

McGill, Pam

From: Serge Bonte [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, January 22, 2024 5:49 PM
To: Kamei, Ellen; Showalter, Pat; Hicks, Alison; Ramirez, Lucas; Abe-Koga, Margaret; Matchak, Lisa; Ramos, Emily Ann; City Council
Cc: Cameron, Dawn; Whyte, Brandon
Subject: re: 1/23/24 Meeting - Agenda Item 6,1 Caltrain Grade separation Projects

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Honorable Mayor Showalter and Mountain View City Council:

I had followed the Council Transportation Committee meeting where this topic was discussed last. And I agree with its recommendations regarding phasing out/trimming the Castro Grade Separation project (Evelyn/Shoreline ramp, some better phasing/grouping of work....) and I hope you will all support the CTC direction on that topic.

While this was not discussed at the CTC meeting, I read the staff report regarding the need to set some scheduling and funding priorities between the two grade separation projects: Rengstorff which first started in 2004 (!!!) and Castro which started 11 years later in 2015.

I completely support the staff recommendation to prioritize Rengstorff over Castro. I found the data driven rationale to be compelling and hope you will agree as well:

In short,

- Rengstorff (a route to school) is more dangerous than Castro and there are no near term alternatives to make that crossing safer for active transportation users.
- Especially since the pandemic, Castro has less vehicular traffic than Rengstorff. As Caltrain starts its enhanced schedule with electric trains, there will be a more pressing need for the Rengstorff project.
- Staff proposes a near term improvement by closing all vehicular traffic across the tracks at Castro and working with Caltrain and the County to simplify the signal cycles. This will greatly improve crossing the tracks and Central Expressway on foot or by bike....without breaking the bank.

Finally, as mentioned in the staff report, the Rengstorff neighborhood encompasses the poorest US Census Districts in Mountain View. Given your previous pledge to review budget decisions via an equity lens, that data point alone is a compelling reason to support prioritizing the Rengstorff project

Sincerely

Serge Bonte

McGill, Pam

From: Cox, Robert [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, January 22, 2024 9:21 PM
To: City Council
Subject: RE: Livable Mountain View comment on Item 6.1 California Grade Separation Projects

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Sean O'Malley, Treasurer of The Eagles Aerie #2356 at 181 Castro Street, would like to add his name to the list of signatories of LivMV's letter below.

- Robert

From: Cox, Robert
Sent: Monday, January 22, 2024 12:49 PM
To: City.council@mountainview.gov
Subject: Livable Mountain View comment on Item 6.1 California Grade Separation Projects

Mayor Showalter, Vice Mayor Matichak, and members of the Mountain View City Council,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on item 6.1 California Grade Separation Projects

It is unfortunate to read that due to the increasing cost estimates, the Castro and Rengstorff grade separation projects will not be able to proceed concurrently. Our greatest concern at this point is the possibility that Council may think that dropping key elements of either of these plans is a viable way to achieve cost savings. We are especially concerned that important parts of the Castro grade separation plan might be dropped.

The Castro grade separation plan contains key elements needed to maintain our downtown as a viable destination for people arriving and travelling on foot, on bicycles, by transit, and in automobiles. The pedestrian/bicycle underpass supports safe pedestrian and bicycle crossing from the Castro side to the Moffett side. The Evelyn S-curve and Shoreline on-ramp support buses and automobile traffic going from the soon to be expanded transit center to Shoreline Blvd. Eliminating part of the pedestrian/bicycle underpass or the S-curve and on-ramp severely compromises the plan and should not be approved by council. It would be more sensible for the Castro grade separation to be delayed than to go ahead with a plan that is not viable and compromises public access and safety in the long term.

We at Livable Mountain View have found by talking to customers and owners of our downtown businesses that about 75 percent of those businesses' customers come from

McGill, Pam

From: Albert Jeans [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, January 22, 2024 10:00 PM
To: City Council
Subject: Comment on Item 6.1: Caltrain Grade Separation Projects

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Honorable Mayor Showalter and Councilmembers,

The two grade separation projects appear to be facing serious budget shortfalls, but with Caltrain electrification an almost certainty in the near future, it is important for Mountain View to prepare for that or face a traffic nightmare. While a certain amount of cost cutting may be possible, it's important to build a high quality project that Mountain View residents can be proud of for decades to come.

