



DATE: March 3, 2015

CATEGORY: Items Initiated by Council

DEPT.: City Manager's Office

TITLE: **Federal Legislative Priorities and Issues**

RECOMMENDATION

Approve Federal-level legislative priorities and issues for the annual Council Washington, D.C., trip for the National League of Cities (NLC) Congressional City Conference (March 7 to March 11, 2015), as outlined in this report and consistent with the NLC and League of California Cities priorities and Council policy (Attachments 1, 2, and 3 to the Council report).

BACKGROUND

In prior years, the advocacy component of the NLC Conference was focused on appropriations requests for major infrastructure. However, a moratorium was placed on congressionally directed spending requests (earmarks) in 2012. Thus, in recent years, advocacy has generally been focused on NASA issues and the preservation of important local government programs such as Community Development Block Grant Funds (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME), or Edward Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) grants.

Historically, staff has prepared general background material for the Council and the NLC has also provided advocacy information in Washington, D.C. No formal action has been taken on a legislative platform in recent years. This year, at its February 10 meeting, Council requested refinement and review of an expanded Federal issues list for advocacy.

At this time, staff has made requests for meetings with Congresswoman Anna Eshoo (due to the District Work Period she is not available), NASA, the Department of Transportation (DOT), and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), as well as group meetings organized by the NLC and League of California Cities (LCC).

DISCUSSION

Federal Funding Opportunities:

- City staff routinely reviews grant eligibility with City administrative and policy implications and match commitments. The major areas of City interest include housing, transportation, public safety, firefighter assistance, and environmental sustainability.

Staff recommends Council focus on the following Federal issues when in Washington:

Housing:

- Mountain View is in the center of the Silicon Valley that is experiencing some of the highest housing costs in the nation. The cost of renting an apartment in the area is rising more quickly than anywhere else in the nation (according to a Trulia report).
 - In the fourth quarter of 2014, the average rent for a 1-bedroom apartment in Mountain View was \$2,387 per month and for a 2-bedroom apartment it was \$3,195 per month.
 - In comparison, a very low-income 2-person household can only afford \$1,020 per month for a 1-bedroom apartment and a 3-person household can only afford \$1,148 per month for a 2-bedroom apartment.
- This widening gap between market rents and affordable rents happens at a time when California cities have lost one of the main tools for providing affordable housing—redevelopment agencies.
- The gravity of the need is greatest in the regions for lower-income residents, with the Housing Authority of the County of Santa Clara having an average 8- to 10-year wait for Section 8-funded vouchers.
- Given the cost of living and goal to maintain the quantity, diversity, and affordability of housing in our community, it is a priority to maintain and ideally expand the two largest Federal block grants received by the City—CDBG and HOME. Over the past five years, CDBG funding from HUD has declined by 27 percent, while HOME funding has declined by 48 percent.

- For Fiscal Year (FY) 2015-16, Mountain View’s CDBG allocation is \$540,596 and the HOME allocation is \$243,015.
- The estimated allocation for FY 2016-17 for CDBG is \$540,000 and the HOME allocation is \$200,000.
- Mountain View has primarily used its CDBG and HOME funding to help develop and preserve subsidized housing for extremely low- and very low-income families. CDBG funds are also used to fund public service programs that provide basic needs services for the homeless, seniors, disabled households, and other special needs populations and for infrastructure and facility improvements in lower-income areas.
- CDBG and HOME funding is vital to sustaining affordable housing and services for Mountain View’s most vulnerable residents. The City also supports new and innovative programs for grants to support affordable housing in high-cost areas such as the Silicon Valley.

Transportation:

- Mountain View, like most of Silicon Valley and other metropolitan areas, suffers from tremendous traffic congestion and a lack of “last mile” connections for users of public transit.
- The City is continuing to leverage severely constrained local funding to obtain Federal grant funding to meet and address important transportation needs in our community. Examples of Federally funded projects in the City this fiscal year include:
 - Middlefield Road Median Island Project (\$652,000 of this \$883,000 project is funded with Federal Highway Safety Improvement Program funding).
 - Safe Routes to School Education Program (\$500,000 of this \$565,000 project is funded with Federal Vehicle Emissions Reductions Based at Schools (VERBS) funds).
 - Modifications to Castro Street (\$840,000 of this \$950,000 project is funded with Federal VERBS funds).
 - Resurfacing Segments of Rengstorff Avenue, Old Middlefield Way, and Charleston Road (\$1.16 million of this \$1.3 million project is funded with One

Bay Area Grant (OBAG) funds. OBAG is a roll up of three prior Federally funded grant programs—the Surface Transportation Program, Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality, and Transportation Alternatives programs).

