



March 15, 2022

Steven A. Nelsen
Mayor

The Honorable Shannon Grove
California State Senate
1021 O Street, Suite 7150
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Melissa Hurtado
California State Senate
1021 O Street, Suite 7310
Sacramento, CA 95814

Brian Poochigian
Vice Mayor

The Honorable Devon Mathis
California State Assembly
1021 O Street, Suite 5530
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Vince Fong
California State Assembly
1021 O Street, Suite 4630
Sacramento, CA 95814

Brett Taylor
Councilmember

Liz Wynn
Councilmember

Dear Senator Grove, Senator Hurtado, Assembly Member Mathis, and Assembly Member Fong:

As Mayor of the City of Visalia and on behalf of 139,254 residents that make up our beautifully diverse city, I write to you to outline some of our city's priorities for the 2022-2023 fiscal year. At a time when the state is expected to experience a \$31 billion surplus, investments in our cities are paramount.

The City of Visalia, like many cities throughout the state and country, is struggling to advance projects that lack dedicated funding sources but have the capacity to create meaningful change, safeguard critical assets and deliver equitable solutions to some of our most pressing needs.

As most of us now know, the pandemic exacerbated inequities in our marginalized communities, and I am proud our city found innovative ways of delivering much-needed services and assistance to our most vulnerable communities during the pandemic. However, these innovative solutions did deplete some of the city's general funds, and given the state's financial outlook, we ask for your assistance in supporting communities that were hardest hit by the pandemic.

For these reasons, I ask for your consideration of the following projects that will make significant improvements and will lead to a better quality of life for our residents:

1. Eastside Regional Park Groundwater Recharge Basin F Construction - \$6.5 million

The Eastside Regional Park and Groundwater Recharge project consists of a 250-acre park featuring diverse recreational opportunities, native plants, wildlife habitat, and integrated groundwater replacement and storm water retention facilities. The dedicated groundwater recharge element is planned to encompass upwards of 55 acres. The park is sited in the northeast region of the city and is traversed by several ditches and channels that will feed the recharge element of the facility. This area was selected because it is upgradient of the city's groundwater, and thus is strategically located to receive the water deliveries from the Exchange Program with Tulare Irrigation District (TID) to replenish the groundwater for the benefit of the region. During times of unprecedented storm events, the creation of these basins will also decrease stormwater flows before they reach the city's center, decreasing the potential for flooding in neighboring communities and the downtown core.

Under the water Exchange Program the city has with the TID, executed in 2013, the city delivers tertiary-treated waste water to the district in exchange for excess surface water in wet years diverted by the district to specific recharge locations that benefit the groundwater pumping system serving the city. This leveraged exchange provides for one acre foot (AF) of surplus water returned to the city on average for every two AF of wastewater effluent delivered to TID. Per the agreement, the city commits to provide at least 11,000 AF of

treated water annually for delivery to TID's canal system for groundwater recharge on an in-lieu basis by virtue of the supply to growers.

The city was previously awarded a grant from the State of California, through Proposition 1, Urban Rivers Grant, in the amount of \$1,568,708 to construct Basin G. These funds will pay for the excavation of Basin G, the groundwater recharge structures, related groundwater pipes, dry wells, a trail, and the landscape & irrigation around Basin G. The city is providing a local match of approximately \$1.1 million for Basin G and may appropriate additional funds in the future. This project is currently underway but presently, the city needs funding for additional basin construction to increase groundwater recharge capacity so that we are best prepared to intake water exchange resources from TID and help counteract the rapid depletion of groundwater resources we are currently experiencing across the Central Valley. Funding requested for Basin F is \$6.5 million. The design work for Basin F is near complete and will be completed by December 2022. This project requires permitting through various state agencies, which the city has not initiated, due to the possibility of permits expiring. The city plans to begin the permitting process as soon as funds are identified for construction of Basin F so that the permits will be current. The city estimates that permitting will be obtained within 1 year of filing; therefore, the city can be prepared to go out to bid for construction of Basin F in the summer of 2023 if funding for construction is secured by summer of 2022. To date, the city has spent approximately \$760,000 of its own local funds on Basin F for the preliminary engineering and design package; and has committed to provide an additional \$250,000 in local funds to complete the design and obtain the needed permits. The city will be ready to provide additional match for Basin F when construction can commence.

2. Central Visalia Traffic Safety Action Plan Implementation Funding for Sidewalk and Bikeway Improvements – \$3 million

The Central Visalia Traffic Safety Action Plan (CVTSAP) focuses on infrastructure improvements that will increase safety for pedestrians, bicyclists and vehicles in Central Visalia. It was determined that for Visalia's downtown to continue to thrive as a local and regional destination, it would be critical for the city, in partnership with residents and downtown businesses, to be proactive in identifying traffic safety challenges and in developing solutions for the Central Visalia downtown area. By seeking to improve mobility, safety and access for all modes of transportation including walking, bicycling, and transit, this action plan is set to help the city better align its transportation and development patterns with state and federal transportation goals of improving multimodal mobility and accessibility for all people while also fostering livable, healthy and socially equitable communities. The plan includes detailed recommendations for design changes to city streets and programs that support transportation safety for those who walk, bicycle, take transit or drive in the downtown core.

