



Staff Report

TO: City Council
FROM: Christina Taylor, Deputy City Manager
DATE May 16, 2023
SUBJECT: Washington D.C. Visit Summary

Description Summary of City legislative visit to Washington D.C.

Background and Analysis:

April 24, 2023, through April 28, 2023, Mayor Pro Temp Fenn, Council Member Lara, Council Member Voigt, Public Works Director Hart, Deputy City Manager Taylor and City Manager Gibbs made a trip to Washington D.C. in an effort to meet with legislators and federal departments to discuss City and regional issues, and the need for support and funding. The information below is a summary of the meetings held.

Monday, April 24, 2023, and Friday, April 28, 2023, were travel days. Meetings were held Tuesday – Thursday as described below:

Tuesday, April 25, 2023:

Federal Rail Administration (FRA): City met with the Intergovernmental Affairs staff from FRA regarding ongoing issues the City has been experiencing with UPRR and the at-grade crossings at Pennsylvania Avenue and California Avenue. City Manager Gibbs provided a briefing on the June rail crossing blockage incident. FRA staff provided the City with information on a pilot program for improving safety and reducing incidents at at-grade crossings. The FRA staff also provided information on the Railroad Crossing Elimination Program (RCEP) which provides funding for planning and construction for elimination of at-grade crossings. The RCEP funding capability is ±\$500M per year for the next 5 years, with the next Notice of Funding Opportunity (NFO) expected to be released in the Fall of 2023. The City was informed of the FRA's Corridor Identification and Development Program (Corridor ID) which may be a potential funding source for RCTC's proposed Coachella Valley - San Gorgonio Rail Service. City staff also received FRA Portal information for reporting incidents. Reports submitted through the portal is retained and can be used to justify the need for at-grade crossing elimination funding.

Federal Department of Transportation (DOT): City delegation met with Intergovernmental Affairs staff from DOT. Public Works Director Hart provided an overview of the Pennsylvania Avenue widening project, Second Street extension project and the Potrero Ramps project. City Manager Gibbs provided an overview and map of the Pass Area Mobility projects. She explained how the projects identified in the plan are of regional significance and the cities of Beaumont, Calimesa and Banning are working together to address regional issues but are in need of support both politically and financially at the federal level to make progress. The City received information on financial resources and programs which could be of assistance to the City and the Pass Area, and emphasized the benefit of projects which benefit underserved communities and workforces via the Neighborhood Access and Equity Grant Program.

Senator Padilla: City delegation met with Senator Padilla's staff to discuss a number of ongoing issues in the City as well as in the Pass Area. City Manager Gibbs provided an overview of the UPRR incident, and Public Works Director Hart provided information on the transportation projects of local and regional significance. Senator Padilla's staff advised the City that they would be supportive of future funding requests and grant applications and would provide letters of support when requested to do so. Senator Padilla's staff requested supportive files for future project requests, emphasizing the importance of portraying a regional benefit.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA): City met with staff from EPA to learn about a variety of resources for water and wastewater projects. EPA staff provided the City information about the Water Infrastructure Financing Innovation Act (WIFIA) which can be used for water, wastewater or sewer infrastructure projects. This program provides loans ranging from 0% to low percentage fixed interest rates and provides more flexibility than issuing general obligation bonds. The City also heard from EPA staff in Region 9 about the State Revolving Fund program (SRF) and the Targeted Brownfield assessment program.

Wednesday, April 26, 2023:

Federal Economic Development Agency (EDA): The City delegation met with a representative from the EDA to talk about revitalization of downtown Beaumont and other industry within the City. Deputy City Manager Taylor gave an overview of the Downtown Beaumont Revitalization Plan underway and some of the issues the City is currently working to address in downtown. EDA staff advised the City there are resources available for water, sewer, street and other infrastructure projects if it can be tied to job growth. Another significant amount of information was provided to the City regarding development of a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). a CEDS is a prerequisite for designation by EDA as an Economic Development District and for qualification to participate in the Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance programs.

National Endowment for the Arts (NEA): NEA staff met with the City to discuss available grants for culture and arts. Emphasis was placed on partnerships and project-based funding, particularly with non-profit partners. Applications are accepted from all disciplines and the initial deadline is July 6, 2023, with subsequent deadlines in 2024. NEA historically funds 50-60% of all applications submitted. NEA staff encouraged the City to explore equity and inclusion projects and their mandate is to strengthen communities.

Department of the Interior - Bureau of Reclamation (BoR): BoR staff met with the City to discuss water related issues such as wastewater and recycled water. Public Works Director Hart gave an overview of the wastewater treatment plant project including the RO system and the City production of recycled water. City staff learned about the WaterSmart grant program and the Title 16 requirements. Since the Washington D.C. visit, City staff has met with BoR staff from the regional office serving Beaumont to further discuss the City's needs and BoR resources.

Senator Feinstein: Meeting cancelled due to COVID in the Senator's office.

Thursday, April 27, 2023:

Department of Justice - Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS): City delegation met with the Director and staff from the COPS program. The City currently receives funding through the COPS program and was able to thank the Director and staff for their ongoing support of the City's police department. COPS staff provided additional information to the City on resources opportunities to receive funding support for things such as target hardening, mental health services, crisis intervention and de-escalation training.

United States Department of Labor (DoL): City delegation met with representatives from Intergovernmental Affairs, the Division of Youth Services, and the Office of Apprenticeship. DoL staff informed the City of apprenticeship programs they support, including pre-apprenticeship (Middle School/High School focus) and apprenticeship (Ages 16-24 focus). Staff also identified existing local apprenticeships they have supported in which the City may become potential partners, including Riverside Community College and University of California Riverside.

Congressman Ruiz: City delegation met with Congressman Ruiz to discuss a number of ongoing issues in the City as well as in the Pass Area. City Manager Gibbs provided an overview of the UPRR incident, Public Works Director Hart provided information on the transportation projects of local and regional significance. Congressman Ruiz advised the City he has submitted the Second Street Extension project for community

benefit funding in the amount of one million dollars. The City delegation thanks the Congressman and his staff for their ongoing support of and attention to the City.

Congressman Calvert: City Manager Gibbs and Deputy City Manager Taylor met briefly with Congressman Calvert's staff to discuss transportation issues in the Pass Area. City Manager Gibbs provided the Congressman's staff with the Pass Area Mobility Projects map as well as information on City of Beaumont projects of regional significance to the Congressman's district.

Fiscal Impact:

The cost to prepare this staff report is estimated at \$430.

Recommended Action:

Receive and file.