



## Staff Report

**TO:** City Council  
**FROM:** Christina Taylor, Deputy City Manager  
**DATE:** March 5, 2024  
**SUBJECT:** Washington D.C. Visit Summary

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**Description** Summary of legislative and advocacy visit to Washington D.C.

### **Background and Analysis:**

February 11, 2024, through February 16, 2024, Mayor Fenn, Mayor Pro Tem Lara, Council Members Martinez, White and Voigt, Public Works Director Vestal and Deputy City Manager Taylor made a trip to Washington D.C. in an effort to meet with legislators and federal departments to discuss City and regional issues, and advocate for support and funding for critical projects. The information below is a summary of the meetings held. Sunday, February 11, 2024, and Friday, February 16, 2024, were travel days. Meetings were held Tuesday – Thursday as described below:

#### Tuesday, February 13, 2024:

Federal Rail Administration (FRA): City met with the Intergovernmental Affairs staff from FRA and provided an update regarding ongoing issues the City has been experiencing with Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) and the at-grade crossings at Pennsylvania Avenue. Mayor Fenn provided a briefing on the rail crossing blockage incident from June 2022. Public Works Director Vestal provided FRA staff with an overview of at-grade crossings within the city and progress made on the Pennsylvania Grade Separation since the incident. The FRA staff provided information on the Railroad Crossing Elimination Program (RCEP) which provides funding for planning and construction for elimination of at-grade crossings. FRA staff indicated RCEP is a good fit for the grade separation project and highlighted information which should be included in the application. City staff thanked FRA staff for the FRA Portal information which is now used for reporting incidents. Reports submitted through the portal are retained and can be used to justify the need for at-grade crossing elimination funding.

#### Wednesday, February 14, 2024:

National Park Service (NPS): City met with NPS to explore how to best access funding through the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) for various parks and open space projects in the City. City representatives provided an overview of the Stewart

Park project, Sports Park project, habitat areas within the City and future park and community center needs. NPS staff advised LWCF is a permanent funding source with annual application cycles. NPS staff discussed the public engagement process expected and also provided information on the technical and staff assistance available to the City for help with projects.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA): City representatives met with the EPA ombudsman, intergovernmental staff and program staff to discuss programs available for wastewater treatment and brownfield reclamation. City representatives were able to provide an update to EPA staff on progress made with the wastewater treatment plant and production of recycled water. EPA staff provided a substantial amount of information on a variety of funding sources including grants and low/no interest loan options for wastewater and recycled water projects. EPA staff also discussed timing on project development related to funding applications. EPA staff reviewed program information for brownfield reclamation and provided contact information for the regional office.

Congressman Calvert: City representatives met with a representative from Congressman Calvert's office to discuss ongoing issues with Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) and Pass Area regional transportation needs. City representatives provided Congressman Calvert's staff an overview of the June 2022 incident with UPRR and the urgent need for a grade separation. City representatives provided a progress update regarding the Pennsylvania Grade Separation project as well as other projects in the area and the regional effort from Pass Area cities working together to address rail and interstate issues.

Thursday, February 15, 2024:

Senator Butler: City representatives met with staff from Senator Butler's office to discuss the City's transportation priorities. City representatives discussed a number of ongoing issues in the City as well as in the Pass Area. City representatives provided an overview of the June 2022 incident with UPRR and an update on the progress we have made toward the grade separation. City representatives provided information on transportation projects of local and regional significance such as Beaumont Ave/SR-79/I-10 and the need for improvements which would benefit a significant number of inland residents. Senator Butler's staff appreciated the information and advised they would provide support for funding requests and grant applications.

US Department of Transportation (DOT): City representatives met with staff from DOT. City representatives provided an overview of the Pennsylvania Grade Separation project and other projects in the vicinity as well as an update on the Potrero Ramps project. City representatives discussed the regional significance of Beaumont Ave/SR-79/I-10, and the collective efforts of Pass Area cities related to this project. The City

explained the need for support both politically and financially at the federal level to make progress on these large projects and regional issues. The City received information on financial resources and programs which could be of assistance to the City and the Pass Area.

Senator Padilla: City representatives met with staff from Senator Padilla's office to discuss the City's transportation priorities. City representatives discussed a number of ongoing issues in the City as well as in the Pass Area. City representatives provided an update on the UPRR incident and provided information on the transportation projects of local and regional significance. City representatives provided information on the regional significance of Beaumont Ave/SR-79/I-10 and the need for improvements which would benefit a significant number of inland residents. 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.

Congressman Ruiz: City representatives met with Congressman Ruiz to discuss ongoing City priorities and regional needs. City representatives provided an update on the Pennsylvania Grade Separation project and other ongoing projects in the area. City representatives were able to discuss with the Congressman, the regional needs for improvements along Beaumont Avenue/SR-79/I-10 and the efforts of Pass Area cities working together on this issue. City representatives provided an update on the status of the Potrero interchange project, including funding, remaining needs and challenges and interagency participation. City representatives thanked the Congressman for his presence in the community and ongoing support of projects within the City of Beaumont.

Bureau of Reclamation (BOR): This meeting was originally scheduled for Wednesday but was rescheduled by BOR staff. City representatives met with BOR staff to discuss water reuse and groundwater basin recharge projects and funding. City representatives provided a progress update on the wastewater treatment plant and production of recycled water. BOR staff reviewed grant opportunities and processes and advised of requirements such as NEPA along with other components which make a project eligible and competitive. City representatives and BOR staff discussed the importance of recycled water within the region.

**Fiscal Impact:**

The cost to prepare this staff report is approximately \$150.

**Recommended Action:**

Receive and file.

