't get stuck. It would be a great disservice to you and our community. Your community too.

The proposal served one group over others. Those who would be immediately and negatively impacted were not given an opportunity for the community to hear their voice. The safety of pedestrians and bicyclists have been noted, many times over. No one believes a long tunnel, on Seale Avenue or any other block, is the right answer.

We don’t agree that the Partial Underpass is the right answer for separating the rail grade from vehicular traffic. We don’t agree that a tunnel built on Seale Avenue is an answer.

There are other modifications that would assist vehicle traffic flow on Alma and modifications to provide safety to pedestrians and cyclists alike. The flow of traffic, backups, safety from cars pulling out of driveways, eminent domain on Alma and Seale, removal of our trees (what Palo Alto is known for, hence a version of its Spanish name), $half billion-price tag that is most likely conservative, and more.... These issues have not been adequately considered although it is clear you have spoken about this.

Please change the dialogue.

Regards,
Jackie Schneider
Palo Alto resident

From:	Mary Bussmann
To:	Council, City
Subject:	Re: Palo Alto Proposal Concern
Date:	Monday, June 10, 2024 10:46:11 AM

Dear Mayor Stone and City Council Members:

As a long standing resident of Palo Alto and Seale Avenue, as well as the Walter Hays Elementary School Principal for the last 16 years I have come to know the community very well. Safety for pedestrians, bicyclists and drivers is extremely important.

I am very concerned with the proposed Churchill Partial Underpass. It serves one group without consideration of others. I am not aware of any survey conducted to gain the priorities of the residents of Seale Avenue and surrounding areas.

Yes, I do believe the safety of bicyclists is important, but not to the extent of impacting pedestrians and cars that need to regularly access these neighborhood streets. I am concerned that increased bicycle traffic will potentially put them in increased harm due to cars backing out of driveways. The width of Seale cannot manage both cars and bicyclists traveling in two different directions. This will affect the safety of all vehicles and pedestrians crossing at intersections.

I rarely see cars and bicyclists fully stop at the intersections of Bryant and Seale, as well as Waverley and Seale. Many cyclists and cars travel at speed above 25 miles an hour and are both at fault for making our streets a hazard. Daily I hear bicyclists yelling at speeding cars not stopping at the intersections. Cars also honk at cyclists that don't obey stop signs. This plan will only increase the dangers that are currently on our neighborhood streets.

The proposed plan will:
1) Require the taking of private property via eminent domain (current drawings of property impacts are incomplete and do not reflect all impacted properties).

When will the real drawings be revealed so residents can fairly and equitably see what the plan intentions will impact?

2) Eliminate needed street parking in the neighborhood and create congestion. There are many multi-family units that rely on street parking.

In the proposed plan street parking will be eliminated? How is that equitable? For families that have multiple drivers where will they park their cars?

Will this lower the value of our homes because we do not have access to street parking?

Where will guests park when we have even small parties at our home? Parking on other side streets impact those streets as well.

3) Eliminate planting strips and trees on affected streets. Possible loss of property to accommodate sidewalks.

Palo Alto itself is known for its trees and shade, hence a version of its Spanish name. This plan disregards this legacy.

Again, will this affect property values?

4) Restrict access to residences and driveways.

Currently, bicyclists traveling down Bryant Street have the right of way and in many instances take up ¾ of the street when several travel side by side. It is nearly impossible and unsafe to pass slow moving bicycles safely.

5) Put hundreds of students at risk by requiring them to pass through an underground tunnel at night.

Yes, this may affect students, but the safety of anyone that travels in these tunnels at night.

6) Complicate vehicle and bicycle traffic flow.

Traffic and speeding are the most significant problems in Palo Alto. This plan is not well organized and does not include the sentiments of the residents of the of these neighborhoods impacted its current structure.

7) Cost estimates of up to a few hundred million dollars.

And who is paying for this poor proposal? What incentive do I have to agree to a plan that creates more unsafe streets, potentially lower house values, and does not address the true issues Palo Alto faces?

Lower cost proposals with far less negative impact, such as the closure of Churchill to automobile traffic, have been inadequately considered.

We ask the City Council to reject the recommendation of the Rail Committee.

Palo Alto City Council please collaborate with the affected community to develop a more reasonable plan. Pedestrians, cyclists and drivers all deserve to travel city streets safely and securely every day!

Sincerely,

Mary Bussmann

On Mon, Jun 10, 2024 at 10:23 AM Mary Bussmann <mrbussmann@gmail.com> wrote:

> Dear Palo Alto City Council :
>
> As a long standing resident of Palo Alto and Seale Avenue, as well as the Walter Hays Elementary School Principal for the last 16 years I have come to know the community very well. Safety for pedestrians, bicyclists and drivers is extremely important.
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Sincerely,

Mary Bussmann

From: Robert Neff
To: Council, City
Subject: Grade Separation Suggestions
Date: Sunday, June 9, 2024 11:46:05 PM

Honorable Members of Palo Alto City Council,

Thank you for your work for our city, and thank you to the Rail Committee for its work, too!

Briefly, here are my suggestions for the Rail Separation decisions.

I like the Hybrid in South Palo Alto. I think it is cheaper, and simpler than the underpass. The Charleston underpass feels like a freeway interchange stuck in the middle of a neighborhood. And while it works for bikes and pedestrians as they cross the tracks and Alma, it will be awkward to reach it from a normal street approach for bikes, or perhaps even pedestrians. It creates havoc for a pedestrian or cyclist trying to use Park Blvd.

For the Hybrid, consider widening Charleston and Meadow beyond their current widths under the rail crossing, to make space for a right turn lane to the right of a through bike lane, or to allow other design flexibility for the Alma intersection crossings to reduce conflict between turning automobiles and through bikes.

At Churchill, I believe the underpass is not part of the discussion, but... I wonder if the money would be better spent to upgrade the Embarcadero undercrossing for autos, bikes, and peds, instead of spending it on the Churchill underpass.

If the Churchill Underpass is built, blocking the bike/ped crossing there, then another crossing between California Avenue and Embarcadero is required. I think Seale to Peers park is the best location, because it will enhance the bicycling network the most, reducing peak traffic at California Ave with a modern, wider facility that should accommodate mixed use better. Neighborhood outreach, and design creativity is needed wherever an underpass will be built, to fit the new infrastructure while prioritizing existing neighborhood needs, be they parking or traffic flow.

Thank you for your service to our city of Palo Alto.

-- Robert Neff

Emerson Street, near Loma Verde.

From: pennyellson12@gmail.com
To: Council, City
Subject: FW: [PABAC] Fwd: PABAC Recommendations for Rail Crossings
Date: Sunday, June 9, 2024 6:32:46 PM

Honorable Mayor Stone and City Council Members,

I recognize that you received PABAC's Recommendations re: Rail Crossings a month ago from our Committee Chair, so they may not be fresh in your minds or close at hand. They don't appear to be attached to the June 10 Rail Grade Separation Action Item 13 staff report, so I am resending them for your convenience. Read below.

