



CONSENT CALENDAR

October 10, 2023

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
 From: Dee Williams-Ridley, City Manager
 Submitted by: Liam Garland, Director, Public Works
 Subject: Grant Application: Safe Routes to BART Grant Program for the Ohlone Greenway Modernization and Safety Project

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution authorizing the City Manager or their designee to:

- Submit a grant application to Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) to receive up to \$3 million from the Safe Routes to BART (SR2B) Grant Program to help close the funding gap for construction of safety-related improvements to the Ohlone Greenway shared-use pathway as part of the Ohlone Greenway Modernization and Safety Project;
- Accept the grants awarded; and
- Execute any resultant agreements and amendments.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

If awarded, the City would receive up to \$3 million in grant funding revenue from BART to be used for construction only (including construction management) of safety-related improvements to the Ohlone Greenway shared-use pathway as part of the City of Berkeley’s Ohlone Greenway Modernization and Safety Project. The grant funds are required to be used within 3.5 years after a funding agreement is approved by the BART Board of Directors.

The total estimated project cost is approximately \$5.5 million. As shown in Table 1, along with grant funds from BART, the project would be funded by a \$1.271 million grant from Alameda County Transportation Commission (Alameda CTC) via the Alameda County Vehicle Registration Fee (VRF) Fund (Fund 307) and up to \$1.229 million from the City’s direct local distribution (DLD) funds from the Alameda County Measure BB Bike/Pedestrian Fund (Fund 135). The Alameda CTC grant and Vehicle Registration Fee funds meet the requirement that public agencies must commit to providing at least 30% of the total project costs from non-BART sources.

Table 1: Ohlone Greenway Modernization and Safety Project Funding Sources

Funding Source	Amount
Alameda CTC Grant Funding – VRF (Local Grant Fund 307)	\$1,271,000

DLD Funding - Alameda County Measure BB Bike/Pedestrian (Fund 135)	\$1,229,000
SR2B Grant Funding Request (Current Recommendation)	\$3,000,000
TOTAL PROJECT COST	\$5,500,000

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

The Ohlone Greenway is a vital regional transportation route that runs through four cities and spans two counties: Alameda and Contra Costa. The Ohlone Greenway connects directly to BART stations and Alameda-Contra Costa Transit (AC Transit) hubs, current and planned housing developments, parks, retail, and employment centers. Specifically, the Ohlone Greenway offers an off-street connection between the North Berkeley and El Cerrito Plaza stations, both of which are planned to be developed with thousands of new mixed-income homes, retail, and community-serving facilities. Because the planned developments will not replace most of the existing BART rider vehicle parking spaces that are removed due to development,¹ fewer BART riders will be able to park their vehicle at the stations in the future, increasing the demand for safe, off-street pathways for alternative modes of transportation. This is why the proposed grant funded safety-related improvements to the Ohlone Greenway shared-use pathway is a vital project.

A 2015 *Bicycling Preference Survey* of Berkeley residents included in the Bicycle Plan (2017) documented that one of the biggest barriers to cycling is the rider not feeling safe. To address safety concerns and to serve the anticipated increase in numbers of pathway users, the Ohlone Greenway Modernization and Safety Project will widen the existing shared-use pathway, include lighting upgrades, and safer and more visible raised crossings. Increased usage of the Ohlone Greenway could potentially bolster transit and reduce the need for vehicle travel.

Separately, BART is implementing modernization and safety-related improvements to the Ohlone Greenway beginning at the North Berkeley station and ending at the southern end of the City’s Ohlone Greenway Modernization and Safety Project limit. BART’s complementary improvements are anticipated to include a raised crosswalk at Franklin Street and widening their segment of the Ohlone Greenway to provide separate, but adjacent areas for pedestrians and bicyclists.

The grant program expects local jurisdictions to meet the following milestones:

1. 100% design/construction bid documents should be prepared within 1.5 years of approval of the funding agreement (anticipated Summer 2025);

¹ BART and California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), *Berkeley-El Cerrito Corridor Access Plan*, p. ES-1, February 2023.

2. A Notice to Proceed with construction should be issued within 6 months of completing the 100% design/construction bid documents (anticipated Winter 2025/2026); and
3. Construction should be complete within 1.5 years after the Notice to Proceed is issued (anticipated Summer 2027).

If grant funds are awarded, Staff anticipates being able to meet the required milestones with the anticipated increase in staffing levels and the funding sources outlined in Table 1.

The positive effects from these safety-related improvements would support the City of Berkeley's Strategic Plan, advancing the City's goal to:

- provide state-of-the-art, well-maintained infrastructure, amenities, and facilities.
- create a resilient, safe, connected, and prepared city.
- be a global leader in addressing climate change, advancing environmental justice, and protecting the environment.