I'm not familiar with how money can be moved around within the city's budget, but I would like you to consider using funds earmarked for the Reversible Transit Lane for the grade separation projects instead. As many of you know, I have long been an outspoken critic of the Reversible Transit Lane because of its dubious benefits and justifications. It was originally proposed as one of MANY transit improvements that would be needed in order to support the anticipated flow of people in a fully built-out North Bayshore neighborhood. It was never intended to stand on its own. Why a previous council decided to go ahead with just that project is not clear to me, but maybe seeing the daily gridlock on Shoreline Blvd. made the project seem attractive. In reality, the Reversible Transit Lane depends on adequate mass transit to the Mountain View Transit Center along with the ridership needed to support such transit and the bus lane into North Bayshore. In the post-COVID world, both of these remain in jeopardy. Caltrain ridership remains low, and the vast majority of commuters from the South Bay prefer cars over VTA's light rail. Hybrid work schedules are here to stay, and traffic on Shoreline Blvd. is only moderately congested 3 days a week. Some of this could be alleviated with better signal timings. Google's Landings and other projects appear to be on hold, and it's not clear how quickly Google will move forward with its North Bayshore Master Plan. Although construction costs inevitably rise in the future, it's even more expensive to build something which has no future use instead of putting that money to use for more immediate needs.

Therefore, I'm suggesting that the Reversible Transit Lane be put on hold so that its funds can be used for the two grade separation projects.

Respectfully,
Albert Jeans
[REDACTED]

McGill, Pam

From: Max Bosel [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, January 23, 2024 12:15 AM
To: City Council
Subject: Item 6.1 — Caltrain Grade Separation Projects

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Honorable Council,

Please consider providing direction to improve safety and reduce train noise at the railroad crossings at the Mountain View train station and Castro Street with the creation of a Quiet Zone, which only the City can create.

The original concept for the Castro grade separation included eliminating the two pedestrian crossings at the train station tracks. This was removed in the current design, although the concept is still depicted in some project renditions.

According to Caltrain, these pedestrian crossings are treated by law and by train operators as identical to vehicular crossings, which require the routine sounding of train horns during all hours of operation. Trains are not required to routinely sound horns at stations without pedestrian crossings over the tracks, such as at Santa Clara, San Jose Diridon, and Palo Alto.

Even without the ideal grade separation, there are options to install safety improvements at these crossings that also reduce the noise of the trains sounding their horns, however, according to Caltrain (<https://www.caltrain.com/projects/quiet-zone>), only the City can create safety improvements at railroad crossings and create so called quiet zones.

With the recommendation to delay the Castro grade separation, the pedestrian crossings not being eliminated as a part of the grade separation project, and electrification increasing the number of trains traveling through Mountain View, please consider pursuing the creation of a Quiet Zone and install safety improvements at the railroad crossings.

Thank you for your consideration,

Max Bosel
Mountain View Resident

outside Mountain View. Most of them use their own personal vehicles. As the staff report notes: “Deferring the Evelyn Avenue Ramp to Shoreline Boulevard and the bidirectional Evelyn Avenue S-curve will affect traffic patterns, including potentially increasing traffic volumes on Villa Street, Franklin Street, Bryant Street, Hope Street, and View Street.”

We all know these and nearby by streets are narrow, used by school children on bikes and fully parked up by residents, visitors and workers such that the above-described increased traffic would create an ongoing safety issue. We also all know that at the present and in the known future there is no accessible mass transit for the Bay Area that would provide an alternative to cars especially for workers and visitors. If we make arriving to and departing from our downtown an increasingly difficult, unsafe and unpleasant experience, our downtown businesses will suffer. Mountain View’s economic viability director John Lang has pointed out our downtown as a whole has not recovered to its pre-COVID vitality. We cannot afford to make this situation even worse.

The Council is well aware that the grade separation plans for Castro and Rengstorff are the result of years of planning and public input. The Council should not make major changes to them with less than a week’s notice and without reasonable opportunity for robust input from the business community and the public on projects that will affect our city for generations to come.

Thank you for listening to our views on this important topic.

Robert Cox, Louise Katz, Maureen Blando, Hala Alshahwany, Leslie Friedman, Jerry Steach, Nazanin Dashtara, Muriel Sivyver-Lee, and Mike Finley

For the Steering Committee of Livable Mountain View

McGill, Pam

From: Jeremy Hoffman [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, January 23, 2024 8:51 AM
To: City Council
Subject: Grade separation project

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I'm writing in support of the staff recommended option to prioritize the Rengstorff crossing over the Castro crossing.

Furthermore, to help rein in costs, I encourage Council and staff to consider whether the project timeline could be shortened by allowing more temporary inconvenience and road closures.

As I understand it, the plan is for the Rengstorff crossing to remain open to traffic for the duration of the underpass project.

