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Title: ***RESOLUTION - Authorizing Submission of a Grant Application to the United States Economic Development Administration (EDA) American Rescue Plan Act Build Back Better Regional Challenge for the Opportunity Walkway; and Authorizing the Execution of Grant Application and Grant Agreement Documents by the Public Works Director or Designee (Council District 3) (Subject to Mayor's Veto).

Sponsors: Public Works Department

Indexes:

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Attachments: 1. 22-324 Resolution

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
3/10/2022	1	City Council	ADOPTED	Pass

REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

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SUBJECT

***RESOLUTION - Authorizing Submission of a Grant Application to the United States Economic Development Administration (EDA) American Rescue Plan Act Build Back Better Regional Challenge for the Opportunity Walkway; and Authorizing the Execution of Grant Application and Grant Agreement Documents by the Public Works Director or Designee (Council District 3) (Subject to Mayor's Veto).

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the City Council adopt a resolution authorizing the submission of a grant application for the Opportunity Walkway Project from the EDA Build Back Better Regional Challenge; and authorize the execution of all grant application and grant agreement documents by the Public Works Director or designee.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Staff is requesting authorization to submit an application to the Build Back Better Regional Challenge for the proposed Opportunity Walkway Project. The Build Back Better Regional Challenge is part of EDA's American Rescue Plan Act program that aims to boost economic recovery from the pandemic and rebuild American communities. The City will serve as the project lead for one component application that is part of the larger regional project, Fresno-Merced Future of Food Innovation (F3) Initiative, being coordinated by the Central Valley Community Foundation. The proposed Opportunity Walkway Project is a Class I pedestrian trail located on Tulare Street from California Avenue to F Street. This project would create a connection between Southwest Fresno and Downtown, improving the access for mobile food vendors and residents with limited transportation options.

BACKGROUND

The goal of the Build Back Better Regional Challenge is to assist communities and regions impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. It seeks to transform regional economies through groups of complementary projects to help regions recover from the pandemic and increase resilience. The Build Back Better Regional Challenge is a two-phase competition to (1) help regions develop transformational economic development strategies, and (2) fund the implementation of those strategies that will create and grow regional growth clusters. A Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) was published on July 22, 2021. Phase 1 applications were due on October 19, 2021, and Phase 2 applications are due on March 15, 2022. Under this NOFO, \$1 billion of funding is available. The Phase 1 application process awarded \$500,000 to 60 regional coalitions for technical assistance with the preparation of more detailed Phase 2 applications for their transformational projects. Phase 2 awards will range from \$25 million to \$75 million, and up to \$100 million, for 20 to 30 finalist regional coalitions. These funds will support implementation of full project cluster applications.

The Build Back Better Regional Challenge funds a variety of construction and non-construction projects, including planning, infrastructure development, innovation and entrepreneurship, and workforce training. EDA expects to fund no more than 80% of each component project with Federal funds. Therefore, non-Federal matching funds must total 20% of each of the component application.

The Central Valley Community Foundation served as the lead institution for the Build Back Better Regional Challenge Phase 1 application. Their concept proposal, the Fresno-Merced Future of Food Innovation (F3) Initiative, was selected as 1 of 60 finalists eligible to submit Phase 2 applications. The F3 Initiative proposes the development of a climate-smart food and agriculture technology engineering cluster. There are five inter-related component projects that would develop advanced, sustainable food production and food manufacturing: Innovation Center for Research and Entrepreneurship in Ag Food Technology & Engineering (iCREATE); Agrifood Technology & Engineering Collaborative (Ag TEC); "Hecho en Fresno" Downtown Hub and Southwest Fresno Satellite; and "Opportunity Walkway:" Connecting Neighborhoods to the Regional Economy. Phase 2 applications will be submitted by respective project leads.

The Opportunity Walkway Project would create a Class I pedestrian trail along Tulare Street from California Avenue to F Street, connecting Southwest Fresno to Downtown and the High-Speed Rail station, iCREATE, and Hecho en Fresno headquarters. Opportunity Walkway will increase trail capacity in the district by 65% and reduce vehicle miles traveled by 10,517 miles annually. The goal of this connectivity project is to improve access to the region's Downtown economic center.

Phase 2 component project applications are due on March 15, 2022. Projects selected for funding

will receive award notification from EDA no later than September 2022. Projects must be completed and all-American Rescue Plan Act Funds must be expended by September 30, 2027.

The City Attorney's Office has reviewed and approved the resolution as to form.

ENVIRONMENTAL FINDINGS

A resolution applying for grant funding is not a project for the purposes of the California Environmental Quality Act.

LOCAL PREFERENCE

Local preference is not applicable because this resolution does not include a bid or award of a construction or services contract.

FISCAL IMPACT

This resolution will have no immediate impact on the General Fund. Should the grants be awarded, local matching funds will be identified through future fiscal year capital budgets.

Attachment:
Resolution