



City of Palo Alto Grade Separation Project

Churchill Avenue, Meadow Drive,
and Charleston Road

Rail Committee
May 20, 2025
6:00 PM



CITY OF
PALO ALTO



Today's Presenters

Project Director



Audrey Brook
Director
Capital Program Delivery

Project Sponsor



Ripon Bhatia
Senior Engineer
Office of Transportation

Project Management



Jill Gibson
Project Manager



Purpose

Provide an overview of the Draft Public Outreach and Engagement Plan and introduce the General Engineering Consultant (GEC) team, their role, and the project schedule.

Project Overview



Project Site





Conceptual Alternatives

**Meadow
Drive**



**Charleston
Road**



**Churchill
Avenue**



Locally Preferred Alternative



Backup



Project Goals



Improve Safety



Minimize
**environmental
impacts**



Improve Mobility

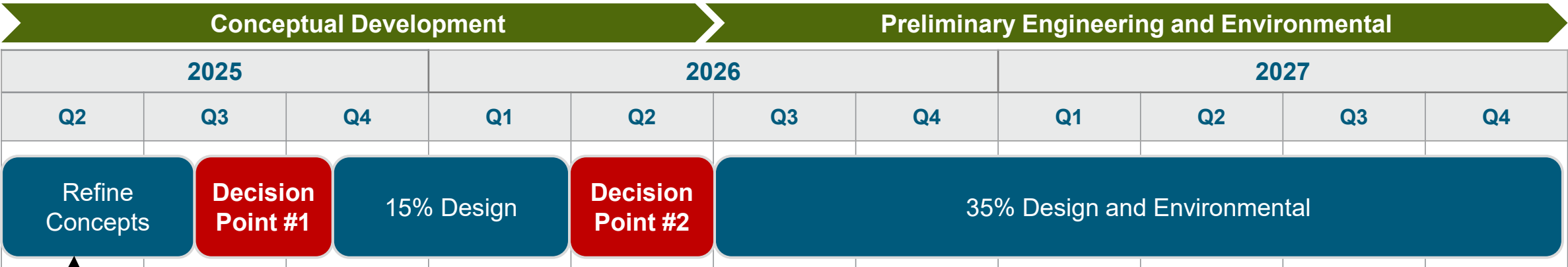


Minimize **potential
private property
impacts**



Timeline

Goal: Complete 35% Design and Environmental Documentation by the end of 2027 per Cooperative Agreement.



We are here

Decision Point #1

Project Team will present Refined Concepts to Rail Committee and City Council. City Council will decide which alternatives to advance to 15% Design.

Decision Point #2

Project Team will present 15% Design to Rail Committee and City Council. City Council will decide which alternatives to advance to Preliminary Engineering (35% Design) and Environmental Documentation.

Draft Public Outreach and Engagement Plan





Draft Public Outreach and Engagement Plan

PURPOSE

Framework of targeted engagement activities to communicate key project information, provide opportunities for community participation, and foster understanding to provide meaningful input.

Components

- Outreach Strategies by Milestone (Tools and Tactics)
- Corridor Partners Identification
- Public Engagement/Agency Activities
- Tracking, Evaluating, and Reporting
- Engagement Schedule



Integrated Engagement Team

Kimley»Horn

Engagement Lead

*Oversight and management of the
project engagement*

Caltrain

Engagement Collaboration

*Collaborates closely with City &
Kimley-Horn on strategy.*



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PALO ALTO

Engagement Collaboration

*Collaborates closely with Caltrain &
Kimley-Horn on strategy and
coordinates City-related
engagement.*



