

**REPORT/RECOMMENDATION TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
OF SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY  
AND RECORD OF ACTION**

September 10, 2024

**FROM**

**NOEL CASTILLO, Director, Department of Public Works – Transportation**

**SUBJECT**

Grant Application to the United States Federal Railroad Administration for the Railroad Crossing Elimination Program

**RECOMMENDATION(S)**

1. Approve a grant application to the United States Federal Railroad Administration, under the Railroad Crossing Elimination Program discretionary grant call-for-projects, to implement a grade separation safety and mobility infrastructure project in the Helendale area, in the amount of \$40,000,000.
2. Authorize the Chief Executive Officer or the Director of the Department of Public Works to electronically submit the grant application to the United States Federal Railroad Administration, under the Railroad Crossing Elimination Program discretionary grant call-for-projects, to implement a grade separation safety and mobility infrastructure project in the Helendale area.
3. Direct the Director of the Department of Public Works to transmit the grant application to the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors within 30 days of submission.

(Presenter: Noel Castillo, Director, 387-7906)

**COUNTY AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER GOALS & OBJECTIVES**

**Promote the Countywide Vision.**

**Operate in a Fiscally Responsible and Business-Like Manner.**

**Pursue County Goals and Objectives by Working with Other Agencies and Stakeholders.**

**FINANCIAL IMPACT**

Approval of this item will not result in the use of Discretionary General Funding (Net County Cost). Pursuant to the terms of the Railroad Crossing Elimination (RCE) Program Grant, the County is required to provide a 20% local match. The Department of Public Works (Department) intends to submit a non-binding grant application to the United States Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), requesting \$40,000,000 to be used towards the \$50,000,000 total construction cost, to build a grade separation to address traffic and safety impacts on Vista Road in the Helendale area (Project). If the grant is awarded, the 20% local match requirement of \$10,000,000 will be funded by the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railroad. If awarded, the County expects to receive a Letter of Commitment from BNSF in connection with the Project and a funding agreement regarding the \$10,000,000 local match. If awarded, the Department will present an item to the Board of Supervisors (Board) to accept the grant award, request any necessary budget adjustments, and will work with BNSF Railroad to bring a funding agreement before the Board for approval of the 20% local match requirement of \$10,000,000.

**Grant Application to the United States Federal Railroad Administration  
for the Railroad Crossing Elimination Program  
September 10, 2024**

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The Department is seeking funding from the FRA's RCE Program for a proposed grade separation Project aimed at improving traffic and safety on Vista Road in the Helendale area. Vista Road currently crosses the BNSF rail line at the same level. The proposed Project will close the existing crossing at Vista Road and redirect traffic approximately one mile to the south via Jordan Road to a proposed bridge crossing over the rail line, connecting with National Trails Highway. The bridge will separate train and traffic movements to improve traffic mobility and safety.

Vista Road experiences significantly higher traffic than other roads in the area because it is the only bridged crossing over the Mohave River between Victorville to the South and Lenwood, just east of Barstow, to the north.

Significant traffic delays on Vista Road occur as up to 70 trains per day use the intersecting rail line intersecting Vista Road. As there are limited east-west travel options, these traffic delays impact larger volumes of vehicular traffic, including safety vehicles, with wait periods of up to 15 minutes. Alternative travel routes create significantly longer travel times and additional mileage. Construction of the grade separation will reduce vehicle delays, improve air quality, enhance mobility, and greatly reduce the potential for train-vehicle collisions.

The RCE is a discretionary grant program, established by the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and administered by the FRA, with \$1,148,809,580 in appropriated funds over the next two years. For 2024-25, the IIJA has authorized and appropriated \$229,305,600 to be awarded by the FRA. Funding from this program is provided to fund highway-rail or pathway-rail grade crossing improvement projects that focus on improving the safety and mobility of people and goods.

On July 10, 2024, the U.S. Department of Transportation announced the call-for-projects. RCE is a highly competitive grant program and submission of an application does not guarantee funding. The non-binding grant application is due on September 23, 2024.

Approval of this item will delegate authority to the Chief Executive Officer or the Director of the Department to finalize, execute, and electronically submit the grant application prior to the application deadline. The RCE Program grant awards are anticipated to be announced in Summer 2025. Following the grant award announcement, the FRA will contact the designated point of contact for selected applicants to initiate negotiation of a project-specific grant agreement. The FRA requires satisfaction of applicable requirements by the applicant and a formal agreement signed by both the grantee and the FRA, including an approved scope, schedule, and budget, before obligating the grant. If selected as a grant recipient, the Department will return to the Board for approval to accept the grant award and approval of all other applicable requirements for the grant.

This action meets the County's and the Chief Executive Officer's goals and objectives of operating in a fiscally responsible and business-like manner by seeking grant funding for projects. Additionally, should grant funds be awarded, the action helps ensure the development of a well-planned, balanced, and sustainable county by constructing facilities that promote safety and mobility.

**PROCUREMENT**

Not applicable.

**Grant Application to the United States Federal Railroad Administration  
for the Railroad Crossing Elimination Program  
September 10, 2024**

**REVIEW BY OTHERS**

This item has been reviewed by County Counsel (Aaron Gest, Deputy County Counsel, 387-5455) on August 22, 2024; Finance (Jessica Trillo, Administrative Analyst, 387-4222) on August 29, 2024; and County Finance and Administration (Paloma Hernandez-Barker, Deputy Executive Officer, 387-5423) on August 29, 2024.

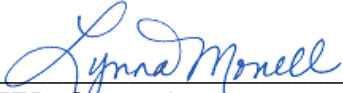
**Grant Application to the United States Federal Railroad Administration  
for the Railroad Crossing Elimination Program  
September 10, 2024**

Record of Action of the Board of Supervisors  
San Bernardino County

**APPROVED (CONSENT CALENDAR)**

Moved: Curt Hagman   Seconded: Joe Baca, Jr.  
Ayes: Col. Paul Cook (Ret.), Jesse Armendarez, Dawn Rowe, Curt Hagman, Joe Baca, Jr.

Lynna Monell, CLERK OF THE BOARD

BY   
DATED: September 10, 2024



cc:   PW/Trans - Castillo w/application for sign  
      File - Transportation w/application  
MBA  09/13/2024