Thank you for your service to our community.

Penny Ellson
Member, PABAC

From: 'Bruce Arthur' via PABAC <pabacpaloalto@googlegroups.com>
Sent: Friday, May 10, 2024 9:24 PM
To: pabacpaloalto@googlegroups.com
Subject: [PABAC] Fwd: PABAC Recommendations for Rail Crossings

Begin forwarded message:

From: Bruce Arthur <barthur@mac.com>
Subject: PABAC Recommendations for Rail Crossings
Date: May 10, 2024 at 11:21:14 PM CDT
To: city.council@cityofpaloalto.org
Cc: "Coles, Charlie" <Charlie.Coles@CityofPaloAlto.org>

The Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee met on Tuesday May 7th, and passed the following motion:

PABAC Recommendations for Rail Crossings

Today's rail crossings at Churchill, Meadow, and Charleston serve hundreds of pedestrians and bicyclists of all ages, abilities and skill levels as well as people who use wheelchairs, walkers and strollers each day.

Whatever Charleston and Meadow alternatives are selected, PABAC recommends beginning design work on a Midtown Bicycle/Pedestrian-Dedicated Rail Crossing as soon as possible so its construction can be completed before construction on Charleston and Meadow begins. Design work on this crossing is long overdue. (A midtown crossing was specifically recommended in the 2012 BPTP).

Similarly, Churchill closure will eliminate important pedestrian and bicyclist commute E/W crossings at this location. This change necessitates construction of an alternative bike/pedestrian crossing prior to the start of construction work on Churchill.

Both of these dedicated bike/ped grade separated crossings are supported by Comprehensive Plan Program T1.19.3-***"Increase the number of east-west pedestrian and bicycle crossings across Alma Street and the Caltrain corridor, particularly south of Oregon Expressway."***

Crossing Alternatives South of Oregon Expressway

Proposed Meadow & Charleston Crossings (Viaduct, Hybrid, Underpass)

PABAC prefers the Hybrid which provides a direct route, shorter grade change than the underpass at significantly lower cost than the Viaduct or Underpass. (Note: We do not know if the cost of moving underground utilities was included in the estimated project cost. Also, we don't know what the long-term maintenance costs for the pumping station may be.) The Hybrid alternative will require lower levels of local funding, with a substantial portion of capital costs covered by Regional, State and Federal sources. Pedestrians and bicyclists will be safely separated from train traffic and each other with bike lanes. It requires no acquisition of private properties; however, driveway modification may be required.

PABAC does not recommend the underpass, though we recognize this alternative completely separates foot-powered people from six lanes of fast-moving vehicular traffic on Alma Street and is the alternative that reduces motor vehicle delays at Alma. Unfortunately, the underpass also imposes out-of-direction travel and longer grade changes than the hybrid alternative and viaduct require. The committee has a strong preference to minimize out-of-direction travel and longer grade change segments for foot-powered pedestrians, bicyclists and other wheeled devices like wheelchairs and strollers.

The two-way bike path on the south side of Meadow east of the tracks terminates at a sidewalk continuation. This design is likely to produce mixed bicycle and pedestrian traffic on a narrow sidewalk, dangerous wrong-way WB bicycle traffic on the street approaching the path, and unpredictable WB bicyclist movements to cross from the right side of the street to the left side. The situation is similar for the two-way path on the north side of Charleston east of the tracks. Only an uncontrolled crosswalk is provided for crossing the road. A similar problem exists today on Churchill, causing students to ride wrong way and/or shoot across the street at uncontrolled locations. However, because Charleston carries much higher auto traffic volumes, the risk associated with this kind of behavior will be greater.On both Meadow and Charleston, both directions of motor vehicle traffic may travel faster than they did with the signal at Alma, volume may be higher than it is today. Traffic will no longer be platooned on Charleston by an Alma signal; all of these factors would make it difficult for pedestrians and bicyclists to find gaps to cross safely to get to the right side of the road. In both cases, two one-way paths, with separate areas for bicyclists and pedestrians, would be far better. Though the bicycle-pedestrian facility has gentler grade, the roadway, for bicyclists who choose the more direct route on the road, has a challenging grade of 10-12 percent.

There are similar problems with the two-way paths west of the tracks, where transitions to and from the roadway for left-side bicycle traffic are absent or ambiguous. A number of locations on Park Boulevard appear to call for several new bends and turns by bicyclists.

In addition, with the underpass, EB bicyclists who choose the more direct route of taking a lane on the road or

riding the shoulder would have to contend with merging motorists as they approach the roundabout on Charleston. The two-lane roundabout will draw a higher volume of traffic than today's traffic volumes on this segment, and it will not be platooned by a traffic signal at Alma, making the merge very challenging for bicyclists.

The subcommittee has tried to work with staff and consultants to solve these problems, but to date we have not been able to identify satisfactory solutions. If these design problems can be solved, our recommendation might change.

PABAC recommends that construction of the midtown bike/ped crossing facility should precede the multi-year period of Charleston and Meadow grade separation construction.

Without a midtown crossing, bicycle commuters will have no low stress east/west crosstown alternative south of Oregon Expressway when both Meadow and Charleston may be closed. Even when these routes are not closed, they are likely to become very high stress routes for people who bike and walk during the construction period. Drivers can safely use detours to Oregon Expressway and San Antonio Road; however, these arterial and expressway routes are not designed to be safe or convenient alternative routes for most people who walk and bike, especially school-bound children.

An additional south Palo Alto bike/ped crossing in the vicinity of Lindero, landing near Robles Park on Park Boulevard could connect through the park to the Wilkie Bicycle Boulevard and would facilitate much more convenient east-west crosstown bicycle-pedestrian commutes for people south of Meadow, as well as providing a completely grade-separated crossing of Alma and the railroad. It would eliminate long twice-daily detours north to the midtown crossing and then back south again to get to Gunn HS during the Charleston-Meadow construction period, for instance. It also would create more equitable citywide distribution of grade separated crossings longer term. After construction of the proposed grade separation projects, north Palo Alto would have five bike/pedestrian rail grade separations and south Palo Alto would have three or four, depending on whether the southern-most areas of south Palo Alto are provided with an additional grade separated crossing.

Churchill, Kellogg & Seale Crossing Alternatives

Two new bike/pedestrian crossings were explored in depth: Kellogg and Seale. PABAC's recommended location for this new dedicated bicycle/pedestrian crossing is Seale which fills a longer gap between bicyclist/pedestrian rail crossings than Kellogg. Seale also provides superior school commute connectivity to Greene Middle School, Walter Hays Elementary School and Palo Alto High School and the citywide bicycle network. A Seale crossing would also provide residents east of Alma with a new, more direct walking and bicycling connection into Peers Park.