- It is a priority for Mountain View to seek new, innovative, and transformative approaches to transportation with Federal funding to State, County, and regional transportation agencies that provide direct regional assistance for mobility-related programs, public transit, and rail. The DOT Federal Transit Administration competitive discretionary grants or other grants should also provide funds to advance the research and deployment Automated Transit Networks and Personal Rapid Transit that show potential promise for the future of transportation in our region.
- The Transportation Bill (“Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act—MAP-21”) was signed into law July 6, 2012, after several years of the prior bill, SAFETEA-LU continuing resolutions. The reauthorization bill expires next year. It is a priority that this funding be extended and expanded long term to deal with the nation’s crumbling infrastructure.

Environmental Sustainability:

- The City urges ongoing funding for Federal Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants (EECBG). While this program has only been fully funded once since it was adopted in 2007 (through ARRA stimulus funds), EECBG was a powerful resource for promoting sustainability in our community, one of the City Council’s top priorities. EECBG funds were used in the City for the launch of a new home energy audit program that was one of the most successful of its kind in the nation, LED retrofits of City streetlights, and installation of microturbines that generate electricity from landfill gas.

Public Safety:

- The City urges full funding for the public safety grants such as the JAG Program, the Community Oriented Policing Services program, and the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response.
- It is a priority to provide support for 911 service enhancements to improve the quality and reliability. The City is appreciative of the efforts of Congresswoman Eshoo advocating for the needs of public safety to the Federal Communications Commission.

- Since 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina in 2005, which exposed the vulnerability of regional safety communication in an emergency, the City has been working regionally to improve public safety communications. Through the Silicon Valley Regional Interoperability Authority, the City is seeking to build Countywide interoperable public safety communications. Additional Federal funding for these coordinated efforts would expedite the ability for first responders to communicate and operate more effectively during an emergency situation.

Online Sales:

- The U.S. tax structure is based on a manufacturing economy that is outdated for our service economy. California is leading on the issue with laws in place that close the sales tax loophole but, at the Federal level, “e-fairness legislation” or the “Marketplace Fairness Act” has stalled. Nationwide action would provide equity between online and brick-and-mortar businesses.

NASA Ames, Hangar One, and Moffett Federal Airfield:

- NASA Ames and its programs are vitally important to the City and region and continued strong local leadership and Federal funding for its programs are essential. The City appreciates the good communication and working relationship with NASA Ames and all its officials and other Moffett Federal Airfield tenants.
- The City supports the management of Moffett Federal Airfield in accordance with existing operations, the rehabilitation of Hangar One, and cleanup of the environmental contamination at Moffett Field. The City will continue to work NASA and the lessee Planetary Ventures, LLC.
- The City understands that the lease provides for appropriate uses of Federal property. The City seeks clarification or changes in the law to allow public parking on Federal land. This is for consideration of parking near the Ellis Street Light Rail Station, and potential considerations for use by Levi’s Stadium attendees, such as the Super Bowl in 2016.
- The City also urges the Federal government to reuse or surplus some or all of U.S. Army’s 17-acre Shenandoah Housing area at the northwest corner of Moffett Boulevard and Middlefield Road. The City is interested in using the open space in the short term for temporary ball fields and desperately needed housing in the long term.

Other Federal Issues:

- On February 23, the Mayor hosted an informal “Mountain View Business Roundtable” lunch as part of the commitment to understanding the needs of businesses of all types and sizes. The common areas of interest for local business leaders and the City included seeking Federal support to improve transportation and housing.
- Other issues noted by the businesses that have associated impacts for the economic vitality of the City included seeking: Federal action to prevent frivolous ADA lawsuits; patent reforms; immigration reform – particularly related to H-1B visas; improving the Small Business Administration procedures; and expressed concerns about the impact of Affordable Care Act and rising insurance costs for small businesses.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with the adoption of these Federal advocacy priorities and issues.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Do not approve these Federal-level priorities and issues.
2. Modify the Federal-level priorities and issues.
3. Provide other direction on Federal-level priorities and issues.

PUBLIC NOTICING – Agenda posting.

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KST/3/CAM
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- Attachments:
1. NLC Federal Priorities – 2015
 2. LCC Federal Priorities – 2015
 3. Positions on Ballot Measures and Legislative Advocacy – Council Policy A-16