

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

May 21, 2024

**FROM**

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

**SUBJECT**

Grant Application to the United States Federal Railroad Administration for the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements Program

**RECOMMENDATION(S)**

1. Approve draft grant application and authorize the electronic submission of the grant application to the United States Federal Railroad Administration requesting \$40,000,000 under the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements Program discretionary grant call-for-projects to implement a grade separation safety and mobility infrastructure project in the Helendale area.
2. Authorize the Chief Executive Officer or Director of the Department of Public Works to finalize, and electronically execute and submit the grant application and any necessary amendments, subject to review by County Counsel, to the United States Federal Railroad Administration under the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements Program.
3. Direct the Director of the Department of Public Works to transmit the grant application, and any amendments related to 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 grant, the County is required to provide a 20 percent local match. The total estimated cost to construct the grade separation, in the Helendale area (Project) is estimated to be \$50,000,000. If awarded funding, the United States (U.S.) Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) will fund \$40,000,000 of the Project cost while the 20 percent local match requirement of \$10,000,000 will be funded by the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railroad. In addition, BNSF is providing the services of its grant writing consultant to prepare the grant application at no cost to the County. The County expects to receive a Letter of Commitment from BNSF in connection with the Project and agreement regarding the \$10,000,000 match funding. If the grant is awarded, the Department of Public Works (Department) will present an item to the Board of Supervisors (Board) to accept the award and

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will work with BNSF Railroad to bring a funding agreement before the Board for the 20 percent local match requirement of \$10,000,000.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The proposed Project, for which the Department of Public Works (Department) is requesting funding from the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program, is a grade separation to address traffic and safety impacts on Vista Road in the Helendale area. Vista Road is the site of an at-grade crossing of the BNSF rail line. The 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 safety and mobility.

Because Vista Road is the only bridged crossing over the Mojave River between the City of Victorville to the south and Lenwood, just east of the City of Barstow, to the north, Vista Road is traveled by a disproportionate volume of traffic due to the delay of traffic flow from this crossing for east-west travel.

Significant traffic delays occur as up to 70 trains use the rail line intersecting Vista Road per day. As there are limited east-west travel options, these traffic delays impact larger volumes of vehicular traffic, including safety vehicles, with wait for 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.

CRISI is a discretionary grant program, established by the federal Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act and administered by the FRA, with \$9,000,000,000 in appropriated funds over the next five years. For 2023-24, the FAST Act authorizes and appropriates \$2,400,000,000 to be awarded by the FRA. Funding from this program is provided to support projects which improve railroad safety, efficiency, and reliability, mitigate congestion at both intercity passenger rail and freight rail chokepoints and support more efficient travel and goods movement to enhance multi-modal connections.

On March 29, 2024, the U.S. Department of Transportation announced the call-for-projects. Because CRISI is a highly competitive grant program, submission of an application is not a guarantee of funding. The terms included in the grant application require a local match. The grant application is due on May 28, 2024, and is non-binding.

Approval of this item will delegate authority to the Chief Executive Officer or the Director of the Department to finalize, and electronically execute and submit the grant application prior to the application deadline. The CRISI Program grant awards are anticipated to be announced in January 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.

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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.

**REVIEW BY OTHERS**

This item has been reviewed by County Counsel (Aaron Gest, Deputy County Counsel, 387-5455) on May 15, 2024; Finance (Jessica Trillo, Administrative Analyst, 387-4222) on May 8, 2024; and County Finance and Administration (Paloma Hernandez-Barker, Deputy Executive Officer, 387-5423) on May 9, 2024.

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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.), Dawn Rowe, Curt Hagman, Joe Baca, Jr.  
Absent: Jesse Armendarez

Lynna Monell, CLERK OF THE BOARD

BY   
DATED: May 21, 2024



cc:     File - Transportation w/ application  
JLL    05/24/2024