

MOUNTAIN VIEW TRANSIT CENTER STUDY MEETING

Summary of Community Meeting
Thursday February 25, 2016

The City of Mountain View hosted a community meeting on February 25, 2016, from 6:30-8:00 p.m. to discuss the Transit Center and related grade separation of Castro Street with the railroad. The meeting was held at the Adobe Building, 157 Moffett Boulevard in Mountain View. Approximately sixty (60) community members attended the meeting.

City staff Linda Forsberg (Transportation and Business Manager) and Jim Lightbody (Project Manager) attended the meeting. Adam Dankberg (Kimley-Horn Project Manager), Brent Ogden, Corbin Skerrit and Nick Evans from Kimley-Horn and Eileen Goodwin (Apex Strategies, Community Outreach lead) represented the project team. Sebastian Petty from Caltrain was also in attendance.

This was the project team's first meeting with the community regarding this project. The purpose of this community meeting was to get input from the community on priorities to be addressed through modification of the existing at-grade rail crossing at Castro Street. Initial improvement alternatives were presented and feedback received. Due to limited right-of-way in the vicinity of the grade separation, trade-offs will be necessary and this meeting's purpose was to learn from the community what their priorities are and confirm the current circulation issues and challenges for users.

Meeting Summary:

The meeting started at 6:30 p.m. In addition to the personnel there to answer questions and present information, approximately (60) members of the public attended. Ten percent (10%) of those in attendance at the start of the meeting indicated they received the mailed meeting notice. The City website was mentioned by about 10% of the attendees as well. About 50% said an e-blast was how they found out about the meeting. Nextdoor was acknowledged by 50% of the attendees as another way they found out about the meeting. Over 70% of the attendees indicated they were "neighbors" to the project area. Forty percent (40%) commute through the area. A few raised their hands indicating they were nearby business representatives.

After a brief introduction by the City's Project Manager, the Kimley Horn project manager spoke to a brief power point presentation. The presentation was given to orient the attendees to the purpose of the project, project objectives, proposed evaluation criteria, existing conditions, and proposed initial alternatives.

To close the presentation, the Kimley Horn Project Manager presented the process and a schedule of next steps. During and after the presentation many questions, suggestions and opinions were offered to the staff and project team. The comments and responses offered during the meeting are captured below in the order they were given.

The meeting format also included 30 minutes of time for attendees to give additional input at three separate stations. That input has been captured in photos and text at the end of this meeting summary. The stations included:

- A station for attendees to provide input on how, when and in what mode they use Castro/Moffett in the study area, a map to indicate where the attendees lived, and another map for attendees to highlight issues for project team consideration;
- A station indicating proposed goals and criteria for the project and opportunity for attendees to provide additional input;
- A station containing graphics and renderings on the proposed initial alternatives, with opportunities for attendees to identify likes and dislikes for each using sticky notes.

At the very end of the meeting, the facilitator convened the attendees and each station lead reported out on the themes of the feedback.

Station Feedback

Where Do You Live

This station intended to get a general sense of where attendees resided to better understand their perspectives.

Most participants represented were from within a short distance of the project study area, with 15 attendees representing the area south of Central Expressway and 11 attendees representing the area north of Central Expressway. There were also a few participants from areas outside the immediate project vicinity and mostly from communities to the north, such as San Mateo.

How Do You Use Castro Street in the Vicinity of the Rail Crossing

This station intended to determine how often and via which modes meeting participants used the Castro Street at-grade rail crossing. The two primary modes by which participants used Castro Street were as a pedestrian or vehicle. Many participants indicated that as a pedestrian they also utilized the Caltrain service from the transit center. The least common mode by which participants used Castro Street was via bus. The top three most common destinations were accessing downtown Mountain View, accessing the Mountain View Transit Center, and accessing El Camino Real and points south of downtown.