The Kellogg connection has several significant problems: a longer tunnel with poor sight lines, out-of-direction travel, intrusion into PAUSD ROW and Caltrain ROW. PABAC supports the City Council Rail Committee's recommendation for a crossing at Seale.

Rail Grade Separation plans, renderings and animations, and other materials can be found here https://connectingpaloalto.com

Approved by unanimous vote by all in attendance

Alan Wachtel
Art Liberman
Bill Zaumen
Bruce Arthur
Cedric de la Beaujardiere
Eric Nordman
Ken Joye

Nicole Rodia
Paul Goldstein
Penny Ellson
Robert Neff

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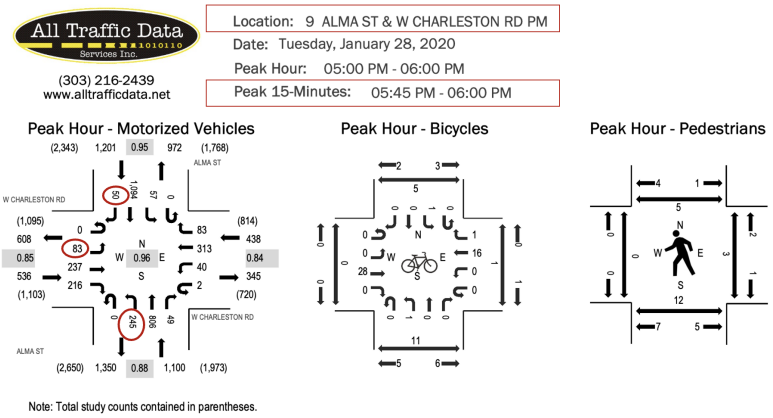
From: Sabrina Lin
To: Stone, Greer; Kou, Lydia; Tanaka, Greg; Veenker, Vicki; Burt, Patrick; Lauing, Ed; Lythcott-Haims, Julie; Transportation; Clerk, City; Council, City
Subject: Re: RE Grade Separation city council special meeting June 10 2024
Date: Sunday, June 9, 2024 1:27:40 PM
Attachments: image.png

apologies, I screen captured the AM traffic data twice but labeled Figure 3 as PM traffic. Below is the correct PM traffic Figure 3.

50+83+245= 378 cars(19.1%) diverted to roundabout turns with Underpass solution



On Sun, Jun 9, 2024 at 11:04 AM Sabrina Lin <sabrinamylin@gmail.com> wrote:

> Dear City Council members,
>
> I have been a Palo Alto resident since 1985 and have raised four children in the PAUSD. I bike or walk almost everywhere within Palo Alto and frequently drive to nearby cities. I would like to highlight the potential negative impacts the Underpass solution presents to both bike/pedestrian traffic and car traffic.
>
> I will specifically address evaluation Criteria A, B, C, and H and will draw on information from the Connecting Palo Alto comparison matrix and traffic analysis report.
>
> **Bike and Pedestrian traffic:**
> A common daily bike route across town from west to east is that of Gunn students biking home across Alma. In the Underpass solution, while the section of the grade-separated route of cars and trains may be safer in *part* of the student bikers' route (the underpass), the complexity they would need to maneuver on their *overall* route may prove significantly less safe than the Hybrid solution.
> The Underpass solution requires navigating up and down ramps as well as a tight U-turn in order to cross W Charleston to arrive at the two-way bike lane. And, depending on where they live, student bikers would need to contend directly with

car traffic at the traffic circle after crossing Alma. Moreover, a likely and even more dangerous outcome is that when confronted with this complexity, reckless students will simply choose to take a short-cut by biking on the much steeper grade underpass *with* car traffic itself. This behavior is allowed by California law and cannot be overridden by the city (Figure 1). The underpass option was clearly designed with cyclists as an afterthought, and in actual use will be either aggravating or dangerous to navigate.

Car traffic:
The comparison matrix delineates how the Underpass solution will create more circuitous routes via the development of turn prohibitions, U-turns, redirection ramps, and traffic circles which create a complicated experience. The traffic analysis report highlights how the Underpass solution improves LOA from an F to a B during rush hour; however, the solution will *also* divert 18% of AM peak traffic and 19% of PM peak traffic to the added traffic circle at Charleston (Figures 2, 3), *and* it will remove both turns from W Meadow and E Meadow toward the Mountain View direction. When viewed holistically, improving the LOA score for an intersection does not benefit the community if it simply passes the traffic burden onto the new routes (traffic circle at Charleston), or prohibits existing turns (Meadow). Following this reasoning, the best-rated solution would be one that offers no turns at all, forcing residents to clog surface streets instead.

The Underpass solution will also exacerbate speeding, because it removes intersections for the benefit of cars passing through Palo Alto and further transforms Alma into an urban highway. Greater distances between lights lead to higher average speeds on Alma, inducing greater traffic demand than it was designed for and making the road even less safe. This will worsen traffic at existing choke points: Oregon, Churchill, the Embarcadero overpass, and ultimately downtown. Additionally, if traffic flows continuously and faster on Alma, those coming from neighborhood streets (e.g. Loma Verde, El Carmelo etc.) will have increased difficulty heading south to Mountain View on Alma, or merging at other intersections.

Ultimately, the drivers best served by the Underpass solution are not the Palo Alto residents for whom the railroad crossing was originally designed, but rather drivers “just passing through.” This ultimately results in lower roadway safety and worsens traffic for all other routes besides the favored north-south one. By comparison, the Hybrid solution *improves* traffic by 65-78% in the morning, and 17-53% in the afternoon (Figure 4). Favoring the Underpass solution because it “improves the LOS rating from F to B” leaves us blind to the ways it harms the overall Palo Alto route experience. The rating is a fundamentally narrow analysis

that cannot take into account the negative traffic externalities of the Underpass solution. These roads were meant to connect Palo Alto residents, not divide them in service of other drivers.

On balance, with these traffic and safety issues for both cars and bikes/pedestrians, along with greater risk in sea level susceptibility and storm water treatment (Criteria G2 & G4), in addition to the 300-370M incremental price tag (Criteria E), and the 33 properties impacted (Criteria F), the Hybrid solution makes way more sense, especially if we focus further negotiations with Caltrain to improve the “wall.”

