



Arapahoe County

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Board Summary Report

File #: 22-544

Agenda Date: 9/27/2022

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To: Board of County Commissioners

Through: Shannon Carter, Director, Open Spaces

Prepared By:
Cathleen Valencia, Capital Improvement Program Manager

Subject:
Grant Application for High Line Canal Underpasses - Quebec and Colfax #1

Purpose and Request:

The purpose of this BSR is to request funding for the design and construction of two underpasses along the High Line Canal Trail; one at Quebec St. and one at Colfax Ave. The 30% design is complete, and Staff is requesting BoCC approval to apply for a grant to fund 80% of design and construction costs for the underpasses through the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Staff has coordinated with the City and County of Denver, City of Aurora, and Adams County to provide the local match along with Arapahoe County Open Spaces.

Background and Discussion: The High Line Canal Conservancy, partnering with all of the jurisdictions along the Canal, completed The Plan for the High Line Canal (The Plan) in 2019. This visionary and collaborative plan reclaims the historic waterway for the region and depicts a new life for this legacy greenway. The Plan lays out clear guidance for repurposing the historic canal, improving people's health and the environment, and increasing accessibility and enjoyment for generations to come. One of the recommendations in The Plan is to create a connected corridor and create safer road crossings.

The Plan recognized the 2014 Feasibility Study for the High Line Canal Crossings that studied underpasses and crossings at Sable Boulevard, Havana Street, Parker Road at Mississippi (under construction), Yale Avenue at Holly Street, Hampden Avenue at Colorado Boulevard (complete), Orchard Road West of Colorado Boulevard, Orchard Road West of University Boulevard, and South Broadway at Arapahoe Road.

The 2014 Feasibility Study resulted in underpasses being planned and constructed at Parker and Mississippi and Hampden and Colorado. These projects received financial support from the federal government, a critical infusion of funding to advance these multi-million dollar projects. Two additional underpasses have been funded at Yale and I-70, with federal funding secured for the I-70 underpass, and design is currently underway for both projects.

The Plan recommends the construction of seven additional underpasses over the next 15 years, prioritizing major arterials that create barriers to using the Canal for communities across the region. All seven of these proposed underpass locations are either in or at the border of Arapahoe County. To continue the momentum of the early underpass projects and position these projects to pursue federal funding, the Conservancy hopes to advance the design of these prioritized underpasses to understand the cost and feasibility of grade-separated

crossing solutions.

The locations that were approved for 30% design included: two at Colfax Avenue (Aurora), Sable Boulevard (Aurora), Havana Street (Denver/Aurora), Quebec Street (Denver/Unincorporated Arapahoe County), and two at South Broadway (Littleton/Centennial).

There is significant funding required to construct a trail underpass and the need to involve multiple resources to acquire the funding. With the completion of the Hampden Avenue and Colorado Boulevard underpasses and the Parker Road underpass, it has become clear that additional planning is needed to get realistic construction costs. The underpasses at Hampden, Colorado, and Parker were included in the 2014 feasibility study and had cost estimates assigned to them at that time. The conceptual design for the Hampden cost estimate was \$4.5M, and the Parker Road project was estimated at \$3.1M. After doing additional design to get them to 30%, both projects came in significantly higher. The actual costs were \$9.1M at Hampden and Colorado and \$7.5M at Parker. Both projects benefited from receiving significant TIP funding, the program through which the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) distributes federal transportation funding to projects across the region.

In 2022, there is an opportunity to apply for additional TIP funding for the underpass projects. With a limited available budget at most agencies, applying for these TIP funds will afford the municipalities along with Arapahoe County and the Conservancy an opportunity to acquire the significant funds needed to plan, design, and eventually construct underpasses at some of the seven locations that have been prioritized. The TIP application requires a 30% design to qualify for the funding to make sure the project is viable and to ensure that sufficient funding is requested to match the true cost of these underpass projects.

During 30% design, Staff determined that 3 of the 7 underpasses were not feasible. The remaining 4 underpasses are Sable, Colfax #1, Quebec, and Broadway/ Arapahoe. Staff has been working with Aurora, Denver, Centennial, Adams County and Littleton to provide financial assistance for the local match. Centennial and Littleton have both agreed to help in funding of the local match for the Broadway/ Arapahoe location. Aurora and Adams County are participating in the local match to fund the Colfax #1 location. Denver is participating in the local match to fund the Quebec location. Arapahoe County previously requested and was approved to pursue funding for the Broadway/ Arapahoe Underpass and split the local match three ways between Littleton, Centennial and Arapahoe County Open Spaces. This BSR is requesting approval to pursue a grant opportunity to fund the Colfax #1 and Quebec Underpasses. Please see Fiscal Impact below for the detailed funding request.

Alternatives: Approve or deny the funding request. Without funding the County would miss out on an opportunity to design and construct two underpasses along the High Line Canal Trail.

Fiscal Impact: If approved, Open Spaces Acquisition and Development would fund \$733,333 (6.7% of the total project cost) over a 4-year period to provide a portion of the local match to design and construct the \$11,000,000 project at Colfax #1.

If approved, Open Spaces Acquisition and Development would fund \$1.4M (10% of the total project cost) over a 3-year period to provide a portion of the local match to design and construct the \$14,000,000 project at Quebec.

Alignment with Strategic Plan:

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

Concurrence: The City and County of Denver, City of Aurora, and Adams County all agree to provide the local match requested to fund the project. OSTAB approved of the County pursuing funding through the DRCOG TIP Grant for these 2 underpasses. BOCC approved of the County pursuing funding in a Study Session on September 13, 2022.

Resolution: Attached is a copy of the draft resolution.