
From: Daniel Hulse [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, January 21, 2024 11:52 PM
To: City Council
Subject: 1/23/2024 Council Meeting - Agenda Item 6.1: Caltrain Grade Separation

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Dear City Council,

I want to say that it is commendable that we are one of the first cities to start on its grade separation projects—getting these projects done sooner rather than later is going to enable higher speeds and better service on the Caltrain corridor, which we all benefit from.

However, it is worrying that the major funding gap required to build the Castro grade separation has not been filled. At present, I am unsure about city staff’s recommendation to prioritize the Rengstorff crossing. Staff lays out some good reasons to pursue this option, however, it leaves us in a predicament for the Castro grade separation that lacks a good resolution.

I hope council will consider some combination of options to put the project on a more certain footing going forward:

- At the council transportation committee, I mentioned pursuing a design with a single, narrower pedestrian tunnel (connecting to a capped Moffett Blvd) could potentially reduce costs while ensuring crucial pedestrian access across Central Expressway and ensuring Moffett becomes the “extension of downtown” envisioned by the city. I have not seen any serious consideration of this option, but given the present funding crisis, further design reductions in project scope like this deserve thought.
- Looking at additional funding sources, including pursuing local taxes/bonds (ideally to fund this and a variety of pedestrian improvements throughout the city going forward), allocating some of the city’s discretionary funds, and advocating for VTA to flex some of its highway/expressway dollars into grade separation projects.
- Financing the project with a land deal, where parts of the station parking lot (or their development rights) are sold to a developer, ideally in such a way that would maximize revenue that could then fund the project. This approach actually be in alignment with the station separation master plan (which lists much of the current station footprint as “development opportunity”) and could further encourage Caltrain ridership.

Making sure that the project is properly paid for is important because it ensures that we can move forward sooner rather than later and lets us hold on to some of the grant money which could otherwise get clawed back.

However, I do worry about some of the factors which led the project to this point—unexpected cost growth has been a major problem for Caltrain throughout its modernization project, in part because of a reliance on outside consultants to move projects forward. In contrast, BART has had success performing work in-house, which has a track record of saving the agency millions of dollars (e.g., on the fleet of the future implementation). Based on its experience so far, the city should advocate that Caltrain builds up its own in-house project delivery team so that the (over 40!) future grade separation projects don’t suffer the same cost escalation problems we have experienced so far.

Sincerely,
Daniel Hulse

From: Cox, Robert [REDACTED] >
Sent: Monday, January 22, 2024 12:49 PM
To: City Council
Subject: Livable Mountain View comment on Item 6.1 California Grade Separation Projects

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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 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

From: Ronit Bryant
Sent: Monday, January 22, 2024 2:46 PM
To: City Council
Subject: Agenda Item 6.1

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Dear Mayor Showalter and members of the City Council,

Staff recommends that you prioritize the Rengstroff/Central Expressway underpass over the Castro/Central Expressway underpass. As you discuss their recommendation, please consider the importance of the Castro project as a way to knit together the center of Mountain View on both sides of the tracks and the expressway. Such a connection will create a sense of place for our increasingly dense and urbanized downtown. The densifying-urbanizing trend will continue. Let's support it with our public works dollars.

The Rengstroff/Central Expressway underpass will be welcome when it finally is constructed. I would argue, however, that the project connecting El Camino to 101 will ease access to Google for people who live south of El Camino, but will not contribute much to the identity of Mountain View or build its sense of place.

And finally I urge you to launch a credible investigation into the very significant cost underestimates of the project. The gap is such as to cast doubt on any cost estimates accompanying long term planning.

Thank you,
Ronit Bryant

From: Lada Adamic [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, January 22, 2024 3:26 PM
To: City Council
Subject: Jan 23, 2024 meeting agenda item 6.1, grade separation project

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Dear City Council,

I am writing as an individual, although I am a member of the BPAC.

I don't think there should be delay in making Moffet between Central Expressway and Middlefield safe for biking. Every time I bike on Moffet, I think about the possibility that I might die. I don't generally worry about dying, but biking in a 40MPH car lane does bring this about every single time. In contrast, I am not as concerned about dying when I cross Central Expressway at grade, although I am sometimes, when cars make right turns through the crosswalk even when pedestrians have right of way. Eliminating right turns on red at this intersection would improve pedestrian safety without costing the tens of millions of dollars that the undercrossings are going to cost (I know that ultimately it would be in the hands of the county because Central is a county road).

I acknowledge that there is a system and method to this: first create the precise plan, then wait for a developer to redevelop, then see if they can fund the implementation of the bike lane. From a cost and other resources point of view, this makes sense. But how long will that take, 5 years? 10 years? More? If our kids are biking now, if our climate change-related goals have a timeline of 15 or 20 years, can we really wait this long to make our city bikeable?

Between 2014 and 2021 Paris added 300 kilometers of new bike lanes, and 150 kilometers of temporary facilities. Cycling in the city doubled over that period. In September of 2022 I was in Paris and saw so many bikes and scooters. It really works. If [this document](#) is to be believed, Paris did it with 150 million Euros, which is less than the Castro street grade separation project is projected to cost. Now Paris is investing an additional 250 million Euros between 2021-2026 to make Paris 100% cyclable (including 180 km of new bike lanes). That's still around the cost of this one undercrossing?

I don't understand how that's possible, but looking at the other item, the cost of the California St complete streets pilot, which seems (relatively) modest, I think prioritizing making our city 100% cyclable by focusing on cheaper surface projects would be more appropriate given the urgency of vision zero and climate change. Once Calderon was given bike lanes, I started noticing many more bikes on it. My sense is that bike traffic did at least double on Calderon. But the rest of the city seems at a long-lasting standstill due to an incomplete bike network.

I acknowledge that getting federal and state grants is also a big factor in the choice of projects, but if there are sizeable local funds going into this beyond the minimum to satisfy the requirement for getting the state and federal funds, then we should very carefully weigh the benefit.

I think undercrossings are great! I would most definitely use one if it was there. Sweden, for example, puts them in at many busy intersections to make biking and walking faster, safer, and more appealing. I loved biking there. But things like the Bernardo undercrossing make little sense to me in the right now (assuming its cost will be similarly high). On the Sunnyvale side, Bernardo is not a good street to bike on: 30MPH, lots of parked cars, and no bike lanes. Sure, in 20 years, when we have even more residential and business development on

both sides we will have been glad we built the undercrossing, the vision is correct, but right now, is this really a better use of funds and staff time than making Rengstorff a complete street so highschoolers can safely bike to Los Altos HS? Or in general making the city 100% cyclable, however many miles of bike lanes it takes?

So I ask you, as you deliberate on this item, to please keep a 100% cyclable city in mind as a potential goal. Maybe prioritizing the undercrossings is the solution, and you may well understand this better than I. Or maybe saving funds and prioritizing bike lanes and safer surface crossings on our main streets is just as if not more important and urgent, and then I hope *that* will be realized.

Thanks for reading.
Sincerely,

Lada Adamic