If the council moves forward with both Underpass and Hybrid options for Meadow/Charleston, then I make the following requests:

1. Underpass solution:
    a. Conduct user studies on experience and functionality and potential safety and likely routes eg of cyclists including teen students going home on the other side of Alma from Gunn. In particular assess safety risks should cyclists decide to use the underpass with the cars since the bike route is awkward.
    b. Assess cumulative and route impact to overall Palo Alto destinations, e.g. other intersections with Alma, driver/GPS initiated routes due to turn eliminations and awkward traffic circles, etc. Prioritize solutions for Palo Alto residents higher than those passing through Palo Alto.
2. Hybrid solution:
    a. Consider how the existing bike paths can be inexpensively improved with standard bike lane protection strategies such as barriers, bike signals, colored paths, etc.
    b. Work with Caltrain on how the wall can be adjusted and made more attractive, perhaps with greenery like many of the segments of raised

tracks in San Mateo county.

3. Community engagement and communications:

    a. Consider composition of community members in the next phase to include, if not already, advocates of each solution to gain greater mutual understanding and potentially spark more innovative revisions

    b. Proactively reach out to those who live in the area that may be potentially impacted - property owners, renters etc - and a) understand their travel routes b) educate them on the potential impact to their neighborhood. I am told that to-date, postcards sent out to property addresses only mentioned meeting times and links to meeting materials but did not indicate any potential impact to residents' travel routes or properties. Nothing was sent to property owners unless they lived at the property address.

    c. In the 5/23/2024 Rail Commission meeting Council member Julie Lythcott-Haims mentioned that she received an email from a resident whose property was potentially impacted saying that a real estate agent declined to list their house due to the disclosure requirement of the potential impact and complications in negotiations expected. Personally, my property is currently being rented, and my tenant said that they are considering moving due to the significant partial property acquisition and construction noise without understanding the timing of potential interruption. Hence, I would like to request that the City issue a fact sheet for all potentially affected property owners that can be included in disclosure and rental info sheets indicating a) the fact that no final decisions have been made b) timing of solution selection b) the timing of when construction is likely to start, along with duration. While this does not remediate the market devaluation of those potentially affected properties that has already happened, it will at least provide official factual information to potential buyers and renters.

The above requests would, of course, be in addition to the cost reduction and property acquisition minimization, and other efforts that the council has already highlighted.

Thank you very much.

Best regards
Sabrina Lin
Palo Alto resident since 1985

Figure 1: white highlight shows awkward maneuvering required for bikes/pedestrians

