



Staff Report

File #: 23-0739

REQUEST FOR CITY COUNCIL ACTION

DATE: 09/20/2023

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: City Manager's Office

SUBJECT:

CITY OF RANCHO CUCAMONGA'S REQUEST FOR THE CITY OF CORONA TO SUPPORT THE BRIGHTLINE WEST HIGH-SPEED RAIL PROJECT APPLICATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This staff report asks the City Council to discuss the City of Rancho Cucamonga's request for the City of Corona to provide a letter of support for the Brightline West (BLW) high-speed rail project application.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the City Council provide feedback and direction to staff regarding the City of Rancho Cucamonga's request to provide a letter of support to the Department of Transportation in support of the BLW high-speed rail project application.

BACKGROUND & HISTORY:

BLW high-speed rail project proposes to be the first of its kind in America, connecting Las Vegas and Southern California. The 218-mile passenger rail service proposes to include a flagship station in Las Vegas, with additional stations in Apple Valley, Hesperia, and Rancho Cucamonga. The Rancho Cucamonga station, known as Cucamonga Station, is proposed to connect to Southern California's regional Metrolink service, allowing for connectivity into downtown Los Angeles, Riverside County and beyond. The rail service will be operated by BLW from Las Vegas to Rancho Cucamonga with 96% of its alignment within the median of the I-15 highway.

Today, nearly 50 million annual trips occur between Los Angeles and Las Vegas with over 85% of them by car. The goal of the BLW rail system is to offer a solution to the traffic congestion that comes along with this type of traffic. BLW expects to serve more than 11 million one-way passengers annually. The project is near shovel-ready and expected to break ground in the second half of 2023.

ANALYSIS:

The project continues to achieve critical milestones. Just recently, the California Infrastructure, an Economic Development Bank ("IBank"), approved the issuance of bond financing to construct portions of the high-speed rail line in California and its related stations. This signifies a significant investment in the project's future and the next step toward another critical milestone, the project's application for a \$3.75 billion grant from the Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail Grant program. The City of Rancho Cucamonga will be sending a package to the U.S. Department of Transportation on September 22, 2023, highlighting municipalities' support for the application. Therefore, the City of Rancho Cucamonga is asking for support of this project from all neighboring City and County partners.

The City Council annually adopts a Legislative Platform that signifies the City's stance on various legislative issues, such as housing, economic development, public safety, and transportation. Section 11, Transportation, items 11.2a and 11.3d, of the Corona Legislative Platform state the following:

- 11.2(a) - "Support efforts to provide State and Federal funding for local and regional transportation projects; especially those which increase the capacity or public safety of State Route 91, Interstate 15, State Route 71, and the various interchanges and on/off ramps associated with those routes in the Corona area."
- 11.3(d) - "Support legislation and grant programs that encourage transit ridership, active transportation, and congestion relief programs for western Riverside County."

Staff believes the request from the City of Rancho Cucamonga to support the BLW project falls within the parameters set by the City's adopted Legislative Platform referenced above. Therefore, a draft letter of support for the BLW project is attached, should the City Council direct staff to send such a letter to Rancho Cucamonga.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is no financial impact associated with the recommended action.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

This action is exempt pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of the Guidelines for the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), which states that a project is exempt from CEQA if the activity is covered by the commonsense exemption that CEQA applies only to projects that have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA. This action seeks direction from Council regarding the City of Rancho Cucamonga's request for a letter of support and there is no possibility that the direction provided will have a significant impact on the environment.

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REVIEWED BY: BRETT CHANNING, ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER

Attachments:

1. Exhibit 1 - Letter of Support