

**City of Culver City, California
Agenda Item Report**

Meeting Date: <u> 11/09/09 </u>		Item Number: C-6
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM: Adoption of Resolutions Authorizing the City Manager to Submit Grant Applications through the State Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program for the Ballona Creek Bikeway Project (P-900) and the West Washington Boulevard Tree Planting Project		
Contact Person/Dept.: Helen Kerstein/PW; John Rivera/PW	Phone Number: (310) 253-5618; (310) 253-5616	
Fiscal Impact: Yes ☒ No ☐	General Fund: Yes ☐ No ☒	
Public Hearing: ☐	Action Item: ☐	Attachments: ☒
Commission Action Required: Yes ☐ No ☒		Date: _____
Public Notification: (E-Mail) Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (11/04/09); (E-Mail) Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission (11/04/09); (E-Mail) Ballona Creek Renaissance (11/04/09) Meetings and Agendas – City Council (11/04/09)		
Department Approval: Charles D. Herbertson (10/30/09)	City Attorney Approval: Carol Schwab (by H. Baker) (11/03/09)	
Chief Financial Officer Approval: Jeff Muir (by N. Kimball) (11/04/09)	City Manager Approval: Mark Scott (11/04/09)	

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Council adopt resolutions authorizing the City Manager to submit grant applications for the Ballona Creek Bikeway Project (P-900) and the West Washington Boulevard Tree Planting Project through the State's Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program (EEMP).

BACKGROUND:

Established by the California State Legislature in 1989, the EEMP provides up to \$10 million per year in grants to projects that mitigate the environmental impacts of new or altered transportation facilities. These grants, which are limited to up to \$350,000 a piece, are awarded in three categories:

- 1) Highway landscaping and urban forestry projects
- 2) Resource lands projects
- 3) Roadside recreation projects

Each grant application must identify both a transportation facility that is in need of mitigation of an environmental impact and a proposed project that is directly or indirectly related to that transportation facility. The proposed project must mitigate the related transportation facility's environmental impact above and beyond any original project mitigation measures.

City of Culver City, California
Agenda Item Report

This year, the California State Legislature has allocated the full \$10 million towards the EEMP program. Staff has identified the widening of Interstate 405 as a local transportation project that has environmental impacts, most notably increased carbon emissions due to increased traffic. Staff has also identified two projects that will help mitigate those impacts, the Ballona Creek Bikeway Project (P-900) (Bikeway Project) and the West Washington Boulevard Tree Planting Project (Planting Project), and recommends that the City Council authorize submission of applications for the funding of those projects.

DISCUSSION:

Interstate 405 (the 405) is one of the most heavily used and overburdened freeways in the state. The 405 widening project, which includes adding a high occupancy vehicle lane (HOV lane) and making other associated changes, will help the freeway handle the tremendous traffic flows that it carries and allow it to better accommodate traffic growth in the future.

While the 405 widening project has significant transportation benefits, it also has and will continue to create negative environmental impacts on the community. The five years of construction to date have contributed emissions of carbon and particulates into the air from heavy equipment. Furthermore, once the widened freeway is fully operational, it will undoubtedly carry more vehicles and generate additional emissions.

Staff recommends that the City Council authorize submission of an EEMP grant applications for two projects, the Bikeway Project and the Planting Project, to help mitigate these adverse effects. These projects fall primarily under the roadside recreation and highway landscaping and urban forestry project categories, respectively.

The Bikeway Project

The Bikeway Project involves improving portions of the Ballona Creek Bikeway, between Overland Avenue and the Pedestrian bridge located approximately 1000 feet west of Overland Avenue in order to restore natural habitat, enhance the Creek and bike path environment, and create educational opportunities, which would promote alternative modes of transportation and contribute to carbon sequestration and pollutant reductions. The concept for the Bikeway Project has been in existence for roughly half a dozen years but has not come to fruition because of limited financial resources.

The Bikeway Project was originally included as a part of the 2003/2004 Ballona Creek Pedestrian Bridge Replacement project, but was dropped because other elements of the Bridge Replacement proved to be more expensive than originally anticipated. Staff continued to seek funding for the Bikeway Project and, in 2007,

City of Culver City, California
Agenda Item Report

received a Proposition 50 grant for \$60,000 for design and planning. The design for the Bikeway Project was completed in fall 2007, but work did not begin due to a lack of funding for construction.

In early 2009, President Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), which included funding for “shovel-ready” infrastructure projects. Through ARRA, the City applied for and was granted \$476,174 in funding for the Bikeway Project. This grant has been critical to making it possible for the City to move forward with the project. However, it covers only roughly 60 percent of the Bikeway Project cost, so a substantial portion must be funded through other sources. These other sources could include local funds or ARRA funds that were granted to the City for other projects that cost less than originally anticipated.

Staff recommends applying for the EEMP grant to meet a significant portion (if not all) of the locally funded cost of this project in order to free up local monies for other projects. While the Bikeway Project was conceived of independently of the Interstate 405 widening, the Bikeway Project will help mitigate the transportation project’s impact by enhancing a roadside recreational resource that will reduce emissions by making bike riding and other non-vehicle-based means of transportation more attractive. Furthermore, it will provide tree plantings that will help sequester the carbon generated by the additional cars on the nearby freeway.

The Planting Project

The City has long recognized a need to encourage coherent and sustainable tree plantings in the public right-of-way. In 2002, the City amended the Street Tree Master Plan which designates tree species for streets throughout the City in order to help address this need. The City is also in the process of planning for street tree plantings on portions of Sepulveda Boulevard and Washington Boulevard as part of other projects to improve arterial streetscapes.

The Planting Project along West Washington Boulevard will help advance this process. It will fill the current gaps in tree plantings along Washington Boulevard by introducing appropriate drought-tolerant and low-maintenance canopy (shade) tree species in order to help make one of the City’s major arterials more appealing. Furthermore, it will help mitigate the carbon emissions from the nearby 405 freeway. Because the Street Tree Master Plan currently designates the Mexican Fan Palm as the tree along Washington Boulevard, staff anticipates coming in the future to the Parks, Recreation, and Community Services Commission and the City Council to ask for a change in the Street Tree Master Plan to accommodate species of shade tree that are more environmentally-sustainable prior to completing any tree plantings.

FISCAL ANALYSIS:

City of Culver City, California
Agenda Item Report

There is no fiscal impact caused by submittal of the grant applications. If the EEMP grants are received, staff resources will be dedicated to manage the projects, but no local funds will be required to construct the Projects.

The City has been granted \$476,174 in ARRA funds for the Bikeway Project, but the project is estimated to cost \$816,174. Therefore, approximately \$340,000 in local funds would be needed to complete the project.

If an EEMP grant is secured for this project, the \$340,000 “unfunded” portion would be met with EEMP funds rather than local funding sources (examples of potential local funds include General Fund Reserve, New Development Impact Fund, Gas Tax Fund, etc.). Additionally, ARRA funds that were secured by the City for other projects but may not fully expended (i.e. Culver Blvd and Washington Blvd street projects), may be transferrable to the Bikeway Project if needed. In any case, the receipt of an EEMP grant will allow the City to complete the project without using any local funds and potentially allow any leftover ARRA funds for use elsewhere in the City.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Resolution - Ballona Creek Bikeway Project (P-900) (Bikeway Project)
2. Resolution - West Washington Boulevard Tree Planting Project (Planting Project)

MOTION:

That the City Council:

Adopt Resolutions authorizing the City Manager to submit grant applications through the Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation Program for the Ballona Creek Bikeway Project and the West Washington Boulevard Tree Planting Project.