



City of Palo Alto

City Council Staff Report

(ID # 12395)

Report Type: Consent Calendar

Meeting Date: 8/9/2021

Council Priority: Grade Separations

Summary Title: VTA Measure B Funding Joint Letter on Grade Separations

Title: Endorse and Authorize the Mayor to Sign a Joint Letter to the Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) From the Cities of Mountain View, Palo Alto, and Sunnyvale Recommending a Measure B Funding Allocation for Grade Separations

From: City Manager

Lead Department: Transportation Department

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the City Council approve and authorize the Mayor to sign the joint letter from the three cities of Palo Alto, Mountain View, and Sunnyvale to Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) recommending allocation of Measure B funding for grade separations along the Caltrans Corridor.

Background

In 2016, Santa Clara County voters approved Measure B, a 30-year, half-cent countywide sales tax to enhance transit, highways, expressways, and active transportation. This measure includes an estimated \$700 million (in 2017 dollars) of program tax revenues to fund grade separation projects along the Caltrain corridor in the cities of Palo Alto, Mountain View, and Sunnyvale, separating the Caltrain tracks from roadways to provide increased safety benefits for drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians and also reduce congestion at the intersections. The funding of projects provided through this tax measure is managed by the Valley Transportation Authority (VTA). The program that funds grade separations in this measure currently does not have any set basis for allocating such funds.

Discussion

There are a total of ten (10) existing at-grade crossings along the Caltrain Joint Powers Board owned corridor within Santa Clara County. Two (2) of the crossings are in the city of San Jose. The other eight (8) crossings are within the cities of Palo Alto, Mountain View, and Sunnyvale; the break-down is that Palo Alto has four (4), Mountain View has two (2), and Sunnyvale has two (2) crossings.

Staff from Palo Alto, Mountain View, and Sunnyvale have been meeting regularly to share information, discuss strategies for funding, and discuss mutually beneficial ways to allocate the Measure B Grade Separation funds. Each city is working within their communities to determine the preferred concepts that are the right fit for them.

Staff from the three cities are proposing that allocation of the Measure B funding to be based proportionally on the number of the existing at-grade locations in each jurisdiction and recommends the following allocation strategy:

- Funds are allocated by City as opposed to by location as follows:
 - City of Palo Alto: 50% of funds
 - City of Mountain View: 25% of funds
 - City of Sunnyvale: 25% of funds
- No ranking or criteria to be applied to each location
- Each City will determine how to distribute funding among their locations.

The City of Sunnyvale obtained approval from the City Council on July 27, 2021 and the City of Mountain View is ready to sign this joint letter. The next step will include processing this request through VTA for their consideration and acceptance of the proposed funding allocation agreement for the life of the current 2016 Measure B Caltrain Grade Separation Program.

Resource Impact

The staff recommendation to send this joint letter to VTA does not result in any direct resource impact at this time.

Funding for planned evaluation of grade separation alternatives is programmed in the FY 2022 Adopted Capital Budget Railroad Grade Separation and Safety Improvements project (PL-17001). Funding for future years is subject to City Council approval through the annual budget process. Historically, the Capital Improvement Fund supports this project through funding sources such as SB1 (the State’s Road Repair and Accountability Act), other State/Federal funding for transportation, Measure B, or through General Fund support. Measure B has a dedicated portion of funding component for grade separations that is the major source of funding for this project.

Environmental Review

The proposed recommendation in this report does not constitute a project in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and is therefore not subject to environmental review.

The proposed action is part of financial planning efforts for a possible future action, which has not been approved, adopted, or funded and is therefore exempt from the CEQA. The future decision to approve project construction would be subject to CEQA and require the preparation

of an environmental analysis. Environmental review and design for the grade separation project will be performed in the subsequent steps of the project development.

Attachments:

- Attachment A: Letter to VTA_Measure B Share Proposal



August 9, 2021

Carolyn Gonot
General Manager and CEO
Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA)
3331 North First Street
San Jose, CA 95134

Re: 2016 Measure B Grade Separation Funding Allocation Proposal

Dear Ms. Gonot,

In 2016, Santa Clara County voters approved Measure B, a sales tax measure intended to generate funding for various transportation projects throughout Santa Clara County, including improving safety at Caltrain crossings through grade separations. Measure B is anticipated to generate \$700 million in 2017 dollars over 30 years for the Grade Separations category. Projects in this category provide increased safety benefits for drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians and reduce congestion at the railroad crossings. This funding is intended to aid in the design and construction of grade separation projects in the cities of Sunnyvale, Mountain View, and Palo Alto along the Caltrain corridor.

There are ten existing at-grade crossings along the Caltrain/Joint Powers Board owned corridor within Santa Clara County, eight of which are within the cities of Sunnyvale, Mountain View, and Palo Alto combined. The City of Sunnyvale has two existing at-grade locations, Mountain View has two existing at-grade locations, and Palo Alto has four existing at-grade locations. All three cities are in various stages of planning of grade separations for all locations and are committed to constructing their grade separations within their jurisdictions.

In the spirit of collaboration and equity, staff from all three cities have been meeting regularly to share information, discuss strategies for funding, and discuss mutually beneficial ways to allocate the Measure B Grade Separation funds. City Managers, Public Works Directors, and Office of Transportation Directors have been actively involved in these conversations.



The three cities have developed and agree to the following proposal for allocation of the Measure B funding:

- Funds be allocated by City as opposed to by location as follows:
 - City of Palo Alto: 50% of funds
 - City of Mountain View: 25% of funds
 - City of Sunnyvale: 25% of funds
- No ranking or criteria to be applied to each location
- Each City will determine how to distribute funding between their locations.

The Cities of Sunnyvale, Mountain View, and Palo Alto have collectively come to this agreement and respectfully request that VTA accept this allocation plan for the life of the current 2016 Measure B Grade Separation fund. We look forward to working with VTA on its biannual budgeting process to identify more specifically when funds are needed as each city continues with its planning and environmental review process.

Sincerely,

Larry Klein
Mayor, City of Sunnyvale

Ellen Kamei
Mayor, City of Mountain View

Tom DuBois
Mayor, City of Palo Alto

CC: Jane Shinn, 2016 Measure B Program Manager
Deborah Dagang, Chief Planning & Programming Officer