The results of the mode type and frequency (i.e., number of participants) are summarized below:

Daily

1. Pedestrian (37)
2. Car (20)
3. Bike (13)
4. Bus (5)

Weekly

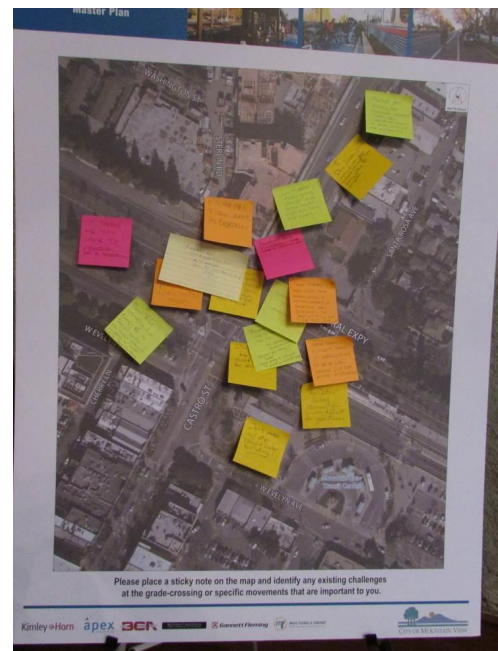
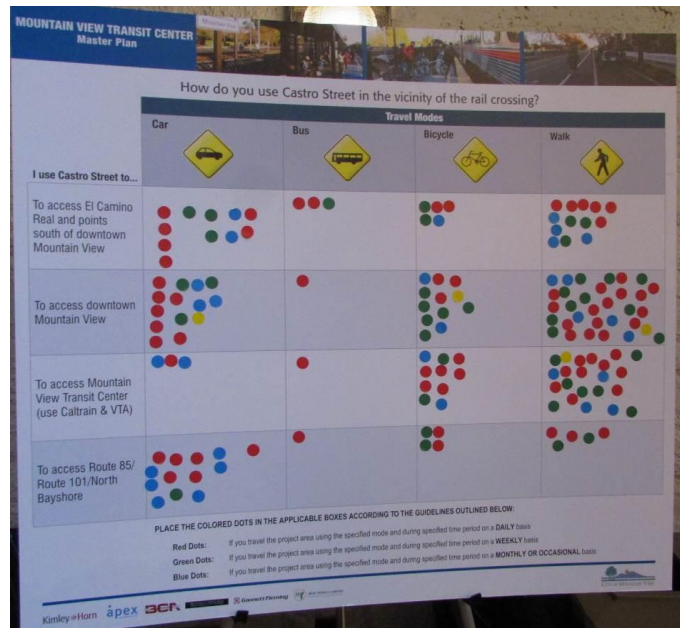
1. Pedestrian (22)
2. Bike (12)
3. Car (7)
4. Bus (1)

Monthly or Occasionally

1. Pedestrian (13)
3. Car (13)
2. Bike (5)
4. Bus (0)

What Are the Existing Challenges for the Area

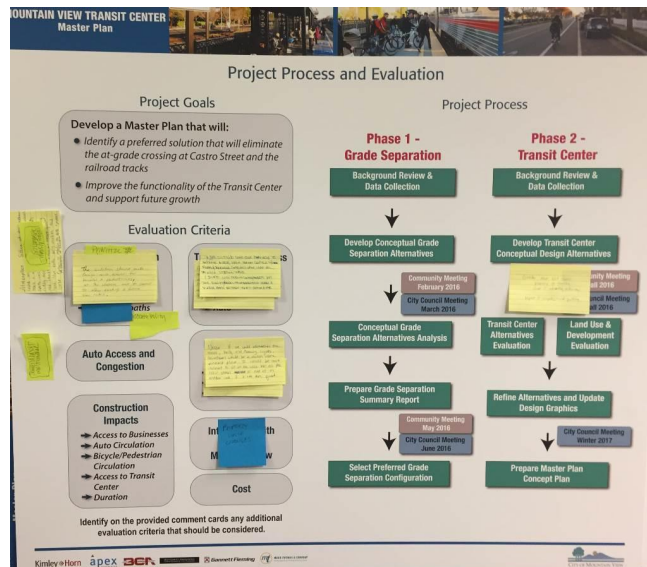
This station intended to determine what the meeting participants thought were the existing challenges within the study area, specifically focused around the Castro Street at-grade rail crossing. There were a total of 17 written responses received on existing challenges.