That may be a luxury that Mountain View can't afford right now.

I take my two small children across the Rengstorff Avenue train crossing everyday -- by bike when I can, by car when I can't. So I'd be extremely inconvenienced by a road closure. Yet I would still support a temporary closure if it would make the overall project faster and cheaper to complete.

I'll certainly benefit from the project being completed sooner: quicker car trips, safer bike trips, and no train horn noise booming through the walls of my home.

Thank you for your hard work.

Sincerely,
Jeremy Hoffman

PS: I also support raising the ADU height limits.

McGill, Pam

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, January 23, 2024 10:19 AM
To: City Council
Cc: BPAC Communication
Subject: 1/23/24 meeting agenda item 6.1 (GSAP)

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To: Mountain View City Council
From: Joel Dean, [REDACTED]
Subject: Grade separations -- 1/23/24 meeting, Agenda item 6.1

The staff recommendation to prioritize the Rengstorff crossing over Castro/Moffett deserves your strongest support. Caltrain grade separations are to meant to eliminate collisions and reduce traffic backups on crossing streets. Thanks to eliminating all rail crossings originating from Central Expressway or Moffett, and prohibiting left turns from Castro (which an occasional nitwit does anyway), Castro is already 2/3-3/4 of the way toward achieving those objectives in peak hours. By contrast, Rengstorff is a major artery carrying several times as many vehicles across the railroad and expressway as Castro, and turning Rengstorff/Central Expressway into a T intersection is infeasible. Clearly, Rengstorff needs to be prioritized.

In that case, there will inevitably be delays in advancing the Casro GSAP. I encourage Council to accept staff's recommendation to reduce the scope of the GSAP to its core elements, some of which can be advanced before funding for the tunnels has been secured. First, close Castro at Central completely. The City has no choice but to do that eventually. Second, prohibit right turns on red into and out of Moffett. That should be done, GSAP or no GSAP. Third, include a pedestrian scramble phase, where all motor vehicle traffic has to stop, in the signal cycle. While waiting for the tunnels to come to fruition, pedestrians and cyclists would have a safer expressway crossing than they do at present. This would not address the rail crossing, but travelers between Moffett and VTA light rail or northbound Caltrain do not have to cross the tracks anyway, and others would at least be no worse off than they are today.

When applying for tunnel funding, it would be unwise to insist on all-or-nothing. We might wind up with two substandard intersecting tunnels where pedestrians and cyclists fight for right of way, or we might wind up no tunnel at all. A single first-class tunnel is preferable to either of those outcomes.

Among the deferred elements, the Moffett streetscape looks like it includes bulb-outs at both corners, which would be useful in reinforcing a right on red prohibition.

The Evelyn ramp, S-curve, and connection of Evelyn across Castro should deferred, deferred again, and again, and again, till somebody finally pulls the plug on then. What is their purpose? Fattening the construction contract? There is enough useful work for the building trades that they don't need worthless projects. Providing bus express service for North Bayshore commuters? Caltrain served only about 3% of them in 2018, ridership is down 60% since then, Shoreline Boulevard is not congested enough for a bus preemption system to have any effect, and the vehicles gumming up the freeway access to North Bayshore will never be diverted to downtown Mountain View.

Technical justification for the S-curve and ramp has been overtaken by events. Kimley-Horn's 9/6/22 memo forecast that the ramp would carry 369 vehicles in the A.M. peak hour and 469 in the P.M. peak, those being bidirectional totals. If all of them wound up on Villa Street instead, it would increase traffic there by 60-80%, which sounds like a lot. But Kimley-Horn's 2019 TIA found that the intersections of Villa with Hope, Castro, Bryant, and Franklin would all be operating at Level of Service A (free-flowing, no delays) or B (stable flow, with minimal delay) under all conditions if the ramp were in place. That leaves quite a bit of room to accommodate more traffic without straining Villa's capacity. No traffic assignment was run with the GSAP but without the ramp, so it cannot be said what the LOS would be under that circumstance. The Villa/Shoreline intersection was rated at LOS C (stable flows, modest delays) under all conditions in the TIA, but in the 2022 update, it was rated at LOS D (approaching unstable flow) due to the effects

of the Castro
pedestrian mall.