BACKGROUND

Modernization and safety improvements to the Ohlone Greenway have been contemplated in City and regional plans, including:

- The Bicycle Plan (2017) designates the Ohlone Greenway as a Tier 1 priority for receiving modernization improvements. The trail corridor receives high volumes of bike and pedestrian traffic because it operates year-round, seven days a week;
- The project corridor also intersects and includes crossing safety improvements at two local High-Injury Street segments as identified in the Berkeley Vision Zero Action Plan (2020): Cedar and Rose Streets;
- The proposed improvements are included in the Berkeley Strategic Transportation (BeST) Plan (2016). Through community-ranked criteria, the Ohlone Greenway Modernization and Safety Project has been identified as a five-year priority, and has been given the designation of "signature project";
- The Alameda County Transportation Commission's 2020 Countywide Transportation Plan's Vision and Goals lists "Greenways and Trails" as a core recommendation of the "Projects and Programs" component.

The SR2B grant program assists local jurisdictions and partner agencies in delivering near term, active access infrastructure. The program includes the following objectives to expand station access choices and make it safer and easier for all riders to use the system:

- Mode Shift: Encourage riders to walk or bike to BART rather than driving and parking;
- Leverage: Leverage other funding sources to deliver improvements;
- Project Readiness: Deliver near-term, enduring active access improvements to real property that demonstrate a clear nexus to a BART station;
- Partnership: Collaborate with local partners to create more sustainable communities;
- Equitable: Provide equitable access for disadvantaged communities;
- Customer Experience: Enhance personal safety and security to enrich rider comfort and sense of place; and
- Complete communities: Promote transit-oriented development.

The Ohlone Greenway Modernization and Safety Project accomplishes BART's goals because it would create a safer and more seamless connection for people accessing the North Berkeley BART Station using alternative modes of transportation including cycling and walking; provide at least 30% of total project funding from non-BART sources; will achieve the 35% design completion milestone by the time the SR2B grant application is submitted; and connects disadvantaged communities in Richmond, El Cerrito, and west Berkeley to a multitude commercial districts, employment centers, affordable housing, recreational amenities, and transit hubs.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE IMPACTS

The Ohlone Greenway Modernization and Safety Project addresses safety issues and modernizes the Ohlone Greenway to create a safer and more seamless connection for people accessing the North Berkeley BART Station using alternative modes of transportation, including cycling and walking. Increasing cycling and walking—and improving connections to transit—supports Goal 5: Accelerate Implementation of the City's Bicycle & Pedestrian Plans in the City's Climate Action Plan because it reduces vehicle miles traveled in the community and in the region.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

SR2B funding will allow the City to modernize and address traffic safety issues on a portion of the Ohlone Greenway. The City has adopted numerous plans, including the Bicycle Plan, Pedestrian Plan, Vision Zero Action Plan, and the BeST Plan, which call for transportation investments to support safe and modern transportation infrastructure. The City currently lacks sufficient funding to construct the improvements planned under the Ohlone Greenway Modernization and Safety Project. As such, applying for and receiving SR2B grant program funding, for which the project is eligible, would help close the funding gap for construction of this project. Not approving the application would mean foregoing up to \$3 million in potential grant funding.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

The City could choose not to apply for these funds; however, this would result in the Ohlone Greenway Modernization and Safety Improvements Project remaining underfunded for the construction phase. The project would then need to secure additional funding from other source(s) in order to proceed with construction.

CONTACT PERSON

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Attachment:

1. Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

GRANT APPLICATION: SAFE ROUTES TO BART GRANT PROGRAM FOR THE
OHLONE GREENWAY MODERNIZATION AND SAFETY PROJECT

WHEREAS, according to the City of Berkeley 2015 Bicycling Preference Survey, as reported in The Berkeley Bicycle Plan (2017), one of the biggest barriers to bicycling in the City is residents feeling unsafe while cycling; and

WHEREAS, the North Berkeley BART and El Cerrito Plaza BART stations are planned to be developed with thousands of new mixed-income homes, retail, and community-serving facilities; and

WHEREAS, the planned developments will replace most of the existing BART rider vehicle parking spaces and fewer BART riders will be able to park at the stations in the future, increasing the demand for safe, off-street pathways for alternative modes of transportation; and

WHEREAS, to address safety concerns and to improve access to the North Berkeley BART station, the Ohlone Greenway Modernization and Safety Project proposes widening the existing shared-use pathway, lighting upgrades; and safer and more visible raised crossings; and

WHEREAS, the City currently lacks sufficient funding to deliver the improvements planned under the Ohlone Greenway Modernization and Safety Project; and

WHEREAS, applying for and receiving Safe Routes to BART grant program funding, for which the project is eligible, would close the funding gap for construction of this project; and

WHEREAS, if awarded, the City would receive up to \$3 million of competitive grant funding revenue from BART; the City would contribute up to \$1.271 million from the Alameda County Vehicle Registration Fund; and up to \$1.229 million from the Measure BB Bike/Pedestrian Fund, beginning in FY 2024.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that the City Manager or their designee is authorized to submit a grant application to BART to receive up to \$3 million from the Safe Routes to BART Grant Program to help close the funding gap for construction of the Ohlone Greenway Modernization and Safety Project; accept the grant if awarded, and execute any resultant agreements and amendments.