The overwhelming majority of the responses were comments on the amount of time it takes for pedestrians to legally cross Central Expressway along Castro St-Moffett Boulevard; many people complain that the wait was entirely too long, causing many pedestrians to cross illegally. Other comments concerned the isolation of Moffett Boulevard from the rest of downtown Mountain View. Participants felt that Central Expressway and the rail tracks provided a physical barrier to Moffett Boulevard and were concerned that a Castro Street road closure would exacerbate the issue. There was also one comment on the connection of Evelyn Avenue across Castro Street; the commenter mentioned that vehicles are forced to make an illegal U-turn to access the other side of Evelyn Avenue and the transit center.

Project Process and Evaluation

This station received feedback on the project process, priorities, and evaluation criteria. Several comments centered around ensuring that considerations for pedestrian activity were prioritized. The project should improve the pedestrian environment, consider pedestrian travel times, and improve pedestrian safety. Some of these comments mentioned concerns about existing safety in this area. Two comments suggested that reducing noise should be one goal of the project. Eliminating train horns would make downtown a more pleasant place. Two comments encouraged consideration of aesthetics and effects on the outdoor dining/downtown experience as part of the evaluation. One comment emphasized the need to account for circulation, particularly to North Bayshore when evaluating the alternatives.



Alternatives Station

The intent of this station was for meeting participants to provide feedback on the four proposed alternatives. Comments provided on the boards are transcribed below:

Alternative	What do you like?	What would you change?
Alternative 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evelyn becomes a throughway. • Ped/bike access. • Safer ped/bike crossing. • Grade separation bikes and cars. • Ped/bike connectivity. • Most important movements are protected. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to SB Central from Moffett. • Ignores congestion impact on Villa, California and West Dana residential areas. • Missing left turn option from central onto Moffett. • Consider relocating Train Station so Evelyn zigzag doesn't need to be over Castro (shortening depressed length). • Impact to businesses on Castro. • Add bike/ped connection to Stierlin. • Examples in Palo Alto are not ped/bike friendly – can the models be improved? • One lane each way of vehicle traffic under central, since Castro is one lane anyways. • Widen ped/bike access. • Close Evelyn at Castro. • Concerned about bikes along with cars in Alt 1 and especially in Alt 2. If you go that way, better to put bikes with ped or completely separate • More parking structures on perimeter arteries less, less cars in downtown area.

Alternative	What do you like?	What would you change?
Alternative 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bike/ped crossing. • Good car and pedestrian access for Moffett to downtown. • Good car access from Central to both Moffett and Castro. • Zero road crossings for pedestrians. • Ped plaza. • Pedestrians stay mostly at grade. • Separation of all modes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove right turn to Moffett and add Ped xing. • Need way to mitigate impact to businesses. • Look up German (Dutch?) elevated bike/ped xing project. They developed a very strong vision bridge, avoiding bad/ugly proportions of most engineered solutions. • Don't close off Evelyn – it would divert too much traffic to Villa and worsen already bad congestion at Villa and Castro. • Dangerous intersection for all modes due to un-signalized left.
Alternative 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best option for train and cars, not so much for peds/bikes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bike/ped crossing is too dangerous. • All options should shorten VTA tracks to allow for more real estate for red/bike ramps, and landscaping. • Ped/bike pathway up Stierlin needs to be strengthened. • Ped/bike pathway connecting to Santa Rosa should be important. • Consider closing one block of Castro. – Make it pedestrian only zone. Either 24/7 or After 5PM – 12 AM.