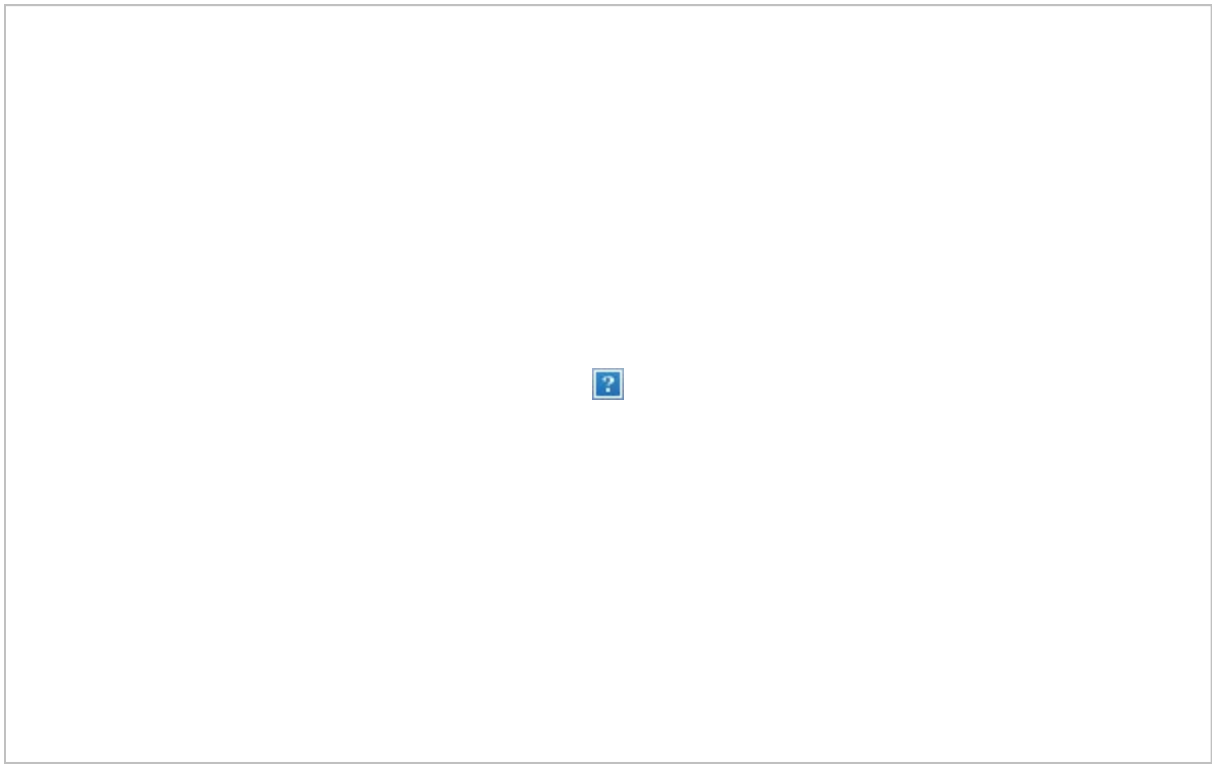


Figure 2. Morning diversions to Alma/Charleston at Alma/Charleston

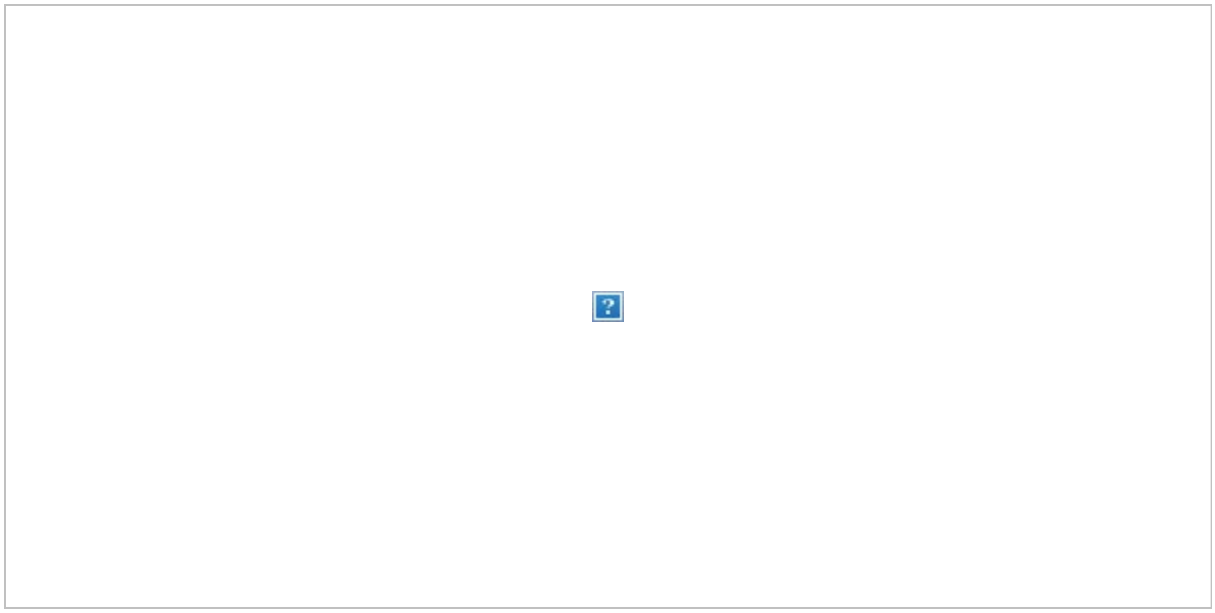


Figure 3. Afternoon diversions to traffic circle at Alma/Charleston

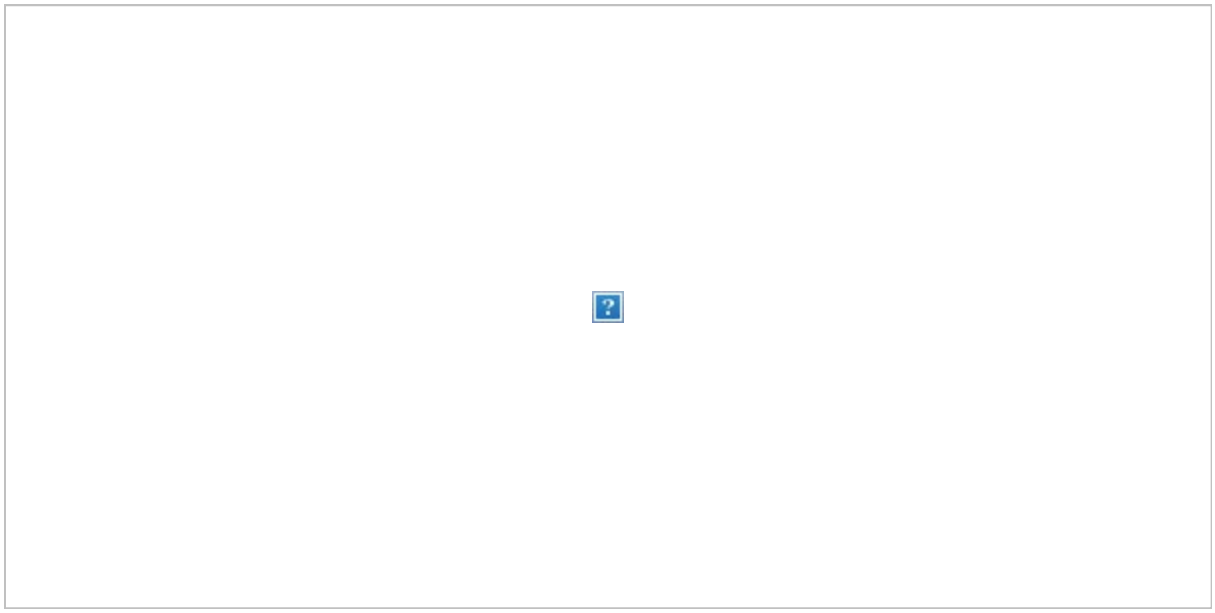
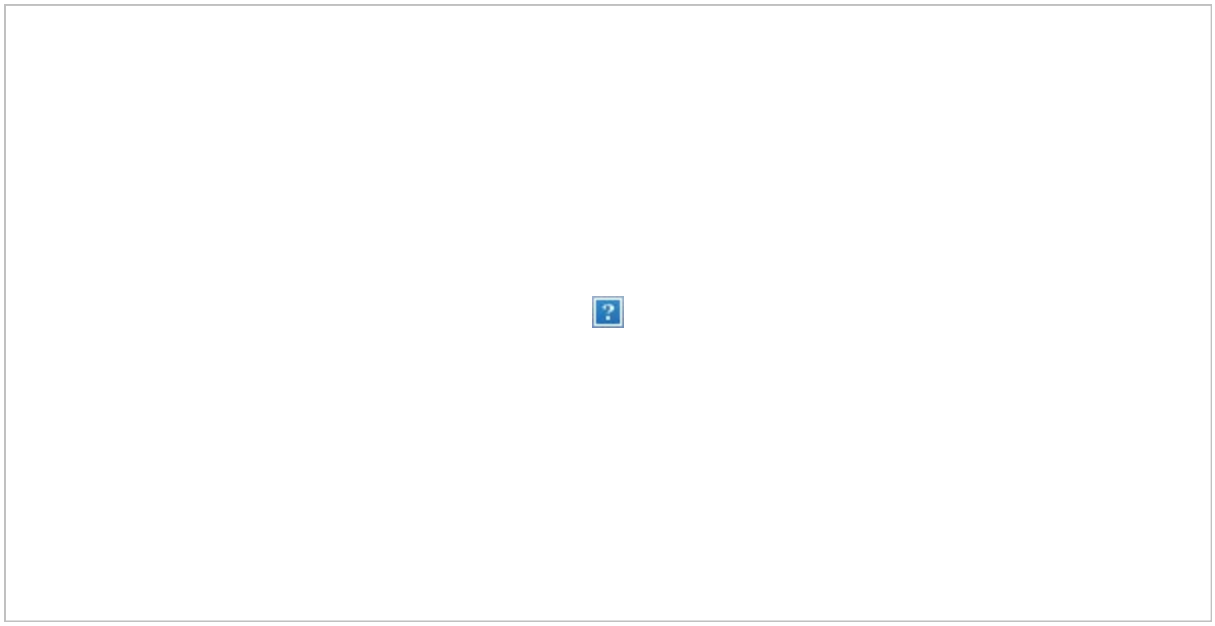


Figure 4. Traffic improvements with Hybrid (report notes that Viaduct and Hybrid improvements are similar)



From:	Sabrina Lin
To:	Stone, Greer; Kou, Lydia; Tanaka, Greg; Veenker, Vicki; Burt, Patrick; Lauing, Ed; Lythcott-Haims, Julie; Transportation; Clerk, City; Council, City
Subject:	RE Grade Separation city council special meeting June 10 2024
Date:	Sunday, June 9, 2024 11:06:59 AM

Dear City Council members,

I have been a Palo Alto resident since 1985 and have raised four children in the PAUSD. I bike or walk almost everywhere within Palo Alto and frequently drive to nearby cities. I would like to highlight the potential negative impacts the Underpass solution presents to both bike/pedestrian traffic and car traffic.

