



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

R-16-105
Meeting 16-20
August 24, 2016

AGENDA ITEM 3

AGENDA ITEM

Caltrans Cooperative Agreement for Highway 17 Wildlife Passage and Bay Area Ridge Trail Crossing Project

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

Authorize the General Manager to enter into a Cooperative Agreement with Caltrans in a not-to-exceed amount of \$165,000 to fund Caltrans' oversight of the development of a Project Initiation Document for the Highway 17 Wildlife Passage and Bay Area Ridge Trail Crossing Project.

SUMMARY

The Highway 17 Wildlife Passage and Bay Area Ridge Trail Crossing Project (Project) was identified as a high priority during development of the District's 2014 Vision Plan and funding for this project was included in the Measure AA Ordinance Expenditure Plan. In February of 2016, the District began a feasibility study for the Project to identify Preliminary Alternatives. A Preliminary Alternatives Report (Report) was completed in July 2016. The Report includes conceptual designs and rough order of magnitude costs for four project alternatives. Since January of 2015, District staff has met with Caltrans to discuss the overall project, review the study area, share information and to discuss roles and define the relationship for the project going forward. Caltrans has identified that entering into a Cooperative Agreement is warranted at this time to advance the Project within their agency.

DISCUSSION

Both components of the Project (a designated wildlife crossing and a designated Bay Area Ridge Trail crossing) are proposed within the Right of Way of State Highway 17, requiring Caltrans oversight and approval. Preparing a Project Initiation Document (PID) is the first step in the Caltrans project review process. The District has requested that a PID document be developed for the project and has agreed to develop and fund the PID's costs and fees, including costs to reimburse Caltrans. Payment of these costs by the project proponent is standard and required for a non-Caltrans initiated project. During the PID phase, Caltrans will oversee the development of a document that describes all aspects of the project and facilitates review of the Preliminary Alternatives to assist the District in selecting the Preferred Alternative(s). Once the PID phase is complete, preferred alternatives for the crossing structures will be selected and advanced to the next phases of the Caltrans project development process which entails preparation of more detailed design, engineering studies, and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and if required, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review.

FISCAL IMPACT

The Caltrans Cooperative Agreement for oversight of a consultant-prepared PID will cost a not-to-exceed amount of \$165,000. This amount will be paid out of the FY2016-17 Natural Resources Department Budget allocation of \$270,300 for the Highway 17 Wildlife Passage and Bay Area Ridge Trail Crossing Project. The PID development phase is the only phase which requires payment to Caltrans for oversight of a locally funded project.

The remaining budgeted amount of \$105,300 will be used to fund a separate consultant contract to prepare the PID document. Current estimates for consultant preparation of the PID exceed this amount, but staff will be working to reduce these consultant costs in conjunction with Caltrans as one of the first tasks under an executed Cooperative Agreement. Final consultant costs will be brought to the Board either as an amendment to the existing consultant contract or authorization of a new contract to complete this work.

Measure AA

This project will be eligible for MAA reimbursement. Portfolio 20--*South Bay Foothills: Wildlife Passage and Ridge Trail Improvements* as identified in the Measure AA Ordinance Expenditure Plan, which allocated \$13,966,000 to the portfolio. The 5-year Measure AA Project List was approved by the Board on October 29, 2014 which included the Highway 17 Wildlife Passage as a priority. This project is identified as *MAA 20-1 Wildlife Passage Improvements: Highway 17* and *MAA 20-2 Bay Area Ridge Trail Crossing: Highway 17* in the Action Plan.

BOARD COMMITTEE REVIEW

The Project Alternatives were presented to the full Board on July 27, 2016. A Planning and Natural Resources Committee Meeting and Public Open House was held on August 2, 2016. The Open House was an opportunity for Committee members and the public to learn more about the Project, the Preliminary Alternatives Report, and to ask staff and the consultants questions to help them better understand the project. The Project will return to the Committee during the PID phase, currently scheduled for mid to late FY2016-17, for a full discussion of the alternatives and to decide what recommendations to forward to the full Board.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

Entering into Cooperative Agreement is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as executing the terms of the agreement does not commit either agency to implement a project, but only to study project alternatives and to ultimately select preferred alternatives. Whatever options are recommended as result of this Agreement will be subject to CEQA as the project progresses into the next phase, which will be covered under a separate agreement with Caltrans.

NEXT STEPS

Upon execution of the Cooperative Agreement, staff will meet with Caltrans and begin the process to complete the PID. One of the first steps will be to meet with the current consultant team to refine their scope and fees required to complete the Caltrans PID. Once the consultant scope and costs are refined by the project team, staff anticipates returning to the Board to either amend the existing consultant contract or authorize a new contract to complete this work if costs cannot be contained with the existing consultant. Upon completion of the PID, preferred alternatives for the two crossing structures will be selected and advanced to the next phases of the Caltrans project development process which entails preparation of more detailed design, engineering studies, and environmental review.

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