

COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Brett Fulgoni, Director of Public Works

DATE: May 5, 2026

SUBJECT: Adoption of a Resolution Approving Authorization to Submit an Active Transportation Program Grant Application

Description:

The City Council will consider adopting a Resolution authorizing submission of an application to the California Active Transportation Program for a proposed citywide multi-purpose trail system intended to create a connected active transportation loop around Santa Maria with links to Downtown/Civic Center, the Transit Center, Allan Hancock College, neighborhoods, schools, parks, and other major destinations.

Environmental Notice: The activity is not a “Project” as defined under Section 15378 of the California Environmental Quality Act State Guidelines; therefore, pursuant to State Guidelines Section 15060(c)(3) no environmental review is required.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Adopt a Resolution authorizing submission of an Active Transportation Program grant application; and
2. Authorize the City Manager, or designee, to execute and submit all documents required for the application.

BACKGROUND:

The City continues to pursue grant funding for projects that improve walking, bicycling, and rolling throughout Santa Maria and that expand access to key destinations for residents of all ages and abilities. The California Active Transportation Program (ATP) is one of the State’s primary competitive funding sources for bicycle, pedestrian, and other active transportation improvements. The program is intended to increase the use of active transportation modes, improve safety and mobility for nonmotorized users, enhance public health, and ensure disadvantaged communities share in the benefits of transportation investment. The current Cycle 8 call for projects is open, with statewide and small urban/rural applications due June 22, 2026.

Staff has been developing a concept for a citywide active transportation loop that would function as a backbone facility for Santa Maria’s bicycle and pedestrian network. The concept generally envisions a multi-purpose trail loop around the community, with strategic on-street and crossing improvements to connect major destinations including

Downtown/Civic Center, the Transit Center, Allan Hancock College, schools, parks, neighborhoods, and commercial areas.

A substantial portion of the concept builds on opportunities along existing maintenance roads adjacent to the Blosser Channel and Bradley Channel, together with targeted roadway realignment and corridor reconfiguration opportunities on streets such as Main Street east of U.S. 101, Blosser Road, Depot Street, Bradley Road, College Drive, and Panther Drive.

Santa Barbara County Flood Control has indicated support for the concept at a planning level. Continued coordination will be necessary during project development to ensure access and operational needs for channel maintenance are preserved.

Staff has also introduced the concept to members of the local bicycling community and received initial feedback. That feedback emphasized the importance of designing safe and intuitive crossings, keeping the trail alignment as direct as feasible near intersections, providing accessible detection and push-button treatments without requiring users to dismount, and ensuring uninterrupted connections at key points in the network.

DISCUSSION:

The proposed Santa Maria Loop Multi-Use Trail Project is intended to create a highly visible, citywide active transportation spine that serves both transportation and recreation purposes. Rather than focusing on one isolated segment, the project concept is designed to connect major community destinations into a continuous network that can be used for daily trips, school access, transit access, and recreational walking and bicycling.

At a planning level, the concept includes a combination of off-street and corridor-based improvements. Key elements may include: enhancement of existing channel-adjacent maintenance roads for shared use where feasible; roadway realignment or reconfiguration to accommodate separated active transportation facilities; protected or high-visibility crossings at major intersections and channel crossings; ADA-accessible access points and intersection controls; wayfinding and branding elements; and other supporting improvements needed to create a continuous and intuitive facility.

The project is well aligned with ATP objectives. The ATP guidelines emphasize projects that increase walking, biking, and rolling; improve safety and mobility for nonmotorized users; benefit disadvantaged communities; and deliver transformative community or regional benefits. The guidelines specifically encourage projects that significantly expand active transportation opportunities and create accessible facilities usable by persons with or without disabilities. Staff believes the proposed loop concept is responsive to those objectives because it would establish a recognizable citywide corridor system that improves network continuity, expands access to important destinations, and has the potential to deliver broad community benefit across multiple neighborhoods.

The current application effort would allow the City to further refine the concept and assemble a competitive ATP submission. As part of that effort, staff anticipates the need

for additional design ideation and conceptual planning, particularly at intersections, roadway transitions, channel crossings, and other locations where continuity and user comfort will be critical to project success. Early community engagement will also be important. Staff intend to continue coordination with the bicycling community and other stakeholders.

In addition to mobility and safety benefits, the proposed loop presents an opportunity to create a signature Santa Maria active transportation facility. Staff intends to explore project branding as the application advances. A clear and memorable identity may strengthen both public support and the competitiveness of the grant application. Staff also intends to explore opportunities to recognize Santa Maria history and community leadership through naming, interpretive elements, or dedications, potentially in coordination with the Santa Maria Valley Historical Society and other local partners.

Authorization from the City Council at this time would allow staff to proceed with submission of the ATP application and completion of the associated forms and supporting materials. If the project is selected for funding, staff would return to the City Council as needed for future actions related to grant acceptance, appropriations, agreements, environmental review, and project delivery.

Alternative(s)

1. *Do not adopt the Resolution*

If the City Council does not authorize submission of the application, the City would forgo the opportunity to compete for ATP funding in the current cycle for this project concept.

2. *Adopt the Resolution with direction to modify the application emphasis*

The City Council may choose to authorize submission of the application while directing staff to emphasize particular destinations, corridors, branding concepts, or project elements in the final application package.

Fiscal Considerations

Preparation of the grant application will require staff time and will require consultant support for conceptual engineering, graphics, cost estimating, and application preparation. Those costs are expected to be funded through existing departmental budgets. The total grant amount to be requested through the ATP application is currently estimated at approximately \$30 million. The grant scoring provides additional points for leveraging local funds, with 1 point (out of 100) for 1 to 5 percent of total project cost to be funded by local match. Up to 5 points can be scored, with more than 20 percent of the project costs having to be funded by local match.

Points	Amount Leveraged
1 Point	At least 1% to 5% of total project cost
2 Points	More than 5% to 10% of total project cost
3 Points	More than 10% to 15% of total project cost
4 Points	More than 15% to 20% of total project cost
5 Points	More than 20% of total project cost

Staff will evaluate how existing roadway funding sources such as Measure A funds that must be spent on active transportation elements can be leveraged. Staff recommends leveraging Growth Mitigation funds identified for active transportation projects if they are available and relevant to the proposed project. Staff will refine the project estimate and funding plan prior to submittal to maximize scoring, but at this time a local match of \$6 million may be utilized.

If the project is awarded funding, staff will return to the City Council with any required actions related to grant acceptance, budget amendments, matching funds, and implementation.

Impact on the Community

If funded and implemented, the project would provide a major new community asset intended to improve safety, expand mobility options, and improve access to schools, transit, parks, employment areas, and civic destinations. The project would support residents who walk, bike, and roll for transportation and recreation, including youth, older adults, and persons with disabilities. The project also has the potential to strengthen neighborhood connectivity, encourage healthy activity, and create a more identifiable and cohesive citywide active transportation network.

Other Agency Review

The project concept has been discussed at a preliminary level with Santa Barbara County Flood Control, which has expressed support for continued advancement of the concept, subject to maintaining access and functionality for flood control maintenance operations. Continued coordination with Flood Control, Caltrans where applicable, SBCAG, transit partners, school representatives, the bicycling community, and other stakeholders will be part of the project development process.

ATTACHMENT(S)

- A. Resolution