I will specifically address evaluation Criteria A, B, C, and H and will draw on information from the Connecting Palo Alto comparison matrix and traffic analysis report.

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analysis report highlights how the Underpass solution improves LOA from an F to a B during rush hour; however, the solution will *also* divert 18% of AM peak traffic and 19% of PM peak traffic to the added traffic circle at Charleston (Figures 2, 3), *and* it will remove both turns from W Meadow and E Meadow toward the Mountain View direction. When viewed holistically, improving the LOA score for an intersection does not benefit the community if it simply passes the traffic burden onto the new routes (traffic circle at Charleston), or prohibits existing turns (Meadow). Following this reasoning, the best-rated solution would be one that offers no turns at all, forcing residents to clog surface streets instead.

The Underpass solution will also exacerbate speeding, because it removes intersections for the benefit of cars passing through Palo Alto and further transforms Alma into an urban highway. Greater distances between lights lead to higher average speeds on Alma, inducing greater traffic demand than it was designed for and making the road even less safe. This will worsen traffic at existing choke points: Oregon, Churchill, the Embarcadero overpass, and ultimately downtown. Additionally, if traffic flows continuously and faster on Alma, those coming from neighborhood streets (e.g. Loma Verde, El Carmelo etc.) will have increased difficulty heading south to Mountain View on Alma, or merging at other intersections.

Ultimately, the drivers best served by the Underpass solution are not the Palo Alto residents for whom the railroad crossing was originally designed, but rather drivers “just passing through.” This ultimately results in lower roadway safety and worsens traffic for all other routes besides the favored north-south one. By comparison, the Hybrid solution *improves* traffic by 65-78% in the morning, and 17-53% in the afternoon (Figure 4). Favoring the Underpass solution because it “improves the LOS rating from F to B” leaves us blind to the ways it harms the overall Palo Alto route experience. The rating is a fundamentally narrow analysis that cannot take into account the negative traffic externalities of the Underpass solution. These roads were meant to connect Palo Alto residents, not divide them in service of other drivers.

On balance, with these traffic and safety issues for both cars and bikes/pedestrians, along with greater risk in sea level susceptibility and storm water treatment (Criteria G2 & G4), in addition to the 300-370M incremental price tag (Criteria E), and the 33 properties impacted (Criteria F), the Hybrid solution makes way more sense, especially if we focus further negotiations with Caltrain to improve the “wall.”

If the council moves forward with both Underpass and Hybrid options for Meadow/Charleston, then I make the following requests:

1. Underpass solution:
    a. Conduct user studies on experience and functionality and potential safety and likely routes eg of cyclists including teen students going home on the other side of Alma from Gunn. In particular assess safety risks should cyclists decide to use the underpass with the cars since the bike route is awkward.
    b. Assess cumulative and route impact to overall Palo Alto destinations, e.g. other intersections with Alma, driver/GPS initiated routes due to turn eliminations and awkward traffic circles, etc. Prioritize solutions for Palo Alto residents higher than those passing through Palo Alto.
2. Hybrid solution:
    a. Consider how the existing bike paths can be inexpensively improved with standard bike lane protection strategies such as barriers, bike signals, colored paths, etc.
    b. Work with Caltrain on how the wall can be adjusted and made more attractive, perhaps with greenery like many of the segments of raised tracks in San Mateo county.
3. Community engagement and communications:
    a. Consider composition of community members in the next phase to include, if not already, advocates of each solution to gain greater mutual understanding and potentially spark more innovative revisions

b. Proactively reach out to those who live in the area that may be potentially impacted - property owners, renters etc - and a) understand their travel routes b) educate them on the potential impact to their neighborhood. I am told that to-date, postcards sent out to property addresses only mentioned meeting times and links to meeting materials but did not indicate any potential impact to residents' travel routes or properties. Nothing was sent to property owners unless they lived at the property address.

c. In the 5/23/2024 Rail Commission meeting Council member Julie Lythcott-Haims mentioned that she received an email from a resident whose property was potentially impacted saying that a real estate agent declined to list their house due to the disclosure requirement of the potential impact and complications in negotiations expected. Personally, my property is currently being rented, and my tenant said that they are considering moving due to the significant partial property acquisition and construction noise without understanding the timing of potential interruption. Hence, I would like to request that the City issue a fact sheet for all potentially affected property owners that can be included in disclosure and rental info sheets indicating a) the fact that no final decisions have been made b) timing of solution selection b) the timing of when construction is likely to start, along with duration. While this does not remediate the market devaluation of those potentially affected properties that has already happened, it will at least provide official factual information to potential buyers and renters.

The above requests would, of course, be in addition to the cost reduction and property acquisition minimization, and other efforts that the council has already highlighted.

Thank you very much.

Best regards
Sabrina Lin
Palo Alto resident since 1985

Figure 1: white highlight shows awkward maneuvering required for bikes/pedestrians

