Authorize Trails Implementation Strategy and Technical Assistance Request for Proposals

Consent
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Attachments: No

Approved by: James Corless
Referring Committee: Transportation

Issue:
This item recommends release of a Request for Proposals (RFP) to implement the next phase of the Sacramento Regional Trail Network Action Plan, with a maximum budget of $300,000.

Recommendation:
The Transportation Committee unanimously recommended that the Board of Directors authorize the release of the Regional Trails Implementation Strategy and Technical Assistance Program request for proposals (RFP) with a maximum budget of $300,000, and delegate authority to the Executive Director to select a vendor, and negotiate and execute a contract with the selected consultant.

Background/Analysis:
SACOG initiated the development of the Sacramento Regional Trail Network Action Plan in 2019. Through this effort, the Regional Trail Network was collaboratively identified in partnership with local agencies, special districts, public health professionals, and community-focused organizations to further the goals of environmental justice, all ages and abilities, economic vitality, health, safety, and recreation. The final trail network, which included over 1,000 miles of trails, focused on equitably creating regional trail connectivity and increasing access to the destinations that support the vitality and livability of the region. Most identified connections (over 250 miles of existing trails and more than 800 miles of planned trails) were selected from local plans for their potential to make connections across boundaries in the region. Over 300 miles of trail study corridors—connections identified for further study in future planning documents, planned connections with known implementation challenges, and high-concept connections—were also identified for their potential to connect via trails or trail-like facilities across the region, including 50 miles of on-road separated bikeways. Concurrent with the approval of the trail network, the board approved a prioritization framework to focus regional coordination efforts. The framework was designed to elevate trail connections that demonstrate regional potential through different combinations of performance outcomes. Recommendations for projects were then grouped into tiers based on each project's readiness to move forward so the recommended actions would build on locally driven efforts.

SACOG identified a key next step in advancing trails in the region to develop a clear strategy to guide implementation of the prioritized network. In 2023, the board authorized the release of the Trails Plan Implementation request for proposals (RFP). That original scope outlined a strategy to accelerate the development, funding, and construction of the trail network. The scope was meant to envision

implementation components for funding alternatives, monitoring framework, and governance alternatives. SACOG released that RFP twice but did not receive sufficient proposals to be competitive. This led staff to revisit the scope to identify areas for improvement and clarification.

Discussion/Analysis:
The revised scope, as outlined below, emphasizes the identification of next steps and associated actions, required partners and stakeholders, prioritization, and potential funding components to implement the trail network. The budget assumptions are also updated to match the expected effort needed for the revised scope.

Staff seeks to release an RFP to select a consultant that will address the following areas:

1. **Challenges and Partnerships**: In working with SACOG staff and key stakeholders through a working group, the consultant will be responsible for identifying challenges and constraints associated with the implementation of a regional trail network. Considerations in this analysis include identifying regional partnerships to implement trail segments, concerns related to legal issues, risks, and levels of responsibility. Governance[1] will also be included in this analysis but will be handled through a separate scope with the SACOG legal team.

2. **Prioritization:** An expanded prioritization methodology will be developed in collaboration with the working group and staff to identify projects with the potential to achieve trail network goals. The previous work to develop the trails plan included three tiers of projects, with Tier 1 being the most developed segments; the expanded prioritization in this RFP will focus on these segments, which have the greatest potential for implementation in the near-term. This methodology will assist in identifying and assessing projects' additional readiness based on priority, complexity, cost, and other metrics such as connection to destinations, gap closures, safety, equity impacts, and others. Once the metrics are identified and the methodology is established, the consultant will assess a full ranking of projects (as initially identified in Appendix A of the 2022 Regional Trails Network Action Plan) and will identify the top ten projects that are ready to move forward with implementation. Cost estimates will be developed for these top ten projects.

3. **Implementation Strategies:** The final outcome of this project will be an Implementation Strategy that presents recommendations for implementing the top ten projects identified through the prioritization process. Funding strategies that address potential funding sources, revenue mechanisms, and models for funding to build and maintain the regional trail network will also be included as part of the final strategy.

4. **Technical Assistance:** In addition to the Implementation Strategy, technical assistance will be provided for up to ten agencies. This assistance will not be limited to the top-ranking projects but will be available to any agency implementing or planning to implement a trail project, as outlined in Appendix A of the 2022 Plan. Technical assistance may look different for each agency and will be tailored to their specific needs. Examples of technical assistance could include grant application preparation, cost estimates, design, developing a community engagement strategy, planning concept development, etc.

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[1] The regional trail network spans the entire six-county region, and includes trails that traverse multiple jurisdictions, including areas of cultural significance to tribes within the region. For the implementation strategy to be successful, elected officials, partner agency leadership, and key collaborators must buy into a solid governance approach that reflects the vision of the network.

Staff anticipates this revised approach will yield a competitive RFP that achieves the desired outcomes of a clear strategy and structure, agency roles, and key steps required to initiate and implement the regional trails program.

This was an action item at the Transportation Committee meeting on April 4, 2024. The committee asked questions regarding the cost of the project and how many consultants typically respond to this type of project. This item was approved unanimously.

Fiscal Impact/Grant Information:
The staff time costs for this program are included in SACOG's adopted Budget and Overall Work Program (Budget/OWP) for Fiscal Year 2023-2024 and proposed Budget/OWP for Fiscal Year 2024-2025.