



DATE: October 7, 2024

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council through City Manager

FROM: Bjorn Gripenburg, MCRP, Project Manager, Public Works & Utilities
Morgan Karcs, Management Analyst, City Manager's Office (CMO)
Deborah Fox, Climate Action Manager, CMO
Patrick Carter, Assistant to the City Manager, CMO

SUBJECT: 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

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the City Council adopt the attached Resolution authorizing staff to submit a grant application to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's Regional Measure 3 (RM3) Safe Routes to Transit and Bay Trail Program (SR2TBT) for the Petaluma River Trail – US-101 and Rail Undercrossings Project (Project) and confirming the availability of matching funds.

BACKGROUND

The Petaluma River Trail—US -101 and Rail Undercrossings Project is a planned 0.5-mile multi-use trail between the Petaluma Marina and an existing section of River Trail that terminates at Bautista and Soto Way in the Riverfront neighborhood. This planned multi-use trail will close the current gap between Bautista Way and the Petaluma Marina/Alman Marsh, offering a safe, car-free alternative travel option to the busy US-101 undercrossing on Lakeville Highway. Ultimately, the Project would connect people traveling by foot and bike with the waterfront while also overcoming several major barriers to active transportation—US-101, Lakeville Highway, and an active railroad—that impede travel between downtown, the City's transit hub (including regional rail, and buses), commercial and employment centers, residential neighborhoods, and 500 acres of wetland parks. Currently, the only way through the area is on Lakeville Highway, a busy state highway with four lanes of fast-moving traffic, no bike lanes, and a narrow sidewalk. Lakeville Highway is part of the Sonoma County High-Injury Network due to a high rate of traffic collisions resulting in severe injuries or deaths, including an 89-year-old man who was tragically killed while bicycling on Lakeville Highway toward the US-101 undercrossing in 2019.

Project Map



The Project is included in several planning documents, including the River Access and Enhancement Plan, which was adopted in 1996 and is in the City’s Capital Improvement Program (C16101519).

DISCUSSION

The Project was identified as a strong candidate for RM3 SR2TBT due to its alignment with the following grant criteria:

- **Safety Countermeasures:** The Project would provide a safer, car-free alternative to the current crossing at Lakeville Highway. This high-traffic state route is part of the Sonoma County High-Injury Network. The existing route lacks bike lanes and requires pedestrians to navigate across US-101 on- and off-ramps to access the sidewalk under the highway.
- **Demonstrated Project Need:** In addition to the safety benefits noted above, the Project is a key gap closure in Petaluma’s envisioned River Trail and would help connect people with the river and natural environment. Additionally, while the CIP indicated the use of Traffic Mitigation Impact Fees, Caltrans earmark repurposing, and developer contributions for approximately 40% of the project costs, nearly 60% of the project revenue is unidentified. The project is unlikely to be completed without additional, aligned funding sources such as the RM3 SR2TBT grant.

- **Support of the Bay Trail Network and Gap Closure Implementation Plan:** The Project provides a key connection in the Bay Trail between downtown Petaluma and existing trails at Alman Marsh, Shollenberger Park, and Ellis Creek Water Recycling Facility.
- **Public Transportation Accessibility:** The Project would enhance safe connections between southeast Petaluma—including residential neighborhoods, major employment hubs, Petaluma’s largest medical campus, and 500 acres of public wetlands—with the Downtown Petaluma SMART Station and Copeland Street Transit Mall, which offer both local and regional transit connections.
- **Design Alternatives Analysis:** This is one of two viable US-101 undercrossing options located south of Lakeville Highway, with the other positioned along the northern edge of the SMART tracks. While the City’s draft Active Transportation Plan envisions both options, this Project is the only alignment that would implement the River Trail as the River Access and Enhancement Plan envisioned.
- **Consistency with Regional Priorities and Planning Efforts:** The Project includes the Bay Trail, Ridge Trail, Regional Active Transportation Network, Draft 2025 Transportation Improvement Plan, and Caltrans District 4 Bike Plan.
- **Demonstrated Local Engagement & Support:** The Project has been included in several planning documents, including the River Access and Enhancement Plan and the City’s Capital Improvement Program. The Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee has highlighted it as a top priority. The City has received numerous letters of support for the Project from active transportation advocacy groups, school leadership, and environmental organizations.