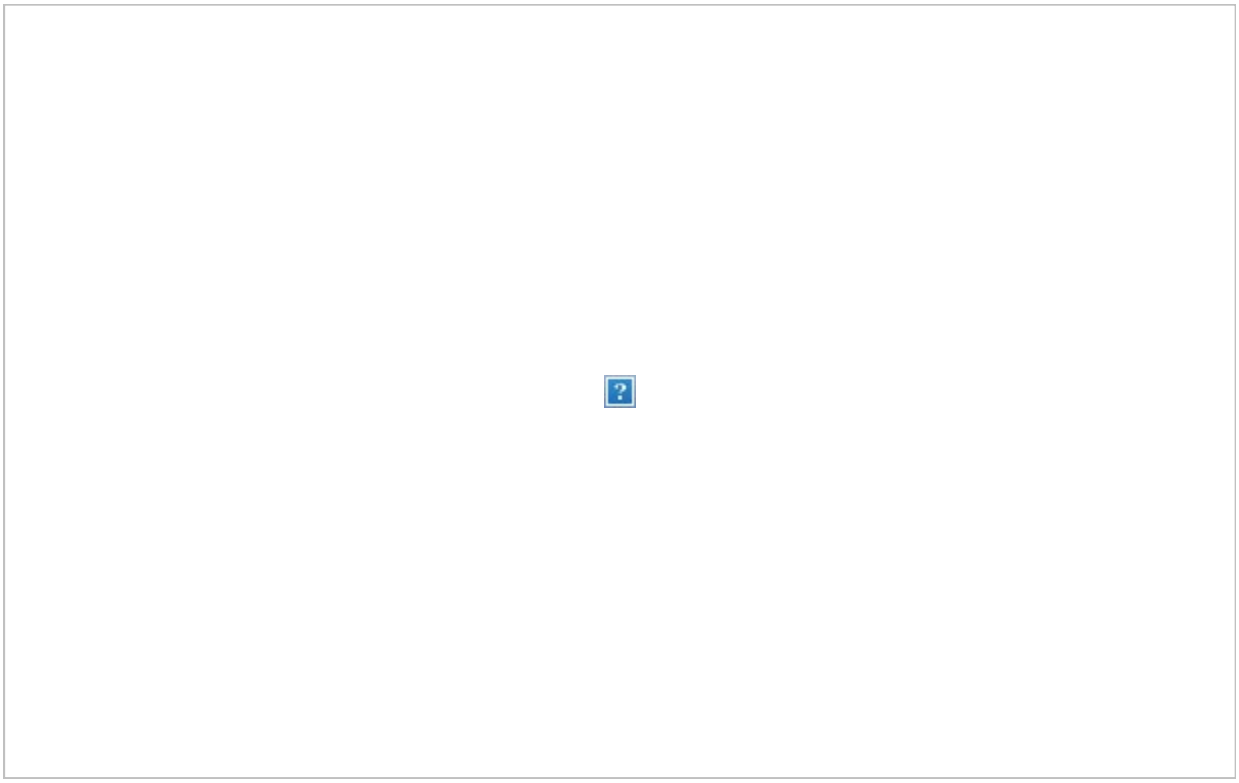


Figure 2. Morning diversions to Alma/Charleston at Alma/Charleston

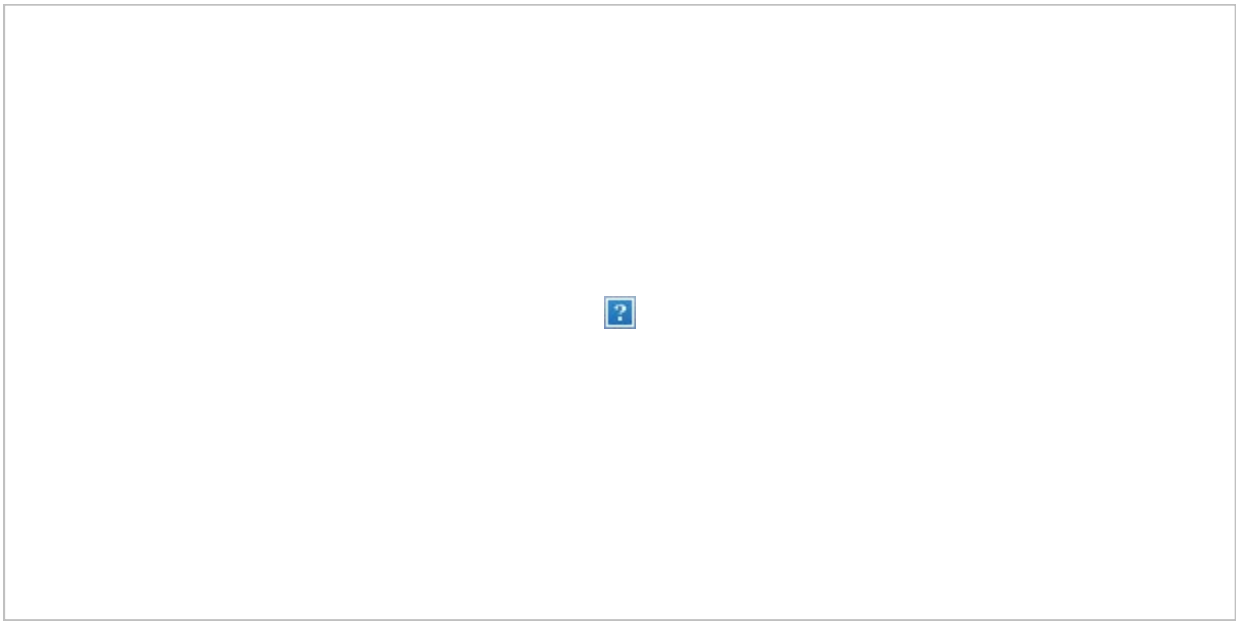


Figure 3. Afternoon diversions to traffic circle at Alma/Charleston

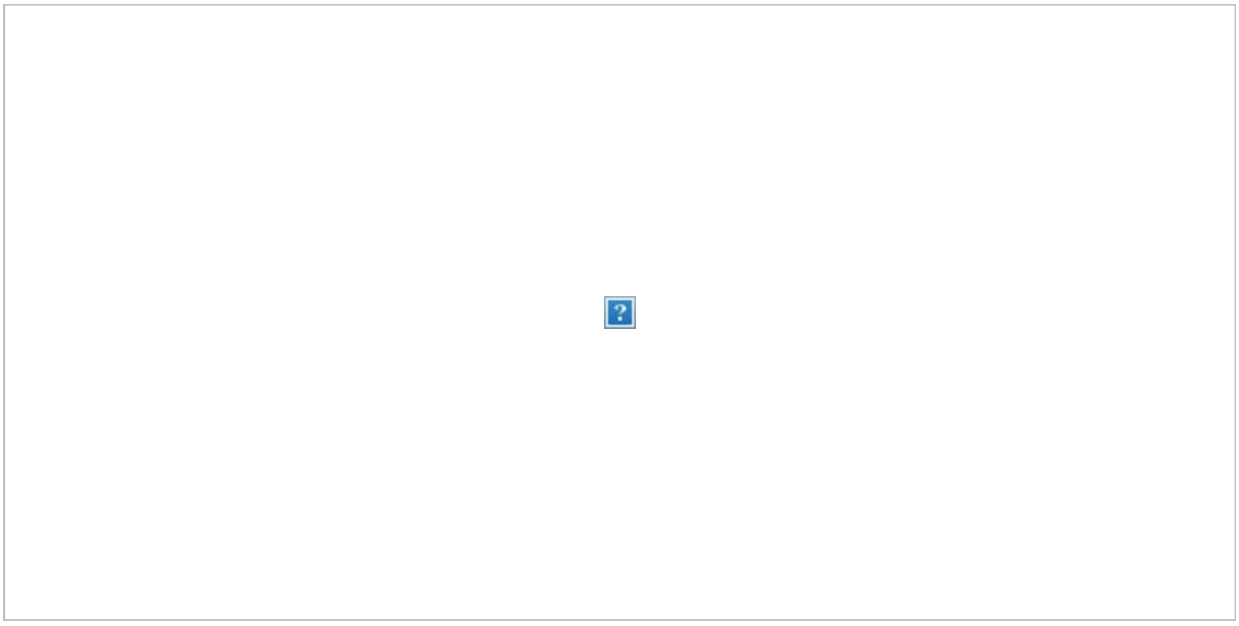
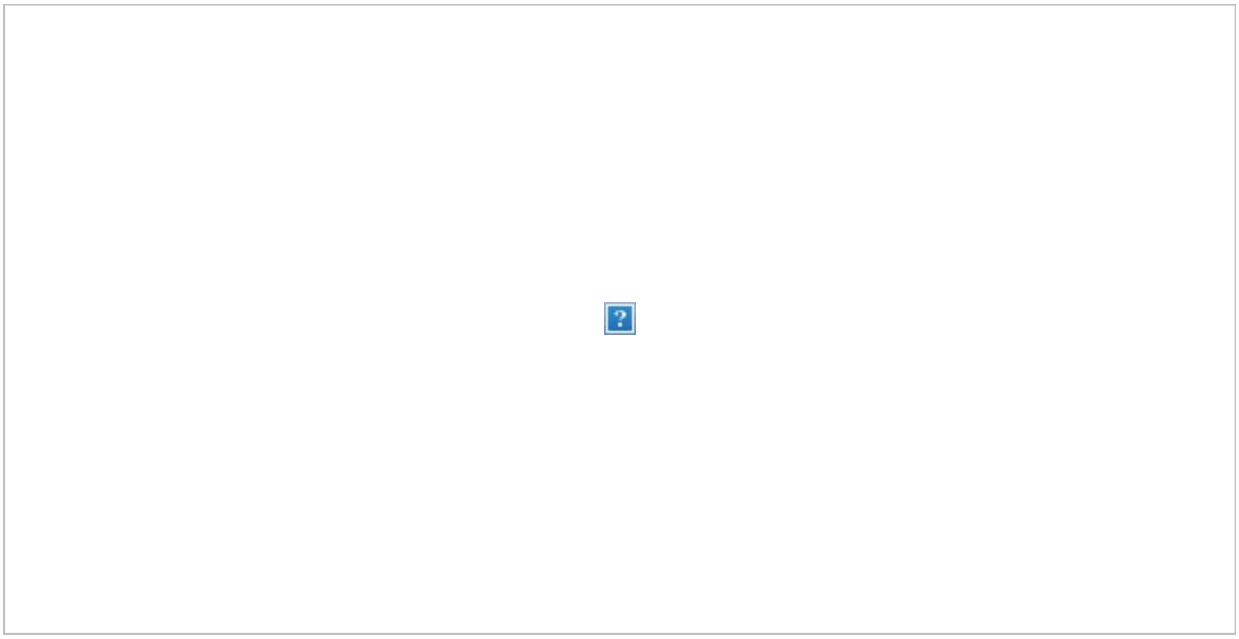


