



Board Summary Report

File #: 24-411

Agenda Date: 7/30/2024

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To: Board of County Commissioners

Through: Gini Pingnot, Open Spaces Director

Prepared By:

Ray Winn, Open Spaces Planner II / County Bike and Pedestrian Planner

Presenter: Ray Winn, Open Spaces Planner II / County Bike and Pedestrian Planner

Subject:

2:15 PM *Funding for High Line Canal Underpass at Yale Avenue

Purpose and Request:

Staff will present the High Line Canal (HLC) Underpass at Yale Ave. to obtain approval from the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) to expend \$500,000.00 from the Open Spaces Acquisitions and Development Fund to the City and County of Denver for construction of an underpass on the High Line Canal under Yale Ave. Open Space and Trail Advisory Board (OSTAB) approved this request at the April 1, 2024, OSTAB meeting.

Background and Discussion: In 2014 OSTAB approved \$300,000 for the HLC working group for design of this project and others. This crossing spans both jurisdictions and requires a joint project and funding. In 2014 Arapahoe County Open Spaces (OS) hired FHU and worked with the City and County of Denver to complete 30% design of 2 bridges and improve intersection crossing of the High Line Canal at Yale Ave. This at-grade intersection crossing improvement was agreed upon and decided as the most financially feasible safety improvement both jurisdictions could construct. The cost estimate for this project was \$1,052,000.00 in 2014 dollars. Of which Open Spaces by IGA was approved to pay 50% or roughly \$526,000. See attached funding memo from 2014.

Shortly after 30% was reached, the City of Denver changed course and decided that they desired to create an underpass not bridges over the canal and at grade improvements. Denver decided to place the funding on an upcoming bond measure. Open Spaces decided that this decision was not in-line with the High Line Canal

crossing study findings and was too expensive. Since this was a bond measure, Denver was now committed to fulfilling the obligation of an underpass no matter the fiscal impact. Therefore, the decision was made that Denver would go it alone and Open Spaces would only fund what we had originally agreed upon, \$526,000.00. However, the most recent IGA with Denver stated that OS would be responsible for only \$500,000 so that is the funding amount we are requesting saving the County an additional \$26,000.

Open Spaces has been budgeting this amount every year since 2014. The funds were allocated and were approved sometime in 2012-14 by OSTAB and we believe BOCC. But due to the changes in scope of work, turnover in Board members, and 10 years since allocation Open Spaces staff feels we should bring this funding request back to all approvers.

Denver passed the bond measure and has worked this project through its queue to finally nearing design completion. The construction cost estimate is \$16.9M for the underpass construction. OS still does not feel that an underpass is a financially feasible option given the fiscal impact of \$16.9M especially when the at grade crossing increases safety for \$16M less. Therefore, OS is committed to contributing the original \$500,000 for the crossing, and Denver is responsible for the rest of the funding through their bond initiative and TIP application.

Staff came before the BOCC in 2022 to fund the multimodal improvements along Yale Ave that are also associated with this project as they will be constructed simultaneously. However, these improvements are 2 different projects: improving the sidewalk along Yale Ave and construction of an underpass of the High Line Canal under Yale Ave. This is an opportunity for the County to support funding for a costly underpass at a fraction of the cost.

The 2014 design with two bridges and street crossing improvements approved by OS is included in the presentation.

Fiscal Impact: The funding request is for \$500,000. The fund balance in the OS Acquisition and Development fund exceeds the amount requested. The funds for this project have been allocated since 2014.

Alternatives: Recommend approval, approval with changes, or denial.

Alignment with Strategic Plan:

- Be fiscally sustainable
- Provide essential and mandated service
- Be community focused

Staff Recommendation: Staff recommends that the BOCC approve the funding request of \$500,000 from OS Acquisition and Development Fund for the OS contribution to Denver for construction of the HLC underpass at Yale Ave.

Concurrence: OSTAB approved this request at the April 1, 2024, OSTAB meeting.