Role of the Engagement Team



Facilitate Community Outreach



Foster Two-Way Communication



**Strengthen and Manage
Community Partnerships**



**Ensure Transparent Communication
Throughout the Project**



**Collect and Synthesize
Community Feedback**



**Relay Community Perspectives
to Decision Makers**



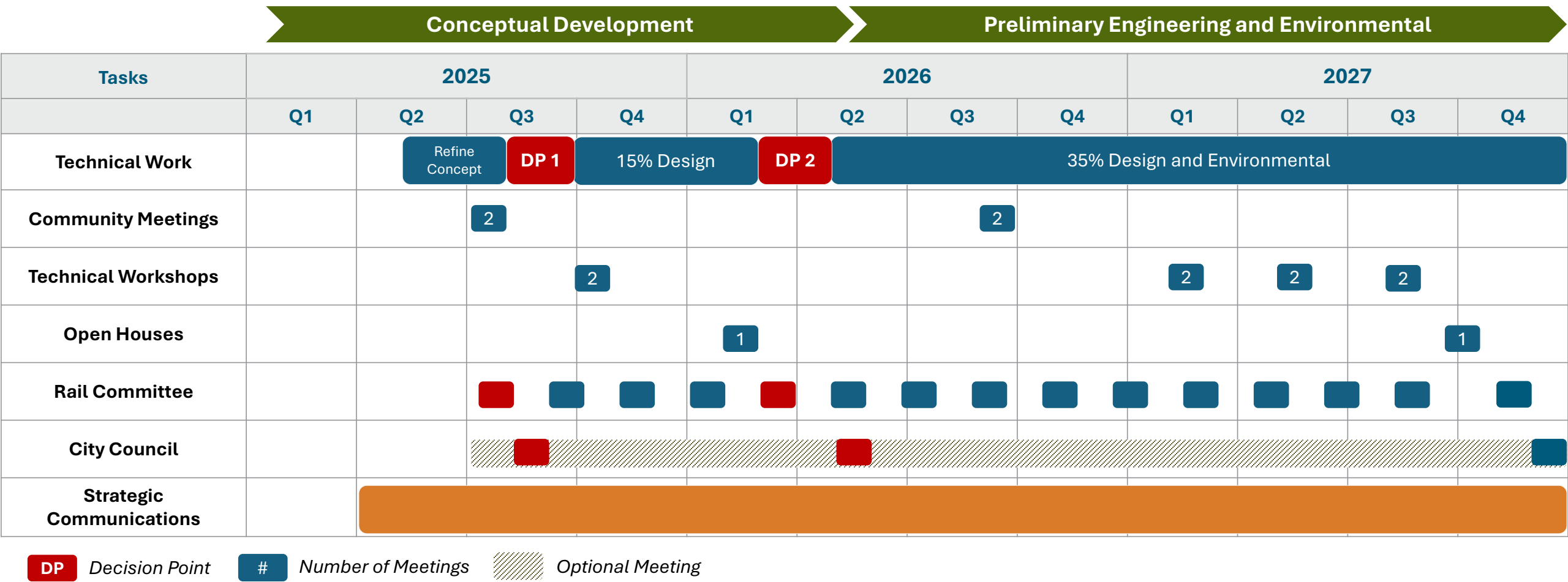
Engagement Goals



- ✓ **Educate and Inform:** Provide the community with clear information about the project's history, objectives, and existing alternatives.
- ✓ **Engage:** Ensure accessible platforms and diverse opportunities for meaningful community involvement.
- ✓ **Solicit Input:** Actively gather detailed feedback to better understand the community's needs and priorities.
- ✓ **Share Feedback:** Communicate community insights and concerns clearly to decision-makers.
- ✓ **Recommend:** Present well-supported alternatives for decision-makers to evaluate and consider



DRAFT Engagement Schedule





Conceptual Development

Decision
Point 1

Conceptual Development

Decision
Point 2

Purpose:

Discuss project phase expectations and engagement opportunities. Gather input on refined concepts.

2 Community Meetings

Churchill/Seale

Meadow &
Charleston

Purpose:

Review refined concepts and potential impacts.

2 Technical Workshops

Churchill/Seale

Meadow &
Charleston

Purpose:

Discuss project phase and engagement opportunities. Review and provide input on refined concepts.

1 Open House

Churchill/Seale

Meadow &
Charleston



Preliminary Engineering and Environmental

Preliminary Engineering and Environmental

Purpose:

Reengage community & gather input on design alternatives.

2 Community Meetings

Churchill/Seale

Meadow &
Charleston

Purpose:

Technical component workshops such as Right-of-Way, Mobility, Cost Estimate, and/or Constructability.

6 Technical Workshops

Churchill/Seale

Meadow &
Charleston

Purpose:

Review refined concepts.