Figure 4. Traffic improvements with Hybrid (report notes that Viaduct and Hybrid improvements are similar)



From: ummkenza@lycos.com
To: Council, City
Subject: Rail crossings at Meadow and Charleston -- Underpass option
Date: Thursday, June 6, 2024 5:24:57 PM

June 6, 2024

Dear Members:

I am writing to express my hope the PA City Council will not select the underpass alternative for Charleston and Meadow. I attended many city meetings where the various options were presented and discussed, and the underpass alternative was never really seriously mentioned or considered. Why does it now it appears to be the favored option?

I do not understand why it is now being considered as a viable option. It is expensive, will take a lot of time to build, provide many inconveniences while being built, and will require taking residents' properties. Eminent domain is not the way to go. In addition, the Oregon underpass is an eyesore, is unpleasant to drive in, and floods when it rains. How would ones at Charleston and Meadow be any different?

I am in favor of either the viaduct or the hybrid. While the viaduct is expensive, it will not take as long to build, will not affect current traffic during the building process in ways the underpass will, and ultimately might even provide space beneath for bike paths and green space.

The hybrid is also a good alternative. I used to live across from the 42nd Avenue hybrid underpass in San Mateo. The noise and vibrations were no worse there than they currently are at the Charleston crossing. As there was no need there for the clang-clang-clang when the bars were lowered, I can even say it was less disturbing.

I know that people are upset about having to see the trains above their backyards, but this could be ameliorated through the planting of trees between the tracks and the backyards. I think this is an opportunity for Palo Alto (Tall tree) to live up to its name.

In closing, I am asking for a NO vote on the underpass. Please consider and choose either the viaduct or the hybrid option instead.

Sincerely,

Kathleen L. Joki, Resident of Palo Alto

From: Gary Gibson
To: Council, City
Subject: Seale Ave tunnel proposal
Date: Monday, June 3, 2024 2:00:15 PM

Dear Palo Alto City Council,

I'm writing regarding the proposed pedestrian/bicycle underpass at Seale Avenue and Alma Street.

This proposal should be rejected because it is unnecessary, expensive, will seriously degrade the adjacent neighborhoods, and will be a public safety hazard.

Why spend hundreds of millions of dollars that Palo Alto doesn't have to create infrastructure that will be obsolete by the time it's completed? I ask that you consider how self-driving cars are a game changer that provides new opportunities to improve the Churchill Ave intersection for cars, bikes, and pedestrians without the need for an underpass at Seale Avenue. According to the American Institute of Highway Safety, Boston Consulting Group, McKinsey, and numerous other groups, autonomous vehicles will be pervasive by the time the proposed projects would be completed early in the next decade, obviating the need for the Seale Avenue tunnel proposal. Self-driving vehicles allow bikes and pedestrians to safely be in much closer proximity to cars and trucks. They enable creative solutions to designing a combined pedestrian, bicycle, and automotive traffic complex at Churchill and Alma that is safer and less expensive than current proposals. The advent of autonomous vehicles may also lead to diminished demand for train traffic on the current Caltrain corridor. Recent studies suggest, for example, that fleets of small autonomous buses will soon be less expensive and more environmentally friendly than trains. Continued improvement in self-driving vehicle technology is one more reason that the California High Speed Rail project will likely never be completed. It will also provide additional downward pressure on Caltrain ridership. Investing vast sums of money to accommodate century old train technology seems like a backward step for forward thinking Palo Alto.

In addition, a new pedestrian/bike underpass at Seale Ave will:
1. be extremely expensive
2. be unnecessary, as there is already an underpass 3.5 blocks away at Cal Ave
3. necessitate an additional expensive means for high school kids to safely cross Churchill Ave to reach Palo Alto High
4. be dangerous for kids who go through the tunnel at night to/from a deserted Peers Park. During the day, it will also force them to compete with cars on the narrow streets of Southgate on their way to Palo Alto High.

5. be destructive to adjacent neighborhoods on Seale Avenue and near Peers Park

We ask that the Palo Alto City Council rescind their Seale Avenue underground tunnel recommendation immediately. It is extremely expensive, unnecessary, and already causing significant disruption/turmoil in our community.

Sincerely,
Dr. Gary Gibson

119 Seale Avenue
Palo Alto, CA 94301