Alternative	What do you like?	What would you change?
Alternative 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is perfect especially if you can connect Franklin/Evelyn where Shoreline business are not disrupted by crazy construction as would be the case for the other alternatives. • Other than costs, nothing - shifts congestion to Villa, California and West Dana. • Simply elegant solution, good aesthetics, reduced traffic on Castro. • Ped/bike bridge (or tunnel) could be very symbolic and sculptural. • By far the best option. • You owe it to the businesses and Historic buildings on Castro. • Ped/bike friendly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can there be stairs as well as ramps? • Elevation of Evelyn to Shoreline would be first V.E. target. • Underground ped/bike crossing. • Linking new train station with Santa Rosa Ave looks like an important option. • Closes off Moffett area from Downtown. • Need to drive from Moffett up to Shoreline and back to get downtown – 4 turns instead of 0. • Continue bike/ped path under Central – continuous path under train. • Use Stevens Creek bridge over train/Central as conceptual model alternative if under bridge not possible. • Make Castro between Villa/Evelyn/train into a pedestrian mall – move Farmers Market on Sunday to this place. • Add parking @train station – parking structure underground with access from Moffett and Central. • Bike/ped access to Stierlin too.

Alternative	What do you like?	What would you change?
Alternative 4 (cont.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes Evelyn to Shoreline a usable space. • Makes Castro move person friendly by receiving cars. • This is the simplest and least expensive. Makes most sense. • Doesn't limit my options from going from Moffett to downtown or Sunnyvale. • Bike/ped grade separation. • Prefer tunnel to overpass – no elevator. • I live across the tracks from downtown and I love this plan because it makes downtown more accessible to me, able by foot or bike. • One of the most attractive features of Mountain View is the abundance of restaurants/activities on Castro. I strongly support Alt 4 to receive traffic flow on Castro to make it more pedestrian friendly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will shuttle bus get from transit center to North Bayshore? • This option feels like it would make an “other side of the tracks” feel for the Moffett community. • Concerned that pedestrian access time/walking time from north of Moffett to Caltrain/VTA stairs take a long time relative to current grade crossing. • Close Castro for the first 4 blocks from the train tracks but keep the cross streets (e.g. Villa, Dana, California) open for traffic. • Undercrossing for ped/bike to extend underneath tracks and Central. • Close off Castro (Central to California) to traffic altogether. Preserve crossings. Expand pedestrian access and outdoor cafes. • Elevated ramp for Evelyn to Shoreline would be an urban design disaster. • Please provide parking north of Central for the pedestrian access to transit and to Castro restaurants. Don't block ped access to Evelyn to Castro.

Additional Comments:

- Add 3 more alternatives; lower tracks, raising tracks, close traffic on Castro and Villa.
- Alternative 0; Lower rails (remove all cons from alternatives 1-4).

Summary of Feedback

The first community meeting was well attended by members of the nearby residential neighborhoods. In addition, a handful of attendees represented businesses. Many of the comments received at the meeting emphasized the desire to prioritize pedestrian and bicycle circulation and safety as part of the grade separation project and transit center improvements. There were a number of concerns expressed about the existing pedestrian and bicycle environment in accessing downtown and the transit center, particularly crossing Central Expressway.

The concept of closure of Castro Street received the greatest amount of feedback. The concept was well received by many and opposed by many. Those in favor cited the benefit to the downtown environment and bicycle and pedestrian activity. Several attendees viewed the Evelyn connection to Shoreline positively as a means to handle traffic flows. Those opposed expressed concerns about traffic diversions and cutting off the Moffett Boulevard area from downtown. There was interest from a number of attendees in evaluating the traffic impacts of diversions as part of the alternatives evaluation.

Concept 3, the median ramps alternative, received the least amount of feedback and that feedback was primarily negative related to its handling of pedestrian and bicycle circulation. Pedestrian and bicycle circulation in Concepts 1 and 2 were viewed favorably.

A handful of attendees expressed a desire for more detailed consideration of depressed rail alternatives as they felt it would address a lot of the challenges with the other alternatives.

Meeting Summary prepared by Kimley-Horn and Apex Strategies