1 Open House

Churchill/Seale

Meadow &
Charleston



Communication Strategies

Tactics

- Leverage existing networks
- Provide interactive and accessible content
- Provide language translation services
- Develop and manage Community Inquiry Tracker
- Calibrate approach based on community participation

Tools

- Digital and printed collateral
- Short-form content
- Brochures, flyers, and surveys
- Project website
- Social media

CITY OF PALO ALTO PROJECT FOR GRADE SEPARATION: CHURCHILL AVENUE, MEADOW DRIVE, AND CHARLESTON ROAD

PROJECT PROCESS

CONCEPTUAL ALTERNATIVES

In June 2024, the City of Palo Alto City Council selected the following conceptual alternatives to advance into PE and ENV.

Meadow Drive	Charleston Road	Churchill Avenue
UNDERPASS ALTERNATIVE		PARTIAL UNDERPASS ALTERNATIVE
Will grade separate the railroad tracks at the current grade and Meadow Drive and Charleston Road under the railroad tracks via an underpass. Traffic on eastbound Churchill Avenue will descend and pass under the railroad and terminate at a lowered T-intersection at Alma Street then ascend and return to grade along Alma Street.		Will retain the railroad tracks at their existing location and grade. Churchill Avenue will become a T-intersection with Alma Street. A pedestrian/bike only undercrossing will be constructed.
HYBRID ALTERNATIVE		STREET CLOSURE ALTERNATIVE
Will retain the railroad tracks at their existing location and grade. Churchill Avenue will become a T-intersection with Alma Street. A pedestrian/bike only undercrossing will be constructed.		Will retain the railroad tracks at their existing location and grade. Churchill Avenue will become a T-intersection with Alma Street. A pedestrian/bike only undercrossing will be constructed.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

The City of Palo Alto and Caltrain, in close coordination with other key community partners, are advancing the grade separation projects at Churchill Avenue, Meadow Drive, and Charleston Road (project) into preliminary engineering (PE) and environmental documentation (ENV). This project is funded by the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) Measure B and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Rail Crossing Elimination (RCE) grants. The City of Palo Alto, Caltrain, and VTA have entered into a Cooperative Agreement to advance this project through PE and ENV.

PROJECT GOALS

- Improve Safety
- Improve Mobility
- Minimize environmental impacts
- Minimize potential private property impacts

PUBLIC OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

- Neighbor Outreach
- Community Workshops
- Open Houses
- Rail Committee and City Council

SCHEDULE

- 2025: Project Initiation and Concept Refinement
- 2026: Preliminary Engineering
- 2027: Environmental Documentation

PROJECT PARTNERS

- Caltrain (Project Director)
- CITY OF PALO ALTO (Project Sponsor)
- U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Railroad Administration (Funding Sponsor)

PROJECT STUDY AREA

Map showing the project study area with key locations: Churchill Ave Crossing, Meadow Dr Crossing, Charleston Rd Crossing, and the Caltrain Corridor.

PROCESS PLAN

Concept Refinement → 15% Design → Preliminary Engineering (35%) and Environmental Documentation

DECISION POINT: Refine LPA selection to advance 35% design and environmental documentation.

DECISION POINT: Identify alternatives to advance into Final Design.

Get Involved and Stay Updated!

www.Caltrain.com/PaloAltoGradeSep??

Project Website

www.Caltrain.com/projects/CMCGS



We Want to Hear from You

The Project starts with input from you, the community. Please share any suggestions or insights on how you think the Project can improve the City.

First*

Last*

Which project crossing are you interested in?*

- ☐ Churchill Avenue Crossing
- ☐ Meadow Drive Crossing
- ☐ Charleston Road Crossing

Comment*

SUBMIT

A screenshot of the Caltrain project website. The header features the Caltrain logo and navigation links: Stations, Fares, Rider Information, Projects, and About Caltrain. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with links: Schedules, Live Map, Service Alerts, and Trip Planner. The main content area has a large image of a Caltrain train (number 317) at a crossing. Below the image is the project title: "City of Palo Alto Project for Grade Separation: Churchill Avenue, Meadow Drive, and Charleston Road". The "Background" section includes three icons: Overview (calendar), Public Engagement (people), and Resources (document). The "Project Background" section contains text about the project's goals and the City of Palo Alto's role. The "Conceptual Alternatives" section lists two alternatives: "Meadow Drive and Charleston Road" and "Churchill Avenue".

Background

Overview **Public Engagement** **Resources**

Project Background

Caltrain and the City of Palo Alto (City), in close coordination with other key community partners, are advancing the grade separation projects at Churchill Avenue, Meadow Drive, and Charleston Road (Project) through the Preliminary Engineering (PE) and Environmental (ENV) documentation step. The Project is a long-term initiative aimed at improving rail safety, reducing traffic congestion, and enhancing mobility along the Caltrain corridor in the City. The Project stems from ongoing efforts to address safety concerns and transportation challenges posed by at-grade rail crossings along Alma Street, where seven major crossings intersect the rail line.

