



CITY OF SAN MATEO

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Agenda Report

Agenda Number: 8

Section Name: {{section.name}}

Account Number: 10-4661-01

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TO: City Council
FROM: Drew Corbett, City Manager
PREPARED BY: Public Works Department
MEETING DATE: November 21, 2022

SUBJECT:

Downtown San Mateo Grade Separation Consolidated Railroad Infrastructure and Safety Improvements Program – Application

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt a Resolution to authorize an application for the Federal Railroad Administration Railroad (CRISI) 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 Reconnecting 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 Federal Railroad Administration.

BACKGROUND:

On September 2, 2022, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) issued a Notice of Funding Opportunity for the CRISI Grant Program, using funds made available by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Bipartisan Infrastructure Law) and the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022. The grants through this program are intended to fund a wide range of intercity passenger and freight rail improvement projects that focus on improving the safety and mobility of people and goods. Grant applications are due on December 1, 2022.

Staff proposes to submit a grant application for the development of a needed planning level analysis consisting of a project study report, preliminary engineering plans, and environmental planning documents estimated to cost \$8,000,000. The project involves planning for grade separations at six (6) of the Caltrain-owned crossings in the City's downtown (1st, 2nd, E. 3rd, E. 4th, E. 5th, and 9th Avenues). The corridor is used by Caltrain, as well as freight rail carriers, and is part of the first phase of California's High-Speed Rail development plans. 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 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 FRA has recognized grade crossing incidents to be the second leading cause of rail-related deaths in America. As part of its Business Plan, Caltrain has projected corridor service level increases 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 more than 30 minutes each hour. The daily shutdowns will increase vehicle idle times, potentially increase harmful air emissions, block pedestrian and bicycle traffic, and 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 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 CRISI grant applications include the project's incorporation of innovative and 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 innovative and environmentally sustainable practices as part of future construction, as well as the use of fair labor practices.

BUDGET IMPACT:

The estimated cost for the planning level effort is \$8,000,000. The CRISI grant application submission 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., a 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 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 a grant application is an administrative activity 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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