



CITY OF SALINAS COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

DATE: SEPTEMBER 14, 2021

DEPARTMENT: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

FROM: MEGAN HUNTER, DIRECTOR

BY: LISA BRINTON, PLANNING MANAGER

TITLE: AUTHORIZATION TO SUPPORT MONTEREY-SALINAS
TRANSIT (MST) FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION
PLANNING GRANT

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

A motion approving a Resolution supporting Monterey-Salinas Transit (MST) District's application to the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Areas of Persistent Poverty Grant Program by committing to fund \$20,000 of the required local match, if awarded.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council approve a Resolution committing a local match of \$20,000, for MST's FTA grant to fund the East Alisal Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and Salinas Transit Center Relocation Feasibility Study (Proposed Project), if awarded. The recommended funding source of the City's portion of the local match is CIP 9136 (EDE Implementation).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

MST requested that the City of Salinas provide a letter of support for its FTA Areas of Persistent Poverty Grant Program application and commit to contribute one third (\$20,000) of the required local match of \$60,000, if awarded. MST will be responsible for providing the remaining \$40,000 of the local match, which could include obtaining contributions from other partners.

City Council was to consider the requested letter of support and funding contribution at its August 24, 2021 meeting, which was continued to September 14, 2021. Since the application deadline was August 27th, the City provided a letter of support for MST to include in their application that did not commit to provide one-third of the required local match. MST requests that the City \$20,000 contribute of the local match requirement, if awarded.

The Proposed Project includes undertaking technical studies and feasibility analysis to evaluate establishing a bus rapid transit system (BRT) along the East Alisal Street Corridor and the relocation of the Salinas Transit Center (STC). The Proposed Project is consistent with and

supports the implementation of the Downtown Vibrancy Plan, East Alisal Street Corridor Plan and the Alisal Vibrancy Plan.

BACKGROUND:

This Caltrans Planning Grant is not the first grant coordination effort between the City and MST. Synchronization and intersection of transportation and land use planning is critical for successful transit-oriented development. The City and MST have partnered on planning grant applications before, including a February 2021 Caltrans application for the same project. City Council approved supporting the Caltrans application, which also would have required a \$20,000, however that grant was not awarded to MST. While unsuccessful, application feedback received has been incorporated into this FTA application which builds upon the previous efforts and advances recommendations for implementing a bus rapid transit corridor connecting the East Alisal community to Downtown and exploring opportunities to relocate the STC. MST believes the Study aligns with the new FTA Areas of Persistent Poverty Program established in 2021 to advance equity and support underserved communities through transit planning and to improve public health and environmental protections.

Downtown Vibrancy Plan

The 2015 Downtown Vibrancy Plan (DVP) identified the relocation of the STC to provide multimodal access to connect residents to work, education and training. The Transportation Agency of Monterey County (TAMC) is in the final stages of completing Stage 1 improvements to upgrade the ITC facility to provide better access, circulation, and loading berths for MST buses. Another objective of the DVP is to rezone city-owned surface parking lots for mixed-use development. The relocation of the STC would create an additional site for mixed-use development.

East Alisal Street Corridor Plan

The East Alisal Street Corridor Plan (ACP), which was unanimously accepted by the City Council in January 2019, outlines improvements to mobility, safety, and access for all modes of transportation, including walking, bicycling, transit, and motor vehicles, and addresses some of the underlying socioeconomic challenges faced by residents in the East Salinas community. The ACP also assists in aligning the City's transportation and development patterns with state and federal transportation goals for improving multimodal mobility, accessibility for all people, and fostering livable, healthy, and socially equitable communities. The ACP was funded by a Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Planning grant awarded to the City in 2016.

Alisal Vibrancy Plan

In November 2019, the City Council unanimously accepted the Alisal Vibrancy Plan (AVP) as a strategic planning document. The AVP is an action-oriented, comprehensive strategy for Salinas' Alisal (East Salinas) neighborhoods. The AVP's purpose is to communicate the collective vision, goals and desires of those who live, work, worship, and shop in the Alisal. Over 2,000 residents and community stakeholders participated in a community-led engagement process that resulted in more than 150 strategies. A community-identified emerging priority was the improvement of

transit services, specifically to work with MST to match bus schedules and routes to community needs.

DISCUSSION

Project Description

The proposed Study will assess the feasibility of establishing the first Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) along the East Alisal corridor in Salinas and potential locations for relocating the Salinas Transit Center (STC). The consultant-prepared Study would identify primary boarding locations and key sites for transit information technology to aid in the implementation of a BRT corridor along East Alisal Street with limited stops and frequent headways during peak hours. By relocating the STC along the proposed BRT, MST seeks to provide a safe and efficient way to connect disadvantaged neighborhoods in disadvantaged parts of the city to employment hubs and the Downtown. The proposed Study is consistent with regional planning documents, as well as the City of Salinas' DVP, ACP and AVP, and it supports their overarching objectives to provide safe, reliable and efficient mobility and accessibility.

The City of Salinas will be included as a project partner throughout the study process to ensure coordination of transportation, housing, and land use planning efforts, as well as to build upon the foundation of community engagement that has already been undertaken. The Proposed Project will serve to further the previous planning efforts and create a foundation for starting the preliminary design process. The timing of the Proposed Project would be ideal since it could occur in tandem with the City's General Plan Update and Climate Action Plan. Study recommendations could be incorporated into the Circulation Element for long-term alignment between the City and MST. BRT could also be a component of the greenhouse gas emission reduction strategies that will be in the Climate Action Plan.

Since most of the study area is a disadvantaged community, engagement will be a key component. The community stakeholders and residents will be asked to recommend bus frequencies, placement of bus stop locations, desired technology features and passenger amenities. Due to the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, best practices for community engagement activities are constantly changing, and the consultant will be responsible for accomplishing community engagement goals while balancing state and local COVID-19 restrictions and ensuring the safety of the public.

CEQA CONSIDERATION:

The proposed action is not a project as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (CEQA Guidelines section 15378). If the proposed scope or actions progress to a "project" level, further CEQA analysis will be required to address potential environmental impacts of the proposed project.

STRATEGIC PLAN INITIATIVE:

MST's proposed studies align with the City Council strategic plan initiative of Investment Strategies/Risk Management. If awarded, grant funds would be used to conduct technical and

feasibility studies that further implement actions identified in the DVP, ACP and AVP related to increasing the efficiency and frequency of bus service and strategically locating bus routes and future stations near future transit-oriented development.

DEPARTMENTAL COORDINATION:

Community Development staff took the lead in facilitating MST's request for support. The Community Development Department and Public Works Department have worked together to develop the community plans that the Proposed Project would help implement.

FISCAL AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT:

Total project cost for the proposed study is \$600,000. MST's request for FTA funding is \$540,000. If awarded, the City would contribute \$20,000 toward a total local match of \$60,000. MST will be responsible for providing the remaining \$40,000 of the local match, which could include obtaining contributions from other partners. The recommended funding source of the City's portion of the local match is CIP 9136 (EDE Implementation).

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Resolution approving local match commitment to MST for FTA Areas of Persistent Poverty grant, if awarded.
2. Signed Letter of Support