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Staff Report for a Resolution Authorizing the City Manager to Execute Agreements with the California Department of Transportation for the San Leandro Creek Trail Master Plan

## SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends approval of a resolution authorizing the City Manager to execute agreements that accept federal and/or state funding and obligates the City to provide matching funds for the San Leandro Creek Trail Master Plan project.

## BACKGROUND

The proposed San Leandro Creek Trail Master Plan is an effort to develop a plan, design concepts, and an implementation strategy for a multi-use trail and path along the San Leandro Creek in the cities of San Leandro and Oakland. This project will build on several years of preliminary outreach and analysis of the corridor; over a decade's worth of effort by the Friends of San Leandro Creek to restore a thriving riparian corridor within Oakland and San Leandro; and many other efforts by a diverse group of stakeholders. The multi-use trail was initially envisioned in 2012 and soon after the San Leandro Creek Alliance began serving as the forum for ongoing meetings of project partners, including the cities of San Leandro and Oakland, BART, Alameda County Flood Control & Water Conservation District, East Bay Municipal Utility District, East Bay Regional Parks District, Friends of San Leandro Creek, National Park Service, Merritt College, and Rails-to-Trails Conservancy.

In November 2013, State of California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) announced the availability of transportation planning grant programs to support the multi-modal transportation of the future, one that would improve mobility and accessibility for all people, with a focus on sustainability. In February 2014, a grant application was submitted to Caltrans for the San Leandro Creek Trail Master Plan. Following the grant submittal, in July 2014, the City of San Leandro was awarded \$201,510 from the Caltrans State Highway Account - Partnership Planning for Sustainable Transportation grant program (see attached award letter, grant application, and project timeline). The

grant allows for the development of the San Leandro Creek Trail Master Plan, design concepts, and implementation strategy for an approximately six-mile multi-use trail along San Leandro Creek through the cities of San Leandro and Oakland. For context, approximately 2.1 miles of the creek are located in the City of San Leandro, 2.1 miles in the City of Oakland, and 1.8 miles runs along the border of the two cities

The San Leandro Creek Trail Master Plan project builds on several years of partnerships and community outreach which analyzed the corridor by engaging hundreds of diverse residents in envisioning how a greenway could enhance access to recreation, schools, and transit while promoting regional sustainability. The project also builds on efforts to restore, enhance, and protect the creek within the cities of Oakland and San Leandro. The Master Plan will consolidate and expand on the earlier work by furthering community and organizational partnerships and conducting an in-depth feasibility analysis of the opportunities and constraints to constructing a multi-use trail through this unique watershed corridor. Further, the multi-use trail is intended to bring more awareness to the creek and to be similar to the Iron Horse Regional Trail that connects the cities of Concord and Pleasanton, a successful multi-use whole-access trail.

The San Leandro Creek Trail Master Plan will strongly support state and federal transportation planning goals and the regional sustainable communities strategy. The project will also support and build upon the Urban Greenway and Creek Walk that the City Council supported in 2013 (see attached urban greenway and creek walk flyer). The approximately 2.1 miles of the San Leandro Creek that is located entirely within the City of San Leandro limits, including the three-quarter mile stretch of the creek from Root Park to the Southern Pacific Railroad, would be studied by the Master Plan. The San Leandro Creek Trail Master Plan project would have similar goals to the Urban Greenway and Creek Walk project by promoting healthy living, restoring the creek, and restoring access to the creek by reconnecting the community with waterways.

## **Analysis**

The purpose of the project is to develop a Master Plan and feasibility analysis for the development of a multi-use San Leandro Creek Trail. The anticipated start date of the Master Plan is February 2015, with a final plan completed by April 2016. The target area for a proposed trail along the San Leandro Creek is currently on property owned by the Alameda County Flood Control & Water Conservation District and various private property owners. The proposed trail would offer a unique opportunity to provide a multi-dimensional amenity for residents, employees, and visitors to San Leandro and Oakland. The communities bordering San Leandro Creek are extraordinarily diverse. The creek provides opportunities for residents in these neighborhoods to access green space and recreational areas, to provide habitat for native species, and to protect areas of historical and cultural significance for the area's native peoples.

The main project team, as related to the grant for the San Leandro Creek Trail Master Plan includes, the City of San Leandro, City of Oakland, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, and Planning/Engineering Consultants. The role of the project team is briefly described below.

### **City of San Leandro**

The City of San Leandro is the lead applicant for the project. San Leandro is the grant recipient; the City will execute contracts with Caltrans and the sub-recipients, and will manage the grant. City of San Leandro staff will participate in all aspects of the project, coordinating closely with other members of the project team, reviewing grant deliverables, and performing grant administration

functions as required. In addition, the Friends of San Leandro Creek staff, with their extensive expertise on the San Leandro Creek watershed, will assist City staff throughout the Master Plan project process.

#### City of Oakland

The City of Oakland is a sub-applicant for the project. Approximately fifty percent of the trail alignment is located within the boundaries of Oakland, and City of Oakland staff will play a key role in ensuring consultation with Oakland stakeholders, providing review and consultation with the consultant team and other project partners to ensure consistency with City of Oakland planning priorities and coordination of future trail construction with other capital projects near the potential trail alignment.

#### Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) is a sub-applicant for the project. RTC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to create a nationwide network of trails for active living communities to help create healthier places for healthier people. A national leader in the trail building movement for twenty-eight years, RTC's Western Region office is based in Oakland. RTC provides trail/bicycle/pedestrian policy information and trail development technical assistance to communities throughout California. RTC draws on a national network of trail managers and professional staff to develop successful strategies for trail planning, design, construction and maintenance. RTC specializes in community engagement, developing and delivering community workshops and participating in the development of trail feasibility studies and master plans.

#### Planning/Engineering Consultants

Through the preparation of a Request for Proposals and a competitive bid process, the City of San Leandro, in coordination with the City of Oakland, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, and the San Leandro Creek Alliance, will select one or a team of planning and engineering consultants with demonstrated expertise in trail planning and design. The consultant team will carry out most of the technical work in this project, and will be primarily responsible for preparation of the draft and final reports, with guidance from the key project partners. The consultant's deliverables will include illustrations, plans, alternatives analysis, and design concepts (including photo simulations of the proposed trail) developed through the input provided by stakeholders and review of site opportunities and constraints. Recommended trail alignment alternatives and phasing will be identified and trail design standards will be provided. Conceptual designs will be developed to demonstrate project feasibility.

The overall project objectives of the San Leandro Creek Trail Master Plan are to:

- Build on previously conducted analyses and community outreach efforts regarding the development of a multi-use trail along San Leandro Creek as well as the long-term vision of the restoration of the Creek.
- Coordinate with the efforts of the National Park Service Rivers Trails and Conservation Assistance staff, which has awarded a technical assistance grant to Friends of San Leandro Creek to further the development of partnerships to support the trail.
- Broaden the existing partnerships to effectively educate and engage local residents and other community-based stakeholders, with a special focus on outreach to disadvantaged neighborhoods such as Columbia Gardens and Sobrante Park, as well as Estudillo Estates, Bay-O-Vista, and Sheffield Village; merchant and business groups such as the Airport Area Business Association; and public agencies about the potential of the San Leandro Creek Trail as a community resource. The location of the trail offers a particularly unique opportunity to link low-income residents directly to local employment sites as well as connections to the regional job

market via improved transit system access.

- Actively solicit participation from groups that represent disadvantaged community groups in the neighborhoods along the San Leandro Creek corridor. The project team has already engaged a number of social equity groups, such as City County Neighborhood Initiative, Higher Ground Neighborhood Development Corporation, Community Reform Church, and representatives of the Tribal community.
- Identify and address real or perceived community concerns about the development of a trail along San Leandro Creek, such as trail safety, impact on property values, crime and liability.
- Identify opportunities and constraints regarding the development of the San Leandro Creek Trail as well as a planning-level assessment of costs for construction, operations, and maintenance of the facility. This will include consideration of opportunities for community-based stewardship.
- Identify alignment options for the trail including trailheads and access points to provide connections to adjacent schools, parks, commercial centers, and transit nodes.
- Identify at-grade street crossing locations (e.g. Hegenberger Road and 98th Avenue), and develop conceptual design treatments for facilitating crossings by trail users.
- Evaluate key issues to be addressed for under-crossings at I-580/Benedict Drive/MacArthur Boulevard, I-880, Bancroft Avenue, East 14th Street (CA-185), San Leandro Boulevard, BART, Alvarado Street, and Union Pacific tracks.
- Develop general concepts for interpretive signage that reflects the history, culture, and ecology of San Leandro Creek; this will include consideration of best management practices for addressing the concerns of the native Tribal community.
- Develop recommended trail standards and sample cross-sections.
- Develop a prioritized list of project segments and key milestones to be achieved as part of an implementation strategy.
- Consider the needs of watershed restoration, habitat, and flood control as part of the preliminary planning and design process.

In conclusion, Caltrans, through the Partnership Planning for Sustainable Transportation grant program, approved \$201,510 in funding for the development of the San Leandro Creek Trail Master Plan. The City must commit to a matching fund amount of \$10,000 and assure project completion. In-kind fund matches from the City of Oakland, Merritt College, and Mike Vukman (Watershed Specialist) will be in the amount of \$43,250. Upon City Council authorization to the City Manager to execute agreements with Caltrans, the grant funds will be made available for the San Leandro Creek Trail Master Plan project (see attached draft fund transfer agreement).

### **Applicable General Plan Policies**

- This action is consistent with San Leandro Creek Goal No. 25 of the General Plan and Policy 25.01 Creek Stewardship

### **Fiscal Impacts & Budget Authority**

This San Leandro Creek Trail Master Plan project will cost approximately \$250,000, including in-kind services from multiple agencies. The majority of this cost, \$201,510, will be funded by the Caltrans grant. The City of San Leandro will provide matching funds in the amount of \$10,000 from the FY 2014-2015 City Manager's Contingency Fund 010-14-015.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

- Award Letter
- Grant Application
- Project Timeline
- Urban Greenway and Creek Walk Flyer
- Draft Fund Transfer Agreement

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