

Responses to Council Questions and Comments

10/7/2024

Item #4: Resolution Authorizing Staff to Submit a Grant Application to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's Regional Measure 3 Safe Routes to Transit and Bay Trail Program for the Petaluma River Trail – US-101 and Rail Undercrossings Project and Confirming the Availability of Matching Funds

- **Question:** The grant has not been selected in prior grant competitions. Why repeat the request? Have alternatives been evaluated not just identified?
 - **Response:** Previous grant applications for this project were submitted to the California Active Transportation Program (ATP), which is an extremely competitive and oversubscribed grant funding source. Staff met with California Transportation Commission and Sonoma County Transportation Authority staff to debrief the City's last application and were encouraged to continue to pursue grant funding for the project. On 9/30/24, staff submitted a grant application for the US EPA's Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) grant to cover the environmental, permitting, and engineering costs of this project, and staff is very optimistic about that application, as this project aligns very well with the evaluation criteria of that grant.

Staff requests Council authority to apply for the MTC grant to fill in the budget gaps and reduce the City's Traffic Mitigation Impact Fee contribution, allowing the funding to be reprogrammed to other projects.

Another alternative under consideration runs from Caulfield Lane along the north side of the SMART tracks. While this alignment would likely be more cost-effective, it would require significant construction within SMART's right-of-way and would not fulfill the envisioned River Trail alignment.
- **Question:** Has the concept been evaluated of cycle track (2 way) behind the guard rail of Lakeville 116 on the south side from Caulfield to Casa Grande? How do the costs compare, the grant opportunity compare and the constructability compare?
 - **Response:** Yes. There does not appear to be sufficient right-of-way along the south side of Lakeville Highway in this section without impacts to private properties. Additionally, that section of Lakeville Highway is owned and operated by Caltrans. A more likely option would be a multi-use pathway along the north side of the SMART tracks starting at Caulfield Lane. Caltrans has a paving project on Lakeville Highway scheduled for 2028, which will present an opportunity to improve bicycle/pedestrian accommodations. The City's upcoming Lakeville Corridor Study will examine the feasibility of these alternatives more closely and engage both SMART and Caltrans on alternatives.
- **Question:** What permitting and CEQA will be required for the proposed project?
 - **Response:** Permitting and environmental review would not be included in the MTC grant application, only construction. The RCP grant mentioned above included a budget request of \$115,000 for the undercrossing environmental review and permitting.

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- **Question:** In what way does the ATP differentiate between recreation trails and transportation trail? Is the value of each evaluated and contrasted? Is the funding from the same sources or from different grant opportunities?
 - **Response:** While criteria varies between grants, most bicycle/pedestrian grants favor projects that connect people with transit, overcome barriers to active transportation, and improve safety, thereby helping make active transportation accessible to more people and facilitating mode shift. As noted in the staff report, staff feel that this project is well aligned with these criteria.
- **Question:** How much staff time was involved in this application?
 - **Response:** The application is due on October 14 and is not expected to require an extraordinary amount of staff resources to accomplish. Much of the application responses and materials will be repurposed from previous grant applications.
- **Question:** Please explain "Caltrans Earmark repurposing?"
 - **Response:** SCTA staff has indicated that there are excess funds from the Marin-Sonoma Narrows project that can be repurposed to other projects that deliver benefits along and across the 101 corridor.
- **Question:** The report says "The entire five-year program is reviewed and approved each year by the Council." I believe that only the current year budget is approved. All else is informational.
 - **Response:** That is correct. However, Finance looks at the five-year CIP funding needs and projects out the expected revenue for those projects, and in this case, funding in FY 26/27 is programmed for this project from the Traffic Mitigation Impact Fee, subject to Council's approval.
- **Question:** How much matching local funds are being committed if this grant is successful?
 - **Response:** Of the \$7 million estimated project cost, if the RCP and MTC grants are successful, the local match would be \$50,000 of developer contributions that were earmarked for this project and \$30,000 of Traffic Mitigation Impact Fees City funds match (down from \$204,000 from the FY 24/25 Budget), as well as \$2,083,000 in Measure M and federal funds being repurposed from the Marin-Sonoma Narrows Project.

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C16101519	Current Council-Approved Budget		Projected Budget (if approved and awarded)	
Project Phase	FY 25/26 (Current)	FY 26/27 (Current)	FY 25/26 (Projected)	FY 26/27 (Projected)
USES				
Design/ Planning/ Environmental/ Land	\$230,000		\$ 360,000	
Administration/ Legal Services	\$ 3,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 15,000
Construction Contract		\$5,000,000		\$5,000,000
Construction Management		\$ 500,000		\$ 500,000
Contingency		\$1,000,000	\$ 36,000	\$1,000,000
CIP Overhead	\$ 4,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 19,000	\$ 100,000
TOTAL USES:	\$237,000	\$6,615,000	\$430,000	\$6,615,000
SOURCES				
Traffic Mitigation Impact Fees	\$204,000	\$2,075,000	\$30,000	
Federal US-101 earmark repurposing via SCTA				\$ 83,000
Measure M US-101 repurposing via SCTA				\$2,000,000
Developer Contributions			\$ 50,000	
US DOT Reconnecting Communities <i>(pending)</i>			\$350,000	
RM3 SR2TBT <i>(pending)</i>				\$4,532,000
Undetermined		\$4,540,000		

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- **Question:** In the FY25 budget, the budget is shown at \$6 to \$7m total. This is equal to much of what's needed for the Trestle rehab. What makes this project better than the Trestle?
 - **Response:** By preparing this application, staff are not conveying the project's priority level relative to other CIP projects, but rather alignment with the grant funding criteria. The trestle is not considered a good fit for this grant opportunity, as it does not deliver the same degree of safety and connectivity benefits as this project, which would provide the only car-free alternative under US-101 along the Lakeville Highway corridor. Additionally, the nearly \$2.1 million of SCTA funding repurposed from the Highway 101 widening project would not be applicable to the trestle project, as there is no Highway 101 nexus.
- **Question:** Why are we committing \$2m of Traffic Impact fees to this without a ranking of benefit?
 - **Response:** The TIF funds programmed to this project are determined by its eligibility in the nexus study upon which the fees are based, as well as the percentage of the overall project cost in TIF funds that can be allocated to a bicycle/pedestrian project.
Additionally, to the extent this grant application, the RCP grant, and discussions with other regional partners are successful, the TIF contribution may be significantly reduced, allowing that funding to be reprogrammed for other projects. Please see the table above, noting \$2,279,000 of TIF funds are currently programmed, whereas if both grant applications are successful, the TIF contribution would be reduced to \$30,000.