

To the Los Altos City Wide Parking Committee  
Re: Public Comment for Special Meeting, January 19, 2016

Dear Committee Members:

Because I may be unable to attend the Special Meeting in person, I am submitting these comments in writing for the public record. Note – I am a member of the Los Altos Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission (BPAC), but these comments are made by me as a resident of Los Altos, and are not made as representative of the BPAC's opinions or recommendations.

These comments are relevant to Agenda Item 2 A, and Attachment B, as well as Agenda Item 3 and Attachment C.

I must express my disappointment that construction of a parking garage remains a recommended option for addressing a perceived parking problem in the downtown area. Specifically, I call attention to one of the explicitly stated assumptions (Page 6 of the January 11, 2016 letter to the Planning and Transportation Commission, as well as elsewhere in the Attachments): "The private auto will remain the predominant transportation mode for the foreseeable future. Too little parking will result in community and economic negative impacts."

Given the increasing presence of the Google self-driving cars in our area, the involvement of nearly every major automobile manufacturer in research efforts focused on autonomous driving automobiles, the millions of dollars invested in ride-providing companies such as Uber and Lyft, improvements and investments in BART and CalTrain, possible shifts in bus transportation down El Camino Real, changing attitudes about car ownership by the younger members of the population demographic in Los Altos and the greater Bay Area, increasing attention on climate change and the need for actions directed at mitigating negative impacts on the climate, and the fact that we live in an area of immensely creative, entrepreneurial individuals who constantly come up with disruptive solutions to complex problems, I suggest that your "foreseeable future" must be extremely near-sighted. I would like you to envision a future, not so far in the distance, in which fewer and fewer individuals own their own cars, but instead share automobiles with multiple households. Self-driving automobiles deliver their passengers to the stores, malls, restaurants, and then drive away to a waiting zone that could be miles away; they return to pick up their passengers when summoned via a smartphone app.

Today, my teenage children take the bus and train to San Jose and San Francisco, and then use Uber and Lyft to complete the "last mile"...why is it so difficult to image that could not work in reverse? Undertaking a many-year, multi-million dollar project to construct a parking garage is a mistake, and should be removed from the list of options. I think there are many things that can be done with the money it would take to construct a garage. Consider, for example, a garage that requires \$10 Million to construct. Now consider a shuttle program that requires \$1 Million per year to operate. That shuttle program can be operated for 10 years for the same cost as the garage construction. In that 10 years, technologies and services such as autonomous driving autos, Uber, and the other things mentioned previously, will have matured and become commonplace, making the parking garage a relic of ancient history. Remember, the iPhone was only introduced in the United States in 2007. In less than 10 years, the iPhone and competing smart phones have become ubiquitous, world-wide! Why should we not believe that transportation is immune to such wondrous changes?

Now, let me present an assumption not explicitly stated in your Committee's material: If you are going to consider a parking garage as an option, then you must make this assumption, "People that are today

unwilling to walk more than one block from a parking space to their ultimate destination will, with the presence of a parking garage, be willing to make a walk of one or more blocks from the parking garage.” Without this assumption, I fear that you cannot make the case that the newly constructed parking garage will be used any more than the parking plazas and Safeway parking spaces are today (I always seem to be able to find a spot in Safeway, regardless of the time of day). Because there are parking spaces available, perhaps not directly in front of the location the driver wishes to visit, I must conclude that the drivers are unwilling to walk farther than a few parking spaces.

I note also that there are no recommendations for improving pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure as mechanisms for reducing the number of automobiles (of course, the lack of these recommendations is consistent with the assumption about automobiles and the foreseeable future).

In closing, I would like to direct your attention to 3 items. The first is from Losaltosonline.com (and printed in the in the “Online Comments” section of the January 13, 2016 edition of the Town Crier), “...I never have a problem finding parking at or near my destination, so I’m always puzzled by the folks who see parking as the No. 1 issue in downtown.” The second is also from that same source, “It’s OK to walk a block or three to your destination!”

Finally, the third item is a link to an online article from Wired Magazine, “Welcome to the Metastructure: The New Internet of Transportation”, Adam Rogers, Wired Magazine (online) 01.04.2016 <http://www.wired.com/2016/01/the-metastructure-transportation/> . This author’s foreseeable future looks different than your committee’s – I encourage you to read this article (especially since a portion of it is taken directly from the author’s experiences in Mountain View).

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Wes Brinsfield

Los Altos