While the full set of potential improvements identified would be beneficial on their own, city staff is requesting funding assistance to implement a specific portion of the CVTSAP that would best complement the potential improvements the city hopes to construct by securing two California Department of Transportation Active Transportation Program (ATP) grants. The city is currently in the process of resubmitting an ATP grant application for the Goshen-Visalia Corridor Improvement Project (GVC) meant to connect the community of Goshen and the residents in the northwest Visalia area to city services and jobs in the downtown core and industrial park. In addition, this 6.1-mile Class 1 multi use trail will not only encourage exercising and recreation but will benefit 6 Visalia schools (affecting over 2,700 students) by providing a safe route to school. The second ATP grant application is a Safe Route to Schools (SRTS) project that will provide further connectivity for Houston Elementary School and the neighboring northcentral Visalia community through needed improvements to missing or inadequate foot/bike travel infrastructure.

Both the GVC and SRTS Cycle 6 ATP application projects are part of the city's overall vision to create an inviting and safe bikeable/walkable network for active transportation users while reducing GHG emissions and directly benefiting the city's disadvantaged communities. Completing the active transportation network will meet the unmet need for transportation access to employment, school, medical care, and service destinations. In addition, it will allow for joint participation in community events, fostering a vibrant and healthier lifestyle. Lastly, connecting the northwest and northcentral areas of the city to the downtown core will help to connect residents to other bikeways and safe pedestrian corridors ultimately radiating to other far-reaching areas of the city and beyond. To achieve this vision, missing gaps in the network need to be completed. Key missing components are the connection between these two ATP grant projects near the vicinity of Recreation Park/Anthony Community Center, and the connection to the downtown core, which this request for implementation funds for the Central Visalia Traffic Safety Action Plan will address.

Obtaining funds to complete these gap deficiencies would be of great benefit to the city.

3. Aerial Fire Truck: \$1.6 million

The Visalia Fire Department needs to replace a 2009 Pierce 105' aerial ladder truck. This specialized piece of fire apparatus is one of two frontline aerial trucks in-service in the City of Visalia. Aerial apparatus are unique and important to our community for their ability to deliver up to 1000 gallons per minute of water onto fires that have grown to a point beyond the capability of smaller attack lines. Additionally, this Pierce aerial also serves as the department's primary apparatus for carrying the department's largest compliment of rescue tools and equipment. The specialized equipment carried on this truck includes the department's heavy duty, hydraulic powered vehicle extrication tools. The truck also carries a full complement of large air struts and air bags to lift and stabilize heavy objects during vehicle accidents, collapse, and other rescue incidents. Visalia's Pierce aerial also carries lumber and shoring materials that are utilized during trench rescue incidents or other incidents requiring the shoring of a building due to the building being compromised.

Given the growth of our community, our increasing call volumes, and specifically the growth of our industrial park with millions of square feet of new commercial property in the last several years, replacement of this highly important fire apparatus is critical. Aerial apparatus are important resources in buildings that are hundreds of thousands of square feet big for their ability to deliver the large amount of water necessary to safely extinguish fires in these very large structures. Given it takes two to two and a half years to build an aerial truck, the Visalia Fire Department is seeking to replace this apparatus now to stay paced with the growth of our community and increased demand on emergency operations. Additionally, Visalia is the largest city in the Tulare and Kings County region and Visalia Fire is the largest municipal fire department as well. As such, Visalia Fire could be called upon to assist our neighboring departments in the event they have an incident that needs aerial truck support.

4. National Fitness Campaign Outdoor Fitness Court: \$250,000

The National Fitness Campaign is a San Francisco based social enterprise and consulting firm that for over 40 years, has been dedicated to helping communities fund, build and activate the Fitness Court, an outdoor gym. They are an interdisciplinary team of partnership builders, designers and consultants, dedicated to improving health outcomes through the built environment. The Fitness Court is an outdoor exercise experience that uses several different fitness stations to create a total body workout. Individuals can scan QR codes and choose from thousands of different exercises to help them reach their fitness goals. This funding would be for our first free outdoor gym in Visalia. It would be a very beneficial tool for the overall health of our citizens. Visalia ranks very low in many health categories so the hope is this free exercise tool, placed in a conveniently accessible park setting, will help some of our citizenry address those health concerns and help them to live more healthy lives. The park chosen for this project is Jefferson Park because it is centrally located, in close walking distance to Mt. Whitney High School, and is in a disadvantaged community where free exercise equipment could be more beneficial and impactful.

Thank you for your time and consideration of support for our community.

Sincerely,



Steve Nelsen, Mayor
City of Visalia

cc: Senate President pro Tempore Toni G. Atkins
Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon
Senator Nancy Skinner
Assembly Member Phil Ting