



Legislation Text

File #: 24-025, **Version:** 1

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SUBJECT: Request for Approval Reimbursement Agreement HSR 22-27 with the California High Speed Rail Authority in the Amount of \$500,000 for the Downtown Station Land Use and Vision Plan

REPORT IN BRIEF:

Considers approving the reimbursement with High Speed Rail Authority to the City of Merced up to \$500,000 for the Downtown Station Land Use and Vision Plan as part of the overall City of Merced General Plan comprehensive update.

RECOMMENDATION

City Council - Adopt a motion:

- A. Adopting **Resolution 2024-05**, a Resolution of the City Council of the City of Merced, California, approving High Speed Rail Agreement #22-27 with the California High Speed Rail Authority for reimbursement of costs related to the preparation of a Land Use and Vision Plan for the Downtown Station as part of the General Plan Update; and,
- B. Authorizing the City of Merced to enter into High Speed Rail Reimbursement Agreement #22-27 with High Speed Rail Authority for Downtown Station land use planning and visioning in amount of \$500,000; and,
- C. Authorizing the City Manager to execute the necessary documents; and,
- D. Authorizing the Finance Officer to make the necessary budget adjustments.

ALTERNATIVES

- 1. Approve as recommended by Staff; or
- 2. Approve, subject to conditions as specified by the City Council; or,
- 3. Refer to staff for reconsideration of specific items as requested by the City Council; or
- 4. Defer action until a specific date; or
- 5. Deny the request.

AUTHORITY

City of Merced Charter, Section 200.

CITY COUNCIL PRIORITIES

As provided for in the City of Merced, 2023-2024 Adopted Budget, Economic Development, Objective 3, “Coordinate High Speed Rail, ACE Train, and other projects that may serve as economic engines in Downtown Merced.”

DISCUSSION

The High Speed Rail Authority (HSRA) desires to enter into a reimbursement agreement for station area planning efforts coordinated by the City of Merced (Attachment 1.) The High Speed Rail Authority will reimburse the City of Merced up to \$500,000.00 in grant funds for station area planning efforts including land use and vision plans. The station area plans will be coordinated with the comprehensive General Plan Update. The Planning Division is finalizing a Request for Proposal for the General Plan Update.

The Downtown Merced Station is part of High Speed Rail’s Central Valley segment reaching from Merced to Bakersfield (Attachment 2). The Merced and Bakersfield portions of the segment are extensions since the focus will be primarily on Fresno to Wasco.

As part of an earlier grant, prior planning and environmental efforts centered on the Downtown Station being located between G Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Way from W. 15th Street to W. 16th Street. As the previous station planning efforts were conducted, staff realized that the City would be better served by relocating the Downtown Station between O Street to R Street from W. 15th Street to W. 16th Street (Attachment 3). The City of Merced worked with the High Speed Rail Authority and other state agencies to justify the need for relocating the station to its new location. Subsequently, environmental clearance was secured, and High Speed Rail Authority accepted the new location for the Downtown Station platform.

Originally, the HSRA proposed constructing a sub-grade line through the community. Now, the constructed line will be an aerial track. The proposed Downtown Station will also serve the Altamont Corridor Express (ACE) Train and Amtrak (The San Joaquins.) Therefore, the Downtown Merced Station will serve as the hub for High Speed Rail, ACE Train, and Amtrak (Attachment 4). The Merced station is unique as it is the northernmost hub for the first segment and will be the only station providing service by three train operators (Attachment 5).

Use of Funds

Funding will be used by the City of Merced to prepare plans necessary to properly incorporate the new station into the City. Furthermore, the funds will be used to develop a rail-based vision for Downtown Merced. These efforts will become part of or run parallel to the comprehensive General Plan Update.

The community will be engaged throughout the process via workshops and forums. Residents and businesses will be able to provide input as to how the station and surrounding area should be designed and developed. It is envisioned the City staff will provide the coordination of various consultants and the public interaction. Over the past two years, the City has co-hosted two rail community workshops and technical working groups.

IMPACT ON CITY RESOURCES

The City previously was awarded a planning grant by the High Speed Rail Authority, and encumbered funds in the City Manager's budget. After work was stopped at the request of the City, the funds remained in the City Manager's budget. The Finance Officer will need to re-appropriate the funds to the new planning effort. The High Speed Rail Authority is committed to reimbursing the City for the planning and vision efforts up to \$500,000.00.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Resolution and High Speed Rail Reimbursement Agreement
2. HSR Statewide Alignment
3. HSR Merced Station Location
4. HSR Merced Multi Modal Station
5. HSR Merced Station Conceptual Design