

DATE ISSUED: May 9, 2001

REPORT NO. 01-087

ATTENTION: Honorable Mayor and City Council
Docket of May 15, 2001

SUBJECT: Safe Routes to School Grant Program Application

SUMMARY

Issues - Should the City Council direct City staff to apply for \$2,160,000 through the Caltrans Safe Routes to School program for six pedestrian improvement projects in the communities of City Heights, Greater North Park, Normal Heights, San Pasqual, Torrey Pines and Uptown?

Manager's Recommendation - Authorize City staff to seek funding from the Caltrans Safe Routes to School program per staff recommendation.

Other Recommendations - None.

Fiscal Impact - If a grant agreement is executed, the City could receive up to \$2,160,000 to implement the proposed projects. Projects selected for funding will be reimbursed for 90% of the project cost, with traffic signals being 100% reimbursed. The city's 10% contribution will be made available from FY 2002 CIP projects 61-001.0, Traffic Control Measures, and 62-279.0, Neighborhood Traffic Calming.

BACKGROUND

The Safe Routes to School (SR2S) program is in its second year of a two-year demonstration period that resulted from the passage and signing of Assembly Bill 1475 (Soto) in 1999. AB 1475 calls for Caltrans, in consultation with the California Highway Patrol, to "Establish and administer a 'Safe Routes to School' construction program. . .and to use federal transportation funds for construction of bicycle and pedestrian safety and traffic calming projects."

Under the program, the State of California will make grants available to local governmental agencies under the program based on the results of a statewide competition that requires submission of proposals for funding. Eligible applicants for the funds must be an incorporated city or a county within the State of California. The funds are available on a competitive basis and will be awarded to the most meritorious projects. Proposals are rated on their effectiveness in improving pedestrian and/or bicycle safety near schools and may include sidewalk, pedestrian crossing and bikeway improvements, traffic calming and diversion and other measures.

For the first phase of the Safe Routes to School program, the City of San Diego submitted seventy projects to Caltrans on April 27, 2000. This grant application was approved by the City Council on April 17, 2000. However, none of these proposals were awarded funding.

The notice of funding availability for the second phase of the Safe Routes to School program was released by Caltrans on March 1, 2000. In order to generate more competitive proposals for the

second grant phase, City staff embarked on a comprehensive process to solicit grant proposals, evaluate proposals based on funding criteria, and recommend only the most qualified proposals for submittal to Caltrans.

Projects selected for funding will be reimbursed for 90% of the project cost, with traffic signals being 100% reimbursed. The city's 10% contribution will be made available from FY 2002 CIP projects 61-001.0, Traffic Control Measures, and 62-279.0, Neighborhood Traffic Calming.

In order to ensure that community groups in San Diego were aware of the program, as well as to set up a process for inclusion, the City of San Diego distributed a letter (Attachment 1) on June 7, 2000 to the Mayor, the eight council district offices, relevant City staff, all community planning groups, and all the business improvement districts. The letter described the program and requested that applicants submit their proposals to the City of San Diego Transportation Department by August 15, 2000. The deadline was set for the middle of August so that the Traffic Engineering Division, the Long Range Planning Division, and the Community and Economic Development Department could review and recommend proposals to include as the City of San Diego submittal to Caltrans by the November 9, 2000 deadline. Caltrans subsequently postponed the submittal deadline to May 22, 2001.

DISCUSSION

City staff reviewed proposals to select projects that were most responsive to the grant criteria. In addition, Long Range Planning and Economic Development and Community Services staff reviewed the proposals to ensure consistency with community plans, revitalization plans, and other relevant policies and plans. Traffic Engineering reviewed projects to verify cost estimates and project feasibility. Based on this analysis, staff recommends the following projects for submittal to Caltrans based on feasibility, city policy, and competitiveness. The total amount of funds requested per staff's recommendation is \$2,160,000. The six applications that staff believes meet the grant criteria are:

Jefferson Elementary School (Greater North Park)

The requested improvements include new sidewalks in the vicinity of the school, pedestrian-oriented lighting on Utah Street as well as North Park Way (a major pedestrian approach to the school) and pedestrian bulb-outs to better define the primary school bus pickup and drop-off point. The total project cost is \$425,000. The improvements are located in Council District 3.

Birney Elementary School (Uptown)

Safe Routes to School program funds would be used to construct curb extensions located at one intersection; replace six blocks of sidewalk, and ten Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) curb cuts; install seven pedestrian streetlights; install one traffic signal with pedestrian crossing enhanced walk lighting; and, create a bus and pedestrian mid-block crossing with lighting safety features in front of the school. An outreach and educational program with written materials and on-site instruction will be coordinated with the Birney School principal, teachers, students and parents. The total project cost is \$500,000. The proposed improvements are located in Council District 2 and Council District 3.

Adams Elementary School (Normal Heights)

Safe Routes to School program funds would be used to construct curb extensions located at six intersections, develop enhanced crosswalks, erect bicycle lane signage, create bicycle lane striping and provide outreach and educational materials to parents of school children attending Adams Elementary School. The total project cost is \$485,000. The proposed improvements are located in Council District 3.

San Pasqual Union School (San Pasqual)

Proposed improvements include installation of a flashing yellow beacon in both directions at the school entrance on Rockwood Road, sidewalk widening on the north and south side of Rockwood Road between 8 to 10 feet wide, and installation of a wood safety fence along the north side of the road to separate the pedestrian walkway from the street traffic. The improvements will be installed along approximately 460 feet of Rockwood Road. The total project cost is \$90,000. The proposed improvements are located in Council District 5.

Del Mar Heights Elementary School (Torrey Pines)

Proposed improvements include installation of approximately 1000 feet of sidewalk along surrounding residential streets within the vicinity of the elementary school. The improvements include handicap ramps. There are currently gaps in the sidewalks or no sidewalks along routes which school children use to walk or bike to school. The total project cost is \$175,000. The proposed improvements are located in Council District 1.

Euclid Avenue Elementary School (City Heights)

Proposed improvements include the installation of curb extensions and enhanced pavement markings at key intersections; installation of a protected left turn signal as well as the installation of a pedestrian activated traffic signal. All improvements are located within one quarter mile of the intersection of Euclid Avenue and Orange Avenue. The total cost of the proposed improvements is \$485,000. The proposed improvements are located in Council District 3 and Council District 7.

CONCLUSION

The Safe Routes to School program provides the City with an opportunity to construct roadway projects such as sidewalks improvements, bulb-outs, enhanced crosswalks, traffic signals, pedestrian-oriented lighting as well as flashing beacons, that will enhance the safety of public facilities used by children to get to and from school. It is recommended that grant funding for these projects be applied for, because the State monies that would be made available under the Safe Routes to School program would help provide for additional needed transportation improvements near schools. Letters of support for each application will accompany the submittal to Caltrans.

ALTERNATIVE

Do not apply for the Safe Routes to School grant program. This is not recommended because grant funding would not be available to facilitate safe passage to six San Diego elementary schools.

Respectfully submitted,

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Planning Director

Approved: P. Lamont Ewell
Assistant City Manager

D. Cruz Gonzalez
Director, Transportation Department

GOLDBERG/LBE

Attachment: City of San Diego Letter, June 7, 2000