Staff recently submitted a grant application to the US Department of Transportation’s Reconnecting Communities Pilot Grant Program for all work needed to bring the Project to shovel-ready status, which includes planning, environmental review/permitting, and design. If approved, this request to the RM3 SR2TBT would fund the construction phase.

Approval of the attached Resolution would authorize staff to submit the grant application and confirm the availability of matching funds as outlined in the “Financial Impacts” section below. While matching funds are not required, they contribute to a more favorable rating during the grant application review process.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

On September 4, 2024, the Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee (PBAC) voted unanimously to authorize the Chair to sign a letter of support for the City’s upcoming grant applications for this Project. This item appeared on the City Council’s tentative agenda document on September 16, 2024. PBAC and City Council meetings are publicly noticed.

COUNCIL GOAL ALIGNMENT

The Capital Improvement Program serves as a comprehensive catalog of community needs. The entire five-year program is reviewed and approved each year by the Council. The Rivertrail – 101/Crossing, Crosstown Connector project (C16101519) is included in the Capital Improvement Program on CIP-81. The full FY2024-2025 Adopted Operating and Capital Improvement Program

Budget can be found here: <https://cityofpetaluma.org/documents/fiscal-year-2025-adopted-budget/>

The Project also supports the City Council’s Active Transportation Plan Goal, a top priority for 2024, as well as the following Council Workplan Items:

- #18: Establish and improve paths, as useful transportation options, and make walking and biking easy, fun and safe.
- #19: Establish bicycle and walking paths and other river access amenities along the Petaluma River as identified in the River Access and Enhancement Plan.
- #79: Improve traffic safety through proactive education, engineering, and enforcement strategies.
- #85: Implement City Vision Zero plan with a focus on pedestrian and cyclist safety with improvements to uncontrolled crosswalks, curb ramps, sidewalk, and bicycle infrastructure.

CLIMATE ACTION/SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS

This Project would overcome major barriers to active transportation, thereby improving mobility options and reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transportation. Transportation is the leading source of activity-based greenhouse gas emissions in Petaluma, at 66.5 percent.¹

Staff plans to include habitat restoration and tree plantings in the Project scope.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15378(b)(5), as submitting a grant application does not meet CEQA’s definition of a “Project” because the action does not have the potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment. The proposed Project will be subject to environmental review and approvals prior to any construction activities taking place. The environmental document(s) will be determined when the City receives funding for and initiates the planning, environmental review, and design phase.

FINANCIAL IMPACTS

The adopted FY24/25 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budget did not allocate funds for activities in the current fiscal year. However, projected budgets for FY25/26 and FY26/27 anticipate a funding gap of \$4,540,000, despite \$2,279,000 expected to come from Traffic Mitigation Impact Fees allocated to the Project.

The RM3 SR2TBT scoring criteria favors applications with matching funds, so staff is proposing a 20 percent local match. Additionally, the City has a pending grant application for the planning,

¹ [Sonoma County Greenhouse Gas Inventory – 2022 Update, pg. 8](#)

environmental review, and design phase, which requires a 20 percent local match. The funding gap will be closed if both applications are successful and the City secures \$83,000 in leftover funds from the Marin-Sonoma Narrows Project. As a result, the City would spend \$1,040,000 in Traffic Mitigation Impact Fees, which is \$1,239,000 less than currently projected in the 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan.

The tables below show the Council-approved project budget for FY24/25, compared to the updated project budget if this Resolution is approved, grants are awarded, and matching funds are committed.

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		\$243,000	
Administration/ Legal Services	\$ 3,000	\$ 15,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 15,000
Construction Contract		\$5,000,000		\$5,000,000
Construction Management		\$ 500,000		\$ 500,000
Contingency		\$1,000,000		\$1,000,000
CIP Overhead	\$ 4,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 4,000	\$ 100,000
TOTAL USES:	\$237,000	\$6,615,000	\$250,000	\$6,615,000
SOURCES				
Traffic Mitigation Impact Fees	\$204,000	\$2,075,000		\$1,040,000
Caltrans earmark repurposing via SCTA				\$ 83,000
Developer Contributions			\$ 50,000	
US DOT Reconnecting Communities (<i>pending</i>)			\$200,000	
RM3 SR2TBT (<i>pending</i>)				\$5,575,000
Undetermined		\$4,540,000		

ALTERNATIVES

Alternatively, the Council may not approve this Resolution, and staff will not submit the grant application and will have to pursue other funding opportunities for the Project.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Resolution
2. Draft Cover Letter