



DATE: July 8, 2014

CATEGORY: Consent

DEPT.: Public Works

TITLE: **Project 14-46, Caltrain Modernization Program – Environmental Review, Amend Title and Scope**

RECOMMENDATION

Amend the title and scope of Project 14-46, Caltrain Modernization Program – Environmental Review, to Project 14-46, Regional Transportation Projects – Environmental Review, to allow project funding to be used for technical assistance and staff coordination expenses for environmental review processes associated with other regional transportation projects.

BACKGROUND

Project 14-46, Caltrain Modernization Program – Environmental Review, funds technical assistance (e.g., engineering and urban design) and staff coordination supporting the City’s participation in the environmental review process for Caltrain’s Peninsula Corridor Electrification Project (PCEP). The project is funded with \$150,000 from the Construction/Conveyance Tax (C/C Tax) Fund. Project expenses to date (for technical assistance in the preparation of City comments to the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the PCEP) total approximately \$11,000.

City staff recently received an update from Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) staff regarding the environmental review it is conducting for the El Camino Real Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project. The BRT project proposes to upgrade the VTA’s existing 522 Rapid Bus service on El Camino Real between downtown San Jose and Palo Alto. Seven project alternatives are being studied, including a No-Build alternative, having buses and other vehicles travel together along the entire corridor in a mixed-flow configuration, and different lengths of dedicated bus lanes. The VTA plans to release the DEIR for the El Camino Real BRT project sometime in September for a 45-day public review and comment period. Staff plans to review the DEIR and present draft comments for Council’s consideration in late October.

ANALYSIS

The Mountain View City Council and community have raised concerns about the traffic impacts of the BRT project, particularly those associated with dedicating lanes on El Camino Real exclusively to buses. The City asked the VTA to thoroughly study the project's traffic impacts, including those to El Camino Real as well as to local streets, as the project would likely divert traffic to other routes. At a meeting on June 26, 2014, VTA staff reviewed at a very high level the preliminary results of the traffic analysis. Based on this preliminary review, it appears that the VTA has performed an extensive analysis, including level of service (LOS) at intersections, traffic diversion, bicycle and pedestrian impacts, and parking displacement. Because of the complexity of the project and the important role that traffic impacts will play in Council's consideration of the BRT project, staff recommends that the City perform a peer review of the VTA's traffic analysis before preparing comments on the DEIR.

The recommended action would allow the funds in Project 14-46 to be used for this purpose in addition to review of the Caltrain PCEP. Given the number of alternatives being analyzed and the highly complex and technical nature of the traffic and transportation analyses, staff recommends retaining a traffic engineering firm to thoroughly review the VTA's analysis and provide well-informed comments regarding the methodology used by the VTA and the conclusions it has reached regarding potential impacts.

Additional funding for Project 14-46 is not recommended at this time as ample funding exists for the recommended review. If additional funding is needed to complete the review of the Caltrain PCEP environmental documents, staff will return to Council with a funding recommendation at that time.

FISCAL IMPACT

No additional funding is requested at this time. Staff will monitor expenses charged to this project and, if necessary because of its expanded scope, will return to the Council if additional funding is required.

ALTERNATIVES

Do not amend the title and scope of Project 14-46 to allow project funding to be used for environmental review processes associated with other regional transportation projects.

PUBLIC NOTICING – Agenda posting.

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LF/TS/7/CAM
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