Kimley-Horn's forecasts of 2030 traffic were made out of an abundance of caution. Vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian counts were made in February 2002. The counts were determined to be too low to be reliable indicators of the future, so it was assumed that traffic would gradually return to pre-pandemic levels, which were used to represent existing conditions. Subsequently, North Bayshore reopened in April 2022, and in the interim, what with hybrid work schedules and population shifts, traffic on Shoreline Boulevard has not returned to 2019 levels. Judging by the midweek morning commute, it is down by 30-40%. Caltrain and MVgo ridership are down by more than that. Now that Google is laying off employees, it may be necessary to trim the forecasts of trips added by future developments, as well as obtain more up-to-date counts of existing traffic.

It is incongruous to spend \$100 million or more to convey pedestrians and cyclists safely under Central Expressway and up a "grand staircase" only to force them to cross Evelyn, where every 8-10 seconds a motor vehicle zips uncontrolled across their path, around two 60-degree curves which many full-sized buses cannot negotiate safely. It makes the City's professed allegiance to Vision Zero and combating climate change sound hollow and conditional upon taking a back seat to out-of-town commuters.

Thank you for your attention. Go Niners.

McGill, Pam

From: William Lambert [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, January 23, 2024 11:53 AM
To: City Council
Subject: Comments on City Council Agenda Item 6.1 Jan-23-2024
Attachments: Comments for Jan-23-2024 CCM Agenda Item 6.1 Jan-23-2024.pdf

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Mayor Showalter and Council Members,
Please refer to my attached letter concerning the Item 6.1 Caltrain Grade Separation Projects on tonight's City Council Agenda.

Thank you.
Bill

[William Lambert](#) | Partner
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] | [Bio](#)

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City of Mountain View
City Council Meeting, January 23, 2024

Agenda Item 6.1 Caltrain Grade Separation Projects

Mayor Showalter and Council Members,

I attended (virtually) the Council Transportation Committee Meeting on November 28, 2023.

I have also read the Council Transportation Committee Memo documenting the Council Transportation Committee meeting that is attached to the Agenda item.

Toward the end of the Committee meeting there was an important discussion that does not appear to have been captured in the Staff Memorandum.

A representative from Caltrans was present during the meeting. He stated that one of the reasons for attending the Mountain View meeting was to understand some of the issues that communities up and down the Peninsula will be facing in addressing grade separations and associated construction to enable high speed transportation between San Jose and San Francisco. He stated that seeing what Mountain View was doing was particularly instructive because Mountain View was so far ahead in the planning process compared to other peninsula cities.

The objective here is to provide high speed rail service between San Jose and San Francisco. This will not be possible unless grade separations are provided up and down the peninsula. This is a huge construction project. The estimate for the Mountain View grade separations alone comes to about \$400M, and there are about ten cities along the peninsula. There appears to be only modest amounts or no monies available from the state or federal governments.

During the Committee meeting, I believe former Mayor Hicks asked the Caltrain representative whether, if monies became available from other agencies such as the state and/or federal government, would Mountain View retroactively qualify to receive grant monies if it had already spent monies building the high speed rail infrastructure. This question was left unanswered but posed the question as to whether Mountain View was moving too fast before other cities developed their respective plans.

Any investment that Mountain View makes in facilitating peninsula high speed rail will not be much use unless all of the other peninsula cities also invest.

The staff reports to the grade separation agenda item communicate an immediate urgency. The reports warn that if the Castro and Rengstorff grade separation projects are not approved, construction costs will only increase and present a greater burden on public funds and the residents and employers in Mountain View. This can be said about any construction project. The staff reports also emphasize that considerable time and money have already been spent on planning the grade separation projects and that these sunk costs would not be productively realized unless we act immediately.

I don't believe any decisions should be based on fear. It seems that construction costs have completely decoupled from the overall economy, especially in the Bay Area. We should be making decisions based on careful and balanced assessment of all options.

I strongly support a well-thought out, coordinated Bay Area regional transportation solution.

Before we make the significant financial commitment to build the Castro and Rengstorff grade separations I would like to see a similar commitment made by the other peninsula communities. Right now I don't see the same sense of urgency from any other peninsula city.

Building the grade separations only in Mountain View does not do much to address the challenges faced by the high speed rail construction project or help to solve regional transportation issues. A commitment to build the underpasses must be made as part of a coherent and funded regional transportation plan and implementation strategy.

I would also like to see where the funding is coming from for the other costs of the Peninsula High Speed Rail project such as the tracks, electrification, and trains.

I would ask the question about how this is any different than that California High Speed Rail project which was plagued with inaccurate costs estimates and resulted in a section of track to nowhere out in the Central Valley. What ensures that an investment by the Mountain View residents and businesses in Caltrain underpasses won't be the same.

Thank you.

Bill Lambert
Mountain View Resident

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]