

MEMO

To: James Keene, City Manager
Ed Shikada Assistant City Manager
Rob de Geus, Deputy City Manager
Heather Dauler, Intergovernmental Affairs Officer

From: Christopher Townsend, President, Townsend Public Affairs, Inc.
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Date: November 26, 2018

Subject: Suggested strategy regarding grade separation funding and opportunities

SUMMARY

Townsend Public Affairs, Inc. (TPA) has prepared this memo for the City of Palo Alto outlining potential opportunities to secure grade separation funding, the various aspects to consider, proposed next steps, and other items.

This memo is intended to provide background, identify some of the challenges we would face, and make recommendations for the City to consider. TPA has secured grade separation funds over the years and we have first hand knowledge on what it takes to be successful.

1. Overview

Successfully securing grade separation funding takes time, patience, and persistence. The top priorities for these competitive funds are to support goods movement and address safety and mobility issues. TPA will tell our Palo Alto-specific story, help build up a regional coalition, work with our legislative delegation and others to first educate and then work on funding opportunities.

2. Recommended strategy Phase 1

Due to the competitive nature of these funds, and the large price tag involved, we recommend education as the first phase of advocacy. We need to create briefing materials that explain the problem, what we are doing to address it locally, and why additional outside funding is needed for project completion.

We need to be able to clearly articulate what problem we are trying to solve and provide data to back it up such as estimated design and construction costs, future traffic counts, future bicycle and pedestrian counts, negative air quality from cars idling, the benefits of commuting, as well as any potential negative impact of electrification on neighborhoods.

3. Recommended strategy Phase 2

Once our materials are complete, we recommend multiple advocacy trips to Sacramento to meet with decision makers, legislators, and members of the new Administration. It would be very helpful if this delegation would include the Mayor or others on the Council.



Meetings targets would include, but not be limited to:

- The State Transportation Secretary
 - a. More than likely Governor-Elect Newsom will appoint his own Secretary
- The Executive Director of the California Transportation Commission (CTC) and her top staff
- Caltrans executives who oversee rail
- Palo Alto's legislative delegation Senator Jerry Hill and Assembly Member Marc Berman
- Neighboring members such as Senator Wiener, Assembly Members Mullin and Ting
- Senate Transportation and Housing Chair Jim Beall and his committee staff
- Assembly Transportation Chair Jim Frazier and his committee staff
- Vice Chair of the Senate Transportation and Housing Committee
- Vice Chair of the Assembly Transportation Committee

After our advocacy trips, we will have briefed many stakeholders and decision makers. From our experience, it's prudent to keep them continuously updated and in the loop so they become vested in our efforts. The form of these updates can be in person briefings, email updates, or written updates.

4. Multiple funding sources

We recommend identifying multiple funding sources as the final price tag of the overall grade separation needs in the City could be high. This includes federal, state, regional and local funding sources.

Funding opportunities including the following existing programs, and, fortunately, with the SB1 funds withstanding a recall, there are other options available, such as:

California Public Utilities Commission:

- The Section 130 Grade Crossing Hazard Elimination Program provides federal funds to local agencies (cities and counties) and railroads to eliminate hazards at existing at-grade public highway-rail crossings.
- The Section 190 Grade Separation Program provides state funds to local agencies to grade-separate at-grade crossings (crossings), or to improve grade-separated crossings.

California Transportation Commission:

- Solutions for Congested Corridors Program (SCCP). The purpose of the Solutions for Congested Corridors Program is to provide funding to achieve a balanced set of transportation, environmental, and community access improvements to reduce congestion throughout the state.
- Local Partnership Program (LPP). The Road Repair and Accountability Act of 2017 (Senate Bill 1) created the Local Partnership Program, which is modeled closely after the Proposition 1B State Local Partnership Program. The purpose of this program is to provide local and regional transportation agencies that have passed sales tax measures, developer fees, or other imposed transportation fees with a continuous appropriation of \$200 million annually from the Road Maintenance and Rehabilitation Account to fund road maintenance and rehabilitation, sound walls, and other transportation improvement projects.



5. Opportunities for partnerships

The electrification of Caltrain will have an impact on Palo Alto and other cities throughout the Peninsula. This works to our advantage for two reasons. The first is it helps us build a coalition of municipalities and other organizations to frame this as a regional matter. The second is by growing our coalition we can increase the likelihood of securing funding or better yet creating a specific funding source for cities to access for grade separation projects.

6. Potential barriers

As highlighted in the overview section, it could take multiple years to secure all the funds needed to fully address grade separation locations throughout the City. Other potential barriers could include requests for design exemptions, state wide demand for these funds, and regional needs.

7. Next steps

Depending on the feedback and discussion to the points above impacts our next steps. However, we recommend the creation of briefing documents as soon as possible so we can then shift to briefing and educating decisions makers in Sacramento.

