



City Council Staff Report

From: City Manager

Report Type: CONSENT CALENDAR

Lead Department: Transportation

Meeting Date: June 19, 2023

Report #:2305-1525

TITLE

Approve and Authorize the City Manager to Execute a Grant Agreement with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to Develop the Palo Alto Safe Streets for All (SS4A) Action Plan by Receiving \$160,000 in Federal Funds and Requiring \$40,000 in City Matching Funds over Two Years and Approve a FY 2024 Budget Amendment in the Capital Improvement Fund; CEQA status – not a project.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that Council:

1. Approve and authorize the City Manager, or their designee to execute a Funding Agreement (attached) with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for the development of the City's Safe Streets for All Streets for All action plan. The Agreement will provide up to \$160,000 in funding, and the City will be required to match up to \$40,000 (or 20% of the actual project cost) over two years; and
2. Amend the Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Appropriation for the Capital Improvement Fund (requires a 2/3 vote) by:
 - a. Increasing the Transportation and Parking Improvements project (PL-12000) revenue estimate for grants by \$160,000; and
 - b. Increasing the Transportation and Parking Improvements project (PL-12000) contracts appropriation by \$160,000.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This item approves and authorizes the City Manager to execute a grant agreement (Attachment A) to receive \$160,000 in funding from the Federal Highway Administration to develop a Safe Streets for All (SS4A) Action Plan for Palo Alto. The City is responsible for a 20% matching portion of the total project cost (\$40,000) that will be funded from the Transportation and

Parking Improvements capital project (PL-12000). Jurisdictions with SS4A Action Plans are eligible to apply for SS4A Implementation Grants in subsequent funding cycles distributing \$1 billion per year. The SS4A Action Plan will address safety for all road users in Palo Alto, particularly vulnerable road users, and will use the Safe Systems Approach endorsed by Federal Highway Administration.

BACKGROUND

The [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#)¹ (BIL) established the new Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) discretionary program with \$5 billion in appropriated funds over 5 years. The SS4A program funds regional, local, and Tribal initiatives through grants to prevent roadway deaths and serious injuries. The SS4A program supports the U.S. Department of Transportation's [National Roadway Safety Strategy](#)² and the goal of zero roadway deaths.

The SS4A program provides funding for two types of grants:

- **Planning and Demonstration Grants** provide Federal funds to develop, complete, or supplement a comprehensive safety action plan. Having an Action Plan in place is the foundation of the SS4A grant program. The goal of an Action Plan is to develop a holistic, well-defined strategy to prevent roadway fatalities and serious injuries in a locality, Tribe, or region.
- **Implementation Grants** provide Federal funds to implement projects and strategies identified in an Action Plan to address a roadway safety problem. Projects and strategies may be infrastructure, behavioral, and/or operational activities. Applicants must have a qualifying Action Plan that meets the eligibility requirements to apply for Implementation Grants.

The Federal Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) was released in May 2022, making available \$1 billion for distribution. The City applied for a grant on September 15, 2022, to develop a Safety Action Plan for Palo Alto and was notified of grant award on January 31, 2023. The draft grant agreement was received from the Federal Highway Administration on May 22, 2023. The application was in alignment with FHWA's Safe Systems Approach to road safety and Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan Policy T-6.2 to reduce fatal and severe injuries on local roadways to zero.

ANALYSIS

This grant-funded project enables the City to develop the Safe Streets for All Action Plan needed to apply for subsequent SS4A Implementation grants. Other Federal or State funding sources requiring a comprehensive road safety plan will accept the SS4A Action Plan as well, such as the State's Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP). In addition, the Safety Action Plan could be used as the basis of a future Vision Zero program included in the Sustainability

¹<https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/3684/text#:~:text=SEC.%2024112.%20%3C%3E%20%20SAFE,135%20STAT.%20818%5D%5D>

² <https://www.transportation.gov/NRSS>

and Climate Action Plan (S/CAP), because improving safety for vulnerable road users is key to reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and growing green travel mode shares.