Caltrain, operated by the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board (PCJPB), has served as a key transportation corridor for the region, but with electrification and expanded service under the 2040 Business Plan, increased train frequency is anticipated to lead to longer gate downtimes and greater congestion at at-grade crossings. Three of the City's crossings—Churchill Avenue, Meadow Drive, and Charleston Road (Project crossing locations)—remain at-grade, posing safety risks and traffic challenges.

Conceptual Alternatives

In June 2024, the City Council approved advancing the Project into the Preliminary Engineering (35% design) and Environmental Documentation step for the following alternatives:

Meadow Drive and Charleston Road
Meadow Drive and Charleston Road: The Hybrid (including a mixed wall/column approach) and Underpass alternative were chosen to advance.

Churchill Avenue
Churchill Avenue: The Partial Underpass at Churchill Avenue with a Bicycle and Pedestrian crossing at Seale Avenue was chosen as the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA), with the Closure alternative as backup to advance.

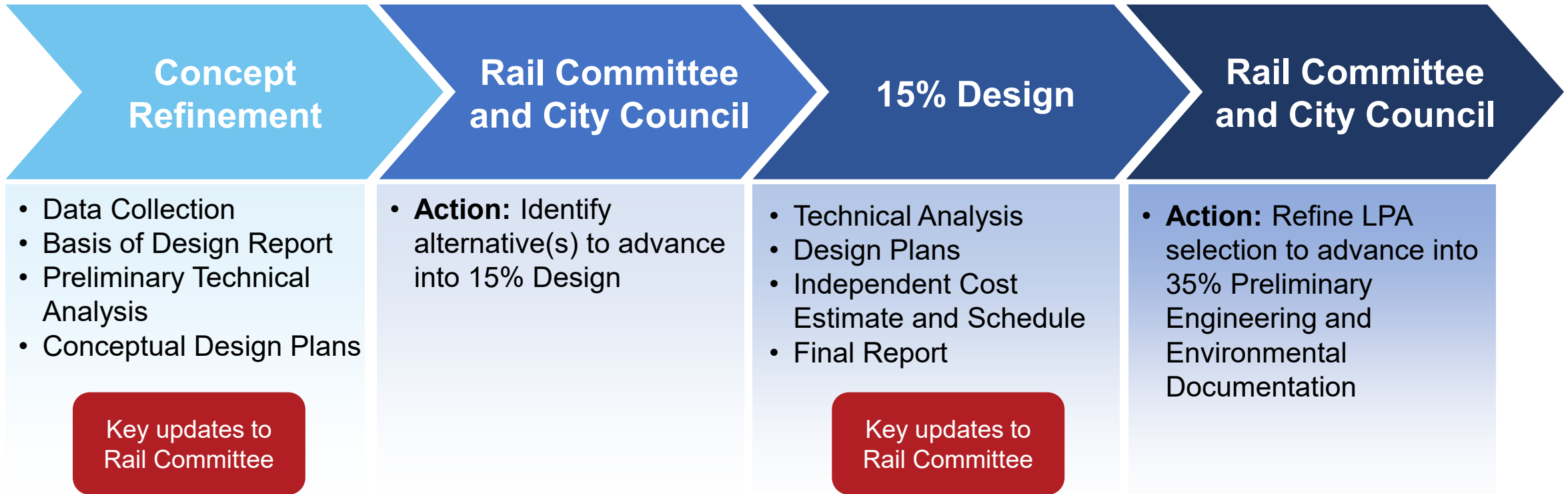
TYLin General Engineering Consultant (GEC)





GEC Introduction and Scope

Goal: Refine concepts to minimize property and environmental impacts.





Future Rail Committee Engagement

Year	Month	Action / Study Session
2025	July	No Meeting (Council Break)
	September	Review Refined Concepts – Recommend alternatives to proceed to 15%
	November	Review Scope for Preliminary Engineering (35%) and Environmental Documentation
2026	January	Project Update
	March	Project Update
	May	Review 15% Design – Recommend alternatives to proceed to Preliminary Engineering (35%) and Environmental Documentation