



CITY OF SAN MATEO

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Agenda Report

Agenda Number: 24

Section Name: {{section.name}}

Account Number: 10-4666-01

File ID: {{item.tracking_number}}

TO: City Council
FROM: Drew Corbett, City Manager
PREPARED BY: Public Works Department
MEETING DATE: September 19, 2022

SUBJECT:

Downtown San Mateo Grade Separation Railroad Crossing Elimination – Grant Funding

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt a Resolution to authorize an application for the Federal Rail Administration Railroad Crossing Elimination Grant Program in the amount of \$6,000,000 to fund the development of a project study report, preliminary engineering plans, and environmental planning documents to assess the Downtown San Mateo Grade Separations Project; commit \$2,000,000 in local matching funds; and authorize the City Manager to execute a funding agreement with the U.S. Department of Transportation to encumber any funds awarded.

BACKGROUND:

The Federal Rail Administration (FRA) issued a Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Department of Transportation's National Infrastructure Investments (i.e., the Railroad Crossing Elimination (RCE) Grant Program) under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Bipartisan Infrastructure Law) on July 6, 2022. The grants through this program are intended to fund highway-rail or pathway-rail grade crossing improvement projects that focus on improving the safety and mobility of people and goods. Grant applications are due on October 4, 2022.

Staff proposes to submit a grant application for the development of a needed planning-level analysis of the Downtown San Mateo Grade Separations Project consisting of a project study report, preliminary engineering plans, and environmental planning documents. This planning-level analysis of the Downtown San Mateo Grade Separations Project is estimated to cost \$8,000,000. The proposed study involves planning for grade separations at six (6) of the Caltrain crossings in the City's downtown (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 9th Avenues). As the 7th largest commuter rail line in the nation, Caltrain provides commuter rail services along a corridor from the City and County of San Francisco to the City of Gilroy. Forty at-grade street/railroad crossings (places where local streets cross the railroad tracks) exist along Caltrain's corridor. Twenty-eight of these crossings are in San Mateo County, with eight (8) in the City – the most of any other municipality.

While the rail line offers a critical transportation service to the Bay Area community, the at-grade crossings in the City pose serious safety risks and disconnect the downtown from the neighboring communities. The Federal Railroad Administration has recognized grade crossing incidents to be the second leading cause of rail-related deaths in America. As part of its Business Plan, Caltrain is planning to increase rail service along the corridor from 92 trains per day to 360 per day by 2040, further exacerbating the safety concerns at the City's existing crossings and resulting in significant gate downtimes of up to 45 minutes each hour. The daily shutdowns will increase vehicle idle times, potentially increase harmful air emissions, block pedestrian and bicycle traffic, and will negatively affect emergency response times.

The proposed grade separations will be critical to ensuring conditions in the City remain safe and equitable. This will increase safety exponentially, and it is expected to produce environmental sustainability and quality of life benefits. In addition, it will provide economic opportunities to the downtown area and will greatly improve mobility and community

connectivity, particularly for some of our most underserved community members living in the adjacent neighborhoods. As the financial sponsor, the City is responsible for obtaining the funding needed for Caltrain to design and construct the grade separations. The City understands that key considerations for RCE grant applications include the project's incorporation of environmentally sustainable practices and opportunities for increased local economic productivity. In its capacity as the sponsor of this effort, the City commits to supporting the use of environmentally sustainable practices as part of the future construction, as well as the use of fair labor practices. Currently, the City is successfully engaged in a Project Labor Agreement (PLA) for the construction of the Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade and Expansion Project. The PLA for this \$400 million construction project, managed by the City, has proven to stabilize wages and has increased workforce development and apprenticeship opportunities. The City commits to the supporting these measures as part of the grade separation effort that Caltrain would lead as well.

BUDGET IMPACT:

The estimated cost for the planning-level effort is \$8,000,000. The submittal for the RCE grant application for \$6,000,000 will require an estimated \$2,000,000 in local matching funds. If the application is selected, the sources for the matching funds would need to be determined (i.e., combination of Measure A, Measure S, and the General Fund), and staff would return to the Council for a formal appropriation of funds.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:

The authorization of a grant application to fund a project study report, preliminary engineering plans, and environmental documents and commitment by the City to completion of the project study report, preliminary engineering plans, and environmental documents with matching funds in an estimated amount of \$2,000,000 is not a project subject to CEQA because it is a government fiscal activity which does not involve any commitment to any specific project which may result in a potentially significant physical impact on the environment, and because it involves administrative activities that will not result in direct or indirect physical changes to the environment. (CEQA Guidelines Sections 15378(b)(4), (b)(5))

NOTICE PROVIDED

All meeting noticing requirements were met.

ATTACHMENTS

Att 1 – Proposed Resolution

Att 2 – Project Description

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