The Valley Transportation Authority compiled a [Local Road Safety Plan \(LRSP\) for Palo Alto and other Santa Clara County cities without LRSPs](#)³ in September 2022. The SS4A grant project will utilize this plan as a basis and will add the following Federally-required elements to create a qualified Safety Action Plan:

- A target date for achieving a significant reduction of roadway fatalities and serious injuries
- Engagement and collaboration with relevant stakeholders
- Equity considerations
- Policy and process changes to improve safety
- Strategy and Project Selections
- Measurement and reporting of progress over time

A list of all the required Action Plan components can be found [here](#).⁴

In addition to supporting the Comprehensive Plan Policy to reduce roadway deaths and severe injuries, this project is in alignment with the following Comprehensive Plan directives:

- Goal T-6: Provide a safe environment for motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists on Palo Alto streets.
- Policy T-1.3: Reduce GHG and pollutant emissions associated with transportation by reducing VMT and per-mile emissions through increasing transit options, supporting biking and walking, and the use of zero-emission vehicle technologies to meet City and State goals for GHG reductions by 2030.
- Policy T-6.1: Continue to make safety the first priority of citywide transportation planning. Prioritize pedestrian, bicycle and automobile safety over motor vehicle level of service at intersections and motor vehicle parking.
- Policy T-6.6: Use engineering, enforcement and educational tools to improve safety for all users on City roadways.
- Program T6.6.1: Periodically evaluate safety on roadways and at intersections and enhance conditions through the use of signal technology and physical changes. Consider the construction of traffic circles for improved intersection safety.
- Policy T-6.7: Use appropriate technology to monitor and improve circulation safety throughout the City.
- Program T6.7.1: Evaluate the performance of safety improvements and identify methods to encourage alternative transportation modes.

³ https://d250c782-7e5b-4e38-b841-e8286bb13bc5.filesusr.com/ugd/a24bce_064ca2d5319a4334a7344f512239f0d6.pdf

⁴ https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2022-06/SS4A_Action_Plan_Components.pdf

Upon execution of the grant agreement (Attachment A), the City will prepare and publish a Request for Proposal (RFP) document in Fall 2023 to hire a consultant to prepare the Safety Action Plan. Staff will return to the Council in Winter 2024 for approval of the vendor contract. Staff target initiation of the planning project by February 2024 or earlier. The City expects to complete the project within 24 months from grant agreement execution, though SS4A funds must be spent within five years of grant execution. Once the Safety Action Plan is substantially complete or in draft form, the City can begin to apply for SS4A Implementation grants. An adopted Safety Action Plan is required to receive an Implementation grant.

FISCAL/RESOURCE IMPACT

Approval for the funding agreement with FHWA requires a budget amendment to increase the Fiscal Year 2024 appropriation for the Transportation and Parking Improvements project (PL-12000) by \$160,000 and recognition of an increase to the revenue estimate for grants by \$160,000. The remaining expense of \$40,000, the City's 20% matching contribution, will be covered by funding recommended in the FY 2024 Transportation and Parking Improvements capital project (PL-12000).

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

As noted above, community engagement is a Federally-required element of any SS4A Safety Action Plan. This is in contrast to traditional Local Road Safety Plans that do not require robust community consultation. The City will engage the public in plan development through online surveys, interactive mapping, in-person tabling at community events and activity centers, and via the City's communication channels. The City will leverage the Planning and Transportation Commission, the Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee, and the City/School Traffic Safety Committee, a historic partnership between City Departments, the Palo Alto School District, and the Palo Alto Parent Teacher Association Council.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Council action on this item is not a project as defined by CEQA because the grant agreement with the Federal Highway Administration is a government funding mechanism or fiscal activity which does not involve any commitment to any specific project which may result in a potentially significant physical impact on the environment. CEQA Guidelines section 15378(b)(4).

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Grant Agreement with FHWA for Palo Alto SS4A Action Plan

APPROVED BY:

Philip Kamhi, Chief Transportation Official