

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: GREG DWYER, ASSOCIATE CIVIL ENGINEER
TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF A REIMBURSEMENT AGREEMENT FOR SMART
RAIL CROSSING AT JENNINGS AVENUE

AGENDA ACTION: MOTION

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the Transportation and Public Works Department that Council, by motion, authorize the City Manager to approve and execute a reimbursement agreement not to exceed the amount of \$1,825,000 with Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART), subject to approval as to form by the City Attorney, to perform work within their, and the Sonoma County Water Agency's right-of-way for the Jennings Avenue at-grade pedestrian and bicycle rail crossing.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The proposed action will authorize the City Manager to approve and execute an agreement that allows SMART to construct an at-grade pedestrian and bicycle rail crossing at Jennings Avenue. SMART provided a preliminary cost estimate for this work, which included a rough order of magnitude for the system integration scope. The SMART agreement will follow, allowing for an expedited process to complete construction prior to commuter rail service.

BACKGROUND

Bicyclists and pedestrians have been crossing the railroad tracks at Jennings Avenue since at least 1904. The Jennings Avenue crossing was reinstated by the California Public Utility Commission (CPUC) when the CPUC approved the at grade crossing on September 15, 2016.

The Jennings Avenue crossing links two neighborhoods and is an important part of the City's General Plan 2035, the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (BPMP) 2010 and the North Santa Rosa Station Area Specific Plan (NSRSASP). The BPMP and the NSRSASP both emphasize the need to improve pedestrian and bicycle access in this

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area. In addition, the Jennings Avenue crossing is part of the planned bicycle and pedestrian path being constructed along the rail corridor as part of the SMART project.

Within approximately one-half mile of the crossing is the Helen Lehman Elementary School, various social services, restaurants, Post Office, Coddington Mall, Transit Center, Dutton Avenue Business Park, Jennings City Park, G&G Market and Santa Rosa Junior College.

In addition to the existing neighborhoods in the Jennings Avenue crossing vicinity, Range Ranch – a medium-high density residential development just to the immediate east of the crossing has been recently constructed, adding to the number of non-motorized trips seeking access across the crossing.

Existing railroad improvements include vandal resistant fencing and a pathway along the east side of the tracks. There is currently a detour in place to Guerneville Road. SMART is actively testing the rail line and is planning to start fee service in early Spring 2017.

SMART has awarded a design-build contract to construct railroad and pathway improvements within their right-of-way.

On September 15, 2016, the application by the City of Santa Rosa for an at-grade crossing at Jennings Avenue in Santa Rosa was approved by the California Public Utilities Commission.

To maximize economic efficiencies and minimize future disruption to the rail corridor Capital Projects Engineering (CPE) has determined the work outside of the City right-of-way would be best performed by the contract awarded by SMART. It's good to have SMART perform this work due to continuity, liability, safety, time and cost. There's a benefit to having one contractor working on the whole SMART system. Additional construction work within the City's right-of-way will be performed separately to connect the SMART crossing to City streets and sidewalks east and west of the SMART corridor.

The original construction estimate at time of crossing approval was \$1,512,000. The current construction estimate is \$2,256,000, which is a net increase of \$744,000. Estimates include the budgeted City right-of-way portion of the project for \$432,000.

The cost increase was related to unanticipated changes in the scope necessary to intergrate the crossing into SMART's train operating system. Systems work includes computer modeling, integration into the overall corridor, calibration with specialists and computer hardware.

Additional funding will come from projects not moving forward at this time. This will be accomplished through a re-prioritization of existing projects with funding sources from Gas Taxes and Capital Facilities Fees. No General Fund funding will be required.

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PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

During a study session in September 2009, staff provided the Council with a description, process for establishing, and discussion about the pros and cons of Quiet Zones.

On August 14, 2012, the City Council, by Resolution No. 28181, unanimously authorized a funding agreement with SMART to complete the environmental review and design alternatives for a grade-separated pedestrian and bicycle crossing of the SMART railroad corridor at Jennings Avenue.

On November 13, 2012, City staff presented to the Council the results of a feasibility study including a statement by California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) staff that approval of an at-grade crossing at Jennings Avenue would be unlikely unless at least one existing at-grade crossing was eliminated at either West Sixth, West Seventh or West Eighth Streets, near the West End Preservation District. At that meeting, the Council expressed a preference to study an at-grade pedestrian and bicycle crossing as the preferred project. The item was then continued to a future Council meeting to allow staff additional time to ascertain potential costs of environmental review.

On May 21, 2013, the Council, by Resolution No. 28284, unanimously directed City staff to complete environmental review in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for an at-grade pedestrian and bicycle crossing of the SMART railroad corridor at Jennings Avenue, including an ADA compliant pedestrian and bicycle rail overcrossing alternative and possible removal of an existing crossing at West Sixth, West Seventh or West Eighth Street.

On November 18, 2014, the Council held a public hearing on the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

Council certified the Jennings Avenue Pedestrian and Bicycle Rail Crossing Final EIR on March 17, 2015, and directed staff to apply for an at-grade crossing without closure of an existing crossing. A Quiet Zone was included as a potential mitigation measure if that crossing was installed. Noise was identified as one of the significant impacts that would affect the adjacent community.

ANALYSIS

Working with SMART to deliver the project through an agreement allowing the City to fund the work and SMART to install the portion of the project within SMART's right-of-way will save the City money and keep the project on schedule by utilizing a Contractor already working with SMART in the area.

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FISCAL IMPACT

Funds for this project have been appropriated within the Capital Improvement Program. There is no fiscal impact to the General Fund.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

On October 17, 2014 a draft EIR was completed by GHD, Inc. for the Jennings Avenue Pedestrian and Bicycle Rail Crossing Project.

The Final EIR was completed on February 9, 2015 and accepted by City Council on March 17, 2015.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Not applicable.

NOTIFICATION

Not applicable.

ATTACHMENTS

None

CONTACT

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