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Title: ***RESOLUTION - Authorizing the City Manager or Designee to Execute a Grant Agreement with the California Department of Transportation for the City of Fresno's Blackstone Avenue Corridor Smart Mobility Project.
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REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

August 18, 2016

FROM: Jennifer Clark, Director
Director of Development and Resources Management Department

SUBJECT

***RESOLUTION - Authorizing the City Manager or Designee to Execute a Grant Agreement with the California Department of Transportation for the City of Fresno's Blackstone Avenue Corridor Smart Mobility Project.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that City Council authorize acceptance of the grant award in the amount of \$279,635 from the California Department of Transportation (CALTRANS) Sustainable Communities grant program and authorize the Director of DARM to enter into a contract with CALTRANS.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

City Council approval is being sought to accept a Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant award of \$279,635 from the California Department of Transportation (CALTRANS). The Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant program aims to identify and address mobility deficiencies in the

multimodal transportation system, encourage stakeholder collaboration, involve active public engagement, integrate Smart Mobility 2010 concepts, and ultimately result in programmed system improvements.

Under this grant, the City of Fresno will partner with the Local Government Commission (LGC) and Fresno Metro Ministries (Metro). Metro is included as a sub-applicant on the grant proposal to provide leadership for community outreach, engagement, and preparation of community constituents, to effectively participate in design workshops that it will help facilitate along with LGC and a consultant.

BACKGROUND

The Fresno 2035 General Plan and recently adopted citywide development code (adopted November 2015) support intensification of the corridor with mixed-use, transit-oriented activity centers. Funding has been acquired to design and implement the first phase of Bus Rapid Transit operations projected to begin in Fall of 2017. Changes to the corridor are needed to create walkable, transit-friendly environments to make these initiatives successful.

The proposed project will identify changes to the corridor to accommodate the safety and needs of non-motorized as well as motorized users. The focus will be the 3-mile southern segment of the 7.5-mile corridor from Dakota Avenue to Divisadero Street with average daily traffic volumes between 21,000 and 26,000 (spring 2015 traffic counts). This segment includes the Manchester Shopping Center and transit station, (the mall is about to undergo large-scale renovation), Fresno City College (approximately 24,000 students), Susan B. Anthony Elementary School (466 students), several proposed affordable housing and mixed-use development projects, nearly 1,000 small and mid-sized businesses, and areas of vacant sites and buildings in need of renovation.

This project will reach out to community residents, small businesses, property owners and other stakeholders, and engage them in developing a collaborative vision and plan for implementing immediate improvements and future changes. It will study alternatives and develop detailed designs for pedestrian, bicycle and transit access and facilities along the corridor to support a safe, inviting and comprehensive non-motorized network. It will also explore roadway cross-section concepts, intersection designs and parking strategies to facilitate smooth and efficient traffic flow, speed moderation, and safe and convenient crossings for non-motorists of all ages and abilities. Recommendations regarding adjacent land uses and community design along the corridor will also emerge from the workshops to coordinate future development that supports walking, bicycling and transit. The approach will be consistent with Caltrans' Complete Streets DD 64-R1 policy and Smart Mobility Framework. It will also lead to changes to reduce vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions, helping to advance the region's SB 375 Sustainable Communities Strategy.

DARM is the proposal applicant and will be the grant recipient. The City will partner with Metro and the LGC. Both entities are 501(c) 3 non-profit organizations.

The City, with support from the project partners, will conduct a competitive RFP process to select a highly qualified consultant team to assess study area existing physical conditions, participate in the community engagement process, develop and evaluate design alternatives and produce the final plan document. Consultants selected will have expertise in transportation planning, traffic engineering, designing for transit, pedestrians, and cyclists, urban design, and public infrastructure and private development finance.

The roles and responsibilities of the City and sub-applicants are detailed below.

City of Fresno. DARM is the lead applicant for the project. The City will be the grant recipient, execute the Restricted Grant Agreement with Caltrans, and execute agreements with the sub-applicants. The City, assisted by the partners, will conduct a competitive bid process to select a qualified consultant team with multimodal transportation planning, traffic engineering, urban design, and public infrastructure cost analysis and financing expertise. The City will provide staffing support to meet the 11.47 percent local match. Staff will coordinate with project partners and agencies, participate in community workshops, attend meetings, provide data and policy documents, review consultant products, and direct revisions. City staff will prepare quarterly invoices and reports to Caltrans with support from the sub-applicant. Staff will also coordinate with partners to help publicize the project and ensure public participation in all aspects of the community planning process.

Metro and LGC will be grant sub-recipients with the joint responsibility for all community outreach and engagement, with special emphasis on ensuring effective participation of disadvantaged and environmental justice community members at community meetings and design workshops. Metro is a 45-year old Fresno based community-benefit organization, and functions as the staff and support agency for the Better Blackstone Association. LGC is a 35-year old highly regarded Sacramento based non-profit with extensive experience in coordinating and facilitating public participatory planning processes, land use and transportation planning and design. Both Metro and LGC have multi-cultural and multi-lingual staff and long-term experience with effectively engaging disadvantaged and environmental justice community members in public planning processes.

Consultant The selected firm (or team of consultants) will analyze and document corridor segments and Activity Center area baseline conditions, will actively engage in the public process of the Community Design Events, develop design concepts and recommendations that respond to input from the community and implementing and overseeing agencies, and prepare the plan document.

ENVIRONMENTAL FINDINGS

The acceptance of these grant dollars is not defined as a project under the California Environmental Quality Act and does not require an environmental finding.

LOCAL PREFERENCE

Local preference is not applicable because this is not a contract for goods, services, or public work of improvement.

FISCAL IMPACT

The General Fund will not be impacted. The City will provide staffing support to meet the 11.47 percent local match.

Attachment:
Resolution